

# CONSIDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE IN THE POST-EPIDEMIC ERA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHINA-BELARUS COOPERATION

**Wang Sihan**

*Belarusian State University, Minsk;*

*1009351931@qq.com;*

*supervisor – E. V. Lebedeva, Associate Professor of the Department  
of Communication Technologies and Public Relations*

Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has focused on infrastructure development, strengthened all-round connectivity, created new impetus for world economic growth, and created a new platform for international economic cooperation, giving a strong boost to world economic development. At the beginning of 2020, the global economy stagnated due to the ravages of COVID-19. The economic, cultural and policy reciprocity of the Belt and Road cooperation was seriously affected. The purpose of this paper is to explore the opportunities and challenges of the Belt and Road initiative in the post-epidemic era, solve problems, seize opportunities, and deepen exchanges and cooperation between China and Belarus.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, COVID-19, post-Epidemic era, Intercultural communication, China-Belarus cooperation.

In 2013, the two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership, and in 2016, on this basis, they stressed the need to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership based on mutual trust and mutual benefit. China and Belarus jointly built a community of shared future and shared interests. Belarus is a comprehensive strategic partner of China and an important cooperative partner in jointly building the Belt and Road. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, China and Belarus have worked together to overcome difficulties and further strengthened cooperation in various fields, which fully testifies to the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

The infrastructure connectivity between China and Belarus has not been suspended due to COVID-19, and many projects have been completed smoothly during this period, which has boosted connectivity and thus contributed to economic recovery along the Belt and Road. In the past three years, despite the impact of the epidemic, the projects completed under the Belt and Road initiative have great social and economic value, which is also of great significance to the economic development of China and Belarus.

In terms of economic and trade, since the establishment of China-Belarus comprehensive strategic partnership, the total import and export trade between

the two countries rose to us \$1.8487 billion in 2014, up 27.3% year on year. However, in the following three years, the total import and export trade between the two countries declined year by year, and the completed turnover of China's contracted projects in Belarus fell below the level of 2013. In 2018, the import and export trade between China and Belarus turned for the better, with the total volume of import and export trade between the two countries reaching us \$1.712.4 billion, up 18.2% year on year. Among them, China's export amounted to us \$1.1459 billion, up 22.3% year on year. China's imports reached 570.5 billion US dollars, up 10.8% year on year. The turnover of China's contracted projects to Belarus also started to pick up, rising from \$667.47 million in 2017 to \$996.03 million, up 49.2% year on year [1]. According to data from the State Statistical Commission of Belarus, the total import and export trade between the two countries reached \$4.616.4 billion in 2019, up 22.3% year on year. Among them, Belarus exported us \$710.3 billion to China, up 37.8% year on year. Belarus imported us \$3.906.1 billion from China, up 19.9% year on year. Against the backdrop of the ravages of COVID-19, the import and export trade between the two countries has suffered a certain impact. According to the statistics of Belarus, the total import and export volume between China and Belarus in the first half of 2020 was us \$1.9525 billion. Of this, Belarus exported \$315.42 million to China; Belarus imported us \$1.637.9 billion from China [2].

In 2014, China-Belarus Industrial Park was included in the Development Plan for comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus (2014-2018) as a key economic and trade cooperation project. In September of the same year, the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Ministry of Economy of Belarus jointly established the Industrial Park Coordination Working Group. Belarus is committed to turning China-Belarus Industrial Park into a harmonious new city in the new era and a model of cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, said President Lukashenko at the Belt and Road Regional Cooperation and Development Forum held in the park on July 2, 2019 [3].

On 24 March 2020, President Lukashenko thanked China for timely sharing its experience in fighting the epidemic with Belarus and expressed confidence that the two countries could overcome the negative impact of the epidemic and further expand bilateral economic and trade cooperation [4]. Since then, based on vigorously promoting the construction of key projects in the park, China and Belarus have actively promoted bilateral economic and

trade cooperation talks. The "Belarus-China" China-Europe freight train, carrying about 2,000 cubic meters of Belarusian saw wood, also started on 24 July 2020.

By July 2021, the park has attracted 71 resident enterprises from 13 countries, with an intention to invest more than \$1.2 billion and create more than 1,000 direct jobs. As the first Chinese medicine project enterprise in Belarus, after entering the park, the Eurasian Railway Company will invest in the construction of freight railway stations in the park, to realize the docking of railway transportation channels such as the China-Europe Freight trains with the China-Belarus Industrial Park, which is of great significance to the future development of the industrial park. The Torch Park project was the first to enter the park in the year of the epidemic, playing a leading role in attracting investment and resuming work and production. After the center is officially put into operation, it will undertake the mission of cultivating and incubating the high-tech industry internally and promote the international innovation cooperation of the park. The commencement ceremony of the Minsk International Exhibition Center project means the systematization of supporting facilities in the park, which will guarantee the long-term benign development of the park.

Compared with the economy, the impact of the pandemic on cultural transmission is small. Since the two countries began mutual recognition of academic qualifications in 2018, China has conducted 40 government scholarship exchange programs for Belarus every year. In 2020, nearly 1,000 Belarusian students were studying in China, while more than 5,000 Chinese students were studying in Belarus, more than 4,000 of whom were studying in universities in Minsk. Higher education institutions of the two sides have signed more than 400 cooperation agreements. Since 2016, the Chinese Embassy in Belarus has established the "Chinese Ambassador's Scholarship", which has funded a total of 148 Belarusian college and high school students to learn Chinese. Beijing International Studies University, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Xi'an International Studies University and Beijing Foreign Studies University have also set up departments of Belarusian. Scientific research cooperation between the two sides is also close.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Belarusian Academy of Sciences have established the China-Belarus Cultural Cooperation Forum, which hosts international seminars in turn every year. The Two houses have implemented the consensus reached by the two heads of state and established

the China-Belarus Development Analysis Center to serve the intergovernmental Cooperation Commission and cooperation under the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Due to the impact of the epidemic, offline exchanges in cultural cooperation between the two countries have been suspended. Instead, the two countries have started to focus on online publicity and exhibition, including World Heritage in China, Beautiful China photo Exhibition, China Poverty Alleviation Photo Exhibition and the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the CPC. In terms of media cooperation, mainstream media in Belarus, including The Bai Tong News Agency, The Belarus Today newspaper, and major TV stations often reprint current political news from China's Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television and People's Daily. The "Window to China" section of the website of Belarus Today regularly reports economic, political, and social information about China, and displays pictures of tourist attractions.

But, from February 10 to 15, 2022, the Belarus-China Financial Media Development Research Center of The University of Belarus held the "China Week", featuring a series of Chinese folk customs exhibitions, Lantern Festival gala and other activities. During the event, the Media Center shared Chinese folk customs, including calligraphy, tea ceremony, food, lantern riddles, etc., for the students and local teachers and students of Belarus, making contributions to the cultural exchanges between China and Belarus.

For better economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries, the author puts forward the following suggestions:

On the economic front, the two sides should first take measures to ensure the sound development of existing investment and cooperation projects. To attract each other and expand investment, the two sides could discuss the signing of laws on investment security and regulations to continue simplifying customs procedures. In addition to strengthening cooperation in agriculture and renewable energy, we also need to explore innovative ways of cooperation, such as developing digital economy, and green economy, so that China-Belarus cooperation will always be vibrant.

In terms of cultural exchanges, the two sides should continue to strengthen regional cooperation and people-to-people and cultural exchanges to consolidate the social foundation for bilateral cooperation. After the epidemic is brought under control, the two sides need to resume cultural, and people-to-people exchanges as soon as possible. They should make full use of the existing exchange platforms to conduct frequent and colorful cultural, scientific,

technological, and educational exchanges, with special emphasis on media cooperation and youth exchanges.

The arrival of a new round of scientific and technological revolution and the spread of COVID-19 have further intensified such changes. In the post-COVID-19 era, China and Belarus are in such a changing international environment. We need to keep pace with The Times, explore the space and path of bilateral cooperation, and promote the solution of global issues while safeguarding the interests of our two countries, to contribute wisdom and strength to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

### **References**

1. National Bureau of Statistics of China [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://data.stats.gov.cn> – Date of access: 04.17.2022.
2. National Statistical Commission of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-statistika/real-sector-of-the-economy/foreign-trade/> – Date of access: 04.17.2022.
3. China and Belarus jointly Hold belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2019-07/03/c\\_1124706036.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2019-07/03/c_1124706036.htm) – Date of access: 04.18.2022.
4. President of Belarus: Thank China for sharing its experience in fighting the pandemic with Belarus in a timely manner [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.China.news.com/gj/2020/03-25/9136642.shtml> – Date of access: 04.18.2022.