

ArcGIS suggestions: label Fergana valley region, all economic corridors, label highways on the map, label cities and geographical features I mention, highlight Tuna's 3d print areas

Guiding Questions: Why is it advantageous to go through here?

Why was it difficult or easy? What trade went through here?

### **Pamir Mountains (BRI and Silk Road):**

- strategic position between Kashgar and Kokand

- >Kashgar

- was an Oasis at the foot of the Pamir

- west China Uyghur region

- trade center

- northern and southern silk routes met here

- high resource production (Britannica)

- >Kokand, Uzbekistan

- mentioned in routes from china to India

- connected Xi'an and Parthia (Silk Road) and Constantinople

- Pamir highway

### **Himalayas (Silk Road and BRI):**

Silk road: connected India and China- Kashmir to the Tibetan plateau

- >Persian art (patterns, calligraphy, and painting)

- >islam

BRI: Trans-Himalayan economic corridor

Intro: why routes ancient silk road were formed, why are they making a BRI

Passage through the Pamir Mountains has been an essential part of Eurasian trade for centuries. On the Silk Road, it served as a passage from Kashgar and Kokand, two cities that welcomed caravans and served as trading centers. The route through the mountains was the most efficient path to travel from the far east to the west; therefore, travelers were motivated to deal with the freezing temperatures, raging rivers, and shifting terrain that frequently turns to landslides; however, if they survived, merchants would reach these prosperous cities. Kashgar, China, is the more prominent city of the two, welcoming weary travelers from the mountains and the Taklamakan Desert. Kashgar is an oasis city in the Tarim Basin that is situated where the northern and southern Silk Road routes meet. Since passing the Pamir mountains was the most efficient route to more northern cities such as Xi'an, Samarkand, and Constantinople, Kokand, and Kashgar served as a nexus for Eastern and Western exchange of trade and culture. Both cities also produced their own goods, in Kashgar the fertile Oasis soil allows wheat, rice, corn, cotton, melons, grapes, apricots, and many more crops to thrive. The people of Kashgar also traded textiles, rugs, pottery, and animal hides. The city of Kokand lies in the famous Fergana

Valley, only fifty miles from the capital city of the region, Fergana. The valley is known for its mineral-rich land and ability to sustain a large number of crops. Needless to say, the cities to the east and west of the Pamir's were in very strategic positions that allowed them to have booming economies.

Today, the road along the Pamir Mountains is known as The Pamir Highway or the M41. It was built by the Russians during "The Great Game" because Russia feared the English invasion of Central Asia. The highway was created in order to deploy Russian troops efficiently if an invasion ever did occur. The road remained largely unused and unfinished until the 1930s when the Soviet Union took reinterest in the highway and finished its construction. From there it remained in fairly acceptable conditions until the Soviet Union dissolved and the road fell into disrepair. Recently China has taken interest in the M41 and has launched a campaign to repave the entire highway in order to incorporate it into the Belt Road. Currently, it is the most dangerous road in the world and the second-highest highway altitude wise. They hope to better the conditions on the road for people who live in the Pamir region and better connect Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan to China. Since the M41 was a preexisting highway, none of these countries had to risk extreme debt and land leasing to China for this specific road; however, the road does not come without economic benefit to China. Trade has continued to be a very important part of Central Asian culture so improving the road would allow goods from China to more easily reach this region, as well as improve the local trade economies. Unfortunately, the most prolifically traded good on the road today is heroin.

The Himalayas have always been a fascinating topic in pop culture, but its importance isn't only the fact that it is home of Mt. Everest, it has also served as an important junction of cultural exchange for centuries. Material trade was prolific on this route, precious metals, gems, horses, spices, and ivory were exchanged mostly between India and China, but it was the spread of religion that is the most crucial aspect of this Silk Road route. Buddhism was born at the edge of the Himalayas in India. The religion spread throughout India to the Kashmir region, where it thrived and continues to thrive in Ladakh, the only modern majority Buddhist region in modern-day India. From there it spread to Tibet and the rest of China, deeply affecting the culture of East Asia for centuries. Islam also took flight on this route. Under the Persian Mughul emperors, Indian culture began to adopt art, etiquette, writing, and religion from Persia which inevitably spread throughout the trade routes to China. Today China's Buddhist majority lies in Tibet, home of the Dalai Lama, and China's Muslim majority lies in the western portion of the country, the regions closest to the Himalayan trade routes.

The Trans-Himalayan Economic Corridor is one of the routes China is working on for the Belt Road. This road is particularly controversial because it involves the country that most opposed the project as a whole: India. China plans on connecting itself with India and Nepal through a railroad in order to improve relations with these countries and bring economic benefits. Nepal has wholeheartedly agreed to act as a bridge between northeast and southeast Asia because a railroad through Kathmandu would greatly improve tourism and allow Nepal to have more independence from India. Previously, Nepal completely relied on India for the transport of goods, but Chinese interest has allowed more alternatives for the Nepali people.

India does not want any land connection with China due to the historical border skirmishes with the Chinese and distrust of the Belt and Road Initiative as a whole. China offers to invest in the infrastructure of countries along the Belt Road, however, if these countries are unable to pay back the investment with interest, they would be plunged into massive amounts of debt and forced to lease land to China. To India and other skeptics in the international community, the Belt Road is an attempt to spread Chinese political influence and entrap countries with debt. There has also been a long-standing fear of invasion in India. The Himalayas have protected India from foreign adversaries for centuries and the Belt Road will effectively strip them of their natural protection.