First draft: Chinese construction, urban engineering and megastructure stakeholders in Laos

# Introduction to the BRI

## Historical review, from the old silk road to the new one

Chinese trade outreach has been known to us for over 2 millennia. The historical Silk Road has been a trade network connecting the east of Asia to the central part of the Eurasian continent. Two hundred years B.C., during its heyday with the Roman and Byzantine governance, and until their fall to the sea routes, these roads connected two geographical extremes (McBride, 2015). These roads gathered together different civilizations as never before. It was not only gold, silk or spices that were traded in the markets along the route, but also knowledge, thought and technology. The power associated with its control and thus its security has shaped an infrastructure commensurate with its importance. The Great Wall of China being the best example[[1]](#footnote-1).



Figure 1 - Map of silk routes[[2]](#footnote-2)

Despite the existence of older routes, we can trace the birth of the Silk Roads to around 130 BC and the sending of an ambassador from the Han dynasty for political and military reasons. It was on his return that he proposed the idea of opening up trade with the regions he had visited, suggesting the economic expansion of the Chinese empire.

1. Xinru, Liu (2010). The Silk Road in World History New York: Oxford University Press, p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://95698391.weebly.com/historical-context.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)