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Study on the Development of Interregional Synergistic Construction (Taking the China-Belarus Industrial Park and the International Land Port of Gansu as Examples)

T. Qu

Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, People's Republic of China

ABSTRACT

The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the initiation of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative. Belarus, as one of the countries along the One Belt and One Road, is actively responding to the initiative's call and participating in its joint implementation. The author creatively establishes a connection and conducts a profound analysis of the China-Belarus Industrial Park and the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou). The article assesses the present status and development progress of the two projects, identifying pertinent issues and proposing solutions through a methodical approach that combines theoretical analysis with practical application. A theoretical framework for these two projects is presented, aiding in surmounting challenges and charting the future trajectory of collaboration. The study's objective is to introduce novel developmental concepts for Park administrators and policymakers, while also pinpointing fresh avenues for growth within the Park development of both countries, to contribute to economic advancement more effectively.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative; interregional development; industrial park; land port; China; Belarus

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, President Xi Jinping introduced the “One Belt, One Road” initiative¹ [1], inaugurating a fresh phase of rejuvenating the historic Silk Road.² As a result, the China-Belarus Industrial Park and International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) were established. Numerous scholars are captivated by this initiative and the two aforementioned projects. Jiang Ling's [2] research examines the developmental facets of the logistics and warehousing industry within the International Land Port of Gansu. Jin Yuqing [3] delves into strategies for

augmenting the competitive edge of the International Land Port of Gansu. Deborah B. and Tang X. Y. [4] center their research on structural transformation and China's special economic zones abroad. Salmygina's [5] study develops the topic on the potential of multilateral economic cooperation between China and Belarus.

It is evident that numerous scholars have conducted extensive research on the aforementioned two projects from various perspectives. Nevertheless, a research gap exists concerning the cross-regional synergistic development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park and International Land Port of Gansu. Given the evolution of global economic integration and the emergence of regional conflicts and other unpredictable factors, it becomes imperative to explore new avenues for the growth of the China-Belarus Industrial Park and International Land Port of Gansu, thereby propelling regional economic advancement.

This paper introduces an innovative approach, proposing a strategy for the cross-regional synergistic

¹ State Council Information Office held a conference on “Building the Belt and Road Initiative: Progress, Contributions and Prospects”. URL: <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/86763.html> (accessed on 22.04.2019).

² United Nations Development Program in China: Report on China's Belt and Road Overseas Economic and Trade Cooperation Zones Contributing to Sustainable Development — Analysis and Practical Guidelines Based on Economic, Social and Environmental Frameworks, April 25, 2019. Institute of International Trade and Economic Cooperation of Ministry of Commerce of China.

development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park and the International Land Port of Gansu. By analyzing the current state of the aforementioned projects, identifying practical challenges, and leveraging their distinct strengths and features, this study creatively advances the concept of cross-regional synergistic development at various levels. The aim is to address complex issues and offer fresh insights and developmental concepts to Park administrators and policymakers. Furthermore, this approach seeks to uncover additional economic prospects and foster enduring regional economic progress for both Parks.

This paper employs the following research methodologies:

- literature research method — by collecting official information and data related to the China-Belarus Industrial Park and the International Land Port of Gansu, this method comprehensively organizes the developmental history and current status of these projects;
- comparative method — through comparative analysis with other European and Chinese industrial parks, this method highlights deficiencies in areas such as financing, market access, logistics, policies, and supporting facilities. This offers a factual foundation for subsequent problem-solving approaches;
- deductive reasoning method — feasibility analyses and specific recommendations are formulated for the Parks concerning policy formulation, investment attraction, logistics, scientific research, and innovation.

1. ABOUT CHINA-BELARUS INDUSTRIAL PARK AND INTERNATIONAL LAND PORT OF GANSU (LANZHOU)

The **China-Belarus Industrial Park**, also known as the “Great Stone” Industrial Park, is a specialized economic zone established through an intergovernmental agreement between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus [6]. In September 2011, an intergovernmental agreement was signed to establish the China-Belarus Industrial Park. On May 12, 2015, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the construction site of the first phase of the China-Belarus Industrial

Park [7, 8]. By November 2019, the initial phase of infrastructure development, including roads, pipeline networks, and other facilities, covering an area of 8.5 square kilometers, had been completed in the China-Belarus Industrial Park. The number of officially recognized residents within the park had reached 60 by that time³ [9].

By May 2023, the China-Belarus Industrial Park boasts a total of 108 resident companies, there are 50 Chinese-funded enterprises, 38 Belarusian enterprises, and 20 enterprises from Europe, America, and other countries in the park, signifying a significant accomplishment in terms of investment attraction. The park’s infrastructure and comprehensive support services offer a wide spectrum of business growth prospects, including all-encompassing office complexes, a center for science, technology, and innovation, over ten industrial-standard factory structures, residential accommodations, business-oriented hotels, financial institutions, and various other amenities.

Belarus, being a significant node of the Silk Road Economic Belt, was among the earliest nations to embrace China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative and took active part in it. The collaborative effort resulting in the China-Belarus Industrial Park has witnessed a decade of progress, emerging as a landmark undertaking in the collaborative endeavors between China and Belarus to construct the Silk Road Economic Belt. Moreover, it stands as the largest overseas trade and economic cooperation zone for China, characterized by the highest level of cooperation [10–12].

International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou). In 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward the “Belt and Road” initiative, inaugurating a fresh phase in the renaissance of the historic Silk Road. Subsequently, in 2016, the province of Gansu and the city of Lanzhou collaboratively embarked on the establishment of a pivotal hub, serving as Gansu Province’s gateway to participate in the “Belt and Road” initiative. This endeavor materialized as the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou).

The International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) serves as a significant platform for Gansu Province to facilitate its western opening-up efforts, functioning as a pivotal

³ China-Belarus Industrial Park. URL: <https://industrialpark.by/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

“Belt and Road” international logistics transit hub and an international trade materials distribution center. During his visit to Gansu, General Secretary Xi Jinping highlighted that the “Belt and Road” presents the greatest opportunity for the province. Moreover, the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) holds the distinction of being among the pioneer batch of land port-type national logistics hubs, national demonstration logistics parks, inaugural national multimodal intermodal transportation demonstration projects, national-level railway logistics bases, and one of China’s 18 railway container centers.⁴

2. BOTH OF THE AFOREMENTIONED INITIATIVES HAVE ACHIEVED CERTAIN SUCCESSES IN RECENT YEARS. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO ENCOUNTER CHALLENGES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

The China-Belarus Industrial Park is currently facing the following issues:

1. Financial and Market Challenges. The development of Belarus and the industrial park has been impacted by regional conflicts, leading to specific challenges. From the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian regional conflict in 2022 to the first quarter of 2023, Belarus’ economic growth has experienced a downward trajectory. Based on the official data from the State Statistics Committee of Belarus, preliminary estimates indicate that Belarus’ GDP in 2022 was approximately 191.4 billion Belarusian rubles (equivalent to about 73.05 billion U.S. dollars at the annual exchange rate of the Central Bank of Belarus). This marked a decline of 4.7% compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. Additionally, in the first quarter of 2023, Belarus’ GDP amounted to about 46.5 billion Belarusian rubles, reflecting a decrease of 2.1% compared to the same period in the prior year. The GDP deflator during this time was at 109.4% when compared to the corresponding period last year.⁵

The Belarusian financial system is relatively underdeveloped, primarily focusing on basic financial services. It offers limited financial derivative products

and services, and the commercial insurance system is not well-established. Furthermore, the imposition of economic sanctions on Belarus has exacerbated its financial challenges. Notably, Belarusian banking organizations are no longer accepted within the SWIFT system. Moreover, European and American investors face restrictions in collaborating with the National Bank of Belarus and accessing its financial markets.

The combination of various internal and external factors has triggered a sequence of issues. Firstly, Belarus is grappling with a shortage of foreign investment and loans. Additionally, organizations such as the World Bank have ceased offering support for medical, educational, and technical projects in Belarus, contributing to economic decline, fluctuations in exchange rates, and an increase in inflation. Consequently, this has led to a rise in local unemployment rates. These external dynamics have presented significant hurdles for the financing and payment channels of enterprises in the industrial park. They have also escalated investment risks, resulting in practical challenges for the timely implementation of infrastructure and the creation of a conducive business environment by these enterprises. The original sanctions against Belarus in Europe and the United States mainly targeted Belarusian enterprises and individuals; the assets of the sanctioned individuals in Europe were frozen, the sanctioned individuals were banned from entering the European Union, and European Union individuals and enterprises were not allowed to provide funds to the sanctioned individuals. Belarusian products such as timber, steel and potash were banned from being exported to EU countries.

Following the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Europe and the United States broadened their sanctions against Belarus, extending them beyond the previous economic sanctions. These sanctions are progressively encompassing a wider range of products manufactured in Belarus. This extension includes products resulting from collaborations between Belarus and businesses in other nations. As a consequence, the enterprises within the China-Belarus Industrial Park have encountered constraints and limitations due to these sanctions. These sanctions have led to a significant impact on the businesses operating within the industrial park. Their ability to sell products in the European Union

⁴ International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou). URL: <http://lzitlp.lanzhou.gov.cn/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

⁵ National Statistical Committee of Belarus. URL: <https://www.belstat.gov.by/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

market has been severely hindered. Consequently, these enterprises have suffered losses in terms of market access and market share in Europe and the United States.

These sanctions have had a profound impact on Belarus, severely impeding its regular socioeconomic progress. They have amplified the nation's financial deficiencies and caused disruptions in the country's economic supply chain. Consequently, numerous Chinese and Western investors have halted their investment intentions within Belarus. The advantages of the China-Belarus Industrial Park, initially conceived as a strategic gateway for Belarus to access the European Union market, have undergone certain modifications due to these circumstances. As a result, the task of attracting investments has become notably more challenging.

2. Logistic Challenges. Belarus heavily relies on imports for its domestic manufacturing, exhibiting a significant dependence on imported raw materials and equipment. The ongoing escalation of the crisis in Ukraine and the repercussions of sanctions have directly impacted logistics, resulting in a reduction in the nation's production capabilities. The European Union and Belarus have imposed mutual trade embargoes, leading to current restrictions on Belarusian road, rail, and air cargo transportation to European countries [13]. Furthermore, transportation towards Ukraine has been completely halted. As reported by the Belarusian Border Committee, the volume of truck traffic entering Belarus from the Lithuanian direction has plummeted by 70% since the regional conflict emerged. This disruption has severely impacted the Belarusian production logistics chain, resulting in a significant decrease in freight turnover.

The successful development of industrial parks necessitates a robust logistics system to support the construction of infrastructure and the operational needs of enterprises, particularly in terms of raw material imports. However, the current logistics situation in Belarus is challenging. This predicament is anticipated to significantly impede the progress of industrial park construction and the import and export operations of businesses. Despite the completion of the initial phase of infrastructure construction within the industrial park, the resident enterprises are grappling with escalated expenses in procuring raw materials, significant pressures

to maintain regular productivity levels, and extended production cycles. The logistics-related hindrances have created difficulties in transporting raw materials and machinery to the site, inevitably disrupting the smooth operation of businesses. This situation is not conducive to the progression of the park's second phase of construction and its envisioned high-quality development in the future.

3. Challenges in Industrial Support. During the initial establishment of the China-Belarus Industrial Park, emphasis was placed on key sectors such as warehousing and logistics, machinery manufacturing, electronic information, biomedicine, fine chemicals, new materials, e-commerce, big data processing, research and development, as well as social and cultural industries. The selection process for enterprises to be located within the park favored those with high-tech attributes.

However, at present, Belarus lacks adequate supporting conditions to fulfill the developmental needs of high-tech enterprises in areas such as traditional industries, talent acquisition, financial infrastructure, logistics, economic regulations, taxation, customs procedures, and information security. Given the absence of well-defined strategic positioning, development direction, market assessment, development focal points, delineated responsibilities, and institutional structures, embarking on rapid expansion and heightened standards could result in a range of issues. For instance, this approach might lead to overinvestment within a short timeframe, creating future burdens; prolonged investment cycles that challenge risk management; intricate challenges in balancing diverse interests; and sluggish outcomes that may not align with anticipated results.

Problems faced by the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou):

1. Internal factors have presented challenges for the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou). On one hand, the China Railway Express has been striving to secure cargo sources from the maritime market, resulting in price suppression. This dependency on financial subsidies from the local government for its operational maintenance and the high operational freight costs, without sufficient independent market-based revenue, highlight a notable lack of marketization within its operation.

On the flip side, the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) lacks coordination with other central land

ports like Chengdu, Xi'an, and Xinjiang. These ports share similar management models, freight transportation methods, and face the challenge of homogeneity [14–16]. Consequently, the port struggles to establish distinct competitive advantages, making it less appealing to shippers and hindering its ability to become the preferred land port. Furthermore, in comparison to traditional seaports, the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) falls short in terms of area construction and lacks comprehensive logistics, information services, business, and industrial functions. Particularly, its information infrastructure remains inadequate. Unless pivotal entities such as logistics companies, financial institutions, inspection and quarantine authorities, and customs are integrated into the e-commerce platform and the land port, there's a risk of reduced operational efficiency and diminished economic benefits for the international land port.

2. From an **external perspective**. The infrastructure along the Silk Road Economic Belt is insufficiently developed, with weak existing municipal foundations. The road leading to the land port in Lanzhou City is constrained by limitations, given its considerable distance and remote location. Moreover, the area lacks population concentration and a robust business ambiance.

For development, talent is of paramount importance. In contrast to the southeastern regions, the northwest as a whole suffers from diminished economic dynamism and struggles to attract skilled individuals. This deficiency hampers the region's ability to establish a virtuous economic cycle. The underdeveloped state of the port industry coupled with the proliferation of China-European trains has led to port congestion. This congestion, in turn, has exacerbated the shortage of essential resources along the routes, such as cranes and berths. The frequent changing of rails has further contributed to an overall reduction in the ports' throughput capacity.

3. FEASIBILITY OF INTERREGIONAL SYNERGISTIC DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN CHINA-BELARUS INDUSTRIAL PARK AND INTERNATIONAL LAND PORT OF GANSU (LANZHOU)

The International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) serves as a pivotal platform for Gansu Province's

engagement with western regions, functioning as an international logistics transit hub and a center for distributing international trade materials. The China-Belarus Industrial Park in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, was a joint endeavor initiated and promoted by the leaders of China and Belarus. This landmark project is a testament to the collaborative efforts of both nations within the framework of the "Belt and Road" initiative, symbolizing the embodiment of their mutually beneficial partnership. Regarded as the "Pearl on the Silk Road Economic Belt", the China-Belarus Industrial Park stands as the largest overseas economic and trade cooperation zone in terms of its planned area, development scale, and the highest level of collaboration China has engaged in for investment and development.

During his visit to Gansu, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that the "Belt and Road" initiative presents the most significant opportunity for the development of Gansu. The International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou), distinguished as one of the initial group of land port-type national logistics hubs, national demonstration logistics parks, as well as the pioneering batch of multimodal intermodal transport demonstration projects, national-level railway logistics bases, and one of China's 18 railway container centers, should assertively take the lead in competition against Chengdu International Land Port, Xi'an International Land Port, and Xinjiang International Land Port. This moment is crucial to seize the "Belt and Road" opportunity and expedite the advancement of the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) in alignment with the "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

The International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) and China-Belarus Industrial Park should leverage each other's strengths in terms of resources and industries, enhance the foundation of cooperation, foster extensive collaboration, and share the outcomes of their joint efforts to attain a mutually beneficial outcome.⁶

⁶ Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. NDRC, MFA and MOC (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China with State Council authorization). URL: https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/201503/t20150328_956036.html (accessed on 28.03.2015).

Cooperation can be explored in the following areas:

1. Policy Formulation. Implement a “government-led, market-oriented operation” model by integrating funds from financial and social aspects for construction. Interpret and align investment policies of the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) and the “Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus on the Special Legal Regime of the ‘Great Stone’ China-Belarus Industrial Park”, among other documents. Enhance coordination of trade laws and regulations and mutual recognition of standards. Establish a cooperative mechanism and platform for fair, just, and scientifically grounded standards recognition based on international standards. Promote mutual recognition of standards following international criteria, facilitating certification for enterprises. Strengthen collaboration in transport, customs, and trade facilitation. Foster ties with think tanks, encouraging policy planning and information exchange to build mutual trust. Provide intellectual support and offer professional legal advice and technical standards training to enterprises.⁷ Develop industry-specific standards in areas such as warehousing and logistics, machinery manufacturing, electronic information, biomedicine, fine chemicals, new materials, e-commerce, big data processing, research and development, and social and cultural industries.⁸

2. Investment Attraction. Avoid excessive protectionism of existing industries in the China-Belarus Industrial Park and refrain from pursuing high-profile developments without balance. Embrace the notion of independent development and avoid overemphasis solely on high technology, ensuring a conducive environment for a diverse range of sectors like food, light industry, and building materials. To facilitate smooth integration, the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) should identify high-quality industries aligned with its

developmental positioning. Take the initiative to offer preferential policies to attract enterprises in accordance with the development conditions. Focus on nurturing dynamic small and medium-sized enterprises along with local characteristic industries. Strengthen the region’s industry competitiveness and proactively engage enterprises that align with the development conditions into Lanzhou. Exploit the strategic location of Lanzhou to establish point-to-point business connections with the China-Belarus Industrial Park. This cooperation will support enterprises in their outbound ventures with the backing of Lanzhou and simultaneously attract high-quality enterprises to invest in the region. Furthermore, attract and develop high-quality projects within Lanzhou, thereby fostering local economic growth.

To address the issue of limited financial services within the China-Belarus Industrial Park, targeted financial preferential policies have been implemented. These policies aim to diversify and broaden the scope of financial cooperation, effectively resolving challenges related to currency exchange and inter-regional investor settlements. In the resource-rich areas of both participating regions, comprehensive “one-stop” services are being offered to streamline and expedite investors’ business operations. Additionally, specialized financial and tax regulations have been designed exclusively for enterprises situated within the designated area. These enterprises operate under a distinct framework that is not constrained by the jurisdiction or limitations of the regional governments where they are situated. Instead, they operate directly within the jurisdiction provided by the designated zone, facilitating a more flexible and supportive business environment.

3. In the Domain of Logistics. The China-Belarus Industrial Park, positioned in landlocked Belarus, relies on the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda within the European Union’s Kaunas Free Trade Zone for sea-based commodity exports. The competitive dynamics between this port and the China-Belarus Industrial Park have resulted in less-than-optimal transportation options for investment activities. The International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) can leverage this situation as an opportunity to robustly develop the Lanzhou-Kazakhstan-Russia-Belarus China-European liner bulk container service trains

⁷ Ministry of Commerce: will support the upgrading of a number of new batch of overseas economic and trade cooperation zones. Sina Finance. URL: <http://finance.sina.com.cn/china/gncj/2019-03-09/doc-ihrfqzkc2462083.shtml> (accessed on 09.03.2019).

⁸ Chinese Government’s Support Policies and Measures for Overseas Economic and Trade Cooperation Zones. Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China). URL: http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_jwjmyhzhq/subjectn/201004/20100406869369.shtml (accessed on 15.04.2010).

[17]. By establishing overseas bases and sub-parks in the China-Belarus Industrial Park, the Lanzhou Land Port can capitalize on the time-efficient land transport advantages, implement strategies to reduce cross-border logistics costs, facilitate two-way point-to-point services, and foster multimodal transport development. This approach would effectively establish the Lanzhou Land Port as a pivotal national logistics hub. The Lanzhou Land Port has already been at the forefront as a national logistics hub. The implementation of point-to-point liner services, fortification of information-oriented service systems, and provision of streamlined customs clearance services through innovative data systems, intelligent order management systems, and sophisticated query and data analysis systems are essential. Establishing an electronic port and collaborative customs clearance platform would significantly enhance customs clearance efficiency.

4. Advancement of “Sister Park” Construction.

Initiating the establishment of cross-border collaboration parks along the Silk Road Economic Belt is crucial to bolster connectivity, streamline cargo sourcing, catalyze profound industrial collaboration, and foster a climate of international trade development. Dedicated efforts shall be directed towards propelling the expansive growth of enterprises in Lanzhou. This entails nurturing several large-scale international land port enterprises distinguished by elevated service standards and robust global competitiveness. Leveraging overseas initiatives and cross-border industrial cooperation parks, the promotion of Lanzhou’s international land port expansion beyond China’s borders will be prioritized. This strategic move aligns with the overarching Silk Road Economic Belt construction while concurrently laying the foundation for cross-border collaboration platforms.

Drawing on Lanzhou’s industrial, geographical, and land transport advantages, expeditiously realizing the development orientation of the “China-Belarus Industrial Park” is paramount. This endeavor aims to achieve mutual benefits with the China-Belarus Industrial Park. It is noteworthy that the China-Belarus Industrial Park is still in its nascent phase of development and operation, grappling with various policy, managerial, and operational challenges. Lanzhou International Land Port should proactively identify windows of opportunity for its growth

and navigate novel developmental pathways amidst the array of challenges it confronts.

5. Advancing Scientific Research and Innovation.

In addition to robustly fostering forefront industries grounded in contemporary logistics, modern trade, and export processing, Lanzhou Land Port can strategically collaborate with the China-Belarus Industrial Park to foster profound exchanges in scientific and technological innovation. Notably, the China-Belarus Industrial Park, in 2021, achieved the establishment of the China-Belarus Science and Technology Achievement Industrialization Innovation Centre.⁹ This hub encompasses international R&D collaboration, science and technology research institutions, and research enterprises within the park. Facilitated by fund support, this center is instrumental in nurturing small and micro enterprises, cultivating the founders of R&D outcomes, as well as fostering innovation and entrepreneurship among young entrepreneurs.

Given that the comprehensive execution of robust scientific and technological endeavors constitutes a pivotal facet in Gansu’s acceleration of the “one nucleus and three belts” regional development blueprint, Lanzhou Land Port can leverage the city and province’s university and enterprise resources, as well as tap into the existing assets of the China-Belarus Science and Technology Achievement Industrialization Innovation Centre. This concerted effort should accelerate the advancement of innovation platforms, bolster the transformation of scientific and technological achievements, cultivate high-tech industries, and forge novel competitive edges for subsequent industrial growth. The net result will be the cultivation of fresh advantages in industrial progression, thereby nurturing a wealth of premium economic increments for forthcoming development.

China and Belarus have notably ratified an agreement encompassing mutual recognition of academic degrees and certifications, concurrently launching joint university programs. This partnership has resulted in a year-on-year increase in the exchange of foreign students. Mandarin has even been integrated as an optional foreign language in the Belarusian college entrance examination. With

⁹ China-Belarus Industrial Park. URL: <https://industrialpark.by/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

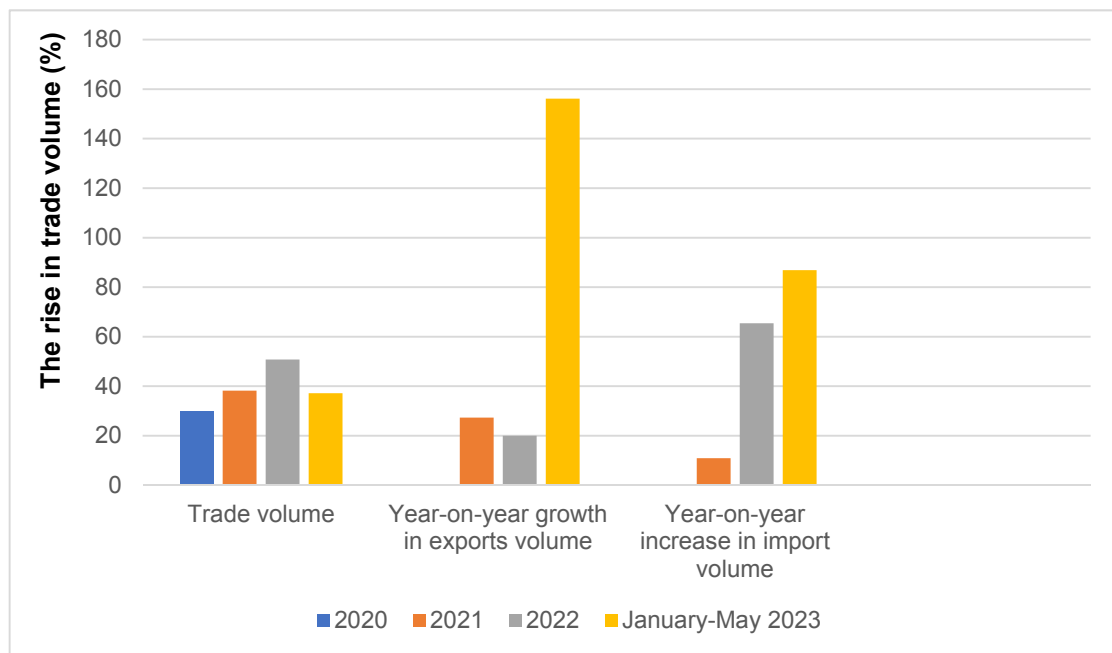


Fig. China-Belarus trade volume from 2020 to 2023

Source: Compiled on the basis of data from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

over 7,000 Chinese students presently in Belarus and a corresponding number of Belarusian students in China,¹⁰ a total of six Confucius Institutes have been established in Belarus thus far. In this vein, Lanzhou's higher education institutions should orchestrate tailored educational initiatives, emphasizing the cultivation and dissemination of international talents. This strategic alignment should focus on nurturing interdisciplinary and multifaceted professionals dedicated to fulfilling the developmental requisites of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

CONCLUSION

Western China is undergoing a transformation, evolving from being an interior region to becoming a pioneering frontier in terms of trade liberalization and foreign trade engagement. This evolution is marked by an amplified involvement in international trade, accompanied by rapid escalations in both import and export volumes. As reported by China's General Administration of Customs, in 2020, the trade volume between China and Belarus

exceeded the threshold of US\$ 3 billion for the first time.¹¹ Within this context, China's exports to Belarus amounted to US\$ 2,113 billion, while imports from Belarus totaled US\$ 889 million.¹² The momentum continued in 2021, witnessing a surge in China-Belarus trade to a value of US\$ 3.822 billion, marking a notable year-on-year growth of 27.33%¹³ (see Figure). During this period, China's exports to Belarus expanded to US\$ 2.729 billion, indicating a 29.15% growth, while imports from Belarus amounted to US\$ 1.091 billion, registering a year-on-year increase of 22.7%.¹⁴

The trend of bilateral trade between China and Belarus exhibited even more robust growth in 2022, with the trade volume soaring to US\$ 5.079 billion, denoting a remarkable year-on-year expansion of 33%.¹⁵ China's imports from Belarus witnessed an impressive surge of

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/> (accessed on 10.08.2023).

¹⁰ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Belarus URL: http://by.china-embassy.gov.cn/zbqx/jylx/202301/t20230121_11013915.htm (accessed on 20.01.2023)

65.4%, whereas the rise in exports to Belarus reached a commendable 20%.¹⁶ The initial months of 2023 also bear witness to this trend, as the trade volume between China and Belarus from January to May reached an impressive US\$ 3.72 billion, signifying an extraordinary year-on-year growth of 127%.¹⁷ Further granularity reveals that China's imports from Belarus escalated by a remarkable 86.9%, while exports to Belarus saw an astonishing leap of 156.2%.¹⁸

The Belarusian government is equally attuned to the significance of collaboration. This was evident during the state visit of the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, to China, which spanned from February 28 to March 2, 2023. On a national level, a consensus was reached to jointly advance the development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park, transforming it into an internationally oriented cooperative endeavor and a satellite town affiliated with the city of Minsk. China's commitment remains steadfast in supporting the integration of large-scale production enterprises and high-tech companies into the industrial park.¹⁹

Previous research on the China-Belarus Industrial Park primarily centered around addressing their internal challenges, such as enhancing industrial features and

optimizing functional layouts. This paper takes a fresh approach, delving into the potential for cooperation and growth of interregional industrial parks. It examines this potential through the lenses of policy formulation, investment attraction, broadening collaboration in logistics, mutual promotion of "sister parks", and fostering cooperation in scientific research and innovation.

Looking ahead, it is envisioned that the China-Belarus Industrial Park will collaborate with the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou), capitalizing on their respective strengths, sharing experiences, and collectively formulating policies. Such collaboration will facilitate the growth of the logistics industry, fostering diverse cooperation and exchanges. By collectively addressing individual shortcomings and progressing together, they can contribute to mutual advancement while promoting shared development among nations.

Undoubtedly, the imminent inter-regional synergistic development of the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) and the China-Belarus Industrial Park is poised to propel the economic progress of nations along the "Belt and Road". This cooperative endeavor also holds the promise of establishing an exceptionally efficient logistics network for both Lanzhou and Minsk along the Silk Road Economic Belt. As a result, a flourishing industry and thriving development are on the horizon.

This collaboration aims to propel both the International Land Port of Gansu (Lanzhou) and the China-Belarus Industrial Park to the forefront of global advancement. This joint endeavor is poised to significantly catalyze and contribute to the ongoing prosperity of the global economy.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Qu Tao — Cand. Sci. (Pedagogy), lecturer of the College of International Cultural Exchange, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, Province Gansu, China
[http:// orcid.org/0009-0004-5233-0922](http://orcid.org/0009-0004-5233-0922)
 qt@nwnu.edu.cn

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