Rebalancing of Power.
The Case of China’s Global Strategy


In the case of the changing geopolitical situation, the publication on the topic of economic development of China requires a special attention. The book entitled *Inicjatywa Jeden Pas i Jedna Droga. Co rozwój Chin oznacza dla świata* by Wang Yiwei, associate professor and director of the Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for EU Studies at Renmin University of China, was published in 2016 by Adam Marszałek Publishing House. The contents are divided into four sections, preceded by an introduction, conclusions and a bibliography. All sections have one thing in common – it’s to present closely and holistically the idea of Chinese One Belt, One Road with its historical and political contexts, characteristics and causes.

The Author is raising questions such as: How China in its global rise may economically and culturally aid other nations in the region? How advanced development can help China in obtaining the status of one of the three world’s great powers? Why Chinese One Belt One Road Initiative is exceedingly beneficial to entire world and how exactly should it be initialised at the level of international cooperation? All of these questions find comprehensive answers, which are also enhanced by some maps and charts, likewise a wide historical context of the new Chinese Silk Route.

The first part of the book may be seen as a kind of an introduction. It presents the basic and fundamental features of the Initiative. The Author explains on what the
Initiative relies, also points out economical past of the Belt and Road and explains its elementary objectives such as infrastructure developing between China and Europe (precisely the Baltic Sea region) through the Mediterranean Sea region, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and the Russian Federation. The Author also refers to the Initiative as the “Beijing’s Marshall Plan”, as *One Belt, One Road* was named by *The New York Times* (Simpfendorfen, 2009), and compare both of those economical projects. However, by many comprehensive examples, the Author also proves *One Belt, One Road* should not be considered as the “Chinese Marshall Plan”, because – among other things – it offers and involves much more.

In the second part the Author presents the Initiative from the geopolitical perspective. The part is related mostly to the international cooperation in constructing the Initiative and its benefits for the European Union and all of the transit countries as well. According slightly to Halford Mackinder’s (1919) geopolitical conception of the Heartland and the Rimland, the Author explains why the Belt and Road Initiative is so important to Europe. In the opinion of the Author, the European Union is facing the ability – by realising and participating in the Initiative – to be a great power again; to rebalance its transatlantic relations – the Belt and Road Initiative is supposed to “outperform” TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), boosting the EU’s economy (by putting 315 billion euros in the market over the course of three years), and even improving the diplomatic relations between the EU and Russia. As the Author points out, on the geopolitical ground, *One Belt, One Road* is China’s solution for economic growth after the global crisis, but on the other hand, it is clearly also a China’s attempt to change world’s balance of power and at the same time it is a response to the American global economic hegemony, which, according to the Author, is non-effective and dissipative to the Europe’ interests.

*The Belt and Road* project, crucial for the *Chinese Dream*, is spread over long time. The entire project should be completed in the year of 2049. This makes the Initiative very demanding, high-maintenance and risky. In the third section of the book the Author divided the possible risks into five different categories: “political risks”, “security risks”, “economical risks”, “legal risks” and the last but not least – “moral risks”. The awareness of so many threats and depth of research can not only impress, but it is in fact another exemplification of how elaborate and significant for China’s State Council and its scientists the Belt and Road is.

In the last part of the book consisting of three subchapters, the Author provides us with a detailed set of strategies for China and participating countries, which intentionally ought to speed the project up. Especially the idea of China’s openness for investing on both domestic and global markets, the concept of “inclusiveness”, which – besides – may be considered as a theoretical category, require a special attention.
The work is intended to be a textbook and is a kind of academic response for actual demand. The Author also notices that the book was written during the time when one of the most important publications on the subject was not yet released. Due to the substantive content of the book, however, the publication is a great supplement to the topic. Despite the plethora of advantages the book has, on the other hand, it also has some weaknesses. The major one is subjectivity – the book is written from the particular perspective, which especially may be seen on the topics of China’s geopolitical interests. One Belt, One Road relies on international cooperation of the two of the three most prominent external markets on the world: East Asian and Western European. Although, it should be remembered that the Initiative is not only an economic idea, but a global geopolitical concept and in this matter stimulating economical growth of third countries (between the UE and China) and even creating a beneficial and outsized economical system, is found to be less important than China’s drive to change the world’s balance of power. It was Halford Mackinder who first said: “Those, who control Europe, control everything, likewise those, who control China, control everything” (p. 88). Moreover, as exertion of influence and military involvement in Europe is becoming nowadays less beneficial for the United States (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016), the China’s great political strategy appears to be very comprehensive.

What is more, in my opinion, on the level of presenting political strategy, Wang Yiwei’s book can be compared to Zbigniew Brzezinski’s The Grand Chessboard or Alexandr Dugin’s works. Definitely, China’s foreign policy is about to change soon. The book has a great value for all of those, who are interested in political and economical growth of modern China, as well as its international relations and geopolitics, and therefore – this publication clearly deserves high recommendation.

References:


Author

Mr Mikołaj Lisewski
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies.
Contact details: ul. S. Batorego 39L, 87–100 Toruń, Poland; email: mjanelski@gmail.com.