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THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI): IMPLICATIONS FOR IRAN-CHINA RELATIONS

In 2009 Ben Simpfendorfer published his bestselling book titled *The New Silk Road: How a Rising Arab World is Turning Away From the West and Rediscovering China*. He wrote among other things: “The Silk Road is about more than a trading route. It is about the historical, geographical, and religious ties that have bound the Silk Road economies together. The rise of China, the rise of oil prices, and the events after September 11 have reinvigorated them, making the Silk Road relevant once again” (Simpfendorfer, 2009: 166–167). The historical trade route was regaining its symbolic meaning. However, at the time nobody expected that four years later the Chinese leadership would propose a resurrection of the old land route and attempt to transform it into the biggest engineering project in world history. Although this time in a very modern way, the idea is the same. Its objective is to embrace landlocked states in Central Asia, establish land connections with Western Asia, Europe, as well as African partners, and become independent from naval powers, especially the US Navy, which controls all strategic points on the maritime route connecting East Asia with Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe.

This article focuses on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its potential impact on Iran-China relations in the long term. Various political and economic aspects related to the BRI are taken into consideration. Would both sides benefit from the cooperation in the BRI framework or would one of them maybe have the upper hand? What are the main opportunities and challenges in the case of China-Iran relations and BRI implementation?

The work is based on primary sources such as official governmental documents, speeches of influential politicians, and official statistical data. Besides these sources, information from secondary sources was taken into consideration. These sources were relevant monographs, reports, and academic articles.

THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: AN ELEMENT OF THE CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY

China has been regaining its position in the international system since 1978, namely since the introduction of Deng Xiaoping reforms and the improvement of relations with the outside world. At the very beginning of the 21st century, China became a symbol of economic success and the rapid development. Peter Ferdinand argues that “one

important factor underpinning the Chinese dream campaign has been the growing self-confidence within the regime over China's economic achievements during the past decade, compared with both the developed world and other states in the developing world" (Ferdinand, 2016: 948).

The BRI project was initiated in September 2013, when President Xi proposed the idea of a New Silk Road Economic Belt during his official visit to Central Asian states. In his speech, titled *Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt*, the Chinese leader described the new initiative in the following way: "To forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an economic belt along the Silk Road. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route" (Xi Jinping, 2014: 317–318).

A month later President Xi paid another visit to Indonesia, where he presented a general overview of the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road. In this speech *Work Together to Build the 21st Maritime Silk Road*, mainly dedicated to China-ASEAN relations, he stated: "We should draw on the experience gained by other regions in development, and welcome countries outside the region to play a constructive role in promoting development and stability in the region. The outside countries, on their part, should respect the diversity of our region and do their part to facilitate its development and stability" (Xi Jinping, 2014: 323).

This way the Chinese president initiated probably the most complex, ambitious, and expensive project in world history. Its successful completion may change the balance of power till the end of the century. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China's attempts to invest in both land and maritime routes can result in the end of the classic division of geostrategic realms and/or even in the elimination of shatterbelts in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa (Cohen, 2015). Filippo Costa Buranelli claims that "these two vectors, alongside the secondary and parallel infrastructure, will serve as the two main commercial routes through which China will foster its own economic development by finding new export routes, but also promote, encourage, and sustain the economic development of the states and territories affected by the project" (Buranelli, 2018: 210).

Xi's initiative was soon known under the name 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR). It was later renamed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). According to some sources, around 70 states may be engaged in the project and the Chinese are ready to invest more than 4 trillion USD (Hillman, 2018). However, these figures could be much higher. It should be noted that representatives of more than 110 countries participated in the BARF, the Belt and Road Forum in May 2017. During the multilateral summit President Xi announced that China would transfer an additional 14,5 billion USD for the Silk Road Fund.

Is the BRI part of China's grand strategy? Or maybe it already is China's grand strategy? Edward Luttwak defined grand strategies as levels "at which knowledge and persuasion, or in modern terms intelligence and diplomacy, interact with military strength to determine outcomes in a world of other states with their own grand strategies" (Luttwak, 2009: 409). He is convinced that all states have their own grand strategies, even if their leaders do not realize it. A slightly different approach is presented by

Colin Gray, who claims that a grand strategy comprises “the purposeful employment of all instruments of power available to a security community” (Gray, 2007: 283). Lastly, Basil Henry Liddell Hart argued that a state should not only develop its economic resources and manpower in order to support the fighting services, but should also take care of the moral resources, invest in diplomacy, and apply financial pressure as well as ethnic pressure to weaken its opponents (Liddell Hart, 1967: 322). All these elements can be distinguished when analyzing the main assumptions, means, and goals of the BRI. However, whether the project is the grand strategy or just an element of it remains a subject of discussion.

Stig Stenslie and Chen Gang claim that “the expansive schemes of Silk Road Economic Belt and Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road are crucial pillars of the emerging grand strategy that Xi has crystallized in the first three years of his tenure” (Stenslie, Gang, 2016: 121). Other authors define the BRI as an element of the Chinese strategy. For instance, Anoushiravan Ehteshami perceives the OBOR/BRI as “a key element of Beijing’s grand strategy, embedded in its strategy of building an international Asian society, it is possible to argue that to legitimize Beijing’s drive westwards it has to articulate the idea of a common destiny” (Ehteshami, 2018: 196). The ‘Keep a Low Profile’ policy was thus replaced by the ‘Proactively Seek Achievements’ policy. Maximilian Mayer adds that “the leadership in Beijing emphasizes that a peaceful international environment remains crucial to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation said to be completed at the 100-year anniversary of the People’s Republic in 2049” (Mayer, 2018: 2). In this context Zhang Yunling underlines the importance and priority of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. He claims that the further economic development is the main task and that all projects or initiatives, including the BRI, must serve it. China simply needs “to further deepen the reform and opening-up process in order to achieve the successful transformation of its economic development model and to increase its comprehensive national power” (Zhang, 2016: 845).

There is almost no doubt that the project is in fact an essential element of China’s grand strategy that will shape not only its foreign policy for many years to come but will also seriously affect the international system. As Riza Kadilar and Erkin Ergüney put it, “the People’s Republic of China has embarked on an initiative that could be the biggest infrastructure project for years to come. The project aims to strengthen commercial ties between nations, connecting Chinese cities to the rest of the world” (Kadilar, Ergüney, 2017: 85).

Some authors stress the importance of negative aspects and potential threats for the international community. Among them is, for instance, Willy Wo-Lap Lam, who states that “after China became a quasi-superpower in the second half of the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration between 2007–2012, it is evident that the country morphed from a status-quo power to one that is bent on aggressive global power projection so as to safeguard its growing national interests” (Wo-Lap Lam, 2015: 190). And Tom Miller stresses the hidden agenda of the Chinese diplomacy. In his opinion, “China’s aim is to use economic incentives to build closer relationships with its neighbours, drawing them ever tighter into its embrace. In return for delivering roads and power lines, it expects its partners to respect its core interests, including its territorial claims in the South China Sea. This is what Beijing means by win–win diplomacy” (Miller, 2017: 25).

Yet it seems too early to judge whether the BRI poses a real threat to neighbouring states and other partners. One can notice, however, that the BRI is not only about trade and new infrastructure, that will enable China to produce more, sell more, and deliver faster. This is only one out of five main components. The other four are regional political cooperation, unimpeded trade, especially removal of trade barriers, the integration of financial systems and markets and the exchange of people and experience (Buxbaum, 2018).

To achieve these aims the Chinese leadership presented a list of principles and general guidelines. They are neutral and universal, so can be accepted by all interested parties. Among them are:

- the need to step up policy consultation;
- improvement of road connections;
- promotion of unimpeded trade;
- enhancement of monetary circulation;
- increase of mutual understanding and trust;
- mutually beneficial cooperation;
- mutual assistance and unity;
- openness;
- inclusiveness.

Based on the abovementioned provisions, the Chinese leadership changed the project name in 2017. Since then, all Chinese politicians and partners have referred to it as the Belt and Road Initiative. There were three reasons behind this decision. Firstly, the previous name implied only a single network. Secondly, the BRI sounds more inclusive. Lastly, the current name stresses China's peaceful intentions and the lack of any ideological background (Stanzel, 2017).

POLITICAL ASPECTS

The Iran-China relations have been positive in general since the official recognition of the People's Republic of China by the Iranian Empire in 1967. Soon after that both states established diplomatic relations in 1971. Although the success of the revolutionary forces in Iran in 1979 was a serious setback to their relations, the situation soon changed with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980. While both global superpowers were supporting the Saddam Hussein regime, the Chinese leadership provided Iran with substantial assistance, something the Iranians did not forget about after the war. For instance, in 1989, during Deputy Prime Minister Tian Jiyun's visit to Tehran, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei expressed his gratitude to Chinese partners in the following way: "In cooperating with other countries, we prefer to deal with countries for which our nation does not harbor bitter memories" (Calabrese, 2006: 5).

The Middle East, including Iran, constitutes a core part of the new Chinese project. Andrew Scobell quite rightly points out that the region "has become of greater importance to China than ever before. Indeed, Beijing now seems to perceive the Middle East as an extension of China's periphery as well as a zone of fragility. Moreover,

China has become concerned about the stability of regimes in the region after being largely agnostic for many decades” (Scobell, 2018: 9). The more China is engaged in the Middle Eastern disputes and conflicts, the higher the risk that it may be sucked into them. If that is the case, the Chinese will have to adopt a more proactive attitude toward regional problems. The question is whether China and Iran will have more convergent or more divergent interests. There is a high risk that Beijing’s views may not be in line with the Iranian regional strategy. It should be emphasized that Iran is already a regional power and it is very unlikely that it would like to reduce its influence in the Middle East to please China. It is furthermore worth recalling that the same risks may appear in case of Central Asia (Fiedler, 2016).

Since 2010, the process of political and social changes in the Arab world, which is often referred to as the Arab Spring, has changed the situation in the Middle Eastern and North African region in a very significant way. On the one hand, Iran plays a leading role in the still ongoing process of regional changes and is therefore a desirable political ally for China. Since 2010, Iran has gained more than any other regional power. It strengthened its influence in such states as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and, since the split within the Gulf Cooperation Council in June 2017, even in Qatar. Iran’s negotiation capacities have also been boosted since 2011, which can be very crucial from the Chinese point of view during any future BRI-related talks. From the Iranian point of view, the active participation and engagement in the BRI can only further enhance its regional role. On the other hand, the BRI may help to solve some problems and eliminate some divisions in the Middle East. It goes without saying that cooperation and mutual interests are the best tools to improve political, economic, and security relations among any conflicted parties. According to Oded Eran, the BRI can become “a catalyst and be of significant added value towards solutions when peoples and states have the will to solve their conflicts. For that, China as the leading and convening power, has to drive and make the initiative concrete and secondly it has to broaden the political coalition behind this colossal project” (Eran, 2017).

The current level of Iran’s relations with the People’s Republic of China could be described as positive and constructive. However, their political cooperation is seriously limited by a lack of common ideological values and objectives. A long-lasting and true alliance between a communist state and a theocratic republic sounds very unrealistic. Nevertheless, both states still cooperate. Their bilateral relations are more and more complex and dynamic. Such a pragmatic alliance is a result of the political pressure from the West, as well as economic necessity. Both the Chinese and Iranians perceive the American presence in Asia as a threat to their national security. For this reason, the PRC and Iran undertake activities that aim at limiting the U.S.’s sphere of influence in the Middle East, Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Moreover, this is the main reason why their policies are also attractive to the Russian Federation. This powerful political trio has an almost unlimited political potential to block any American or any other Western initiative in Asia. Moreover, China sells military equipment to Iran and both states cooperate on a number of security issues. For instance, the 17th Escort Fleet of the Chinese navy visited Iran in 2014 (*China’s Foreign*, 2015: 205).

In January 2016, during President Xi's visit to Tehran, the Chinese leader stressed the fact that China and Iran were natural partners as far as the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative was concerned. He also called on both sides to boost cooperation in infrastructure, interconnectivity, production capacity and energy in the framework of the BRI (*Chinese President*, 2016). In response, Ali Khamenei said that Iran would push the bilateral practical cooperation to a new high. Soon after that Xi met President Rouhani and signed 17 multi-billion-dollar agreements.

Surprisingly, Iran was not represented at a high level during the BRI Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in May 2017. Although 29 heads of state and government arrived in China to meet with and talk to President Xi, Iran was only represented at a ministerial level. Ali Tayebnia, the minister of economy and finance, headed the Iranian delegation. It should be noted that even Kenya, the Czech Republic, Argentina and Chile sent their presidents to the meeting. Of course, this does not mean that Iran was not interested in the project or that it will not participate in it, but the absence of President Rouhani was noticeable, especially since the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, were present.

Nevertheless, on the sidelines of the forum, China's Finance Minister Xiao Jie openly declared: "Iran not only could participate in carrying out the plan within their borders, but they could also be a force to execute the New Silk Road vision in other countries. With Iran's combined effort, we will try to eliminate a number of burdensome international regulations that might disturb our financial relations" (*Iran's Role*, 2017). Minister Ali Tayebnia responded in the following way: "Iran's position in Xi Jinping's innovative plan to revive the New Silk Road is spectacular and ideal, therefore we intend to play an effective role in its implementation" (*Iran's Role*, 2017). The long-awaited details soon followed. The Iranian representative announced that his delegation managed to sign an agreement with more than 20 states participating in the forum. This way, Iran sought assistance for the implementation of various initiatives, including projects in such fields as energy, trade, and infrastructure.

The above declarations were both meaningful and very constructive. In September 2017, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, President Rouhani said: "About the Silk Road and the new plans that China has in this regard, we have talked about this issue several times with president Xi Jinping and Iran is willing to have its share and cooperation in this plan. The new Silk Road can be beneficial for economic interests of all countries that were a part of this road. We welcome this plan and we have discussed with Chinese authorities in this regard and we have plans about it" (Gao, 2018). Such a declaration dispelled initial doubts and confirmed Iran's commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative.

What is the future for the Iran-China political relations? Manochehr Dorraj wrote that "future Sino-Iranian relations will likely be influenced by two predominant factors. The first one is linked to China's grand global strategy and its implications for the Middle East. The second is linked to Iran's prerogatives in a post-sanctions world and the possibility of détente with the United States" (Dorraj, 2016: 212–213). Undoubtedly, China will not abandon its flagship project, in which the Middle East plays a key role.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Trade turnover between China and Iran in 1978 was twenty times greater than in 1971 (Huwaidin, 2002: 159). The Iranian Revolution as well as the Iran-Iraq War slowed a further increase in the 1980s. In 2016 both sides traded commodities worth over 50 billion USD (*Iran-China Trade*, 2017). Furthermore, the current Iranian government intends to increase trade with China to 600 billion USD by 2026 (Hsu, 2016). President Rouhani would like to boost trade with the Chinese by about 1,000 percent (Mollman, 2016). However, such a high increase in the bilateral trade turnover looks very unrealistic, at least for the time being and there are many obstacles that should be removed in order to achieve such an ambitious economic goal.

John W. Garver claims that “Iran, along with Pakistan, plays an increasingly important role in providing western China access to the oceanic highway of the global economy. Economic and strategic factors converge here” (Garver, 2006: 288). For this reason, it would be hard to imagine any success of the BRI project without an active Iranian participation, especially from a geopolitical perspective. Given the volatile situation in Afghanistan, China would lose the only land route for the so-called Southern Corridor of the BRI as well as the connection between Central Asian states and the Middle East in general and with the Persian Gulf region in particular.

As far as economic sanctions and their implications are concerned, John W. Garver proves that, although U.S.-China relations are the core element of China’s foreign policy, “the evidence does not suggest that China’s support for the Islamic Republic of Iran between 2003 and 2011 has seriously injured Sino-American cooperation” (Garver, 2016: 202). Furthermore, international sanctions imposed on Iran have helped China to strengthen its position in this Middle Eastern state. For instance, in 2011 Iran’s crude oil export to China constituted 21 percent, making the People’s Republic of China its second most important trade partner. In 2014, after the EU had imposed its sanctions, China became the biggest importer of Iranian crude oil and its share in Iran’s export rose to 45 percent (*Iran’s Key*, 2018). Moreover, Thomas J. Christensen underlined the fact that, although China did its best to comply with the UN sanctions, it did not propose any unilateral measures against Iran. To the contrary, the Chinese diplomats tried to ensure that the sanctions would not harm the Iranian banking system as well as enterprises heavily involved in the energy sector (Christensen, 2015: 133). Although China did not play any leading role in the P5+1 talks on the Iranian nuclear program, it possessed a clear economic advantage over its competitors, especially the Western enterprises (Fiedler, 2013). Over time, some analysts began even to praise China and its constructive approach during the negotiations. In this context Shirzad Azad claims that “in addition to applauding China’s minimal, rather insignificant role during nuclear negotiations, many in the international media and policy circles ran reports and news stories about an imminent Chinese surge in Iran in the aftermath of the deal. They discussed why Western companies could now have a really tough time returning to Iran and successfully rivaling their Chinese and other Asian counterparts in the lucrative Iranian market” (Azad, 2017: 78–79). The explanation of this phenomenon seems to be quite obvious. The People’s Republic of China did a lot to support Iranians when the inter-

national community imposed sanctions. John Calabrese adds another dimension to the above reasoning. He argues that “the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions against Iran has removed a major obstacle to the broadening and deepening of China-Iran relations while supplying fresh impetus to Beijing’s aim of integrating the Middle East into its ambitious OBOR initiative. Iran could serve as a critical nodal point in this evolving transport network” (Calabrese, 2018: 174–175). China was already the most important trade partner of Iran, now its position can be only stronger.

The first noticeable event in the framework of the BRI took place in February 2016, when the first direct train from China arrived in Iran. This cargo train completed the entire route from Zhejiang to Tehran. It took around 14 days, 30 days less than the maritime voyage. “Iran, for its part, is intent on becoming a regional rail hub, seeing Chinese trains continue on to Europe via its territory. Tehran also has the potential to link up with the trans-Caspian transit route being touted by Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine as another way to Europe” (Putz, 2016). There remain, however, some important obstacles. One of them is related to border controls. In this regard, Iran should start a customs harmonization process with its neighbours to ease the passage of goods through borders. Moreover, Central Asian states and Iranians should find solutions to some technical issues, especially differing gauges. While the Chinese and Iranian systems are based on a standard-gauge railway, namely 1435 mm, Central Asian states have broad-gauge railways of 1520 mm. For this reason, bogies have to be changed twice during a single journey from Shanghai to Tehran.

Furthermore, Iran should try to diversify its export base and explore the possibilities of increased trade with Central Asian nations. According to Josphe Yu-shek Cheng, Iran already “perceives itself as an energy transport hub between the Western countries and the oil and natural gas producing countries in Central Asia and in the Caspian Sea region” (Cheng, 2016: 399). However, official statistics do not prove that Iran goes beyond official rhetoric.

There are also some competing projects. The most striking one is connected with new ports by the Indian Ocean. Iran favours the further development of one of its main harbours, Chabahar. It should be noted that this is the only oceanic port in Iran. Opened in 1983, Chabahar serves as the gateway to the markets and the energy routes of Central Asia and the Middle East. One of its main functions is to connect the Indian Ocean with transportation hubs in Afghanistan, as well as former Soviet republics in Central Asia such as Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan.

One of the main supporters of the development of Chabahar is India. Thanks to its existence, Indian enterprises have access to Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, thus bypassing its archrival Pakistan. If there were no port investments in Iran, India would not have any access to Central Asia due to the ongoing border disputes and tensions with Pakistan.

At the same time the Chinese government invests more and more in its flagship project in Pakistan, the harbour in Gwadar. For the moment it is very unlikely that China or Iran will stop promoting and building up their harbours and such divergent attitudes may lead to future economic rivalry or even disputes. It is worth recalling, by the way, that Gwadar Port is located nearby the Iran-Pakistan border.

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Undoubtedly, the Belt and Road Initiative creates new opportunities for the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both partners have complementary political as well as economic interests in this case. Iran has been trying to limit the U.S.'s presence in the region since 1979, which is in line with Beijing's expectations and foreign policy objectives. It is clear that the BRI's role is not only to promote cooperation, peace, and trade in Eurasia, but also to limit the American sphere of influence as well as the U.S.'s naval superiority.

It goes without saying that the BRI may seriously affect Iran-China relations. Iran should maintain a constructive approach towards the BRI, both in case of the construction and its future operation. China can only benefit from this cooperation, especially in regard to the import of fossil fuels and export of industrial products to Iran. Furthermore, Iran's geopolitical position enables China to exploit existing trade routes connecting Central Asian states with the Persian Gulf region and to create new transport corridors, with particular reference to the so-called Southern Corridor of the BRI, which is to cross Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, and the Balkans.

Obviously, besides new perspectives and breathtaking projects, one can also notice some obstacles, especially from the Iranian perspective. Jonathan Hillman points out that "the BRI's roster may seem long at roughly 70 participants, but that still leaves about 125 countries that have not joined. Ultimately, the BRI's longer-term political impacts hinge on its execution and its economic performance" (Hillman, 2016). As long as there is no complete network of roads, railways, cargo hubs, and new harbours, the BRI still remains a promise rather than a concept written in stone. Some of the planned routes, especially the Southern Corridor running through Iran, may never leave the drawing board. All main routes are to go through potential conflict areas in Central Asia and the Middle East. There is a high risk that China may be sucked into regional disputes and conflicts in which Iran is already engaged. If that is the case, Beijing will not be able to apply its traditional strategy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its partners, including Iran.

All in all, the ultimate success of the Belt and Road Initiative depends to a large extent on Iranian participation and support, especially as far as geopolitical and logistical issues are concerned. For this reason, the Chinese will do a lot in order to please their Iranian counterparts and Iranians will do a lot to attract Chinese investors and benefit from the project.

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the Belt and Road Initiative, which was introduced by the leadership of the People's Republic of China in 2013, and its political as well as economic implications for Iran-China relations. The ongoing implementation of the Chinese initiative raises a few research questions. Would both sides benefit from the cooperation in the BRI framework or would one of them maybe have the upper hand? What are the main opportunities and challenges in the case of China-Iran relations and BRI implementation? The analysis is conducted in the framework of the grand strategy theory. This study is based on primary sources such as official governmental documents, speeches of influential politicians, and official statistical data. Besides these sources, information from secondary sources like monographs and academic articles was taken into consideration.

Keywords: the Belt and Road Initiative, BRI, China, Iran, the New Silk Road, grand strategy

INICJATYWA PASA I DROGI (BRI). IMPLIKACJE DLA STOSUNKÓW CHIŃSKIEJ REPUBLIKI LUDOWEJ Z IRANEM

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł jest poświęcony chińskiej inicjatywie pasa i drogi (BRI – the Belt and Road Initiative) oraz możliwych konsekwencji jej realizacji dla stosunków dwustronnych pomiędzy Chinami i Iranem. Okoliczności procesu implementacji głównych założeń inicjatywy budzą wątpliwości już na jego wstępnym etapie. W tym kontekście należy postawić dwa istotne pytania badawcze. Czy obie strony odniosą porównywalne korzyści w ramach realizacji BRI, czy też jedna z nich zyska wyraźną przewagę? Jakie są główne szanse oraz zagrożenia dla stosunków irańsko-chińskich, wynikające z implementacji założeń BRI? Analiza została przeprowadzona w ramach teorii wielkiej strategii, zwłaszcza odnośnie do możliwości jej wykorzystania w przypadku BRI. Badaniu poddane zostały zarówno aspekty polityczne, jak i ekonomiczne. Podstawę źródłową stanowią oficjalne dokumenty, wypowiedzi czołowych polityków oraz dane statystyczne. Ponadto, w trakcie pracy wykorzystane zostały wybrane monografie oraz artykuły naukowe.

Słowa kluczowe: inicjatywa pasa i drogi, Chiny, Iran, Nowy Jedwabny Szlak, wielka strategia