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## **Chinese *Belt and Road Initiative* as a political and economic challenge for the current world order**

**Abstrakt:** At the end of the 1970s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) introduced many reforms which resulted in a rapid growth of its economy. A crucial moment was the 2008 economic crisis which added to the growing role of the PRC. From a passive participant of the global economy, China changed into the global economic player. Nowadays, the PRC has become an equal partner for the politically and economically weakened United States. The article examines economic and political significance of the Chinese *Belt and Road* initiative for current world order. The main research problem is expressed in the following question: Will the People's Republic of China, thanks to its *Belt and Road* initiative, become a hegemon capable of playing the leading role in the world? Those rapid changes are presented from the realism theory perspective.

**Key words:** *Belt and Road Initiative*, world order, People's Republic of China, United States, global economy, prognostic analysis

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### **Introduction**

**D**ue to its rapid economic growth, the Peoples' Republic of China has become the key player in the global economic system. Progressing globalization prompted previously isolated China to greater openness to the world. At the end of 1970s the country instigated a number of reforms which resulted in a rapid economic growth. A breakthrough moment was the 2008 economic crisis which contributed to highlighting the role of the PRC.<sup>1</sup> From a passive participant of the global economy, China changed into the global economic player. Nowadays, the PRC has become an equal partner for the politically and economically weakened United States (Szatlach, Jureńczyk, 2017, p. 11). In an assertive and dis-

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<sup>1</sup> Peoples' Republic of China recorded a major economic growth. Despite the fact that the dollar is still a global currency, its global value is determined to a large extent by the PRC, which has accumulated a large volume of US securities.

crete manner, primarily using political and economic instruments, China has been strengthening its geopolitical position.

The article presents economic and political role of the *Belt and Road* concept for the future world order. The main research problem is expressed in the following question: Will the People's Republic of China, thanks to its *Belt and Road* initiative, become a hegemon capable of playing the leading role in the world? The article includes a critical analysis of Polish and English literature. It uses a critical analysis method, descriptive and prognostic, highlighting the significance of the Chinese initiative for the future world order. Those rapid changes are presented from the realism theory perspective. According to the realism, the state is the most important and basic actor of international relations which tends to pursue self-interests and goals, rather than universal values, or even the most "equitable" international law (Łoś, 2000, p. 42). The realism perspective leads to a conclusion that the hierarchy of power determines international relations, which enables to refer particular international goals to positions of states. The realist paradigm is still attractive and valid for highlighting the international reality (Baylis, Smith, 2008, pp. 195–223). Moreover, according to Edward Halizak, its domination in research on the Asia and Pacific Region is unquestionable (Halizak, 2005, p. 42). China is a rational state, which means that out of several alternative solutions, they select those that are most favourable for them while neglecting interests of other actors.

## International order

In the science of international relations, the broadest category of the atomization and integration era is the "international order." However, it should be emphasised at the outset that the definition of the term is rather vague (or none), in particular in the Polish specialist literature. While reading articles on the subject, one may have an impression that the term is often misused and sometimes not really understood by the researcher himself.<sup>2</sup> Most frequently, researchers use it as synonymous with the international system. The author, best known for using the term was Henry Kissinger. In his understanding of the global order, the researcher was a realist, but

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of works containing the term of international order in their title; however, no one attempts to refer to the definition of the term (Kuźniar, 2005).

he did not define the term directly through anarchy. In his opinion, the world order is a concept of a region or civilization encompassing a set of just organizational rules and distribution of power, and he believed that the solution as such can be adopted all over the world (Kissinger, 2016, p. 17). Kissinger explained that every system is based on two fundamental elements: commonly acceptable rules which define boundaries of our activity and the balance of powers which imposes restrictions where rules are no longer valid (Kissinger, 2016, p. 17).

Hedley Bull defines the international order as a “pattern of activity pattern of activity that advances the goals of a society of states.” Although the order restricts (stabilizes) behaviour of state actors, we should be aware that they do not follow its principles. In consequence, the pattern of behavior produces an illusion of order, but it is not the same (factual) order. The behaviour of actors is determined by combination, calculation and psychological and physical limitations which may originate from the international environment (Bull, 2002, pp. 6–8).

Janusz Symonides presents a legal definition of the international order as a result (state) of normative and institutional durable regulation of relations between actors of international relations (Symonides, 2005, pp. 84–85). It should be emphasised that the term of international order means a system of valid legal, political and moral rules. Its characteristic feature is little variability and it is a product of a lengthy historical process. Again, the term of international order denotes an expected system. In this context, a change is very important. While referring to the perception of time, we rather deal with a current order than a “new” expected order. Those terms are only partially convergent.

### **Category of change – time of disparities with China in background**

In recent years, we have observed symptoms of intensive evolution of the international order. Those changes lead to divergent interests and area of influence between particular states. Although it is not very realistic to have a single supranational form of governance, i.e. *global governance*, where decisions are made with care of common good and bright vision of the future “single global state.” Those changes and relative openness to new major players are anxiously awaited.

Despite increase in power and status of developing states, their rights and interests are often neglected. Therefore, they demand changes to re-

flect their current potential. Increasingly often we keep hearing about the decline of the dominating power of America. This implies questions about which state (or group of states) could take over the global hegemony. In place of an order based on “western” domination (America and Europe), a new order starts to emerge based on the Asian civilizations, which is predominantly represented by rapidly growing China.

Andrzej Gałganek emphasises that the explanation to the mechanism of change is provided by the supercycle, which exemplifies the functioning of the global system. The supercycle indicates *modus faciendi* of the international system in its most generalized dimension (Gałganek, 1992, p. 11). In the global international system, we may indicate two complete supercycles as a form of synchronization of political and economic levels. Special attention should be drawn to reverse stages of supercycles. Those are periods of interferences of hegemonic war stage of a political cycle and changes generated by longer periods of the economic cycle (Gałganek, 1992, p. 73). Stages of hegemonic rivalry and changes of long-term growth and decline stages are periods of more intensive integration of both sub-systems which lead to imbalances. According to this theory, a superpower has surplus of resources that enables it to implement changes in the system (currently China), whereas the main goal of the hegemon is to suppress such a growth, as the United States try to do.

Bogdan Góralczyk emphasises that the economic crisis of 2008 made China leaders aware that the international situation profoundly changed (Góralczyk, 2018, p. 356). He added that in the opinion of the Chinese, the previous hegemon, the USA, lost its unique status, at least in its economic sense. Then, it was possible to notice clear deviation from the single-pole order towards a multiple-pole one. The role of emerging markets started growing tremendously. This was very vivid in the late 2008 when in Washington, apart from G-7, a group of seven “western most advanced states” (possibly G-8, when we include Russian Federation), another separate group G-20 was established. The latter consisted of emerging economies of Asia, including China. Moreover, six months later a meeting of the BRIC was held, which shortly after – according to the wish of China, the strongest state in the group – was transformed into BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and RSA).

David Shambaugh emphasises that China are as yet a “semi-superpower,” since the state remains focused on its narrow national interests and evades responsibility and risk (Shambaugh, 2013, p. 7). According to the researcher, major advantages of the PRC, highlighting its superpower

nature include its population, the largest in the world, large territory, second largest economy in the world, largest currency reserves, own space program, two aircraft carriers, and the second largest army in terms of human resources and budget (Shambaugh, 2013, pp. 8–9).

The currently growing position of China in the international system is considered to be the restoration of a natural state of affairs, established still during the Emperor's era, deviation from which was the "century of humiliation" (Medeiros, 2009, p. 7). In the Chinese awareness, a key civilization component is "sinocentrism," or the conviction that China is literally the center of the world (*also Middle Country*). A strategic goal of China is to regain its superpower status which they lost during the period of European colonial expansion. Evan Medeiros in Chinese "Global Times" notices that China is in the process of historical transformation from an important state into the superpower (Medeiros, 2009).

### **Chinese initiative of *Belt and Road* – description**

China aims at strengthening its position as a regional superpower and an important economic player in the world. To this end, they use primarily *soft power*.<sup>3</sup> An example of the above is the *Belt and Road* initiative which for the first time was announced on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2013 Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Astana (*President Xi Jinping*, 2013). During his speech, the Chinese leader presented the initiative, which then was described as the vision for the *Silk Road Economic Belt*. A month later, they announced a parallel initiative of the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road* (*Xi in call*, 2013). Initially the concept was also known as the idea of *New Silk Road*, which supposed to refer directly to the ancient *Silk Road*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The term should be understood as a wider set of projects aimed at deepening international cooperation to influence friendly states. According to Joseph Nye, *soft power* is a kind of power based on three basic resources: culture, political values and foreign policy. Each of them play a major role in creating the image of a state and contributes to its credibility on the international arena (Nye, 2007); Joshua Kurlantzick redefined the term to "adjust" it to the reality of the Peoples' Republic of China. He focused primarily on economic tools, cultural diplomacy, multilateral development aid, inward investment and influence in international organizations (Kurlantzick, 2007, p. 306).

<sup>4</sup> The *One belt and one road initiative* refers to the historical *Silk Road*. In 139 BC, upon the order of the Emperor Wu, Zhang Qian set out with the delegation from the Longxi District to kingdoms of Middle Asia. According to historical sources, it

In essence, particular components of the road are not limited to partners from their immediate neighbourhood. The Maritime Silk Road is designed as a conglomerate of roads which start at the Chinese coast and lead to the Mediterranean Sea through the Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Horn of Africa and Red Sea (Kwieciński, 2017, p. 21). It is a response to continuous American domination at seas and oceans (Nobis, 2016, p. 31). The Strait of Malacca is the largest challenge for Chinese strategists, since it conveys one of major transport sea routes in the region of Asia and Pacific.<sup>5</sup> Although still land transport of goods from China to Europe is twice cheaper than by sea, Chinese economy is based on export, and trade between China and the world concentrates on sea routes (Nobis, 2016, p. 32). The sea corridor is used to export over 80% of natural resources from the Middle East and Africa (Nobis, 2016, p. 32). Thus, while promoting its concept, China's goal is to relax the network of American alliances.

China intends to build and modernize roads, rail, ports and other modes of transport and infrastructure to boost trade with more than 70 countries on the route from the Baltic Sea to Pacific (*Will China's*, 2018). According to Kevin Sneader, an analyst from McKinsey Global Institute, the idea of the *New Silk Road* may become the largest platform of regional cooperation in the world encompassing nearly 65% of the global population and generating 35% of the global GDP (Sneader, 2016). However, it should be emphasised that projects of *New Silk Roads* do not focus on economic goals only but they are primarily a political tool. The Chinese government emphasises that the main objectives of the initiative are: political dialogue, development of infrastructure, intensified trade and investment, and development of interpersonal contacts. According to the official document titled "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," the "implementation of the initiative is expected to contribute to the economic wellbeing of countries [...], exchange and mutual learning involving various civilizations, as well as promotion of peace and development of the world. The is a great venture that will benefit people all over the world" (Vision and Actions, 2015).

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started a period of trade between the Han Dynasty Empire and the East. The route was used to export silk, tea, and porcelain. It played a tremendous role as regards economic cooperation and trade, cultural exchange and international stability (Beckwith, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Strait of Malacca connects the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal and further with the Indian Ocean.

The *Belt and Road* Project does not have any defined rules and principles. One may even observe unwillingness among Chinese political elites to introduce any norms binding all participants. China do not want to introduce any rules since it imposes limitation on their negotiation area. The establishing of a single political formula is not in their best interest. They want to remain flexible in its interpretation and implementation. An advantage of such defined concept is the freedom of its management during implementation. In practice, it is difficult to verify the merit-based content of Chinese elites plans, since their message evolves creating an impression of a wide range of ideas rather than a well-thought concept.

Yet another feature of the project is unwillingness to institutionalize it. China emphasise that they do not want to play the role of a state that dominates and exercises control over the entire project. This would contradict the idea of the concept, a concept which is based on the equality principle (*Wizja i działania*, 2015). The Chinese vision of the world order involves non-confrontational gaining of influence abroad. Any country can subscribe to the concept, regardless its geographical and economic constraints (Guoqiang, 2015). It means that the integration does not have any specific boundaries. While promoting the inclusive nature of the project, China encourages other countries to join in, including those of different culture, religion, history, and economic position. However, China have no experience regarding the complexity of political issues in the Middle East or South Asia. The question is whether China is willing to understand culture of other region (Ferdinand, 2016, pp. 941–957).

Current rhetoric of the Chinese diplomacy is designed to show to the world that China has become a reliable state focused on its development and economic growth, but it also concentrates on solving other problems. China expects that the building of its image of a trustworthy state, supporting the development of other countries, will help it winning approval for the assertive territorial policy that can be seen in conflicts on the South China Sea and East China Sea (Kaczmarek, 2015). It is possible that the Chinese hope that increasing their economic activity will produce geopolitical rapprochement ensuring greater stability in border regions of China, such as Xinjiang and Tibet (Greer, 2018). It should be emphasised that China are not able to make other countries resigning from their interests. The assumption that potential partners respond with enthusiasm and engagement is risky. Despite astonishing prospects, we cannot forget about challenges China is going to face in the years to come. A major is-

sue maybe the growing disparities in income and regional development, demographic downturn, cost of environmental changes and health issues, widespread corruption and bureaucracy (Gwiazda, 2018).

### ***New Silk Road and New World Order?***

One of major tools to protect and strengthen globalization is the vision of the *New Silk Road*. While following changes in the international environment, the Chinese government creates the image of the country as a defender of globalization and free trade. In particular, this can be seen, from the International Economic Forum in Davos held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Then, in his speech, the Chinese president emphasised that China is ready take the place of the increasingly isolationist United States. Xi Jinping presented the Chinese vision of globalization based on open and beneficial for all collaboration (*President Xi's speech*, 2017).

*The New Silk Road* may contribute to making the yuan an international currency. The development of financial relations with their neighbors may help China building a network of pro-western interdependencies which can increase the role of Chinese financial markets and make them independent from the American dollar (Kozłowski, 2017, p. 84). Observers are convinced that both the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Bank of the BRICS Group may become an alternative for multilateral *Bretton Woods*<sup>6</sup> institutions. It is worth remembering that after 1949 the United States has become an unquestioned world leader and the architect of the financial system designed during the conference.

Not only does China try to develop their own regional block, but it also attempts to create possibility of gaining a global influence. In his inauguration speech during the *Belt and Road* Forum in Beijing, Xi Jinping highlighted that China was willing to share their experience. The message as such was for certain attractive for many developing countries which

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<sup>6</sup> In July 1944, during Bretton Woods Conference (United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference) a post-war international currency system was established, known as the Bretton Woods system. Then, they established two superior institutions: the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (known also as World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The main objective of the IMF was a short-term financial assistance to states facing crisis of their balances of payment, whereas the World Bank was established to provide loans for various projects to countries destroyed by the war (Chang, 2015, pp. 73–74).



count on Chinese capital necessary to stimulate their economies. Concluding his speech, Xi Jinping said: “Chinese proverb says that a journey of thousand miles begins with a single step, whereas an Arab proverb says that a pyramid is made of individual blocks, whereas in Europe they say that Rome wasn’t built in a day” (*Chiny: ponad 100 miliardów dolarów*, 2017). China expects that the interest of other countries will increase due to mutual benefits based on the “win-win” principle. During his speech in Jakarta, Jinping Xi said: “China can no longer develop in isolation from the world, and the world also needs China to develop. China is fully committed to peaceful development [...] and strategy mutual benefits” (*Chiny: ponad 100 miliardów dolarów*, 2017). As emphasised by Michał Lubina, the concept of the *New Silk Road* should be examined as a project aimed at maintaining the favourable *status quo* that may prevent the erosion of the western political system (Lubina, 2017).

### **Reaction of selected states to Chinese concept**

The far-reaching Chinese plans are the test for the ability to develop cooperation with other players on the international arena (Kozłowski, 2017, p. 85). There are many strong states, also in the region of Asia and Pacific, which will resist the project. Therefore, it is worth discussing Chinese relations with selected international actors.

Particularly important in this context are bilateral relations between China and the United States. The American–Chinese “trade war” best reflects the struggle between the two countries. Customs imposed on China by Donald Trump resulted in the necessity to find other markets for Chinese goods and expedite the development of cooperation with states on the route of the *New Silk Road*. The Global Trade Alert survey by the London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research is a cause for concern, since it showed that the American trade policy became more protectionist between 2016 and 2017 (Evenett, Fritz, 2017). For example, the US decision to withdraw from the TPP shows that they turn away from the Asia and Pacific region. It also suggests decrease in American influence and questions their credibility as an ally. The economic and strategic void after the collapse of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is an opportunity for China to strengthen their position in the region. It should be emphasised that China do not want and cannot effort an open confrontation with the United States. They are still weaker, at least from a military perspective,

which means that it would be unfavourable for them. However, in a decade, the system of power may be more balanced.

Another problematic issue is the Chinese expansion on the continent through Central Asia to Europe. Initially, the Russian Federation considered the Chinese project to be a threat to their influence in Central Asia and Eurasian Economic Union. However, with time, the approach of Moscow to the concept has changed, mainly since Moscow was assured of being treated as a major component of the initiative of the *New Silk Road* (Lubina, 2014, pp. 470–476). Beijing, which perceives Moscow as a potential opponent of the initiative, had tried in any way possible to encourage Russia to cooperate. China does not question the Russia's political primacy in the region, but they focus largely on gaining aid and economic tools. In exchange, they offer to refrain from intervening into political affairs in areas of the former USSR. It is possible that China, as well as Russia, are aware that in order to counterbalance the economic and military power of the US they need to act in unison.

The *New Silk Road* is also an attempt to intensify relations with Europe. The Chinese initiative is an opportunity to boost trade with all countries along the route. China wants Europe, especially western one, to become more economically dependent. Bogdan Góralczyk emphasised that “we witness the new expansion of China in Europe” (Góralczyk, 2013). The growing popularity of the Chinese project of *Belt and Road* has relaxed relations between NATO allies. It is a cause for concern that the US stopped promoting their own initiatives – inter-continental economic agreements, including the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) in the European Union.

The success of the *New Silk Road* will depend not only on the relations between China and the United States, Russia and the European Union. It is very important to work out a consensus with regional and local leaders of Asian states. Supranational cooperation regarding security will be linked with the necessity to ensure stability in areas bordering China. For instance, South Korea, which initially was not enthusiastic about the concept, expressed their support for the Chinese plan of infrastructure investment in Asia. Moreover, Japan developed interest in the project. It seems that only growing India will remain a durable ally of the United States on the Asian continent. As emphasised by Mateusz Ambrożek, the Pacific region is not an attractive space for the Chinese economic expansion. China seems to be satisfied with neutralizing Australia, the Philippines, Indochina, Japan and South Korea by their gradual separation from the United States (Ambrożek, 2018).

### **Prognostic analysis**

China's international activity is an important factor while assessing the current and future evolution of the international order. Already since 2008, there has been a growing sense that the existing centuries old world order has been gradually coming to its end. The order based on "western" domination (American and European) started to transform into a new order based on the domination of Asian civilizations, which to a large extent was represented by rapidly growing China. However, the new order means changes which will take a very long time to progress, perhaps even a millennium. Nevertheless, everyone wonders which of economic powers, American or Chinese, will eventually win the struggle for domination in international relations?

So far, experts and analysts have failed to provide an unambiguous answer. According to the World Bank, the present GDP of China is USD12,238 bn, and that of the United States USD19,391 bn (*GDP current US\$, 2017*). According to Goldman Sachs, one of the largest investment banks in the world, the Chinese economy is expected to outperform the American one in 2027 (*Made in the USA*, p. 33). The opinion has been confirmed by studies by Pew Research Center, an American think-tank. According to those studies, China will soon take over the role of the United States as a global economic superpower (*China Will Be World's*, 2009). According to the Intelligence Council, an agency which has presented the forecast for changes in power among the largest superpowers of the contemporary world, following the traditional formula including GDP, population, military and technology spending, China will become equal to the US around 2030. Then, the growing trend should continue in China and decreasing one in the US (*Global Trends 2030*, 2012). According to the report by Global Governance, in 2025, the US, China and India will comprise the triangle leading in global politics and having major influence on the shape of the international order in the 21<sup>st</sup> c. (*Global Governance 2025*, 2010). Research on the economic significance of states in the world has been implemented by globally recognised think-tank Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). According to the EIU, in thirty years, the leading economies in the world will include the following: China, United States and India. According to economists, China will be ranked first, and their economy will outperform the American one already in 2026 (*Report*, 2016). This translates into a re-orientation of the domination in the global economy will shift from the West towards the East.

The question is what steps we can expect from the Chinese government? Some say that we can expect a revolutionary dramatic change, since the existing order is to a large extent inequitable and needs to be profoundly restructured. Supporters of the proposal firmly believe that China should lead the development of the future order, considering their history, moral superiority and size. Others consider the current order as acceptable but requiring adjustments (e.g. ensuring developing countries, including China, larger recognition). Additionally, China, being the largest of the emerging superpowers, should be in the forefront of the reforms. The third position adopts the same assumption as the second one, namely that the existing order is to a large extent satisfactory and requires some adjustments. The difference is that China should not take the lead. This position can be referred to as “modified through cooperation with others.”

However, despite their growing international status, China is not ready to face the challenge of Western primacy under the leadership of the US and must accept limitations of their real capacity. They also should not overestimate the decline of the US power, or neglect their resilience. The American economy is still larger than the Chinese one, and its GDP per capital is eight-times higher than that of China. Moreover, the US is still the global leader regarding technology, innovation, and research potential. Thus, the world order may shift to the situation in which two superpowers of major potential comparing with other states will be responsible for the global governance. However, according to Rafał Kwieciński, the advantage of the general potential of the United States and China comparing with the rest of the world rejects the strict multipolarism. Therefore, we may expect a new unprecedented system (Kwieciński, 2017, pp. 13–24), and a change in the perception of a multilateral division of the international order. The bipolar system has become visible, and in the midterm perspective perhaps a single-polar one with China in the forefront. China, as well as the entire Far East region, are expected to gain a special status in the world.

## **Conclusion**

China’s international activity is an important factor while assessing the current and future status of the international order. With the growing economic and political influence, china has natural attracted more attention. At the moment, objectives of the Chinese foreign policy focus on attracting others to its culture and diplomatic measures, but at the same time China exerts its

influence by using economic measures. The intended use of economic tools by the Chinese diplomacy expresses their growing pragmatism. This multidirectional and versatile development is a proof that China understands the meaning and significance of a strategic opportunity they have. Undoubtedly, the concept of *Belt and Road* is a challenge for the current world order based on the American domination. The promoted initiative is, however, evolving. Its success depends on current changes in the international environment and the perception of the concept by the international community. An open question is whether the potential Chinese leadership will be based on a harmonious development and peaceful cooperation, or rather strengthening of Chinese pragmatism, which will gradually impose their own rules and principle to other states and nations, initially in economic policy and then in politics itself. An in-depth analysis of the *Belt and Road* concept suggests certain scepticism. The mere fact that Beijing developed a vision of the international order does not mean that China will manage to implement it. The project is equally risky as it is ambitious. Most probably, the initiative is the first step towards changing the global architecture of the financial system based on the yuan. China must, however, first stabilize its internal situation and maintain their peaceful development narrative. The Middle State needs some time to work out relevant balance between their individual interests and challenges of the international community. One should carefully follow declaration made by the Chinese political elites, but also observe actual steps and activities implemented. After the initial fascination which followed the official presentation of the plan for the *Belt and Road* initiative, from China to Europe, the time has come to convince potential partners that both sides can win. We should be aware, however, that China has been building their influence zone along the route, e.g. foreign direct investment in countries enjoying the status of strategic partner. Further implementation of the concept is an exciting perspective that may produce major benefits but also threats both for China, as well as the rest of the world.

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## **Chińska inicjatywa Pasa i Szlaku jako polityczno-gospodarcze wyzwanie dla obecnego porządku światowego**

### **Streszczenie**

Pod koniec lat 70. XX w. w Chińskiej Republice Ludowej podjęto szereg reform, które spowodowały dynamiczny rozwój gospodarki tego państwa. Momentem przełomowym był także kryzys gospodarczy z 2008 r., który przyczynił się do wyeksponowania



rosnącej roli ChRL. Z biernego uczestnika międzynarodowych stosunków gospodarczych, Chiny stały się światowym stymulatorem koniunktury. Obecnie pretendują do miana równorzędnego partnera dla osłabionych gospodarczo i politycznie Stanów Zjednoczonych. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie ekonomicznego, jak i politycznego znaczenia chińskiej inicjatywy *Pasa i Szlaku*<sup>7</sup> dla obecnego porządku światowego. Głównym problemem badawczym jest następujące pytanie: czy Chińska Republika Ludowa za sprawą promowanej przez siebie inicjatywy *Pasa i Szlaku* osiągnie pozycję hegemonu zdolnego odgrywać pierwszoplanową rolę na świecie? Przedstawiona dynamika zmian będzie ujęta w oparciu o perspektywę teoretyczną realizmu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Inicjatywa *Pasa i Szlaku*, światowy porządek, Chińska Republika Ludowa, Stany Zjednoczone, światowa gospodarka, analiza prognostyczna

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<sup>7</sup> The author uses terms the New Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) interchangeably. At the moment those terms are most frequently used while describing the concept. One may have an impression that in the Polish popular and scientific discourse the *New Silk Road* is the most frequently used.

