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## IRANIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS: A NEW STAGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Iran and China have been economic and military allies for decades. China is Iran's largest trading partner. China has now created enough space to develop relations with Iran in a way that can balance the American presence in the Middle East. In addition, Iranian-Chinese relations will be 'sustainable and strategic' regardless of regional and international conditions. Therefore, by strengthening Beijing's relations with Iran, it is possible that in the future, mutual relations will peak, which will have geostrategic effects, and joint projects, investments and other forms of cooperation will deepen after the lifting of sanctions against Iran. At the same time, China is interested in developing cooperation with Iran, and the Chinese are very interested in the country's energy market. As a proof of my word, the visit of President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ibrahim Raisi to Beijing on February 14-16, 2023 is the first official visit in the last 20 years at the invitation of the Chinese leader. This visit shows a favorable political environment in the mutual relations of the two countries, which emphasizes the high political will of the heads of state to expand bilateral relations.

### KEYWORDS

UN Security Council, Strategic Agreement, IAEA, One Belt, One Road, project of the century, economic convergence, SCO summit, nuclear agreement.

### INTRODUCTION

Iran and China have vast potential in various fields. Tehran is interested in further strengthening ties with Beijing. Also, the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran has various energy sources and geographical location has an important strategic advantage in the field of international cargo transportation. It is known that Iran is one of the shortest land routes and is the best way for Central Asian countries to access open waters. Due to its geographical and strategic location, Iran is regarded as the main crossroads of the Silk Road, which is the bridge connecting the East and the West and plays an important role in the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. Since 2016, when President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China proposed the Belt and Road Initiative, Iran has announced its support for the plan. This plan connects continents and different parts of the world, and also creates a basis for the economic development of various countries and regions in the Silk Road area. Iran is one of the shortest land routes, making it the best way for Central Asian countries to access open waters. This project unites more than 65 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, and includes about 65% of the world's population, three quarters of energy resources and more than 40-60% of the world economy . However, to date, 125 countries and 32 international organizations have signed more than 200 cooperation agreements with China in accordance with this plan, and the estimated value of the total projects provided for in this plan is more than 3.67 trillion dollars . According to experts, the full

implementation of this plan can lead to huge changes in the commercial structure of the world, so some refer to it as the project of the century.

It should be noted that during 2021-2022, Iran's export volume to China exceeded 14 billion dollars, which is 58% more than the same period last year . China is the first importer of Iranian goods and the second exporter to Iran . Cooperation between Iranian and Chinese companies can be a turning point in the strengthening of relations between the two countries. Therefore, Iran can take advantage of its geographical location and increase its economic position regionally and globally, which requires the necessary preparation to realize the reality, take advantage of the opportunities and compete with regional competitors.

According to the 'Strategic Agreement' signed with China in March 2021, during the administration of former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, it is planned to establish cooperation in the field of military and security between the two countries . The agreement even stipulates that the countries will take joint actions against the sanctions imposed by the United States and respond to them. In 2021, despite the United States imposing unilateral sanctions against Iran and China, the two countries signed an important comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. Also, the UN Security Council banned arms sales to Tehran in 2010, but after the embargo expires in October 2020, Beijing has

indicated that it will veto its extension . In December 2019, China also took part in trilateral naval exercises in the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Oman alongside Iran and Russia for the first time .

Iran is placing great emphasis on relations with China in order to take measures against economic sanctions. In addition to economic cooperation, the multilateral partnership includes security and military cooperation between Iran and China.

It is known that both countries have strained relations with the United States, and their trade relations have expanded significantly in recent years. A few months ago, China took a more cautious stance towards the country due to the mass protests in Iran, but now Beijing has announced that it intends to increase its influence in the oil-rich region. In addition, Iran is strengthening relations with Russia, which China considers a strategic partner. It should be mentioned that the President and Xi Jinping last met in person at the SCO summit held in Samarkand in September last year. After that, the Chinese leader noted that both countries are bound by 'traditional friendship, and bilateral relations have been tested by the change in the international situation.'

In a joint statement issued at the end of their chairman's three-day state visit to Beijing, the presidents of Iran and China reaffirmed the withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal, officially

known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. According to him, the importance of lifting sanctions and protecting Iran's economic interests is emphasized as the main part of the agreement. It is clear from this that Iran and China firmly support the security of a Middle East free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The two partner countries strongly oppose efforts to politicize the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, on the implementation of the Agreement on Safeguards. It is known that negotiations to preserve the nuclear deal have been stalled since August 2022, as the previous US administration insisted on not lifting all sanctions imposed by Washington on the Islamic Republic .

It is known that China strongly opposes foreign interference in Iran's internal affairs and attempts to undermine the country's stability and security, and supports Tehran's growing role in regional and international affairs, and Iran will continue to adhere to the 'one China' policy .

In conclusion, today it is known that the old world order is disappearing, and a new one is being formed, and the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is economic convergence in the new world order. Also, Iran and China have long-standing friendly relations and historical relations, and both countries are interested in strengthening the comprehensive

strategic partnership. The strategic partnership between Iran and China is considered a symbol of the will to develop relations between the two countries. The versatility of the two countries as a common axis in their international positions and the strengthening of Iranian-Chinese cooperation in international and regional organizations are of great importance.

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