

Bartosz Płotka

Center for Eastern Studies (Poland)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6385-2046>

e-mail: b.plotka@icloud.com

One Initiative, Many Solutions – Chinese Belt and Road Initiative for Comprehensive Development

Book Review: Wang Yiwei, *Inicjatywa “Jeden Pas i Jedna Droga”. Co rozwój Chin oznacza dla świata*, Adam Marszałek Publishing House, Toruń 2016, pp. 248

The contemporary world is nearly infinitely sophisticated and dynamic. The numerous advanced information technologies, digital systems and procedures cause that everything constantly outdates. New information displace “old” ones, even if the latter were published minutes earlier. In such a dynamic environment, planning something is tremendously difficult. Nevertheless, in 2013 the President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, introduced a political and economic strategy called “One Belt, One Road” which aims at developing infrastructure that will connect China with Central Asia, Middle-East, Europe and Africa. However, the initiative is much more complex than it can be initially seen. It is an expression of China’s rich culture, general approach toward internal and external politics, and another expression of the policy of opening-up. As such, it concerns much more fields than political and economic ones.

The complexity of Belt and Road Initiative was discussed by Jean Monnet Chair Professor, Wang Yiwei, in his book *The Belt and Road: What Will China Offer the World in Its Rise* that has been published in many languages and countries across the world. This review concerns its Polish edition published by Adam Marszałek Publishing House: *Inicjatywa “Jeden Pas i Jedna Droga”. Co rozwój Chin oznacza dla świata*.

The book consists of four parts on historical aspects of the initiative, its international dimensions, risks and methods for implementation, respectively. As such, it presents the consistency of the new initiative with the Chinese history, potential for comprehensive, sustainable global development in all aspects, the initiative’s possible flaws, and, the most

interestingly, the theoretical concepts present in the actual Chinese political thought and practice, serving the realization of the initiative's goals and assumptions. Today, Chinese economy is one of two biggest economies in the world; moreover, as a producer of countless materials for nearly all countries, its economy is strongly intertwined with the others. Because of that bold connection there is a saying 'if Chinese economy has a runny nose, the others have a pneumonia'. Therefore, the successful realization of the Belt and Road Initiative may entail the development of the other engaged parties. The author of *Inicjatywa "Jeden Pas i Jedna Droga"*... explains Western readers all intricacies of this dependency in an understandable way, simultaneously raising their awareness that the process of realizing the idea needs to be participated by all engaged parties since the initiative is assumed to bring benefits and prosperity not only for China.

A very important aspect of the book is that it shows that the Belt and Road Initiative is not strictly economic or political programme. One of the initiative's goals is to increase global awareness of its assumptions, as well as provide all interested parties the Chinese perspective on current international affairs. As such, the initiative includes a well-developed cultural dimension which, as an instrument of China's soft-power, is intended to inform the world about the achievements of China on the ground of politics, economy and culture. First of all, however, the initiative aims at spreading the idea of peaceful and friendly cooperation as the core of any further processes. The other aspects of cultural exchange mentioned by the author comprise, for instance, publishing initiatives aimed at making the global audience more familiar with the Chinese culture. They include not only books on politics, economy and international relations, but also literary or poetry ones. Such and other examples discussed in the reviewed book show the immense complexity and reach of the discussed initiative.

Although the book is one of key titles on understanding the Belt and Road Initiative, it is not free of flaws. Certainly, it would benefit from applying more developed scientific apparatus and more analytical approach. Without them, it may cause an impression of being too descriptive and focused on presenting facts. Also, the fourth part of the book presenting the theoretical concepts could be more developed, especially since the introduction of the BRI was accompanied by creating numerous currently key concepts necessary for understanding the Chinese politics, and placed as the second part. Certainly, it would make the book reception easier and its argumentation more efficient in convincing readers about the positive aspects of the discussed programme.

Eventually, the flaws are of minor importance and the general contents of the book makes it undoubtedly one of the crucial and still up-to-date works for scholars, politicians, diplomats and businessmen who want to understand the China's way of thinking and international activities.