
RESEARCH ARTICLE

A New Phase in Sino-Iranian Relations: 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents Iran and China's 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership as a new stage in their relationship. The 25-year agreement's potential to strengthen Sino-Iranian relations is discussed in the paper. The goal of the paper is to investigate, in particular, Iranian perceptions of the deal and to consider how it might affect ties between Beijing and Tehran. The focus of the paper is on the analytical approach used to show how the agreement may affect the relations between the two countries. The paper's findings indicate that Iranians have two opposing views on the agreement. While some support the agreement, others criticize the government for signing it. Furthermore, the paper indicates that if the agreement is implemented, it will deepen relations between Tehran and Beijing in a variety of ways. The paper would help to broaden our understanding of regional and international relations, particularly those between Iran and China.

KEYWORDS

China, Iran, Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Belt and Road Initiative, and the United States.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 02 September 2023

PUBLISHED: 23 September 2023

DOI: 10.32996/ijlps.2023.5.5.5

1. Introduction

Making and cultivating partnership relations with major global powers and important developing countries has been central to Chinese diplomatic approaches. Since the beginning of the 1990s, China has tried to use partnership diplomacy to maximize its regional and international role. Accordingly, since the end of the Cold War, Beijing has established a vast network of partnerships around the globe.

The Chinese partnership diplomacy has been based on the principle of disunity and non-confrontation. In particular, China is cooperating with countries in the strategic areas of West Asia, North Africa, and the Red Sea in the framework of various types of partnerships. Beijing set up Comprehensive Partnership Cooperation with Iran in the framework of a 25-year agreement in March 2021. China is Iran's leading trade partner and has been one of the biggest consumers of Iranian oil.

The 25-year document of Iran and China has been registered as the official title of "Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program", and political, security, defense, cultural, agricultural, economic, scientific, tourism, oil and energy, telecommunication, infrastructure, trade, health, and wellness fields are included in the agreement. The deal is formulated in the framework of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

Indeed, this deal was developed to practically enhance Sino-Iranian relations at the level of comprehensive strategic partnership and to provide an appropriate platform for the comprehensive development of cooperation between the two nations. Accordingly, the deal has been well received by the Iranian Supreme Leader, the president, and other officials. It is evaluated as a document that is formulated in line with regional and international peace, stability, and development, and therefore, it is not opposed to any

third party or interference in any country's affairs. While the Sino-Iranian deal has a significant amount of support among Iran's business community and at multiple levels of government, some Iranians have questioned and challenged the accord. This paper aims to address the question of how this deal would lead the two nations' relations to the new phase. And how did the Iranians assess the Sino-Iranian 25-year agreement? It reviews how China came to treat alliances and partnerships as essential instruments of its quest for its regional and global role. It also discusses the major politico-economic, security and, military, and cultural provisions and their potential ramifications for Iran. Additionally, the paper tends to explore Iranians' different perspectives on the agreement.

2. Theoretical assessment

What does participatory diplomacy mean in terms of the relations between the two nations? Common interests and competing interests typically serve as the two main determinants of a country's relations with other nations. Six types of behavior can be identified when this is applied to international relations: reciprocity, competition, cooperation, partnership, coalition, and unity. The two sides work to create a win-win relationship and mutually beneficial supplier in the cooperative partnership between two nations, which is based on mutual respect and trust. At the level of international relations, the partnership has qualities that set it apart from other relationship types like alliances, coalitions, cooperation, and competition. In a globalized world, one way to establish flexible interstate relationships to further politico-economic and security interests is through the creation of partnerships. In fact, over the past three decades, a growing number of states have embraced partnership diplomacy (Strüver, 2017: 36-42). The following factors are taken into account in state partnerships:

1. This kind of relationship has a wide range of functions in the areas of government cooperation;
- 2-The partnership model's level of commitment is based on the text of the particular negotiations between the countries (fluidity);
- 3-The availability of various patterns for joining a partnership;
- 4-Dividends or benefits resulting from this type of contract are relatively unaffected by asymmetry or the degree of state power;
- 5-Governments can establish a long-term bond and commitment through this kind of agreement, but they shouldn't form an alliance or coalition that they would later regret;
- 6- Unlike security-oriented unions, this type of cooperation does not develop against a shared rival;

- 1- This type of relationship has a high variety and scope of function by the areas of cooperation among governments;
- 2-Determining the level of commitment in the partnership model is based on the text of the countries' specific negotiations (fluidity);
- 3-The existence of different patterns for entering the partnership;
- 4-Asymmetry or the level of power of states has little effect on dividends or benefits arising from this type of contract;
- 5-Governments can build long-term will and commitment to each other in this type of contract but not enter into a very allergic alliance and coalition;
- 6-Unlike security-oriented unions, this form of cooperation does not take shape against a common rival;
- 7-Updated in the context of partnership time with other countries by the parties' needs and
- 8-Participation is a dynamic process, and governments can improve their level of participation. Since the Soviet Union's collapse in December 1991 and the end of the bipolar system, which was furthered by the emergence of an international order best characterized as "polycentric," the chances for and forms of diplomatic cooperation and exchange among nations have significantly expanded. The exclusive international alignment camps that predominated during the Cold War era and took the form of more rigid and static alliances have lost appeal in today's globally integrated society (Womack, 2016: 23). To manage their bilateral relations and lessen uncertainty in their international relations; states are now expected to rely less on coercion and more on negotiation. Additionally, Womack (2015) states that "increased communication opportunities and greater partner choice flexibility in regional and global politics should favor cooperative and regulatory frameworks to advance shared interests and objectives and prevent crises."

According to Li and Ye (2019: 68–73), a partnership can refer to an alliance (like the Trans-Atlantic Partnership), a common economic partnership, or occasionally even the interactions between rivals. However, the term "partnership" has a specific meaning and is only used to refer to a particular kind of relationship in other nations' nomenclature. The United States is one example of using partnership diplomacy in the international arena. In late 2001, the Bush (son) administration began using strategic partnerships and dialogues to secure support for the global fight against terrorism and the management of relations with emerging powers. The partnership is reserved for relations with non-allies that are more formal and structured than common intergovernmental dialogues (Hamilton, 2014). Former US president Barak Obama even made greater use of partnership diplomacy as he envisioned a "multi-partner world" with both established allies and developing nations. The EU has also employed partnerships to achieve specific objectives of economic cooperation. Additionally, nations like Vietnam and the Republic of Korea

have built rather stratified and diverse networks of partnerships (Bang, 2017: 382–389). Partnership diplomacy is also used by other significant global powerhouses, most notably China, in their regional and global foreign policy.

3. China's Partnership Diplomacy

In his speech to the Chinese Communist Party's Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in November 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged China to "develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major power" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014). Making and fostering partnership relationships with significant global powers and developing nations has thus been essential to this strategy. China should "make more friends [...] and build a global network of partnerships in the years to come", President Xi added. (Strüver, 2017, 45–48).

Wen Jiabao, the former Chinese premier, has provided an explanation that is considered to be the most credible so far. When he visited the European Union in Brussels in 2004, he gave a keynote speech in which he explained that the term "comprehensive" refers to cooperation in the economic, technological, cultural, and political fields; the relationship is both bilateral and multilateral, meaning that the dyadic countries in a comprehensive partnership may also work together in dealing with multilateral issues; a comprehensive relationship is multi-layer as well, including both government-to-government cooperation and people-to-people diplomacy (Li and Ye, 2019: 74–79). Of course, China has a history of using partnership diplomacy in international relations. Although Beijing formed its first strategic partnership with Brazil in 1993, it has a long history of using alliances to manage its bilateral relations and currently holds the record for having the most of them among all major powers. Since the end of the Cold War, China has built up a vast global network of alliances. Aside from Brazil, China established an integrated strategic partnership with Russia in 1996, which was upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2011. In 2004, China and India formed a strategic partnership.

China is not the only country to use the partnership as a tool for diplomacy and to advance its own national interests. In fact, the fact that China's strategy places partnership networks at the forefront of Beijing's foreign policy is what distinguishes it from other approaches. Few other countries have given forming alliances as much importance as China. China has generally been a pioneer in partnership diplomacy and established its first strategic partnership with Brazil in 1993. China has 107 countries and regional organizations with which it has established cooperation, including 38 in Asia, 16 in Africa, 17 in Latin America, 28 in Europe and North America, and 8 in Oceania. In its interactions with the globalized world, the Chinese government has employed a variety of partnerships (see the map). The Chinese partnership network, on the other hand, is divided into several strata, ranging from straightforward alliances to extensive strategic alliances. In addition, the recent official discourse has placed an unprecedented amount of emphasis on partnership diplomacy, raising the possibility that this trend will continue as partnerships shape China's foreign policy in the years to come (Strüver, 2017: 54–57).

Map1: China Partnership Network around the globe (Li and Ye, 2019: 67)



Chinese partnership diplomacy is generally based on the principles of disunity and non-confrontation. Participation is part of China's global diplomacy strategy, which adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence proposed by the Chinese government in the 1950s:

- 1-Mutual respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other country;
- 2-non-aggression;
- 3-Non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- 4-Bilateral win-win relationship; and

5-Peaceful coexistence (The Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, 2022)¹.

The Partnership for China program is currently the most important factor in practicing and negotiating diplomacy with other nations, and through this diplomacy, contracts and the intensity of ties are established over time. In the context of strategic partnership diplomacy, the People's Republic of China takes into consideration a number of terms and structures that highlight the unique traits of each partnership and are malleable over time. Generally speaking, strategic engagement in China's foreign policy is referred to as diplomacy, opening doors for negotiations and dialogue with other governments. The People's Republic of China's various partnership arrangements with countries have overshadowed the dimensions of Beijing's cooperation (economic, trade, technology, infrastructure, and energy) with the target countries.

China specifically collaborates with nations in the strategic regions of West Asia, North Africa, and the Red Sea through a variety of partnerships. Beijing encourages a kind of multipolar model through participation and, if possible, challenges US hegemonic unilateralism through a soft balance. However, by forming alliances with China, regional medium and small powers also avoid asymmetric dependence on Western major powers. Iran, a country in the Middle East, the most significant part of the world, is one of these regional powers.

According to the China Partnership Diplomacy Model, it can be assumed that the Chinese program has laxly enforced rules. The Strategic Partnership Program of the People's Republic of China suggests that it is more like a roadmap and that nations are not required to abide by its legal requirements. The legal provisions are not viewed in the context of the People's Republic of China's strategic partnerships with other nations and are signed only for close bilateral ties and friendly, stable, sustainable, and long-term partnership programs between Beijing and its partners. Before delving into more minor issues like energy, infrastructure, technology, etc., the parties in this arrangement outline the scope of their cooperation in various fields.

Beijing has established the following standards for the degree of partnership with the target countries, taking into account traits like the scope and depth of cooperation (Table 1).

Table 1: China's level of partnership with the target countries (authors)

| No. | Kind of Partnership | Countries |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership | Russia, Pakistan, Germany, UK, Belarus, Cambodia, Chile, Laos, Myanmar, Congo, Thailand, Vietnam, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Netherlands, Orange, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, EU |
| 2 | Strategic Partnership | Denmark, Ireland, Switzerland, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Angola, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech, Fiji, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nigeria, Qatar, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, India, UAE, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, African Union, ASEAN, Philippines |
| 3 | Systematic participation | Belgium, Bulgaria, Maldives, Romania, Singapore, Croatia, East Timor, Ethiopia, Nepal, Gabon, Netherlands, Tanzania, Hungary, Jamaica, Senegal, and the Arab League |

In Table 2, different levels of China's participation in several countries have been compared:

¹ -In December 1953, China proposed for the first time the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during its negotiations with India on the outstanding bilateral problems, especially India's contacts with the Tibet region.

Table 2: Comparison of China's different levels of partnership with several countries(authors)

| Country | Romania | Belgium | Diameter | Ireland | Pakistan | Russia |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|----------|--------|
| Main interests | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Security and Counterterrorism | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ● |
| Military Exchange | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ● |
| Regional and international issues | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ● |
| Aerospace | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Economy | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Culture | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

China collaborates with countries in a variety of partnerships in the strategic regions of West Asia, North Africa, and the Red Sea (see Table 3). Beijing creates a sort of multipotent pattern through participation and, if it's possible, uses soft balancing to combat hegemonic unilateralism. On the other hand, through alliances with Beijing, regional, medium, and small powers also avoid asymmetric dependence on other major powers.

Table 3: Levels of China's partnership with MENA countries (authors)

| No. | Country | Year | Participation level |
|-----|----------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Iran | 2016 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership |
| 2 | Egypt | 2014 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership |
| 3 | Algeria | 2014 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership |
| 4 | Saudi | 2016 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership |
| 5 | United Arab Emirates | 2018 | Comprehensive Strategic Partnership |
| 6 | Iraq | 2015 | Strategic Partnership |
| 7 | Jordan | 2015 | Strategic Partnership |
| 8 | Djibouti | 2017 | Strategic Partnership |
| 9 | Kuwait | 2018 | Strategic Partnership |
| 10 | Morocco | 2016 | Strategic Partnership |

| | | | |
|----|----------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 11 | Oman | 2018 | Strategic Partnership |
| 12 | Diameter | 2014 | Strategic Partnership |
| 13 | Turkey | 2010 | Strategic Partnership |
| 14 | Israel | 2017 | Innovative Comprehensive Partnership |

4. China Comprehensive Partnership Cooperation with Iran

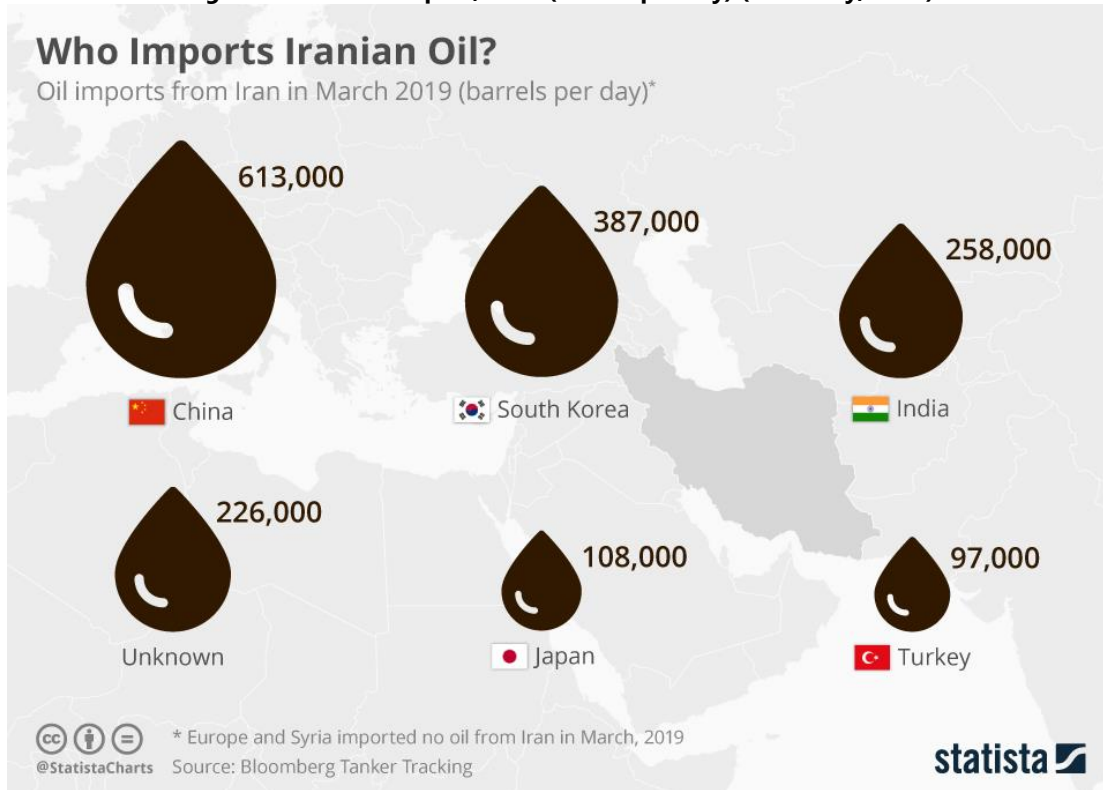
As mentioned, China has established Comprehensive Partnership Cooperation with Iran under the terms of a 25-year agreement. Before proceeding to China-Iran comprehensive cooperation, we would examine Sino-Iranian relations, which serve as the foundation for the two countries' new partnership.

5. Sino-Iranian relations: A briefer history

Iran and China share a common identity as the cradles of ancient and, in many ways, ongoing civilizations, which is reflected in their foreign relations. Both countries are great civilizations with rich cultural traditions and deep historical roots. Indeed, these factors have contributed to the formation of a foundation on which both nations can share "psychological identifications." According to such historical accounts, China and Iran are two strategic partners with growing political and economic ties with regional and global implications. More than 2600 years have passed since these two nations first interacted ([1]1998, آذری). The Parthian and Sassanid Empires of Iran had long-standing relationships with China, and the two countries were also connected by the legendary Silk Road. These early connections prepared the ground for the current ties between the two countries. China was connected to Central Asia and the Middle East via the ancient Silk Road, which served as a trade route between the two countries.

In modern times, the two countries established official diplomatic relations on August 16, 1971, when Iran recognized the People's Republic of China as the "sole legitimate government of China", and China expressed its support for "Iran's just struggle to defend its national resources" (Graver, 2006). Throughout their 2600-year history of bilateral relations, Iran and China have both played important roles in spreading friendly cooperation along the Silk Road, as well as facilitating and expanding global trade ([1] آذری, 1998). Bilateral relations between the two countries have seen outstanding achievements in a variety of political, economic, cultural, strategic, and defense areas over the last 50 years since diplomatic ties were established. The regional and international situation is currently undergoing profound and complex changes. In such circumstances, the two sides emphasize the importance of bilateral cooperation in international affairs and are committed to working together to achieve peace, stability, and development in the region and around the world. The Sino-Iranian relationship has entered a new phase, come to an end, and significant changes have taken place in both nations since the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to Harold and Nader (2012), the term "China-Iran relations" generally refers to the interactions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China since 1979 in the areas of energy, trade, politics, culture, military, and social life. China was Iran's top trading partner and one of the biggest consumers of Iranian oil before then-US President Donald Trump reinstated harsh unilateral sanctions against Tehran in 2018 after pulling out of a multilateral nuclear deal with Tehran (see Figure 1).

Figure1 : Iran’s Oil export, 2019 (barrels per day) (McCarthy, 2019)



With the visit of President Xi Jinping to Iran in 2016, Sino-Iranian relations reached a new level and paved the way for a comprehensive multifaceted agreement between the two countries for 25 years, particularly within the context of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. President Xi Jinping wrote a message of congratulations to his new Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of diplomatic relations with Tehran. He stated that since the two nations established a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016, mutual political trust between them has grown and that progress has been made in mutually beneficial cooperation in a variety of areas. In a message, President Ebrahim Raisi emphasized that both Iran and China are ancient civilizations and that their friendship is like an ancient tree fed by thousands of years of friendly exchanges (between the two countries) and is a deep foundation for comprehensive strategic partnership ([2]2021, دنباى اقتصاد).

Given the pressing need to raise the level of bilateral relations under the new circumstances, both parties agreed to establish relations based on a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," under which they will expand bilateral cooperation in the following areas:

- a- Political Domain;
- b- Executive Cooperation Domain;
- c- Human and Cultural Domain;
- d- Judiciary, Security, and Defense Domain; and
- e- Regional and International Domain.

6. Sino-Iranian 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

The strategic agreement was first put forth in 2016, when President Xi Jinping proposed the strategic agreement during his official visit to Iran on January 22 and 23. The two parties agreed to expand and deepen their relationship. As a result, in an amicable and cordial atmosphere, he and former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani exchanged views on cooperation in all fields of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest and reached extensive agreements. At the conclusion of their meeting in Tehran, the presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People’s Republic of China declared that they had formed a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" after reaching major agreements in all areas of their bilateral relations as well as on issues affecting the region and the world.

According to Article VI of the communiqué released during President Xi’s visit to Iran, the two ancient and civilized Asian nations explicitly expressed their political determination to advance and deepen relations by creating a comprehensive 25-year roadmap

as the foundation for the cogent and comprehensive expansion of the political and economic relations between the two nations. On March 26, 2021, Wang Yi, the foreign minister of China, and Mohammad Javad Zarif, the former foreign minister of Iran, signed the agreement that had been in the works for five years. A significant turning point in the two countries' bilateral relations is the 25-year cooperation agreement. The "Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China" contains 20 articles, according to the official statement, and lays out a plan for strengthening ties between Tehran and Beijing in various sectors.

Political, security, defense, cultural, agricultural, economic, scientific, banking, tourism, oil and energy, telecommunication, infrastructure, trade, health, and wellness, etc., are all covered by the 25-year agreement, which has been registered under the name "Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program." The agreement also promotes travel and cross-cultural interactions. In order to realize a comprehensive strategic partnership and advance its viability, the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran came to an agreement on a road map and a vision of comprehensive relations in this document. Zarif had outlined the following three objectives for the Sino-Iranian agreement:

- a- Practical promotion of relations at the level of comprehensive and strategic partnership based on the declaration of the two presidents in February 2016;
- b- Roadmap and long-term horizon of relationships in different fields to achieve comprehensive and strategic partnership and its practical promotion; and
- c-Providing a suitable platform for the comprehensive development of cooperation in the areas of trade, economic, political, cultural, defense, and security between the two ancient Asian civilizations(2021 [3]، طرف).

This document is regarded as a political-strategic, economic, and cultural program that, from both countries' perspectives, pursues all-round strains of relations in the long-term horizon, and three political, military, security, economic, and cultural axes have been discussed in the document:

6.1 Political, military, and security dimensions of the deal

The agreement has attempted to regulate the close positions and cooperation of the two countries in the political-strategic (military-defense-security) sphere through permanent mechanisms while fostering their interactions, consultations, and close cooperation on issues of mutual interest in regional and international institutions. The most significant pivots in this area can be categorized as strengthening the defense system, combating terrorism, and conducting routine military exercises as a sign of strength and agreement between the two countries.

6.2 The economic axis of the 25-year deal

Beijing and Tehran concur that the potential for economic cooperation is greater than the current circumstances, making economic cooperation one of the key pillars of a long-term collaboration between the two nations. In particular, the agreement links Iran to the value-based supply chain by completing complementary domestic processing chains, coproduction to supply both countries' domestic markets as well as those of third countries, and ultimately exploitation of Iran's capabilities, including its young and skilled labor. As a result, the document places a strong emphasis on cooperation in the fields of oil, industry, mining, and energy-related areas (power, renewable energy, etc.) based on issues of sustainable and environmental national development.

Furthermore, in order to maximize the country's geopolitical and geoeconomic benefits, the agreement emphasizes Iran's effective participation in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, and thus, comprehensive cooperation in the form of this initiative with the priority of cooperation in the fields of infrastructure, communication (rail, port, and air road), telecommunications, scientific-technology, education, and health (Rashid, 2022). Moreover, special emphasis is placed in this document on facilitating effective processes in economic and commercial cooperation with the goal of promotion as a concern for businesses and the private sector and thus facilitating financial-banking cooperation, customs, deregulation, granting logic facilities with laws in free trade and special economic zones, and strengthening non-oil cooperation and trade with a focus on two areas: agriculture and knowledge-based.

6.3 The Cultural Axis of the 25-year Agreement

Regarding culture, the agreement places a strong emphasis on promoting intercultural exchanges, tourism, media, academic collaboration, various cultural non-governmental institutions, friendship associations, and NGOs in order to increase mutual

recognition. This program also emphasizes investment and aiding in the completion of the required infrastructure to promote cross-cultural cooperation, including in the tourism sector. (4[اقتصاد نیوز، 2022]).

Indeed, this agreement was designed to practically strengthen Sino-Iranian relations at the level of comprehensive strategic partnership, as well as to provide a suitable platform for the two countries' comprehensive development of cooperation. The document considers a comprehensive long-term (25-year) approach to bilateral, regional, and international relations based on mutual respect and win-win interests. Sharing views on many regional and international issues, particularly the fight against unilateralism, has paved the way for Beijing and Tehran to expand their international cooperation. "We have good global and international contacts and have common positions with China on countering unilateralism and [maintaining our] political independence," Ebrahim Riasi said during his visit to China in February 2023, expressing that the Islamic Republic and China share similar views on combating unilateralism at the international level. (Alwaght, 2023).

This document is said to be written in accordance with regional and international peace, stability, and development, and thus, it is not opposed to any third party or interference in the affairs of any country. According to the agreement, Beijing will contribute significantly to the Iranian infrastructure, banking, telecommunications, petrochemicals, ports, and railways sectors, as well as dozens of projects. In exchange, China would receive regular and discounted Iranian oil supplies. The agreement also called for increased intelligence sharing, joint research and development of weapons, and joint training and exercises in the military. Muhammad Javad Zarif has also emphasized the politico-strategic elements of the agreement, such as the enlargement of interactions and consultations in institutions on a regional and global scale, as well as the improvement of infrastructure for defense and counterterrorism.

However, it is worth noting that Russia's war with Ukraine and the consequences of this crisis may have an impact on the implementation of Iran and China's 25-year agreement. The continuation of the Ukraine crisis will present numerous opportunities and challenges for various countries, including Iran, and may affect Tehran's political, economic, and energy relations with other countries, such as China, in the long run.

7. Iranians' opinions on the agreement

Since the proposal for comprehensive strategic cooperation between Iran and China, many Iranians, both official and nonofficial, have provided both positive and negative commentary on the agreement.

7.1 Positive Perspectives: Officials and others

In general, Iranians believe that any bilateral or international cooperation will provide more opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran's sanctioned economy to recover. According to them, regardless of how strategic this collaboration is, it inevitably provides more planning for both parties. The agreement with China marked the Islamic Republic of Iran's first long-term agreement with a major global power. Nonetheless, in 2001, Iran and Russia signed a 10-year cooperation agreement, primarily in the nuclear field, which was later extended to a 20-year agreement through two five-year extensions.

The comprehensive cooperation agreement between China and Iran is primarily viewed as a global strategic choice, particularly in response to the current situation in which the United States and the West are undermining the international order.

During a meeting with China's President in February 2016, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, emphasized the desire and perspective of the East in Iran versus the West, stating that the 25-year strategic relationship agreement with China is "absolutely correct and wise." The Supreme Leader also stated that Iran will never forget China's assistance during the sanctions period. "Iran's government and people are striving, as they always have, to expand relations with trustworthy, independent countries like China," he added. (5[خبرگزاری رضوی، 2020]). After meeting Wang Yi in March 2021, former President Hassan Rouhani declared that Iran's relations with China are important and strategic. Additionally, he emphasized that "Tehran and Beijing enjoy very good relations, and the two countries' shared stance on international issues attests to the favorable level of these ties" (Tehran Times, 2021). In the government delegation's statement on June 24, 2016, Hassan Rouhani added: "This cooperation is a ground for Iran-China participation in fundamental projects and development infrastructure, including the Grand Belt and Road Initiative, and will be an opportunity to attract investment in various economic sectors, including industry, tourism, information, and communication technology (2021, [7]ب[تجارت نیوز، 2021]). Rouhani emphasized the expansion of cooperation between the two sides in the field of energy, describing the agreement as a positive step toward increasing the importance of global energy and the sustainable development of oil and gas resources, as well as renewable energy, and referred to the joint venture in the development of free zones as a way to promote the role of these regions in international production and trade. (7[تجارت نیوز، 2021])

Regarding China's significance in Iran policy, the former Iranian foreign minister Zarif referred to China as the "friend of difficult days" and stated that it is because of this friendship that "we thank and praise the stance of China during the oppressive sanctions." Saeed Khatibzadeh, a former spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry, was quoted by AFP as saying that "This document can be very effective in deepening" relations and that it would establish a framework for "reciprocal investments in the fields of transport, ports, energy, industry, and services." He has also emphasized that the Iran-China deal is based on a win-win approach in pursuit of shared interests. "(Krishnan, 2021).

In a message to President Xi Jinping, Iran's President, Raisi, stated that "as bilateral relations enter the sixth decade, Iran will continue to promote strategic cooperation with China, strengthen communications to expand practical cooperation in various fields, and continuously expand relations between the two countries"(2021 [2]دنیای اقتصاد). Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's Parliament Speaker, tweeted that "signing a strategic document with China is an important element of power generation within the framework of looking at Asia and the Asia-based with a balanced and economically based foreign policy approach"(2021 [7]قالیباف). Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, described the agreement between Tehran and Beijing as a component of Iran's "active resistance policy."(2021 [8]ناطقان).

Iranians have therefore emphasized that the agreement should be viewed as a long-term political, strategic, economic, and cultural program that includes investment and finance clauses as well as mutual support in international forums. Some Iranians believe that Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which was finalized in September 2022, is one of the outcomes of the Sino-Iranian agreement (Khan, 2022)

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a leafed proposition after the Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program was signed, outlining the following points:

- 1) This document is a roadmap for comprehensive cooperation between Iran and China and thus contains no contracts.
- 2) The document contains no specific figures or numbers, including investments or financial and monetary resources, because it was never quantified regarding the prospects for cooperation, whether economic, political, cultural, or strategic.
- 3) The 25-year agreement is named to see and follow up on the two countries' overall comprehensive cooperation plan in this long-term period. The timetable for implementing any bilateral contract is determined by the forecast outlined in the contract.
- 4) The assignment of any region or no mutual or unilateral monopoly is not considered in this document, and thus, no exclusive right is granted.
- 5) No management, administration, or operation of any region or domain is delegated in this document (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, 2021).

The agreement is viewed as a "roadmap" by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The objectives, guiding principles, and key components of the agreement have been summarized by Mohamad Javad Zarif. He emphasized that the agreement seeks to "practically promote" strategic ties and provides "a roadmap and long-term horizon" for achieving those objectives ([4]2021، ظریف). The agreement, according to Saeed Khatibzadeh, a former spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, is a "roadmap" for trade, economic cooperation, and transportation, with a focus on the private sectors of both countries.

Some people think that the agreement will benefit the Iranian government in a number of ways; a stable relationship with China means a stable oil market at a time when US sanctions have significantly reduced Iran's income, and it conveys a message of power and is an effort to end the diplomatic isolation imposed by the United States.

According to reports, Iran benefits from three main aspects of the 25-year China-Iran strategic agreement;

First, China is one of the five UN Security Council members with veto power. Iran will have two countries in the UN Security Council thanks to Russia, another nation with veto power in the body.

The second benefit of a 25-year contract for Tehran is that it will eventually increase the country's oil and gas production in three key fields. China has agreed to accelerate the development of the South Pars gas field's Phase 11. When France's Total left Iran due to sanctions, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) added a 50.1 percent stake in Total to its 30 percent stake in the South Pars Development Project.

The third benefit of the long-term agreement with China for Iran is that Beijing will increase its oil imports from Iran. [10]تجارت نیوز، الف، (2021).

In addition to having a positive effect on Iran's economy, the signing of the 25-year Iran-China Strategic Agreement could have significant implications for Iran's regional relations, according to Mashregh, the Iranian News Agency:

1. Iran's participation in the "Belt and Road Initiative" may receive more support as a result of the agreement, which could lead to Iran taking a more active role in the initiative.

The partnership would be feasible given the capacity to develop rail lines and transportation seen in the agreement, and it could take place at the China-Central Asia-West Asia economic crossings.

2. Iran's influence in Central Asia will grow now that it is a recognized member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Tehran's political and economic ties with other Central Asian members, including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, will be strengthened.

3. Strengthening the economic presence in Syria: if the implications of this agreement result in the industrial and technological dimensions of Iran's economic structure being strengthened, it may open the door for Iran to play a larger role in reconstructing the destruction left by the Syrian Civil War and, as a result, strengthen the position of the Resistance Front forces in these countries [(2023، مشرق، [11]).

From a transregional policy standpoint, applauding the Iran-China agreement could strengthen Iran's position in standing up to US and European indulgences. They will see that a country has discovered the possibility of massive investment in Iran without interfering in its internal affairs or imposing restrictions on its defense and regional programs.

In sum, many Iranians believed that the agreement did give Iran some strategic advantages, as shown in the table below:

Table 4: Positive view of the agreement(authors)

| No. | Advantages (positive view) |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Strengthening the strategic interests of both Iran and China |
| 2 | Assist in the development of equipment and facilities in Iran. |
| 3 | Reducing the pressure of the economic crisis and US sanctions |
| 4 | Facilitate the flow of Iranian oil sales. |
| 6 | Facilitating Iran's participation in the "Belt and Road Initiative"; |
| 7 | A win-win game |

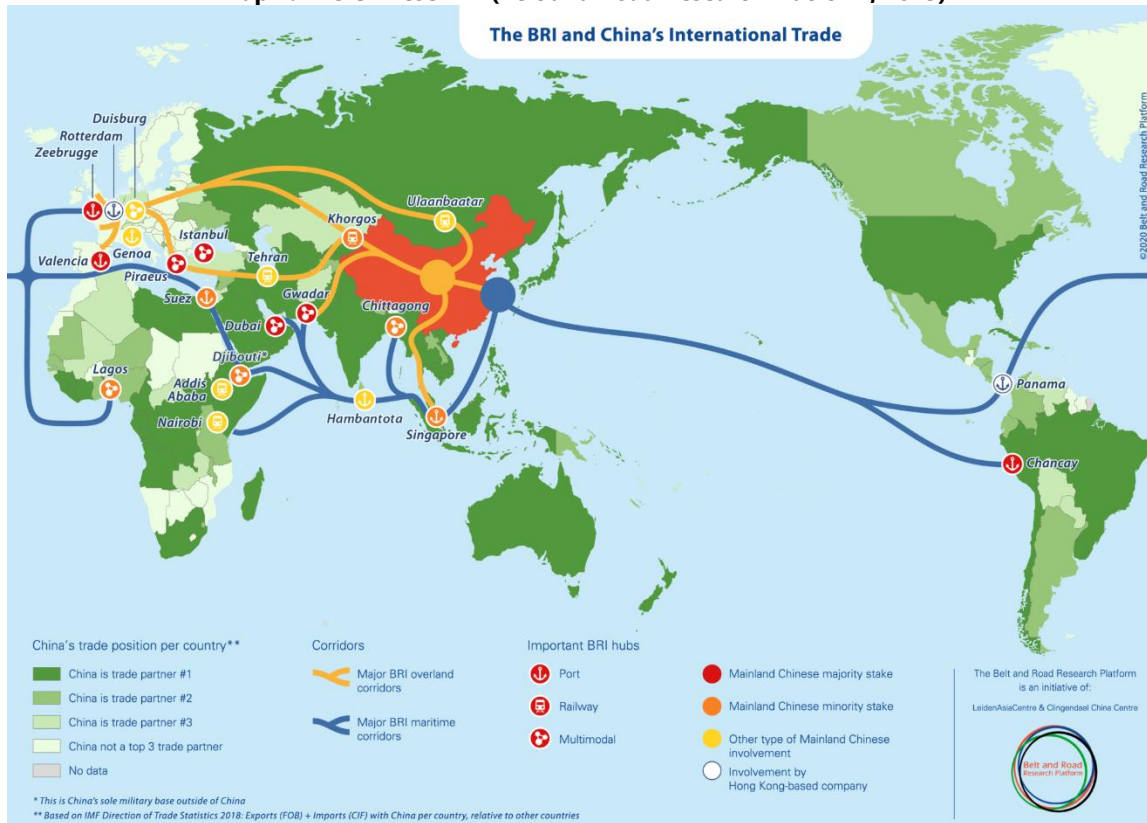
Furthermore, analysts in Iran also view the recent (March 2023) Iran-Saudi development to restore normalized relations in a deal brokered by China in Beijing as one of the outcomes of the Sino-Iranian 25-year agreement. The Iran-Saudi deal includes an agreement to resume diplomatic relations between them and re-open their embassies and missions within a period not exceeding two months, and the agreement includes their affirmation of the respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in internal affairs of states. They also agreed that the foreign ministers of both countries should get together to put this into action, arrange for the return of their ambassadors, and talk about ways to improve bilateral relations. They agreed to put into effect the General Agreement for Cooperation in the Fields of Economy, Trade, Investment, Technology, Science, Culture, Sports, and Youth, which was signed in June 1998, as well as the Security Cooperation Agreement between them, both of which were signed in May 2001. The Iran-Saudi agreement also represented, at least temporarily, a reorganization of the conventional alliances and rivalries, leaving America out of the picture (Baker, 2023).

7.1.1The deal in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative

President Xi Jinping introduced China's Belt and Road Initiative in September 2013, a massive undertaking that seeks to establish a modern trade route between countries in Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Beyond the

historic Silk Road trade routes, BRI aimed to create a network of infrastructure and commerce linking Asia with Europe, Africa, and Latin America. The BRI was created to support infrastructure, 5G, energy, and commercial projects in about 150 countries around the world (see map) (McBride and others, 2023).

Map 2: The Chinese BRI (Belt and Road Research Platform, 2023)



According to reports, the Sino-Iranian strategic 25-year agreement is a component of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Iran would be properly integrated into the Belt and Road Initiative as a hub for transit between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, thanks to Chinese investment in infrastructure projects (China Briefing Team, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, the new strategic cooperation between China and Iran was described by the former Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, as a ground for Iran-China participation in fundamental projects and development infrastructure, including the Grand Belt and Road Initiative (2021, [6] تجارت نیوز، ب). This was also emphasized by Iranian former Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh as, he has said: "The document can elevate bilateral ties to a new strategic level" (2021, [6] تجارت نیوز، ب). The deal focuses on boosting private-sector collaboration and the Islamic Republic's role in President Xi's flagship infrastructure and investment program, the Belt and Road Initiative, he stated.

The effective inclusion of Iran in the Belt and Road Initiative would be pursued in this cooperation agreement to maximize the geopolitical and geoeconomic advantages of the Islamic Republic of Iran. China's gateway to the markets of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Russia is Iran, which is the most significant component of the BRI. The alliance, which could quicken this trend, is partly a response to the US's declining global influence, particularly in the Middle East.

The massive Belt and Road Initiative, launched by China and supported by the 25-year agreement, aims to revive and expand the historic Silk Road trade routes by building or upgrading networks of railways, ports, pipelines, power grids, and highways. A larger Chinese presence in Iran could make it more difficult for European businesses to reclaim their market share when US sanctions are less restrictive in the future (Motevalli, 2020). Iran's participation in the initiative, according to Tehran Times (2023), an Iranian newspaper, is not only a step toward easing the pressure from the economic sanctions but also a successful method of countering the sanctions' non-economic objectives. Tehran Times added in recent years, the US has sought to ignore Iran's geopolitical advantages and has opposed the passage of any corridor through Iran. Iran's involvement in the BRI project has the potential to defeat the US plot to bar Iran from international trade routes (Tehran Times, 2023).

7.1.2 The Sino-Iranian Deal and the United States

China and Iran are both under pressure from US foreign policy. Washington's policy toward Iran has been hostile since 1979, and US policy toward China has become increasingly aggressive since 2010. Nonetheless, since Joe Biden took office, Washington has focused on bolstering its position as the world order's leader. The new US administration has worked to forge regional and international alliances to counter China's growing political and economic clout. On March 24, 2021, the US secretary of state met with European leaders in Brussels to discuss how to approach China as a rival that poses a threat to the current global order. On March 12, 2021, Biden also met virtually with the leaders of Japan, Australia, and India to coordinate efforts to reduce China's global influence. To maintain the power gap with its closest rival, China, which forced the latter to act out of necessity, Washington also plans a military and security redeployment to emphasize its dominance and callout in addition to bolstering its military growth (Resanah, 2021).

Despite the fact that the Sino-Iranian agreement is not yet opposed by any third party, the signing of the agreement between Iran and China is seen as a direct reaction to their conflict with the United States, particularly the new US administration. Some Iranians see the Sino-Iranian 25-year agreement as a move to counter US sanctions against Iran. To them, America's constant hammering to pressure and isolate Iran, as well as impose harsh sanctions on the country, particularly during Trump's presidency, has steadily driven Tehran to look East and reach an agreement with China. They think that by strategically collaborating with China, the Islamic Republic of Iran can quickly render the sanctions ineffective (Tehran Times, 2023). Wang also made pointed remarks during his meeting with the former president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, about "unreasonable unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran" and "the evil consequences of external interference on the regional situation," which were blatant allusions to American policy toward Iran (Tiezzi, 2021). More than just an economic measure, some Iranian experts view the signing of the agreement as a means of exerting pressure on the US administration to rejoin the JCPOA and lift sanctions against Iran. They view the partially completed strategic partnership agreement as a chance to address the cruelest aspects of the sanctions system, a system that has left its immoral imprint on a nation's life.

The 25-year Document between Iran and China, according to the Iranian Diplomacy website, is a crucial component of Beijing's power play against the United States (16)] 2023. [دیپلماسی ایرانی]. According to a similar analysis, this document is not a serious economic issue but rather a political move by Iran in order to worry Westerners about China's growing influence in the region and persuade them to support the JCPOA (17)] 2020. [دیپلماسی ایرانی]

It is believed that the agreement is a response to Biden's antagonistic stance toward both nations. As a result, analysts see China's alliance with Iran as a threat to the Biden administration while Washington tries to rally its allies against China. President Biden said it "worried me for years" in a statement about the agreement and the expanding relationship between China and Iran. (2021; Resanah). On April 6, 2021, William Figueroa, a Ph.D. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, wrote in the Diplomat that the agreement was based on Tehran and Beijing's mutual interests in fighting the US, saying: "Proponents of the deal hail the onset of mutually beneficial relations between two influential Asian countries with a shared desire to reduce and resist US influence in the region" (Figueroa, 2021). The agreement gives the two countries a chance to defy US pressure and topple Biden's plans and actions on the global stage. Thus, it was referred to as "the biggest geopolitical test in the world" by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Prior to the potential nuclear talks with Iran, it also damaged Washington's standing globally and locally (Arsalan, 2021). As the administration of President Joe Biden works to rally allies against China, the alliance between China and Iran has been seen as a challenge.

Indeed, the signing of a 25-year cooperation agreement between the oil-rich and regionally influential but US-sanctioned Islamic Republic of Iran and the globally powerful but US-pressed People's Republic of China introduces a new strategic pincer in the Middle East for the US and its allies. As a result, the US is likely to oppose this China-Iran partnership, which Washington believes threatens US security and energy interests in the Middle East and Eurasia. On the other hand, Washington's actions are likely to have played a role in pressuring China and Iran to sign the strategic partnership agreement at this time.

Beijing is attempting to counter US pressure by signing the agreement with Iran in an effort to contain Washington's power and reduce its global political and economic influence on the one hand while at the same time fighting US pressure on both Iran and China on the other. China has a reliable partner in Iran, while the United States has a hostile rival in the region. Tehran, on the other hand, requires a powerful ally like China to fend off US pressure, particularly with regard to the renewal of the nuclear deal. For the Islamic Republic to withstand US sanctions and assist Tehran in resolving its worsening economic issues, it also needs to be more open to trade with China, which is its most significant trading partner (Resanah, 2021).

Overall, there is a chance that such an agreement will motivate Washington to look for new ways to assert its control over the global economy and bolster its dwindling influence before America loses its economic edge over China. However, some Iranians have questioned the anti-Western tenet of the agreement, arguing that while Tehran wants to bring China to Iran to serve its anti-

Western objectives, Beijing already opposes the waves of Western globalization enough that if this policy enters a new ideological platform, Beijing will retreat and only implement portions of the agreement, such as the exchange of goods or the use of oil and industrial resources that do not cause regional conflict and rivalries.

7.2 What are the concerns of Iranian opponents of the China-Iran agreement?

While the Sino-Iranian deal has widespread support in Iran's business community and at multiple levels of government, some Iranian political, economic, and media experts and activists have criticized the agreement's signing from a variety of perspectives, including the lack of transparency in the text, the time constraints, and the lack of executive guarantees. In other words, while the agreement is a critical step toward greater cooperation between China and Iran at the internal, regional, and global levels, and Iranian officials view it favorably, it has been criticized by some Iranians, including several parliament members, political parties and groups, journalists, and some opposition groups outside of Iran, as well as social media users who have raised concerns about the agreement. What main issues are Iranian critics of the document on comprehensive cooperation with China raising here? The main worries are typically the worry that the nation will become dependent on China rather than the West, as well as the repetition of Beijing's experience with other nations, which was largely considered to be large and long-term loans for the governments of these countries, which subsequent generations had to repay. Additionally, Beijing may easily gain ground on Iran, given the weakening of Iran's position as a result of US tough sanctions. (2021 [9] بارسان، الف).

Many of the agreement's leaked clauses, according to some Iranians, fall under Beijing's general policy toward the entire region, not just Iran, and Beijing is attempting to include Iran within this broader regional policy. Some contend that there is no assurance that the two nations will move forward on a predetermined schedule or complete the agreement's specific provisions, objectives, and projects.

Some have questioned whether the agreement can lessen the economic pressure on Iran and how it will affect US sanctions against that country. Others have questioned whether China and the Arab nations of the Persian Gulf share similar political and economic interests, pointing out that these interests are significant, especially in the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KAS), which has more Chinese investments than Iran. Saudi Arabia is China's top supplier of oil and petrochemical goods.

Another opinion holds that the agreement would make Iran financially reliant on China for many years. Due to the unbalanced distribution of Iranian resources to China, this document is detrimental to Iranian national interests because it creates structural dependence on China.

Some critics see this deal as a sign of Iran's entry into an international game, and this means by such an agreement, Iran retreats from its principles and policies of the past 40 years. Some do not consider China a stable partner, pointing to the fact that it has pulled out of many deals with Iran in the past. Rather than asking if the agreement is mutually beneficial to China and Iran, it would be better to consider a different version of that question: "Who in Iran and China does it benefit?"

These worries have also been reflected in reports from some Iranian media outlets. For instance, the agreement was described as "somewhat ambiguous" by the Fars News Agency. On the other hand, Iran has occasionally had unpleasant dealings with other nations. Pros and cons exist. Although the report recognizes the agreement is a "roadmap," it discusses general plans for bank cooperation and infrastructure projects connected to the "New Silk Road" and the Belt and Road Initiative. Before agreeing to the specific agreement, it urges that "if Iran wants to make progress... it should not wait for the other side" and develop "a long-term plan" when talking about technology transfer (2021 [12] خبرگزاری فارس). An article in the Hamdeli Daily Newspaper asked whether Iran would become a Chinese colony?!(2020 [13] روزنامه همدلی).

In an interview, former diplomat and foreign policy expert Qasim Mohebali emphasized the importance of maintaining strategic ties with nations with which we have substantial economic and trade exchanges: The main issue regarding the conclusion of a 25-year contract with China is that relations between Iran and China are unbalanced, and Iran lacks options because of sanctions. This tips the scales in China's favor more than usual. Mohebali added: "Iran is likely to have the power to reprocess any investment in the country because of sanctions. Under such circumstances, a country like China will demand the investment it will make in Iran's projects. This could create problems for Iran in the future" (2021 [14] بارسان، ب).

The following issues have been raised in relation to such criticisms of the Sino-Iranian agreement generally (table 5):

Table 5: Negative view on the deal (authors)

| No. | Criticisms (Negative view) |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Secrecy in the publication of document text |
| 2 | China's access to Iranian ports and establishment of a 5G network in Iran |

| | |
|----|---|
| 3 | The second Turkmenchay treaty |
| 4 | Assignment of water resources and the Iranian islands |
| 5 | Cheap sale of Iranian oil to China |
| 6 | Deploying Chinese military forces in the Iranian territory |
| 7 | Limits Iran's national interests |
| 8 | Iran's inability to repay a debt to China |
| 9 | Threat to Iran's independence |
| 10 | Establishment of Chinatowns |
| 11 | The imbalance between Iran and China |
| 12 | A lower hand in the agreement |
| 13 | The deal is signed late, ineffectively, and with a short-term view. |

Some Iranians believe that the Sino-Iranian 25-year agreement has increased China's appeal to Arab nations and encouraged them to provide Beijing with numerous economic and political benefits, as demonstrated by the Chinese president's visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2022 when a summit between China, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab nations was held in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Three articles containing "hostile rhetoric" against Iran were included in a joint statement issued by the Chinese President and the leaders of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council following the summit (Jazexhi, 2023). The claim that Beijing is endorsing the UAE's claim to three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf is thought to jeopardize Iran's territorial integrity.

The majority of the aforementioned claims, however, have been refuted by Iranian authorities. They have categorically stated that there are no provisions for the deployment of military forces or bases, occupation, or anything else that would support other alarmist claims, such as the sale of Iranian islands to China. Furthermore, Reza Zabib, director of East Asia at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, described the agreement as a "non-binding document." In response to the question of why the text had not been published in its entirety, he stated that "there is a legal requirement to publish agreements; however, the publication of non-binding documents is not common" (Zabib, 2021). However, it is claimed that these criticisms are the result of a misunderstanding of the agreement.

In response to some misconceptions and slurs regarding the Sino-Iranian 25-year strategic plan, former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif emphasized the following points:

- This document is not a contract or treaty.
- This document makes no commitments for either party but rather outlines the prospects for relations.
- The publication of this document, like similar documents, requires the agreement of both parties, and the lack of public release of such strategic documents is common.
- This document contains no numbers or figures regarding cooperation, including economic, political, cultural, strategic or investment, financial and monetary resources.
- This document does not delegate any region or even point and does not create any exclusive right in any domain.
- Management, administration, or operation of any region or jurisdiction is not assigned.²
- The deployment of any military force is not envisaged in this document, and there is no possibility of taking over the base.
- This document is not in opposition to any third party or to interfere in the affairs of any country (Zarif, 2021, [4]).

8. Conclusion

The fact that China and Iran are the modern offspring of two ancient civilizations has influenced their interactions as well as the sense of self and place in the modern world that their leaders have. Given its advantageous location at the junction of the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, and South Asia, Iran has historically played a significant role as a gateway for the ancient Silk Roads and has continued to do so since China's BRI was established. This concept led to the establishment of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Beijing and Tehran, which is regarded as Iran's first long-term agreement with a major power. In a number of

² It is said that the deal is designated for investing USD 400 to 600 billion in Iran over 25 years ., yet, this has been denied by Iranian officials.

fields, the agreement aims to promote cooperation and relations between the two countries for a period of 25 years. This collaboration is seen as the foundation for Iran and China's participation in important infrastructure development initiatives like the Belt and Road initiative, as well as an opportunity to draw investment in a number of different economic sectors, including energy, industry, tourism, information technology, and communication. By promoting intercultural dialogue, tourism, media, non-governmental organizations, friendship networks, and academic cooperation, the agreement also aims to increase mutual recognition.

The deal is essentially set up as a "plan" for a considerable amount of time (25 years). In order to create and actively promote a significant strategic partnership, the two parties set forth a roadmap and outlook for close relationships in this document. This agreement should be viewed as a political-strategic, economic, and cultural program with long-term, all-encompassing aspects of relations from the perspectives of both parties.

The timing, nature of its provisions, longevity, amount of investment, and potential effects on the regional and global scenes are key factors in this agreement, especially given China's desire to expand its political and economic influence in the Middle East while allowing Iran to participate in its strategic "Belt and Road Initiative" to access European and Central Asian markets. Iran may also be able to shield its economy from the effects of US sanctions by closer integrating with China within the framework of strategic cooperation.

Despite the fact that many Iranians support the agreement, it has been criticized by political and economic experts, as well as the country's media and journalists, for issues such as secrecy in the text, unequal positions of the parties, and a lack of guarantees required to implement it. Therefore, it is assumed that having a predetermined strategy at all levels and involving locally motivated companies and forces in the agreed joint plans is the only effective strategy that can lead the Iranian side of the contract to win-win conditions in this memorandum.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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