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Department of Recreational Geography and Tourism

# The Role *of the* Great Silk Road

Discipline: The role of the Great Silk Road  
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**IRAN**  
*on the way of*  
**Great Silk Road**







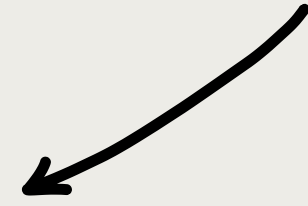
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**1** Sassanian Iran

**2** Byzantium and Turkic kaganate

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# Sassanian Iran

At the beginning of our era, the Great Silk Road connected such powerful ancient empires as the **Roman, Parthian, Kushan and Chinese** empires.

In 224, the Parthian Empire in the Near and Middle East was defeated and conquered by **Sassanian Iran**, a powerful state that was able to significantly expand its possessions.



*Parthian Warrior*

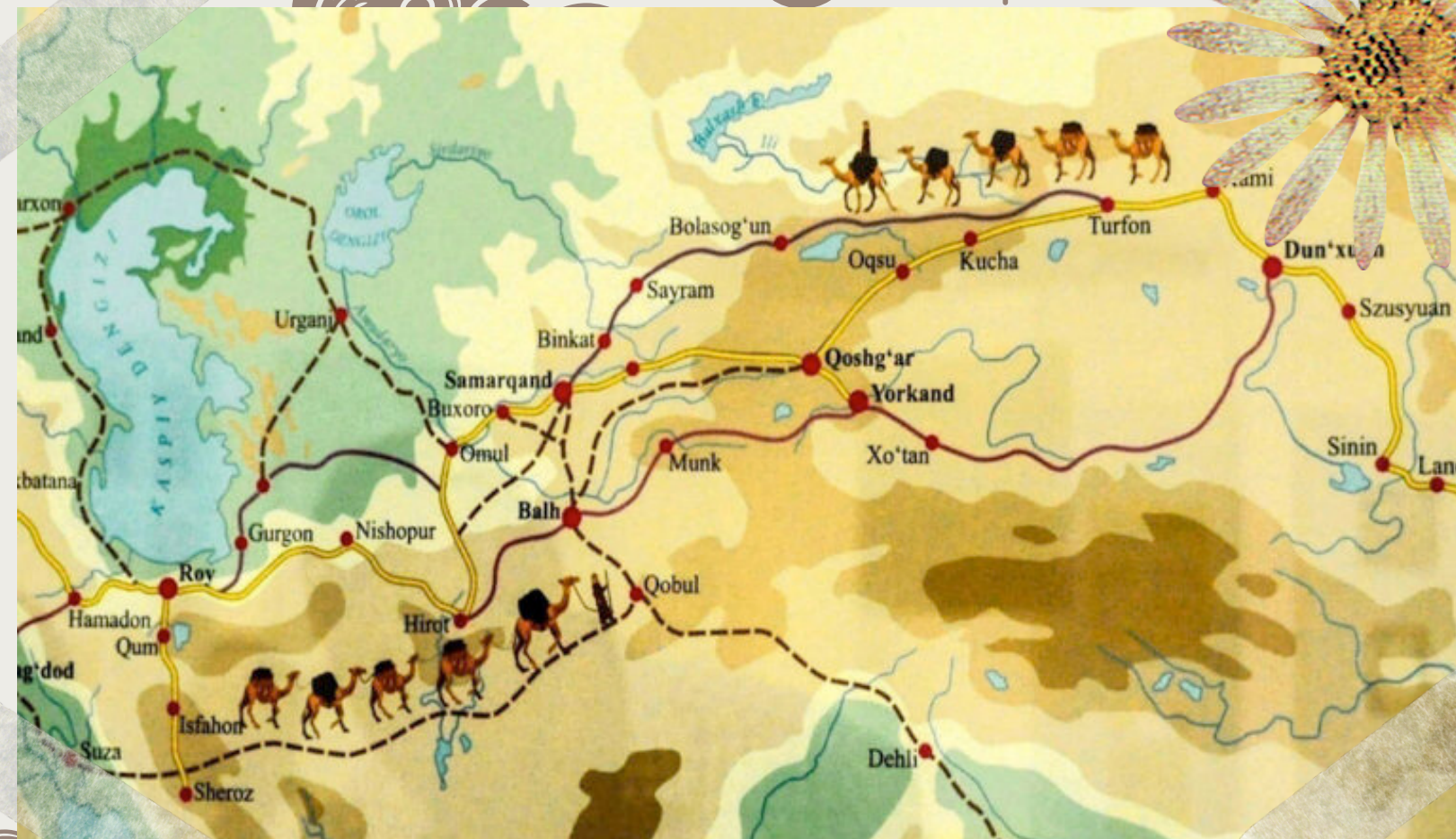


*Iranian Warriors*



# Trade route

International trade remained of great importance under the Sassanids. The most important routes crossing Iran were formed mainly by the beginning of the **1st century AD**. An offshoot of the "**royal road**" from Herat (now in Afghanistan) went north, to Merv, and further to Samarkand, where this route probably merged with the Silk Road from China along the oases of Eastern Turkestan. The region of Asia Minor and Syria was connected with the Silk Road by a land road along the Euphrates, leading to the harbors of the Persian Gulf, or by the ancient caravan road from Syria through Iran.



Great Silk Road



# Turk vs Iran

The Sassanids periodically waged wars with **Byzantium** in the struggle for domination over the busiest sections of the Great Silk Road.

In the **VI century** a significant section of the Great Silk Road from the borders of China to Iran and trade routes leading to Southern and Western Siberia came under the control of the Türkic Kaganate. Due to contradictions regarding the volume of silk trade, the Turks entered into **conflict** with Iran, and tried to build a new trade route to Byzantium, bypassing Iran, through the Volga region and the Black Sea steppes.



→ Great Silk Road  
VI century



The main goods were luxury goods – Chinese raw silk, as well as Indian goods that entered Iran mainly by land –

1

incense

2

opium

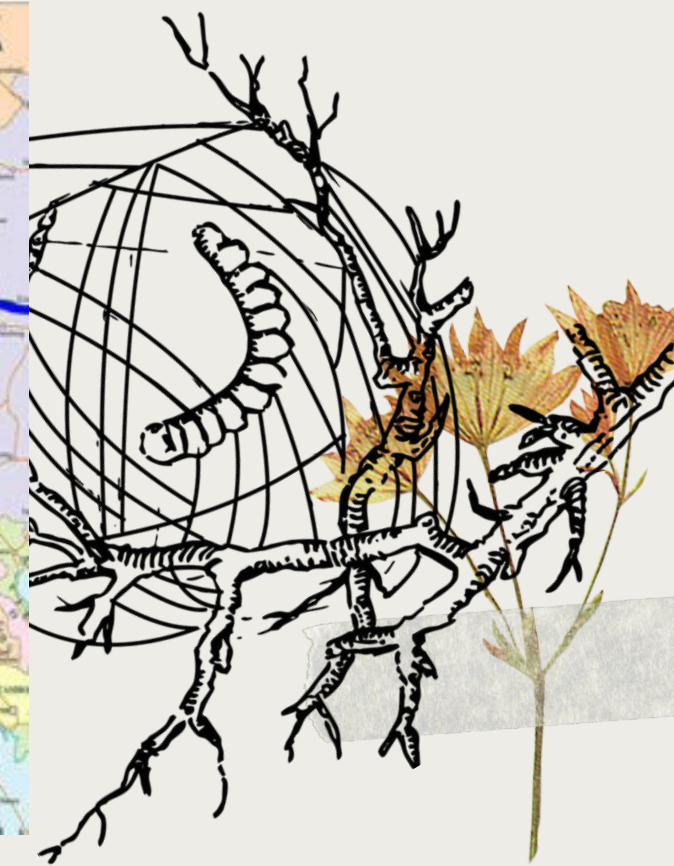
3

spices

## Importance

Thus, Iran is also an important part of the Great Silk Road. And although the modern territory of Iran is only part of what remains of the vast Sassanid empire, many monuments associated with this international artery have survived on it.

Do not forget that South Azerbaijan, together with North Azerbaijan (the territory of present-day Azerbaijan), was also a part of the Iranian Republic, a huge territory of historical Azerbaijan, which has an extremely favorable location at the junction of Asia and Europe, between the Mediterranean, the Caspian, The Black and Azov Seas and plays an important role in international trade. That is why the Iranian provinces of South Azerbaijan are also very rich in monuments of the Great Silk Road.





**In total, according to the WTO and UNESCO, most of the Silk Road monuments have survived in the provinces of Khorasan, Golestan, Semnan, Tehran, Qazvin and Zanjan, through which the Great Silk Road passed.**





# Heritage of

*Iranian*

Great Silk Road







# "Royal Road"



The journey is **2,400 kilometers** (149 miles) from the **Aegean Sea** to **Iran**, formerly known as the **Royal Road**, which can be walked in an estimated **90 days**.

Much of what we know today about this ancient Persian path crossing modern Iran is known from the writings of **Herodotus**, who himself coined the term "**Royal Road**". Built under the command of the Achaemenid king **Darius I** in the **5th century BC**, it created a connection with major cities from Susa, southwestern Iran, to Sardis, present-day Manisa.

1

Although the idea of building such a highway may have arisen for military and political reasons, the Royal Road is an important artery on the Silk Road.

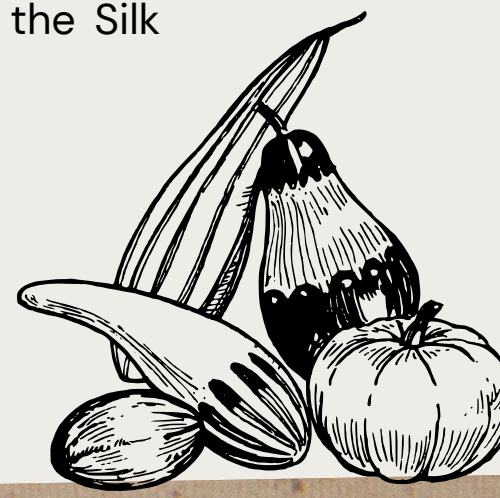
2

It was strengthened during the modernization of Darius by the introduction of systematic military checkpoints alongside caravanserais. Thus, travelers were guaranteed a safe overnight stay and the opportunity to change horses.



3

In the years after the fall of the Persian Empire, guarded caravanserais ensured the use of the road along the Silk Road by merchants and traders.



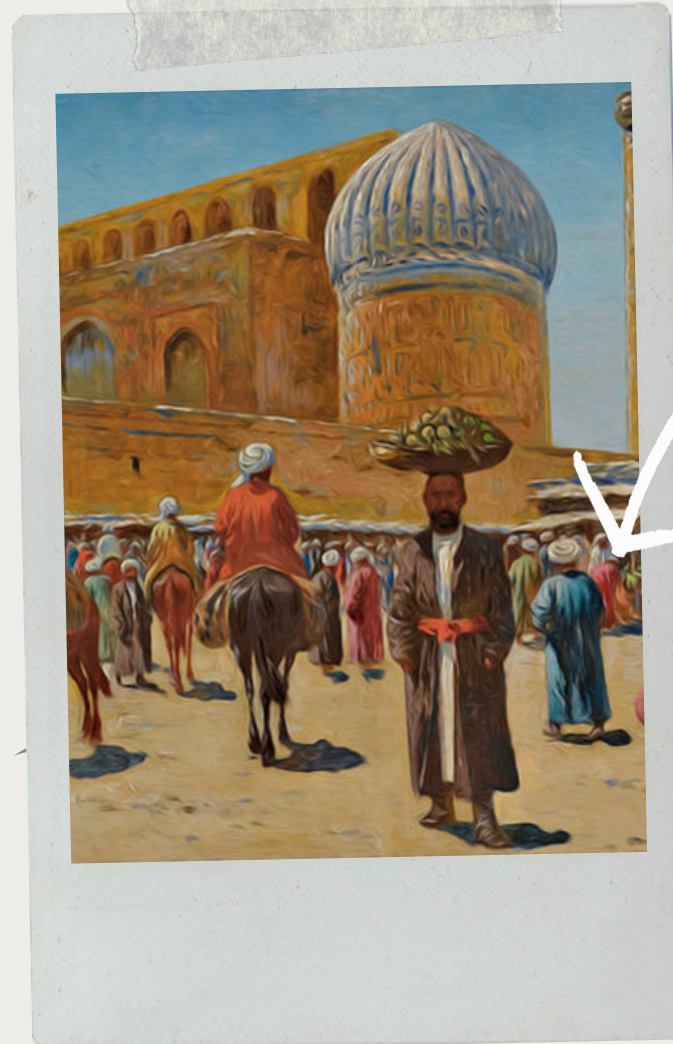


# Isfahan

According to legend, the city existed in this place as early as the III millennium BC.

Notable was the city of Isfahan, which served as the capital of the Persian Empire for several periods of history and more recently during the **Safavid dynasty**. The decision to make this city the capital of the empire was based on its role as a crossroads for travelers heading north, south, east and west, and the fact that it was a city of particular importance to the Silk Road.

Commerce played an important role in the development of the city, and thanks to the activities of **Shah Abbas**, the Great Silk Road ran through Isfahan, and the empire enjoyed trade privileges. In the **17th century**, the wealthy city of Isfahan attracted European merchants, missionaries and mercenaries. The city was becoming a multi-confessional center for international commerce and diplomacy. **Abbas I the Great** gave instructions on the active development of the historical center of the city. Many sights appeared during the era of his reign.



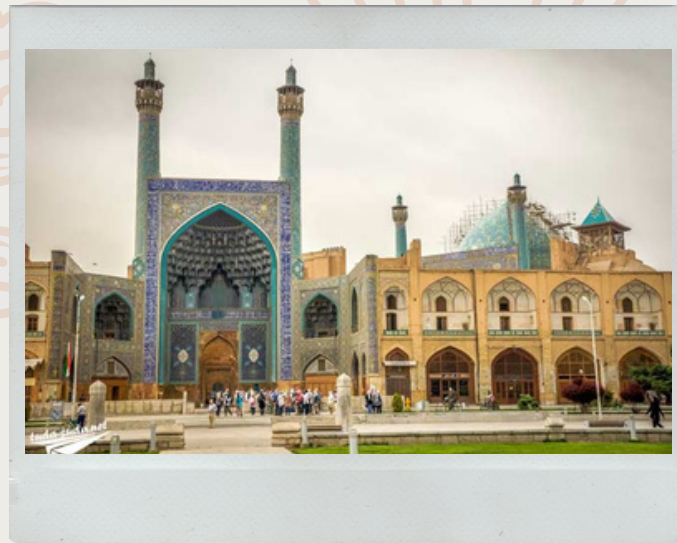
*Abbas the Great*



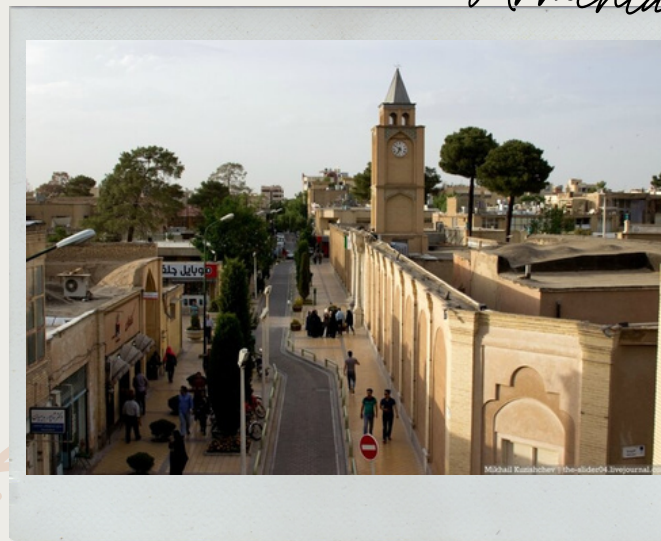


# Isfahan

*Imam square*

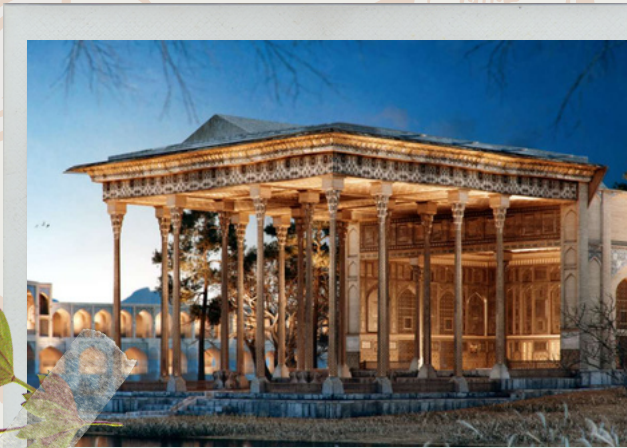


*Armenian quarter*

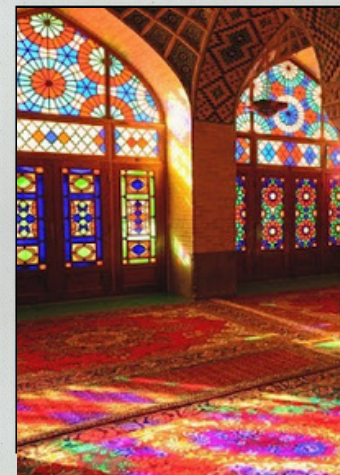


*Bridges with stone arches*

The Armenian Quarter is home to the largest and oldest Armenian diaspora in Iran. In the 17th century, Shah Abbas resettled residents here from the conquered territories of Armenia. Armenian is spoken on these streets, there are Christian churches and monasteries, and only here in Iran can you see alcohol on sale freely.



*Chehel-Sotun Palace*



*Stained glasses*

1

Imam Square, the second largest square in the world, where equestrian competitions were once held.

2

Skillful Iranian stained-glass windows, of which there are quite a few in Isfahan.

3

Unusual architectural bridges with stone arches, the palace of 40 columns Chehel-Sotun (17th century)





# Persepolis

Persepolis, conceived by Darius the Great, embodied Persian culture and religious tolerance. This tolerance manifests itself in architectural influences through the features of structures such as staircases and gateways, which were created by architects from the farthest provinces of the Persian Empire.

1

Here you can see:

bulls with  
human heads

columns and  
bas-reliefs

2

**Herodotus** wrote: "There is nothing in the world that travels faster [on the roads] than the Persian travelers."

**ATTENTION**

The view from the hill to the entire monument gives an opportunity to see that vast space and incomparable grandeur of Persepolis as a **jewel of the Achaemenid empire**.



# History

and

# Beauty

Persepolis



Darius I



1

One can only imagine the delight of Darius the Great if he learned about the modern prosperity of Iran thanks to the Royal Road with its revival of the Silk Road.

2

Thanks to the construction of land routes, the ancient cultures of Iran led reliable cooperation with countries near and far

agriculture

trade

3

Only time will tell to what extent Iran's new projects will have the same long-term impact as they did during the Silk Road.

this one!







## Iran's place in the new Silk Road



**1** As you know, the southern corridor of the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt passes through Iran, the significance and volume of cargo turnover of which will greatly increase after the full-fledged commissioning of the China-Pakistan-Iran corridor.

**2** Iran's railways, in general, are already ready for the transit of a certain volume of cargo from East Asia to Europe, both through Central Asia and through Pakistan.

**3**

On top of that, China has a plan to build a high-speed Urumqi-Tehran railway with further access to Turkey's borders. Some experts even call this project potentially "a real alternative to the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway."

**4**

This road is planned to be laid from Urumqi through Inin (PRC), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tashkent and Samarkand (Uzbekistan), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan).







## The new Persian way

Gradually, the Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran railway begins to gain momentum. Since 2018, the annual traffic volume on this railway has exceeded 1 million tons of cargo. The railway corridor through Turkmenistan, Iran allows access not only to Europe, but also to the markets of the Persian Gulf.

1

A railway is being commissioned in Iran:

Chabahar –


Zahedan

2

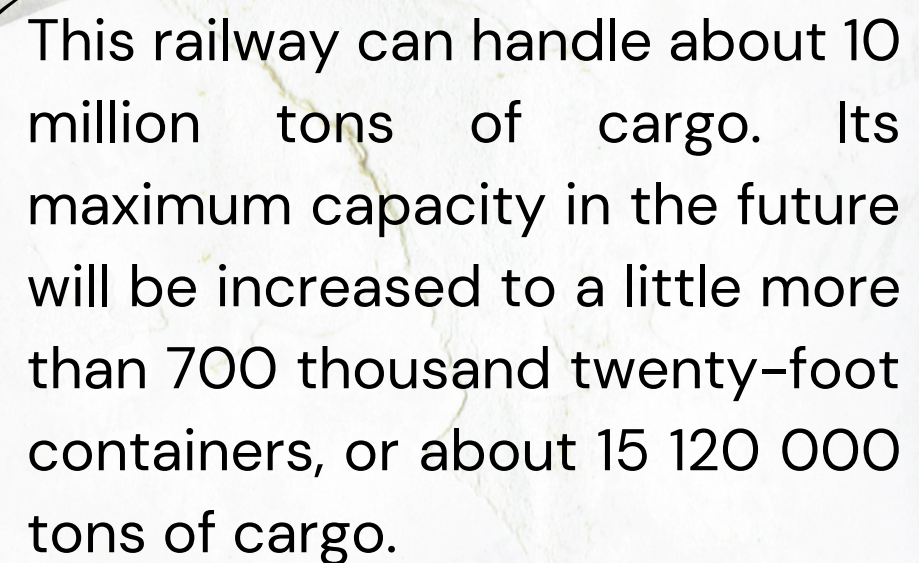
Recall that Chabahar is the only deep-water Iranian port located in the Gulf of Oman.



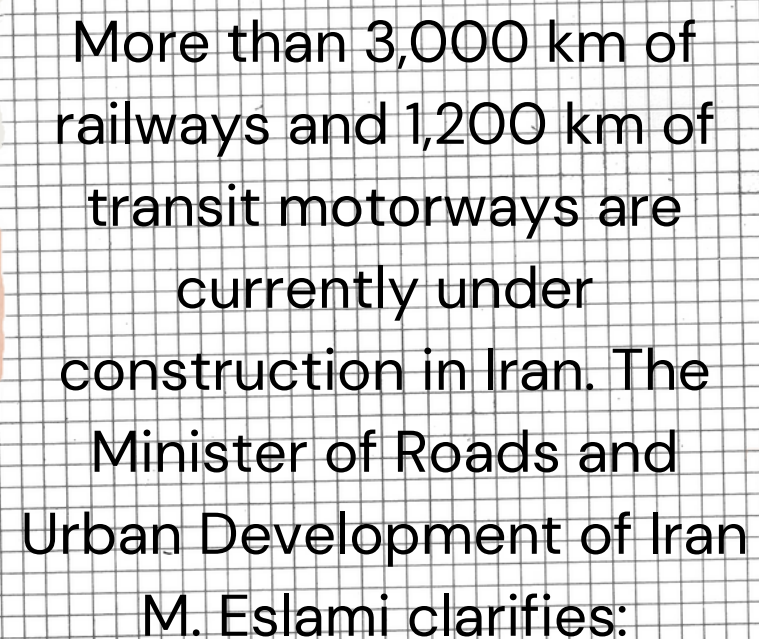




**To connect the port of Chabahar with Turkmenistan, Iran has practically built the Mashhad-Zahedan railway, up to the junction with the railway from Kazakhstan. At the same time, the capacity of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway is limited.**



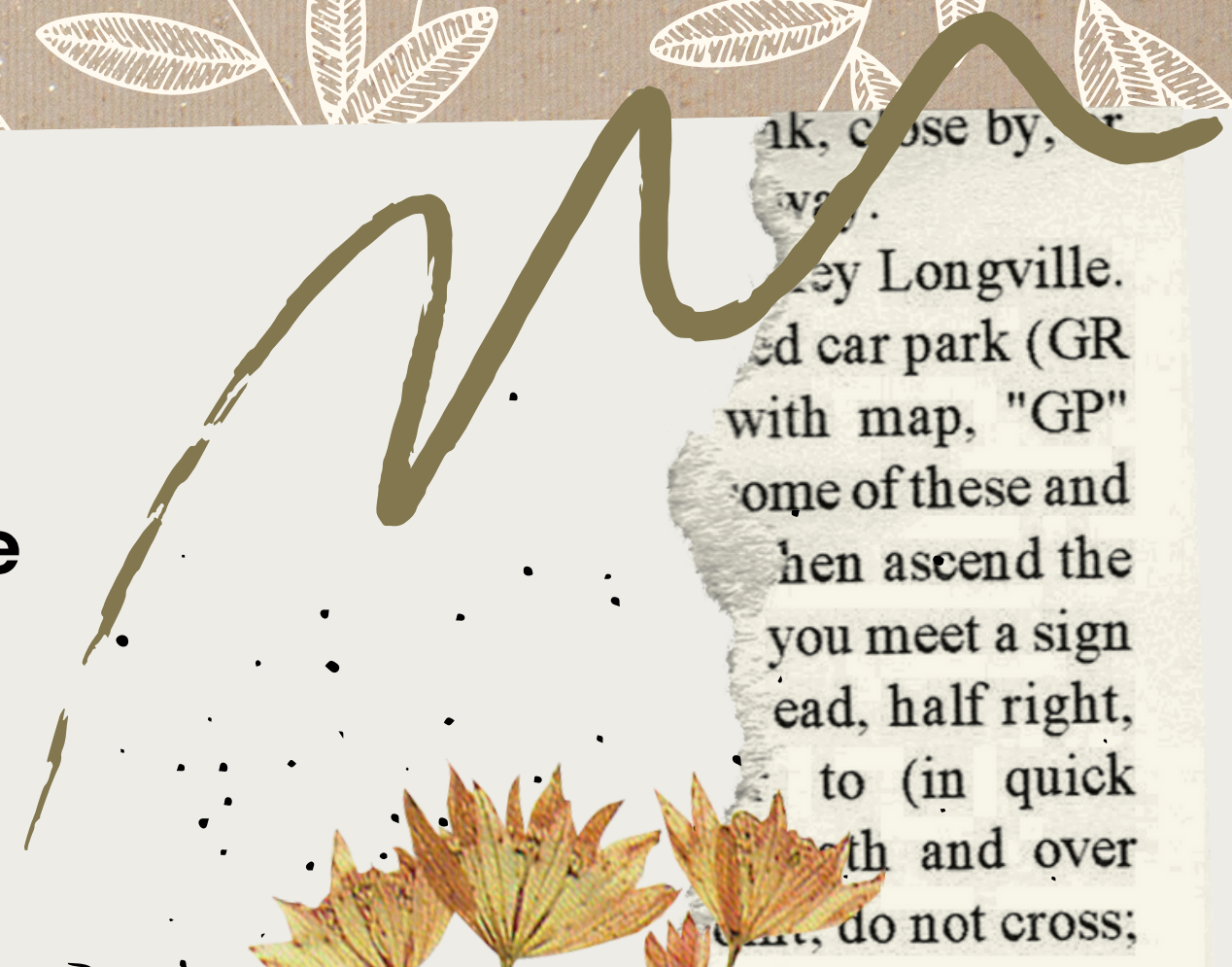
This railway can handle about 10 million tons of cargo. Its maximum capacity in the future will be increased to a little more than 700 thousand twenty-foot containers, or about 15 120 000 tons of cargo.




More than 3,000 km of railways and 1,200 km of transit motorways are currently under construction in Iran. The Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran M. Eslami clarifies:



"By expanding the railway network in the north-west of the country, we are striving to increase the efficiency of freight and passenger traffic, to connect to our western neighbors, namely Turkey and Azerbaijan, in order to speed up the transit of goods through international transit corridors. East-West, which stretch from the north-eastern and south-eastern borders of Iran to Asia in the east and Europe in the West."




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Only one Kazakh wheat Iran hypothetically can import up to 1 million tons per year, and through Iranian territory in transit it can be supplied in a volume of several million tons. Iran has a great demand for Kazakh barley - in 2016, Kazakhstan exported about 800 thousand tons of barley to this country.

## NOTES

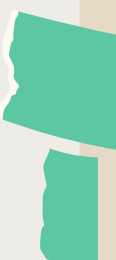
A similar increase in cargo turnover with Iran is observed on the part of Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan and Russia are showing great interest in this corridor. In addition, the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway is also aimed at entering Pakistan and further to India. The southern route is preferred by more players than the northern route. Many countries in the region are counting on good dividends from transit trade.

Kazakhstan has plans for the further development of railways and highways along the southern route. A couple of years ago it was announced that "China is working on the details of building a bridge over the Caspian Sea from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan", i.e. the parties are counting on large trading volumes.




Tehran already has some experience of trade on the Silk Road - China is Iran's largest foreign economic partner. Beijing is actively working on the launch of infrastructure projects (railways, ports) in India and Pakistan, which also need Iranian and Turkmen energy resources.

The railway corridor through Pakistan and further through Iran is of great importance for Beijing in the framework of the SREB. At present, the issue of joining the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway with the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway is being worked out, with Kazakhstan's participation in a number of transport projects in Pakistan.



The project will receive a full-fledged launch in 2030, when "it will combine a high-speed railroad, a highway, and a power transmission line." The corridor will stretch from the Chinese city of Kashgar to the Pakistani port of Gwadar. That is, this project combines two projects at once - the Sea Route and the Economic Belt of the One Belt - One Road strategy.





# Belt and One Road

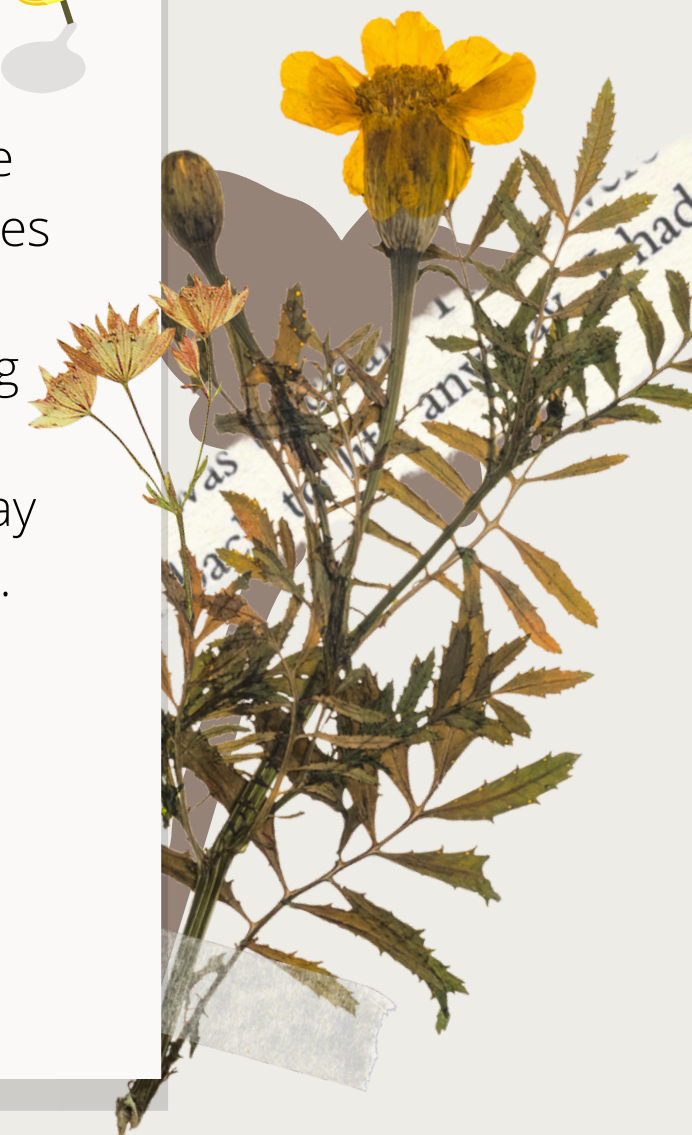
Within the framework of the Chinese strategic program "One Belt and One Road", a number of projects of sea and land routes between Europe and China are being developed under the general name of the New Silk Road.



Overland routes are united by the name "Economic Belt of the Silk Road", sea routes "Sea Silk Road of the XXI century".

A railway route through Pakistan is being built as part of the southern overland routes. The China-Mongolia-Russia railway line is being built on the northern route.

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road project provides ASEAN countries and southern China with access to port terminals in China.







**Thank you**



for your attention!

