



ESSCA EU-ASIA INSTITUTE Workshop on EU-China Relations

CALL FOR PAPERS

‘EU FACING GLOBAL CHINA: SOCIOLOGICAL, COMPARATIVE, AND RISK ASSESSMENT OF BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE’

Angers, 14–15 May 2020

Workshop purposes

- 1- Have an “inside-out” analysis of global China’s strategic action system around “Belt & Road Initiative” (BRI).***

China’s recent strategic reach from a normal globalizing economy to an extraordinary globalized power results from its internally coherent action system. This globalization system has BRI as core, supported and supplemented by national manufacturing strategies (Made in China 2025, Internet Plus Plan), techno-economic paradigm transformation (5G telecommunication technology and digital platform innovation), international political advocacy (new order of global governance, human destiny community, and ‘great power diplomacy’), “relationship network” deployment (overseas medias and external communications, person-to-person dialogue, Confucius institutes, so-called ‘united frontiers’ building), and global outreach of Chinese regional city clusters such as the Grand Bay Area of Guangdong-Hong Kong- Macau, etc. BRI can be regarded as a volunteered strategy, but it is in fact more a strategy as practice, as well as the continuation and replication of the very Chinese system of society at a new global level. To gain some new insight into the BRI and its move for the EU, the workshop will put them in the context of a broader Chinese action system, break down this system in pieces, and take a “the-other-way-around” perspective to understand the natures, logics and characteristics of current globalization of China.

- 2- Establish an objective assessment of risks and challenges of China’s current global actions on EU-China relations.***

Different from more and more US thinktanks reports which adopt often a negative geopolitical assumptions on BRI, as well as the Chinese main steam research which, on the contrary, has habit to blur the borders between academic analysis and BRI communicative promotion, the workshop will invite more disciplinary approaches with sociological, historical, institutional, and comparative theoretical foundations for assessing the risks and challenges of BRI based on objective analysis. In terms of implications on more coherent policy strategies, it is believed that both EU and China, as well as third parties in the world, will benefit from such neutral and systemic evaluation.

Comparing BRI to China’s Globalization 1.0

There has been significant expansion and globalization of Chinese capital, people, and ideas since the late 1990s. Before 2013, Chinese firms adopted “going out” strategy alongside with the government’s “going out” policy and

carried out FDI through greenfield projects, alliances, and M&A, etc. They were basically converging to business models of US, Japan and European multinational firms and market-led FDI models. This can be regarded as China's globalization version 1.0, which was a rather entrepreneurial-type and business-oriented globalization process. Yet Western countries were frequently worried about their political motives and State-owned enterprise (SOE) background. However, flows of capital, people, and ideas from China continued to increase, and greatly diversify over the last two decades to reach fields as diverse as energy, trade, transport, media, education, finance, and so on. Without BRI, China probably would have gone down this path of classic globalization with a not so heavy hand of State government.

Breaking Down BRI as Strategic System of Global China 2.0

After 2013, represented and spearheaded by the BRI, China entered into its globalization 2.0 period, i.e., a full-fledged global expansion movement led by State government. "BRI" has been advocated as China's new development strategy and framework for connectivity and cooperation among countries primarily between itself and the rest of Eurasia. It has already attracted over 100 countries and international organizations to join, and enjoyed wider support from Beijing-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Almost all Chinese "going out" activities of business companies are now collected under the banner of BRI. Around it, the world and the EU see a brand-new version of State-organized globalization with Chinese characteristics emerging.

1. Why State government and SOE are global China's backbones and driving forces in BRI?

The Chinese version of globalization and more recent Belt and Road Initiative reflect its domestic situation of capital over-accumulation, its desire of adequate supply of raw materials and energy, as well as its interest in fostering the global competitiveness of its enterprises by exporting overcapacity of production. In the process, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased globally, particularly in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. This has resulted in China becoming the most important source of FDI in the world with 158.29 billion US\$ annually in 2017. At empirical level, key actors of BRI projects in EU need to be surveyed and interviewed in a systemic way. At theoretical level, institutionalist theories such as *Theorie de Régulation* might be mobilized to put Chinese State government and State-owned enterprises under contemporary capitalism framework, to explain the striking forces of BRI for global China.

2. Is BRI the global expansion of Chinese capitalist model?

BRI has three main interwoven economic arms: industrial park with industrial capacity exportation, infrastructure investment and building, and developmental banking and long-term financial support. The BRI projects in these three areas are neither the sort of aid project by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF traditionally associated with the Washington Consensus, nor the sort of joint development project expected by Chinese government. An interesting question is the connection between the transformations of China's domestic economic development strategies and accumulation regimes on the one hand, and the expansion and globalization of China's reach, on the other. Are BRI projects geographic expansion and effort to sustain the Chinese domestic manufacturing-led and the recent finance-led regime of accumulation abroad? In particular, what are the economic and political goals of the expansion of Chinese capital beyond "accumulation for accumulation's sake"? And what impact or consequence of such "hyper accumulation regime" with Chinese characteristics will have on EU?

3. Will the global China technology and digital network make BRI an innovation powerhouse?

With the implementation of Made in China 2025, Internet Plus Plan, and the recent Intelligent Manufacturing Plus Plan, 5G telecommunication rollout, AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing, and digital platform economy are all supporting the global expansion of Chinese industrial power. It looks granted for China that BRI investment is to feed the long term technology deployment abroad, from innovation down to the rise of environmentally fit production units; many industrial sectors, including in "old" industries like steel, metallurgy or fertilizers do show an increasing fine-tuning between modernisation/closing old production capacities and, spreading technological advantages along the BRI. Will BRI spread the new, acquired, comparative advantages of China to EU? Will it drive new/further Chinese innovation? Can it enable or conversely does it threaten innovation in the West? These are practical question global and national leaders need to take a stand when treating BRI.

4. Chinese "global governance new order" and "global human destiny community": political advocacy of real power or ideology for BRI?

US Trump administration's withdrawal from the TPP gives China an opportunity to strengthen its position in the world trade. Beijing has been pushing its own regional free-trade pacts which include both the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as competitors to the TPP. Trump administration launched the United States on a protectionist course by stating that "Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength." Contrarily, China leader Xi Jinping at the World Economic Forum in 2017 called for globalization, declaring "Pursuing protectionism is like locking oneself in a dark room. While wind and rain may be kept outside, that dark room will also block light and air" (c.f. also Xi Jinping's speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China). China has long been a protectionist and isolationist economy even after it joined WTO in early 2000s while the US a free and open one following its victory in the Second World War. At levels of world economic order, political vision, regional then global geostrategic ambition, it seems the US and China, the two largest economies in the world, changed their verbal positions.

5. How powerful is the role of "relationship network building" of global China in BRI?

The strategy of promoting BRI is often mixed up with Chinese "relationship network" extension. For example, over the course of the last decade, China has actively sought to establish a "new world media order" and pulled money on modernizing its international TV broadcasting, investing in foreign media outlets, buying vast amounts of advertising in the international media, and inviting journalists from all over the world on trips visits to China. Also through its embassies and its network of Chinese culture-and-language Confucius Institutes, China no longer hesitates to intimidate in order to impose its own vocabulary in international publishing, educational and think tank circles. In Southeast Asia, authoritarian regimes are adopting Internet control regulations based closely on Chinese legislation. Is this expansion different from other cultural encounters brought by multinational business development, in terms of scale and content? Is there any impact on media in their Western tradition? Are they competing with journalism and constituting another part of BRI? What roles do the various Chinese diasporas, associations and networks play in BRI processes? And, how does "relationship building" integrate with other parts of the global China strategic system?

6. What will future world/EU become at the dawn of the global China made by BRI?

By far, if China's global imprint has been most prominent in the economic or geo-economic fields, the country's increasing presence also has important social, cultural and political aspects. Given China's increasing importance as a global actor, the evolving features of Chinese global capitalism will produce, complicate and reconfigure new political, economic, and social "fields" and "frontiers" in the world, including EU. From a sociological-historical perspective, one may hypothesize that BRI represents a global diffusion and dissemination of the ultra-stable structure of Chinese society to other places in the world, replacing or substituting the previous globalized structure and model. Thus, it is an aggressive conquering rather than an assimilation or fusion process, realizing the "unpeaceful rise of China". On the other side, whether EU will become part of the new global China or not also depends on its reaction today. Will EU wake up or continue to sleep, in face of the Chinese state's expansion and globalization strategy.

Assessing the Risks of Global China in EU and Implications for Policy Strategies

Between US and China, EU is hesitating. The brand-new strategy paper of the European Commission on EU-China relations sounds like a real change in tone and attitude towards global China. Finally, some practical questions become urgent and important: what are the geopolitical and geo-economic implications of the BRI in Europe? How should EU respond to this full-fledged expansion of China? How can take into consideration of wider Eurasia? Are there any better equilibria points between the extreme choices? For answering these, more systemic and theory-founded assessment of risks and challenges of global China in EU is needed. Some key performance indicators need to be counted to check BRI and its strategic system, such as geographical distribution, competition vs. value chain complementarity to local industry, degrees of technology and know-how transfer, maturity of technology, acceleration effects in local enterprises, optimal level of global innovation as well as on territorial distribution of innovative industries, etc. Macro systemic assessment of risks will not only benefit the recipient countries of BRI, China and third-party countries will also draw useful knowledge from it. It is important to work out mutual and reciprocal policy strategies between EU and China. Otherwise, at least in the short term, the BRI will remain what it now is, just a Chinese initiative.

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Submissions

For “EU facing global China”, we invite applications by both senior and junior scholars (Ph D students with fresh first hand field work are strongly encouraged), researchers, graduate students, practitioners and representatives of the private sector and the civil society of all nationalities to send us their paper proposals on the following non-exclusive themes, with strong taste on sociological, comparative and risk-awared analysis:

1. **BRI as flagship action of global China 2.0, its impact on EU, and EU response**
2. **MiC 2025, Chinese digital economy, and 5G innovation as technology spears of BRI, their relevance to EU, and EU response**
3. **Chinese “new order of global governance and mankind destiny community (Xi Jinping thoughts)”, BRI ideological model, and EU**
4. **China's use of diaspora influence in EU and relevance to BRI**
5. **BRI and its relevance to the approach of Chinese *Guanxi* network**
6. **EU at dawn of global China, future and prediction**

Proposals should be 500-600 words. Deadline for submission is **Tue, 14 Jan 2020**. Accepted panellists will be informed on a rolling admissions basis. The full-fledged papers of 5000-8000 words will be expected by **Fri, 17 April 2020**. Please submit your proposals along with your short biographies to wei.zhao@essca.fr.

Proposed outputs

The workshop papers will be integrated and edited into a focus report for strategy purpose, then transformed into a book edition.

Peer-reviewed journal for publication is in contact.

Hosting institution

ESSCA School of Management will cover lunch and coffee breaks. There are no registration fees for this workshop.

Scientific Committee / Keynote Speakers

To be announced when ready (Open now. For becoming member of SC or invited speaker, please contact wei.zhao@essca.fr)

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