
THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE EU

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A REMINDER ON THE B&R INITIATIVE

- Launched in September 2013 in Kazakhstan (the « Belt »)
- The « Road » is added in November in Indonesia
- Major objective: enhancing connectivity
- Initially the major focus was on « hard » infrastructure, but exclusively focusing on this aspect misses the point, the objectives of B&R have substantially changed over time

SHIFTING OBJECTIVES

- Since its launch five years ago, B&R has been constantly evolving
- Geographical expansion: nowadays, **all countries are potentially affected** by B&R.
- Sectoral expansion: the **project goes well beyond the infrastructure sector** to encompass the tourist, customs, police and legal sectors among others.
- China is **promoting intangible cooperation** via B&R (standards, management of flows of goods, data, people, etc.).
- B&R is seen by China as a vector for **internationalizing Chinese priorities** (policy coordination)
- China also sees its project as a platform for international interaction (multilateral as well as bilateral) and more generally as a tool for **restructuring global governance**.
- Lastly, it is also a vector for promoting a **new form of globalization**.

B&R AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

- Few projects in Western Europe
- Few joint projects in third countries
- But a rising activism vis-à-vis Central and Eastern European countries (16+1), as well as vis-à-vis Southern Europe (or the Mediterranean)
- B&R and the division of the EU

DIFFERENT REACTIONS ACROSS EUROPE

- Overall, cautious stance on the part of Western European countries
- More enthusiasm on the part of CEECs ...
- ... as well as from some Southern European countries
- No pushback against China though, but attempts to push for reciprocity

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

- Need for a more coordinated approach and for more internal discussion on B&R within the EU (information sharing, feedback discussion, etc)
- Need to avoid being naive and to take all dimensions of B&R into consideration
- Support connectivity projects without necessarily supporting B&R as such

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !