

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: HARMONY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY

The Struggle For Supremacy over Global Trading Networks

Abstract

The Belt and Road initiative (BRI) is increasingly recognised as an evolving 'alternative global trading system' premised on delivering a new global wealth distribution led by China and powered by Confucian ideals of harmony and mutuality.

Ever since Xi Jinping launched the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in a September 2013 speech delivered to the Indonesian parliament, the key for China, was to keep ASEAN at the core of its connectivity plans and dispel regional fears about the creation of a China-centered regional community (Stubbs and Chin, 2011, Acharya, 2009, Dosch, 2007). Notwithstanding US efforts to discredit the BRI, for China, the cooperation framework with ASEAN was to be based on deepening both strategic trust and good-neighbourly friendship while simultaneously deepening cooperation on economic development and expanding mutual benefit and win-win outcomes (ASEAN- China Centre, 2013, Chan, 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether the BRI's role in the creation of a "community of common destiny" has evolved in four key points of cooperation in non-economic fields (Swaine, 2015):

(1) ensuring the security of transport routes, especially the sea routes; (2) strengthening antiterrorism cooperation at regional level ; (3) establishing a mechanism for settling territorial land and sea disputes ; (4) giving impetus to common exploitation of marine resources. The research is significant for the Asia Pacific region, where the four points are core political debates.

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