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China's Long March 2.0
The Belt and Road Initiative as development model

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The Belt& Road Initiative, aka "New Silk Roads" builds on the former significance of the "Middle Kingdom" and at the same time creates a blueprint for making China great again. The expansion of transport infrastructure, energy supply and economic corridors between Asia, Africa and Europe serves as an initiative to enter a "new Golden Age of Globalization".

Domestically, this is an attempt to maintain growth within China and to secure the legitimacy of the government through implementation of a stimulus program promoted by corporations and supported by the state. In terms of foreign policy, Beijing has thus taken the lead in the global development discourse, at least in Asia and Eurasia. Economic modernization, the security of raw materials supply, especially energy, and access to sales markets as well as the formation of new multilateral institutions geared to China mean a further increase in power.

The book traces central aspects of the discourses on geo-economy, geo-politics, multipolar world order, hegemonic competition and globalization, which have been triggered by this initiative. It questions the extent to which this development strategy is compatible with democratic conditions, social and ecological justice, respect for human and minority rights and the elimination of conflicts. And it examines the assurances of the Chinese leadership, that it does not pursue global hegemonic, let alone imperial ambitions with the initiative.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Ways out of the crisis

Since the financial crisis ten years ago at the latest, China's successful development model to date has reached internal and global expansion and accumulation limits. This also jeopardizes its domestic legitimacy function. According to the "Go West" strategy of opening up domestic expansion areas in the name of regional balance, the Silk Road Initiative will now increasingly open up global expansion areas, which should not only improve access to markets and raw materials, but at the same time have an impact on an economic restructuring and modernisation process within the country ("Made in China 2025").

Chapter 3: Infrastructure development as growth strategy

With its "New Silk Roads" initiative, the Chinese government promises the participating countries considerable investment and an economic growth boost. The focus is on infrastructure development and economic corridors. However, the initia-

tive also entails numerous economic and ecological risks and imponderables, especially for poorer and weaker countries and people, through which the land and sea routes pass.

Interview with **Korinna Horta**, *urgewald*:

"The AIIB derives international credibility from the membership of Germany and other non-regional countries."

Chapter 4: Opportunities and risks in Central Asia

At Nazarbayev University, named after the president of Kazakhstan, Xi Jinping officially presented the Silk Road Initiative for the first time in September 2013. Kazakhstan plays a key role as a western neighbour of Xinjiang province and access to Central Asia and further west, as an oil supplier and a potential location for the outsourcing of Chinese production facilities. Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan also belong to Russia's sphere of influence to date, which it seeks to bind to itself for example through the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Beijing must therefore come to terms with Moscow for the Silk Road Initiative.

Chapter 5: Limits to ecological civilisation

A key aspect of the initiative is to secure the supply of raw materials and energy, especially fossil fuels, for China's growing economy. The cornerstones of the new Silk Roads are supply regions in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa and partly in the Gulf of Bengal and the Arctic, as well as new supply routes and investments in power plants and dams. One example is the economic corridor with Pakistan (CPEC). At the same time, China's environmental problems are externalized, resource plundering in other regions is intensified, and an extractive economic and growth model is strengthened. China's policies operate with different standards: In the country itself, comprehensive environmental protection regulations have now been introduced and an energy transition initiated. For foreign investment, on the other hand, such guidelines and rules are largely absent or are merely non-binding.

Interview with **Sukhgerel Dugersen**, *OT Watch*:

"I am afraid the momentum for an alternative development path for Mongolia was lost with embarking on a mineral extraction based economic development policy."

Chapter 6: Top dog in Southeast Asia

The conflict in the South China Sea is equally concerned with China's territorial claims against the other riparian states, with the control of trade routes, with access to resources and with China's return to "historic greatness". While Beijing is increasingly underpinning its claims with military presence and nationalist campaigning, the Silk Road Initiative functions in parallel as an instrument to persuade opponents to make concessions and to buy political support from other countries in Southeast Asia for its own position in the conflict. Even though Beijing has so far asserted its foreign economic and political interests primarily with money, invest-

ment and diplomacy, the conflict illustrates how closely economic and geostrategic interests are linked.

Interview with **Wolfram Schaffar**, Stiftung Asienhaus:
"The idea of democracy has be discredited."

Chapter 7: China rule the waves

Chinese corporations are in the process of systematically expanding their presence on the maritime Silk Road. The aim is to strengthen control over maritime trade, in which Western seafaring nations still dominate as a relic from colonial times. 'Rule the waves' is therefore an essential part of the efforts to push back 'Christian seafaring' and to lead China back to its former glory not only as a country but also as a maritime power. In this strategy, Sri Lanka is taking on a strategic role in this process. At the same time, India is concerned that the ports could serve as bases for a strengthened Chinese navy, diminishing its own claim to domination in the Indian Ocean.

Chapter 8: Tensions in South Asia

Looking at the B&R maps, one can get the impression that India is being encircled through the initiative by new traffic connections that could be used for military purposes in the event of conflict. Geostrategists and the military are therefore warning against military dominance. In addition, the Chinese presence is growing with economic corridors and trade and investment agreements that China has negotiated or already concluded with numerous countries in the region, in regions that India regards as its economic and political sphere of influence. The focus is on the economic corridor between the port city of Gwadar and China's western province of Xinjiang (CPEC) and massive cooperation with the 'arch-enemy' Pakistan. As a counterweight, the New Delhi government is knitting its own regional alliances, infrastructure projects and access to sales markets - without, however, being able to keep up with China's financial strength and strategic diplomatic 'soft power' game. Therefore, there are also important voices in India that see the initiative as an opportunity for an economic and political rapprochement between the two countries and even for detente in the whole region - provided that India is recognized by China as an equal partner.

Chapter 9: A Bridge to Africa

The history of China in Africa is much shorter and less intense than that of relations with South and Southeast Asia, although Admiral Zheng He called at several ports on the east coast in the 15th century. A milestone in the recent history of China in Africa was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (*Tazara*), a symbol of the support of Communist China for the postcolonial independence of African countries. In the decades that followed, China's contribution to development consisted primarily in the expansion of infrastructure, the exchange of loans for commodities, cheap consumer goods, and development aid. However, this did not bring about a broad sustainable development. In addition, there were numerous protests, conflicts, hos-

ilities and failed projects. In the meantime, Beijing is attempting to renew relations with the extension of the maritime Silk Road, initially primarily in East Africa with the establishment of economic zones for Chinese and other foreign investors.

Chapter 10. Investors on the Balkan route

The takeover of the Greek port of Piraeus by the state-owned shipping company COSCO has received particular attention in Europe so far in the discussion about the sale of Greek silverware through forced privatization. But the move provides the B&R Initiative control over an end point of the maritime Silk Road - and another gateway to Europe. Chinese infrastructure plans, investments and diplomacy are aimed intensively at countries on the EU periphery in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The EU, for its part, has long lacked a comprehensive strategic approach to respond to the advances and/or to implement cooperations such as the EU-China Connectivity Platform.

Interview with **Frans-Paul van der Putten**, Clingendael Institute:

"The EU should engage with China and other countries to jointly build the new Silk Road."

Chapter 11: Outline of a new hegemony

With B&R, China has taken over the hegemony of discourse on the further development of globalization. At the same time, Beijing is emphatically re-positioning itself against rivals for regional and global hegemony. However, not all observers see imperial ambitions in this so far. The question is what plan B the government has for the event that problems and resistance arise in the implementation of this prestigious project, the transformative crisis solution fails, and the growth-based legitimacy of the state, party, and Xi Jinping crumbles. Already, close alliances with authoritarian regimes are striking. Domestically, control over the party, media, business and population is increasing. It is also conceivable that the initiative would lead to a "reluctant hegemony" in which China would be forced to protect citizens, supply routes and investments abroad, and would also play out a stronger military power globally.

Interview with **Au Loong Yu**, Hong Kong:

"It is hard to imagine that Xi can ever exterminate all his opposition within the party".