

“The Belt and Road Initiative @Five: Taking stock of global ambitions, regional response, and looking ahead”

GCRF COMPASS workshop
13-15 March 2019
Canterbury, Cambridge



The Belt and Road Initiative @Five: Taking stock of global ambitions, regional response, and looking ahead

One-day workshop and Master class
University of Kent, Canterbury
13-14 March

Concept: Since Chinese President Xi Jinping announced his signature global economic development project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in Kazakhstan and Indonesia five years ago in 2013, the BRI has become a by-word for a growing list of connectivity projects that have the ambition to encompass 75 per cent of the global economy across Asia, Europe and Africa. The multi-billion dollar initiative claims to boost regional cooperation on infrastructure development, policy reforms, trade and economic growth by facilitating greater trans-regional connectivity. Over the past five years, many countries have clamoured to become connectivity hubs along the land and maritime elements of the BRI. Despite all the hype the BRI has generated in its first five years, the reality is more mixed, in terms of the number and success of projects that have been delivered to date (as opposed to promised investment), and in relation to some of the practices involved in the BRI. While many countries have welcomed Chinese investment and the opportunities to develop much-needed domestic infrastructure and outward connectivity, there is a growing list of BRI partners, including Central Asian and Eastern neighbourhood countries, who begin to demonstrate resistance and even overt rejection to the offered opportunities.

This one-day workshop is supported by the COMPASS project, and is also relevant to scholars working on the topics of IR, IPE, and FPA with a focus on the BRI, Central Asia, Eurasian Economic Union and Eastern Partnership Initiative. The key objective of this workshop is to shed light on recent developments regarding China's BRI and the regional responses to China's growing investments. The workshop offers a unique platform to bring together scholars and experts from different regions to discuss the response towards and implications of China's BRI.

The one-day workshop takes place on **13 March** 2019, at the University of Kent ([Canterbury](#)). It will be followed by a specialist master-class for MA/PhD students at Kent, on **14 March** 2019, to which workshop participants are welcome to contribute. Thereafter, the COMPASS participants will attend a project meeting and roundtable in Cambridge on **15 March** 2019.

The [GCRF UKRI COMPASS project](#) (ES/P010849/1, 2017-21) is an ambitious UK government capacity-building initiative, aiming to extend UK research globally, to address the challenges of growth and sustainability in the developing countries. Notably, the COMPASS project, together with Cambridge University as its research partner, seeks to establish '**the hubs of excellence**' at the top-level HEIs in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to enable them to act as nodes for knowledge sharing and transfer along the following three dimensions, namely **research integration, impact governance, and sustainable communities**.

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DRAFT WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

13 March 2019

University of Kent, Canterbury campus

Darwin Conference Suite

(A map of the campus with the relevant venues can be found at the end of this document)

09.00 – 09.30 Registration/Coffee

09.30 - 11.15 Panel I: China's Grand Strategy and its visions for international order

Moderator: Emilian Kavalski

Kerry Brown (King's College London) – Paper title TBC

Olivia Cheung (Warwick University) - *'China's grand strategy and its visions for international order'*

Anisa Heritage and Pak K. Lee (University of Kent) – *'China's Belt and Road Initiative and Counter-Hegemony'*

Yu Jie (Chatham House and LSE Ideas) - Paper title TBC

11.15 – 11.45 Coffee break

11.45-13.30 Panel II: The BRI and response from the region: The eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia (Part 1)

Moderator: Anisa Heritage

Akram Umarov (University of World Economy and Diplomacy) - *'The role of the BRI in China's new Afghan policy'*

John Heathershaw (University of Exeter) - *'Centred Discourse, Decentred Practice: The Relational Production of Russian and Chinese 'Rising' Power in Central Asia'*

Aleksandr Baichorov (Belarusian State University) – *'Belt and Road Initiative in Eurasian context'*

Ali Saqer (ADA University) – *'The Origins of Everyday National Competitiveness: The case of BRI'*

Moritz Pieper (Salford University) - *'Understanding local agency in China's 'Belt and Road' initiative: Mongolia and Kazakhstan as geopolitical bridgeheads'*

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch break

14.30-16.30 Panel III: The BRI and response from the region: The eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia (Part 2)

Moderator: Pak K. Lee

Natasha Kuhrt (King's College London) - *'An expanded SCO in the time of the BRI: reinvigorated, or on the road to redundancy?'*

Cristian Nitoiu (Loughborough University London) - *'Assessing the impact of BRI project on the EU-China-Russia triangle'*

Balihar Sanghera and Elmira Satybaldieva (University of Kent) – *'Managing BRI projects in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan'*

Alice Ekman (IFRI) – *'France and Europe facing China's "Belt & Road Initiative": the emergence of a strategy'*

Zhouchen Mao (University of Kent) – *'Greening Belt and Road Initiative: China's climate finance in Central Asia'*

16.30-16.45 Concluding remarks by the organisers**17.00-18.00 Drinks reception**

Grimond Foyer, ground floor.

The drinks reception is hosted by the School of Politics and International Relations.

18.00-19.00 Key note lecture by Prof Emilian Kavalski

Grimond Lecture Theatre 3

Prof Emilian Kavalski (University of Nottingham at Ningbo, China), *'One Belt, One Road: China's New World Making or Just Another Power Transition?'*

Since their launch in 2013, the trans-Eurasian “economic belt” and the Afro-Eurasian “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century” of OBOR have progressed speedily. It is obvious that OBOR seeks to replicate the ancient Silk Roads, which represented more than a strip of geography, a venue for commerce, barter and trade from long ago, and far away. The Silk Roads were also a way of life in a world richly populated by multiplicity and complexity, exchanges and flows, languages/religions/goods, despite constant conflicts and contestations. In this respect, the question that seems to preoccupy many today is: What is OBOR? Is OBOR a viable, Silk-Road alternative to Neoliberal globalization? Or does OBOR reproduce the latter but under a different guise? This lecture aims to find out.

The lecture is part of the School of Politics and IR's Public Speaker Programme. Everyone is welcome to attend.

19:00 – 20:00 Workshop dinner at the Beagle (workshop participants only)

The Beagle, Darwin building 1st floor.

MASTER CLASS AND PROJECT MEETINGS PROGRAMME

DAY 2, 14 MARCH

A master class with MA/PhD students at the University of Kent, Canterbury

*** Workshop participants are welcome to contribute to the discussion***

09.30 – 11.30 Master class, School of Politics and IR Meeting Room (Rutherford N4.N1)

This master class will involve current students in cutting-edge research which they can use to inform their studies, research dissertation and future research projects. It will be open to MA and PhD students at the University of Kent, with an interest in:

- Eurasia as a geostrategic region;
- Contributing to the development of the concept of resilience in International Relations;
- Building understanding of the current transformations in world order.

Specific questions that will be addressed, include: Is China spreading influence to Europe, especially to Central and Eastern Europe? Will it likely generate a conflict or competition for allies/friends between China and the EU and USA?

COMPASS meeting in Cambridge

Invited GCRF COMPASS participants only

16.00 Train to Cambridge and check-in at accommodation.

19.00 Dinner with the COMPASS Cambridge team.

DAY 3, 15 MARCH

Roundtable at the Cambridge Central Asia Forum, Centre for Development Studies

Invited GCRF COMPASS participants only

11.00 – 13.00 Round table, Centre for Development Studies

13.00 – 14.00: Lunch and departure