

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as norm-shaper – how can Switzerland contribute to its institutions, norms and values to realize stable and sustainable Eurasian development?

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Objectives

This study paper evaluates the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In doing so, it seeks to answer questions related to the initiative's commitment to multilateralism; and whether it supports existing norms in areas such as security, WTO rules, sustainable development goals, or environmental standards. The study aims to establish the interests, norms and values fostered in the implementation of the BRI, paying attention to the mechanisms and processes used to develop such norms and values from the perspective of BRI partners, especially Switzerland.

The core question focuses on the institution building, norm-shaping and governance aspects of BRI and on what Switzerland can do to positively contribute and influence this process; both from an economic as well as from a comprehensive institutional perspective (including politico-military and human security dimensions).

The study builds upon previous research by the authors (Casas/Serrano 2018; Casas Klett 2014; Lavenex/Serrano 2016; Lavenex/Krizic/Serrano 2017) and existing literature on China and the BRI (e.g. Acharya 2016; Blanchard/Colin 2017; Casarini 2016; CIFS 2014; Ferdinand 2016; Fukuyama 2016; Grossman 2017; Ikenberry/Lim 2017; Swaine 2015; Yiwei 2016) and key third countries involved or affected by BRI such as the EU (Ghiasi/Zhou 2017; Godement 2015; Le Corre 2017), Eurasian Economic Union/Russia (Bond 2017; Dragneva/Wolczuk 2017; Trenin 2015; Wilson 2016), or India/Pakistan (Kaplan 2010; Madan 2016; Ranjan 2015). Given the broad scope and very large number of stakeholders involved in the BRI, including state and non-state actors, national and local (provincial) governments, NGOs, private firms etc., we look at concrete institutional aspects of the BRI, including its conceptualization, economic and security aspects, as well as Switzerland's potential in shaping the initiative.