

BRI and FOIP: Can They Coexist?

Belt and Road Initiative / Free and Open Indo-Pacific

The 6th GSDM International Symposium
“Geopolitics, Geoeconomics, Energy, and
Innovation in East Asia”, 27 February 2019
Akio Takahara, Dean of GraSPP, UTokyo

What is the Belt & Road Initiative?

Cf. New Model of Major Country Relations with the US

- No confrontation, mutual respect, win-win cooperation
- Xi Jinping wishes to stabilise big power relations, avoid confrontation b/n a rising power and the hegemonic power

—America First, cooperate where they can

← However: strategic competition cannot but intensify e.g. over Cyberspace, Western Pacific (incl. East and South China Seas)

China Turns to Eurasia: The Advent of **BRI**

Swing in the diplomatic policy pendulum from America First to Eurasia First, i.e. turn to the neighbours and to the west

Connect East Asia and Europe, & develop the routes

Share institutions to facilitate investment and trade

Counter TPP; establish a new international bank (AIIB)

Utilise excessive construction & production capacities

Domestic and International Impact of BRI

Attracted great attention and “participation”; investment and trade increased

Raised concerns about the profitability of some projects and China’s strategic interests

BRI is a Constellation

The concept: a diplomatic and political genius, an attractive **constellation** (definition is unclear) Cf. **the China Dream**

In reality what matters to us is the **stars, i.e. projects** (let us not be dazzled by the **constellation**)

A signature project of Xi Jinping: **the symbol of Xi's power and authority in the world**

Free & Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP): Another Constellation

- “Improve ‘connectivity’ between Asia and Africa through free and open Indo-Pacific, and promote stability and prosperity of the region as a whole” (Japan’s MoFA homepage)
- Key areas: 1) developing an environment for international peace, stability and prosperity, and sharing universal values; 2) addressing global issues toward achieving SDGs and promoting human security; 3) together with developing countries, contributing to economic diplomacy and regional revitalization that aims at "quality growth"

Two Aspects of the Two Initiatives

- Strategic: geopolitical/geoeconomic competition
- Economic: competition and cooperation

Cf. Fragility and Resilience in Japan-China relations

⇒ Focus on the economic aspect, then the two **constellations** can overlap and coexist

← Can the US bear this?