

BOOK REVIEW

“CHINA CONNECTS THE WORLD – WHAT’S BEHIND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE”

Wang Yiwei, *China Connects The World - What's Behind The Belt and Road Initiative*, The Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development (CIRSD), Belgrade, 2018, p.p. 264.

We have in front of us the second Chinese scientific book by Professor Wang Yiwei, entitled *China Connects The World - What's Behind The Belt and Road Initiative* devoted to the study of the Belt and Road Initiative. Professor Wang Yiwei is a professor at the International Studies School and Director of the Institute for International Affairs. He is also a Research Associate and Director of the Center for European/EU Studies and Senior Research Associate at the National Academy for Development and Strategy, as well as an Associate of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. The author of this book is also known as “Mister Belt and Road”, due to a significant number of scientific papers he has published about the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition to the scientific work on the Belt and Road Initiative, Professor Wang Yiwei is also the author of the first Chinese scientific book dedicated to the Initiative Belt and Road, entitled *The Belt and Road Initiative – What China will Offer the World in Its Rise*.¹

The book *China Connects The World - What's Behind The Belt and Road Initiative* is an important book, both to the academic community and to the countries on the Initiative’s route in order to properly understand what the Initiative is and what is the most important, what the Initiative offers at the regional and global level. The book consists of a preface, introduction, ten chapters, conclusion and appendix. The chapters are titled as follows: 1. The world is connected, 2. The Belt and Road Initiative - the logic of globalization, 3. The Belt and Road Initiative - Civilization Logic, 4. The Belt and Road Initiative - Strategic Logic, 5. The Belt and Road Initiative - Economic Logic, 6. The Belt and Road Initiative - Political Logic, 7. The Belt and Road Initiative - Diplomatic Logic, 8. The Belt and Road Initiative - Perceptual Logic, 9. Chinese Wisdom incorporated in the Belt and Road Initiative, and 10. Global Wisdom incorporated in the Belt and Road Initiative.

¹ This book was named book of the year in China in 2015.

To correctly illustrate the purpose of this book, we will first present what the Belt and Road Initiative is. Namely, the main purpose of the Belt and Road Initiative is the revitalization of the Silk Road, which represented the partnership between China and Europe, their cultural and trade exchange, until its break down which followed in the 15th century. The break of cultural and trade exchange between Europe and China was imposed by the Ottoman Empire which cut the Silk Road by the so-called 'Ottoman wall'. The fall of the Silk Road has influenced both the West and the East. Therefore, China believes it has a historical responsibility through the Belt and Road Initiative to renew the Silk Road and bring the center of civilization back to the Eurasian continent. In the past, the ultimate destination of the ancient Silk Road was Europe. Therefore, the focus of the Initiative is the Eurasian connection and cooperation. The Belt and Road Initiative includes 65 countries across Asia, Europe and Africa. The Eurasian connection is based on connectivity, inclusiveness, strategic synergy, cooperation in capacity improvement, mutual market development, business leadership, market functioning, state institutions and international standards. The five main objectives of interconnectivity in the implementation of the Initiative are the integration of politics, infrastructure, trade, finance and the hearts of people. These five objectives are accompanied by the establishment of six major economic corridors or six main areas, among which are: 1. Economic corridor the New Eurasian land bridge, 2. Economic corridor China-Mongolia-Russia, 3. Economic corridor China-Central Asia-West Asia, 4. Economic Corridor China-Indochina Peninsula, 5. Economic Corridor China-Pakistan, 6. Economic Corridor Maritime Silk Road. This multi-dimensional network of connectivity consists of railroads, roads, airlines, maritime routes, oil pipelines, gas pipelines, transmission lines, and communication networks. All this in order to establish a free trade zone, connectivity, inclusiveness and create a Eurasian market.

According to the author, it is China's responsibility to implement the 'New Silk Road' - the Belt and Road Initiative. Why China? China has a multifaceted identity: it is the largest developing country, the largest emerging country, the second largest economy in the world and an eastern socialist country. In the author's opinion, China will become a leading nation in the quest for humanity to create a new civilization through a new form of globalization - Globalization 3.0. Globalization 3.0 is the merging of the Chinese dream with the dream of the whole world, modeled on Confucian teaching. Namely, the new Chinese view of the world implies that all countries belong to the same family. It is the Confucian teaching that views the state as an extended family in which the state is a large family, and the family is a small state. The new form of globalization is Globalization 3.0 - the idea of the Internet for all, smart cities, as well as inclusive technology in which everyone will win. Globalization 3.0 will reduce the gap between the rich and the poor through three principles: 1. sharing - cooperation in which everyone wins, 2. sustainability - balanced development, inclusiveness and 3. internalization – putting down roots. It is China's

responsibility to create a new model of globalization through the restoration of Chinese civilization and other civilizations along the Initiative route. The author believes that the globalization promoted by the West has created such a society in which the rich are even richer, and the poor are even poorer. The expectations of the world from China are, according to the author, the result of a growing disappointment in American hegemony. So, the key issue of the Initiative and the “Dream of Chinese Civilization” is the question: How do we get the United States of America (USA) to accept this? The author believes that the USA would have difficulty reconciling with the rise of China, given that the United States is guided by a religious belief that they “never take the second place”. The author believes that the West is competitive which leads to a “clash of civilizations”. Thus the rise of China has always been seen as a threat. China will run, unlike the West (which is characterized by competitiveness) with the ‘Go’² strategy, which gives comparative advantages over the West. The author believes that Europe is a key factor in this idea and believes that “whoever conquers Europe, will conquer the world”.

In addition to everything exposed, we have to emphasize that the entire Belt and Road Initiative is based and leads exactly to the religious values of Confucianism: “Do not do unto others what you do not want done unto you”, Buddhism: “Never commit sin” and Taoism: “Road follows nature”. Namely, the Belt and Road Initiative draws the wisdom from the ‘Book of Change’³ which is inspired by Confucianism.

This well-written scientific study of the Belt and Road Initiative is certainly significant for academic audiences, researchers of Political Science, International Relations, Politology of Religion, Economics as well as for political subjects who are interested in learning more about this global project. However, we must mention that the author should pay more attention to another “detail”. Namely, the Route of the Belt and Road Initiative includes 65 countries, of which more than 30 countries are Muslim countries. One of the burning issues facing China is precisely the situation in Xinjiang, a Province with a Turkish ethnic minority of Muslim religion – the Uyghurs. We believe China should first find a framework for a dialogue with the Muslim minority in its own country, in order to establish a dialogue, cooperation and connectivity with other countries along the route of the Belt and Road Initiative in which Muslims represent the majority.

Mirela LONČAR

² Game ‘Go’ is a strategy board game for two players, in which the aim is to surround more territory than the opponent. The game was invented in China more than 2,500 years ago and is believed to be the oldest board game continuously played to the present day.

³ „Changes that are constantly repeated are called consistency. Encouragement and application are called connectivity” (Review, Part I, „The Book of Changes”)