

## Workshop report: The Belt and Road Initiative and its Reflections

Mehdi Amineh and Willem Vogelsang

**O**n 15 January 2020, IIAS attended a workshop at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, in the context of the joint IIAS-CASS international research programme on China's Belt and Road Initiative. Papers under production were discussed as well as the further development of the programme.

The present research programme is entitled *The Geopolitical Economy of the Belt and Road Initiative and its Reflections*. It is jointly coordinated by Mehdi Amineh, Director of the Energy Programme EPA at IIAS (EPA-IIAS), IIAS Deputy Director Willem Vogelsang, and Zhang Yuyan, General Director of the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP-CASS). It is the third international research programme co-managed by EPA-IIAS and a CASS institute.

This current programme concentrates on the international and transnational activities of and responses to Chinese corporations in a number of selected countries in Asia, Africa, and the European Union. The programme also studies the impact of related multilateral institutions set up by China, the regional and global reception of such multilateral institutions, their relationship to the activities and policies of Chinese corporations, and how these institutions could alter the existing regional and global order. More details about this and the previous programmes are available on the IIAS website at: [www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia](http://www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia)

The workshop in Beijing, which was opened by IWEP-CASS Director Zhang Yuyan, was conducted in a very lively and positive



Above: Workshop at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

atmosphere, with open and encouraging discussions of the papers submitted by the researchers involved in the programme. Zhang also concluded the meeting, reflecting on the papers presented and on the programme in general. Plans for the future were discussed, including a proposed series of meetings during the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12) in 2021 in Kyoto, Japan.

The papers that were discussed are currently being prepared for publication in a new book series and peer-reviewed journals, including:

Mehdi Amineh (IIAS and Amsterdam University), *Towards Theorizing and Conceptualization of the Belt and Road Initiative*; Melanie van Driel (Utrecht University), *China's Statist Energy Relations with Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan*; FENG Weijiang (IWEP), *The Political Economy*

*of the Belt and Road Initiative*; Laszlo Maracz (Amsterdam University), *Evaluating the Hungarian Partnership in the Chinese BRI Project*; REN Lin (IWEP), *The Belt and Road Initiative and Global Governance*; SONG Jin (IWEP), *Industrial Structural Change in China and Industry Incentives to Participate in BRI, from the Perspective of the Supply Side*; TIAN Xu (IWEP), *Western Balkans with European Characteristics or Chinese Characteristics?*; Willem Vogelsang (IIAS), *BRI and Afghan-Chinese Relations: Another Quagmire?*; WANG Yongzhong (IWEP), *Facts on China's ODI in Belt and Road Countries*; Jeroen van Wijk (Maastricht University), *Case Study on the Political and Economic Impact of Chinese Developments in Ethiopia in the Context of BRI*; XU Xiujun (IWEP), *The Belt and Road Initiative and Third-Party Market Cooperation*.

### Further development

The day after the workshop, EPA-IIAS Director Mehdi Amineh met with Director Prof. WANG Yongzhong and staff of the Energy Security Division of IWEP-CASS to discuss the further development of the programme. The meeting resulted in plans to expand the cooperation, working together on joint research on the study of energy supply security (oil and gas) and energy transition and alternative resources in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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## New IIAS Programme: The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD)



Dr Jennifer Holdaway.



**A**s of 1 January 2020, FORHEAD has moved its international base to the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), where FORHEAD co-director Jennifer Holdaway is now affiliated and will continue to coordinate the network and its efforts.

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD) is an interdisciplinary network that brings together natural, medical and social scientists to explore the implications of environmental and social change for public health in China and beyond.

Environmental and social change have powerful impacts on public health, but interactions between natural and social systems are complex and fluid. Understanding and addressing them requires diverse forms of knowledge and the engagement of multiple actors. In China, the situation is complicated by the sheer pace of change and by the fact that different regions and populations face different problems as the result of their diverse environmental conditions and development pathways.

Since 2008, FORHEAD has sought to strengthen the knowledge base for responding to environmental and health

problems in China and promote the more effective uptake of existing knowledge. It has fostered the development of a cohort of professionals able to work effectively on these issues from a perspective that is holistic and problem-oriented rather than narrowly discipline-based or technical. Our focus is on environment and health challenges associated with rapid industrialisation, the intensification of agriculture and urbanisation.

### Programme focus

FORHEAD's work has evolved through several stages from field mapping, through the building of the network and development of research sites through small grants and summer institutes to a focus on specific issues through working groups.

In this current phase, the focus will be on distilling and disseminating the findings and experiences of the FORHEAD network through additional publications and curriculum materials that can be used by a wide range of different institutions. We will also be exploring the implications of China's experience for other countries, particularly in the context of China's growing international engagement.

### Jennifer Holdaway

Jennifer Holdaway became an IIAS fellow in January 2020. As co-director of FORHEAD, she will continue to coordinate the network and its efforts during her affiliation with IIAS. Jennifer was formerly a Program Director and the China Representative at the Social Science Research Council and a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. She holds a BA in Chinese Studies from Oxford University and a PhD in Political Science from the City University of New York. Her writing on environment and health and on various dimensions of migration and development has been published in journals including the *China Quarterly*, the *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Social Science and Medicine* and the *International Migration Review*.

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## New Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS



Dr Táňa Dluhošová.

**S**tarting from 1 February 2020, the new Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS is occupied by Dr Táňa Dluhošová, from the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic. She will be staying until the end of June 2020, to teach a course in Taiwanese history and culture at the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). She will also continue her research into Taiwanese elite families at both LIAS and IIAS. Dr Dluhošová has developed several innovative, interdisciplinary methodological approaches to the study of social change in Taiwan.

The Chair of Taiwan Studies is supported by the Department of Cross-Strait Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China, the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University, and the International Institute for Asian Studies. See page 3 for the Call for Applications for the Chair of Taiwan Studies starting in September 2020.

