

## CHINA'S RESPONSE TO EU-ASIA CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY: A MACRO AND MICRO VIEW IN ANALYSIS

[Dan Yi, Zhuyu Li](#)

Centre international de formation européenne | « L'Europe en Formation »

2020/2 n° 391 | pages 94 à 104

ISSN 0014-2808

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

-----  
<https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2020-2-page-94.htm>  
-----

Distribution électronique Cairn.info pour Centre international de formation européenne.

© Centre international de formation européenne. Tous droits réservés pour tous pays.

La reproduction ou représentation de cet article, notamment par photocopie, n'est autorisée que dans les limites des conditions générales d'utilisation du site ou, le cas échéant, des conditions générales de la licence souscrite par votre établissement. Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, en tout ou partie, sous quelque forme et de quelque manière que ce soit, est interdite sauf accord préalable et écrit de l'éditeur, en dehors des cas prévus par la législation en vigueur en France. Il est précisé que son stockage dans une base de données est également interdit.

# China's Response to EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy: A Macro and Micro View in Analysis

Dan YI & Zhuyu LI

*Dan YI is a professor at the College of Literature and Journalism at Sichuan University, China. He has been teaching foreign literature and critical theories since 1985. From 1996, he has been a visiting scholar at various American and European institutions including Harvard, and KU Leuven, to carry out research projects sponsored by China CSC and EU Jean Monnet and Erasmus funds. He is also the director of the academic committee at the Centre for European Studies, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (2011- ) at Sichuan University, offering courses related to European culture and integration to both undergraduate and graduate students.*

*Prof. Zhuyu LI has been working for the Centre for European Studies at Sichuan University as the vice director and academic coordinator since 2012. She obtained her PhD from Hiroshima University, Japan and finished her two-year postdoctoral research at Pennsylvania State University, USA. She worked as a researcher at the Department of Economics II, University of Bonn, Germany and went back to Sichuan University in 1998. She has carried out over 20 academic projects and has published over 70 papers in and outside China.*

---

## Abstract

The 2018's 'Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU Strategy', adopted by EU member states, laid out the EU's comprehensive strategy to Europe-Asia's relation. How this important document has been received and observed in China remains to be questioned. Based on our investigation and analysis, this article argues that although information was communicated through official platforms (the macro-information) in China, the necessary discussions (the micro-penetration) among academics and youth turned out to be insufficient. It is therefore necessary for both the EU and China to cooperate so to better communicate and promote an in-depth argumentation on this topic, by fostering its mutual understanding between the EU and China's young population, by exploiting their new favourite platforms.

## Résumé

Le document 'Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU Strategy' de 2018, adopté par les États membres de l'UE, a défini sa stratégie globale concernant la relation Europe-Asie. Il reste à savoir comment cet important document a été reçu et interprété en Chine. À partir de notre enquête et de notre analyse, cet article soutient que, bien que les informations aient été communiquées par le biais de plateformes officielles (la macro-information) en Chine, les discussions nécessaires (la micropénétration) entre les universitaires et les jeunes se sont avérées insuffisantes. Il est donc essentiel que l'UE et la Chine coopèrent, améliorent leur communication et encouragent une réflexion approfondie sur ce sujet, en favorisant la compréhension mutuelle entre les jeunes de l'UE et de la Chine. Cela peut se faire en exploitant leurs nouvelles plateformes préférées.

## KEYWORDS

EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, China's BRI, Belt and Road Initiative, Micro-infiltration

---

\* The authors would like to extend their gratitude toward the editors for their effort and take full responsibility for all the content of the present article.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the new international environment and China's diplomatic strategy today, the relationship between China and the EU is extremely important, especially after the Trump Administration adopted the policy line of "America First" and successively withdrew from the global cooperation organizations. As comprehensive strategic partners, both China and the EU are aware of the unspoken importance of strengthening all-round cooperation for both sides and for the world.

From the "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road", issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, with State Council authorization on April 1, 2015, "The Belt and Road runs through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and the developed European economic circle at the other, and encompassing countries with huge potential for economic development."<sup>2</sup> Europe is one of the terminals of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the EU is one of China's largest economic and trade partners. As the world's largest regional economy, the EU's acceptance of the BRI proposed by China is a key factor affecting the effectiveness of the initiative. On May 8, 2015, China and Russia signed and issued the "Joint statement on cooperation on the construction of a joint Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB)". It becomes a milestone in Russia-China relations.<sup>3</sup> This is also the first time to link the economic and trade cooperation in the Eurasian region, creating a new model of multilateral economic cooperation and development in the Eurasian region. On September 19, 2018, the European Commission, together with the European External Action Service, published "Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy". The following is referred to as "EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy."<sup>4</sup> It comprehensively elaborated the VISION of the EU to realize

1. This work was partly supported by China's National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science [grant number 18AGJ008]; and Jean Monnet Activity [grant number 619907-EPP-1-2020-1-CN-EPP]MO-PROJECT].

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Maritime Silk Road," [推动共建丝绸之路经济带和21世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动]—*National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China*, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cevn/chn/sghkt/t1251121.htm>.

3. *XINHUANET*, [publication of] "Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Construction of the Eurasian Economic Union" — [中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明 (全文)], 9 May 2015, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-05/09/c\\_127780866.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-05/09/c_127780866.htm).

4. European Commission, "Connecting European and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy," Brussels, 19 September 2018, JOIN (2018) 31 Final, [https://ec.europa.eu/sites/ceas/files/joint\\_communication\\_-\\_connecting\\_europe\\_and\\_asia\\_-\\_building\\_blocks\\_for\\_an\\_eu\\_strategy\\_2018-09-19.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/sites/ceas/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf).

“Better Connection between Europe and Asia” and was committed to building a connectivity model between the EU and its neighbours and Asian countries. The release of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy attracted worldwide attention. This EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy is put forward by the EU to meet its own development needs and meet new challenges in global governance, taking into account the current new situation of world development and its own experience in regional cooperation. It can also be regarded as an important part of its global strategy. This can also be seen as a strategic plan made by the EU to adapt to the new situation of the world development and effectively safeguard its own interests. On October 14, 2018, Sun Yan, a researcher at the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published a commentary entitled “Asia-Europe Connection: A New Growth Point in China-EU Cooperation” in the state-run *Guangming Daily*, giving the first public feedback on the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy document. The article was quickly reprinted on the Chinese government website and important official media outlets. From the title of the article, we can see that the author gives a very positive evaluation to the document EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, and he points out that “*China hopes that the EU’s EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy can be effectively aligned with the joint BRI, and is willing to jointly promote connectivity cooperation under the general framework of Asia-Europe cooperation.*”<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, Zhao Chen, another researcher at the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published a political essay on “How to link the Eurasian connectivity with the BRI” in the official journal BANYUETAN, acknowledging that “*there is some competition between the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy and China’s BRI.*” He thinks that neither the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy nor China’s BRI are exclusive. The security concepts embodied by the two are similar, while there is a strong possibility of complementarity in the economic field.” The author also points out in the end, “*due to the large number of actors within the EU, the complex laws and regulations, and the populist forces within the EU which cannot be neglected, we cannot overestimate the EU’s strength in implementing this document and the amount of EU’s investment for the time being.*”<sup>6</sup> In our discussions with Chinese scholars, we can see that the consensus is mainly about the time of publication. Since the BRI was launched in 2013, some EU member states have joined the BRI, but the EU as a whole has not taken a position. On May 8, 2015, China and Russia signed and issued a Joint statement on cooperation on the construction of joint Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and

5. GMW.cn, “Asia-Europe connectivity: a new growth point for China-Europe cooperation,” [亚欧联通：中欧合作新增长点], [https://news.gmw.cn/2018-10/14/content\\_31694618.htm](https://news.gmw.cn/2018-10/14/content_31694618.htm).

6. BANYUETAN, “How Eurasian connectivity can take on the ‘Belt and Road’” [欧亚互联互通如何牵手“一带一路”], [http://www.banyuetan.org/gj/detail/20181026/1000200033136201540520226188460449\\_1.html](http://www.banyuetan.org/gj/detail/20181026/1000200033136201540520226188460449_1.html).

the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), and then the economic cooperation in the Eurasian region has been synergized, which should be a stimulus to the EU. Second, from the perspective of bilateral relations, compared with China's BRI, the EU's strategic policy on Eurasian connectivity bears some similarities with China's BRI in terms of areas of cooperation and basic concepts. No wonder some researchers call it the European version of the BRI, the BRI of Europe. Finally, the EU emphasizes on the sustainability and equity in its strategy report, which is seen as a response to some of the problems that have arisen in the operation of the BRI. There are also Chinese scholars who have officially published research papers interpreting the expected effects of this document in threefold:

1. To strengthen the *internal* ties of the EU and bringing closer relations with the Central and Eastern Europe;
2. To deepen the internal links of Eurasia and strengthen the interconnection between Europe and Asia;
3. To strengthen infrastructure cooperation between Europe and the USA, and promote the improvement of trans-Atlantic cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

This is the EU's response to the new challenges of globalization and a demonstration of its responsibility for cooperation and development in the Eurasian region. Then what is China's domestic awareness of the EU and the EU document? In the following discussion, we will make some interpretations from multiple perspectives. In the second section, this paper will give the Chinese academic circles' interpretation of the document EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, as well as a brief comparison of the outside world's interpretation of China's BRI. In the third section, we hope to give a general overview of the Chinese public's interest in current discussions and interpretations, which may give further insights into our understanding of the mutual cognition between China and Europe, and finally give our conclusions.

### **Macro Information vs. Micro Infiltration**

The study of international issues involves the diplomatic lines and policies of various countries, international politics and international relations as well as foreign exchanges. It is the focus of Chinese domestic government research institutes, national think tanks and university scholars and experts in international politics, economics and sociology. According to the situation in China, in the study of international politics and international relations, European studies as a

7. Wang Haochen and Sun Wei, "Connecting Europe and Asia' – The Initiative Proposed by European Union and its Impact" [欧盟提出的“欧亚互联计划设想”及其影响], *China Price* 6 (2019), 34-36.

branch of an international relations, has attracted the attention of many young scholars in recent years, but not on the same level as American studies, or even as the studies of some major countries, in terms of both the degree of attention and results of research. The number of European researchers (including political, economic, cultural, legal, etc.) in China is estimated to be much smaller than five digits, but the number of researchers and university scholars working on American studies is much bigger. This difference in numbers can reveal the depth and breadth of the research as well as the extent to which the Chinese public understand the EU.

A clear conclusion can be drawn just from our statistical analysis results of the 5446 valid sample data from 23 universities across China in 2016. The data of young Chinese university students' cognition of the EU shows that only 49.1% answered YES on the statement "The EU is the largest organization of regional integration in the world and has 28 member states in total"<sup>8</sup>. While 39.9% "concerned about the EU's development", a higher rate of 44.1% were "unconcerned".<sup>9</sup> It can be seen that the AWARENESS of the EU among the Chinese public is not high enough. State-to-state relations are about amity between the people, and amity between the people is about empathy. Mutual understanding and recognition between the people of China and the EU is also an important factor affecting the healthy development of China-EU relations.

To better understand how Chinese researchers view the EU-Asia connectivity strategy proposed by the EU, we have searched all published research papers on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) with the keywords 'Eurasia Connectivity', 'Europe-Asia' or 'THE EU's version of the Silk Road'. The results show that from September 2018 to the present, the total number of EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy articles that are truly and accurately related to the EU is 5, and the estimated total number of the articles in other newspapers or media commentary articles that are not included in CNKI is less than three digits in total (the number of papers published by Chinese scholars attending international conferences is not counted here). In the same period (from October 2018 to November 2020), the total number of papers on the CNKI website with EU-related topics or keywords was 12300, including 1206 dissertations, 83 conference papers, 482 newspaper articles and 598 others (including essays and other articles). All statistics include disciplines such as arts, science, engineering, medicine and law. It can be inferred that the research on the EU's EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy is still ongoing.

8. J. SHI, D. YI and ZY LI, "Preparing for the Challenges: To Promote the Dialogue between the Youth of China and EU," in J. SHI and Guenter Heiduk, eds., *Opportunities and Challenges: Sustainability of China-EU Relations in a Changing World* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2019), 146, table 1.

9. Ibid, 146, table 2.

The following table shows the query results of the related research papers involving the same keywords. Sept. 19, 2020–Nov. 23, 2020 shows the query results of EU’s Connecting Europe and Asia–Building blocks for an EU Strategy; May 8, 2015–Sept. 20, 2018 shows the query results of the Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Synergizing the Building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Table 1. Related to Europe and China joint/connective (numbers from CNKI)

	<i>Key words</i>	<i>Numbers of papers</i>	<i>Total Numbers of Download</i>	<i>Total Numbers of cited</i>
<i>Sep. 19, 2020 to Nov. 23, 2020</i> <sup>10</sup>	European-Asia	5	692	0
<i>May 8, 2015 to Sep. 20, 2018</i> <sup>11</sup> <i>(China - Russia)</i>	European-Asia	29	13713	77

Source: Own Extrapolation

Among the five research papers officially published since the release of the EU’s EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, the article by Professor Fang Lexian from the School of International Relations of Renmin University of China has 307 downloads, which should be the highest number of downloads among the European research papers. Moreover, the journal where the paper was published has a great influence in China. The paper points out that the EU’s document “clearly articulates the vision of future EU action to strengthen closer ties with Asian countries and realizing Eurasian connectivity, with three main components to achieve it: Establishing efficient connectivity between Europe and Asia; Building sustainable connectivity partnerships; And ensuring the quantity and quality of investments in sustainable connectivity.” It analyzes “the main motivations and underlying principles of the EU’s EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, and focuses on its core policy framework and its connotation, as well as its potential implications for China-EU relations.” The author also compares the BRI proposed by China with the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy published by the EU. He directly points out that “*EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy has similarities with China’s BRI in terms of policy propositions.*”<sup>12</sup> As far as the cooperation between Europe and Asia is

10. Due to the long publication cycle of Chinese journals, there are not many official articles published at the moment.

11. On 8 May 2015, China and Russia signed and issued the Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the Complementarity and Cooperation between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union. [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-05/09/content\\_2859384.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-05/09/content_2859384.htm).

12. Fang Lexian and Yin Jiazhang, “EU Strategy on Europe-Asia Connectivity and its Implications toward EU-China Relations,” *Teaching and Research* 5 (2019): 63-71.

concerned, there is some overlap between the areas of interest of China and the EU. In terms of basic concepts, both China and the EU take multilateralism and the construction of an open and fair world economy as the starting point of their policies. In relevant policy documents, both China and the EU have expressed their vision of maintaining the global free trade system and an open world economy. At the level of bilateral relations between China and the EU, it is viewed that *EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy* has some similarities with BRI in terms of cooperation areas and basic concepts, while the EU, through its *EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy* is trying to claim that it values the sustainability and equity more. Although this strategy of the EU is called “the EU version of OBOR” and is even interpreted as a competitor of China’s BRI, there are certain commonalities between the two that make strategic convergence between China and the EU on Eurasian cooperation a possibility. Obviously, this possibility will not be easily translated into reality. It requires the joint efforts of both sides to meet each other halfway.

Chinese scholars generally speak highly of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy issued by the EU and see its similarities with the BRI. In the age of the Internet, we hope to accelerate mutual understanding and trust between China and the EU and reduce suspicion. In this regard, the platform through which we get to know each other becomes particularly important.

### **What Are People’s Most Common Concerns?**

With the rapid development of information communication today, information communication affects people’s cognition of things. There are several categories of information dissemination, traditional: printed papers, television, newspapers and other macro communication channels, especially national ones; non-traditional means of communication are all kinds of hardware and software platforms in the new era of global media brought about by the rapid development of the Internet. The global network of social media is almost ubiquitous. Even the rapidly developing self-media has become a channel for any individual to distribute information with certain hardware and software. Compared with traditional methods, network information dissemination has (1) fast speed; (2) wide range; (3) information accuracy; (4) low consumption; (5) various forms and other prominent features, including the diversity of communication carriers, such as text, sound, video, picture or data, covering everything. Moreover, the rapid and timely transmission of audio and visual images over the Internet further improves the timeliness of communication.

It caters to the audience’s psychological expectations for the speed of information transmission in the first place, as people demand faster and more accurate access to the information they need. The interactive exchange of information

is an important feature of network communication, and the realization of this feature is based on advanced technology, i.e. on the basis of computer processing of information and data. The interactive exchange of information is an important feature of network communication, and the realization of this feature is based on high-tech, that is, on the basis of computer reading of information and data. This ensures that the technology is powerful enough to support the spread of multiple real-time interactions. Certainly, the accuracy of information spread by social media is a new problem arising from the new situation, which still needs to be regulated with the intensity and accuracy of network platform information. This is also a problem we must face when we demand timely information under the new situation. Global communication means that any online information is distributed and received globally. This makes it possible for both the performance of network communication agencies and the interpretation of information content to become global activities. Learning and conflicts between various standards and values are also inevitable.

Undoubtedly, some official multimedia platforms have also been established by the authorities. Compared with self-media platforms established by individuals, official media platforms are inherently inadequate, because they may disseminate second-hand information or information released by the official traditional media. While the Chinese public traditionally obtain information through television or print media such as newspapers, the popularization of the Internet in China can be seen in the evolution of the new media for people's access to information. According to a report released by The China Internet Network Center in September 2020, the number of Chinese Internet users has reached more than 940 million, among which the proportion of Internet users aged 10-49 has reached 67%. The proportion of mobile phone users among netizens is more than 99.2%. The weekly Internet access time peaked at 30.8 hours in March 2020.<sup>13</sup>

The Internet has become the most important channel for people to access information, while mobile phones have become the most important tool. The dissemination of micro information, or perhaps even macro-information, depends heavily on the degree of functionality (and therefore usage) of the applications. By the end of June 2020, a total of 3.59 million apps were tested in China, which is significantly lower than the number of apps in the previous three years, showing that netizens are more concentrated on the use of some more interesting apps. Statistical data show that the top four apps groups are games, daily tools, e-commerce and life services, accounting for 58.6% of the total number of apps.<sup>14</sup>

13. China Internet Network Information Center–CNNIC, “The 46th China Statistical Report on Internet Development,” 29 September 2020, p.1-2, <http://cnnic.cn/hlwfzzyj/hlwzxbg/hlwtjbg/202009/P020200929546215182514.pdf>.

14. Ibid, p. 10-23.

News apps usually rank the 12th at most among the most frequently used Top 100 apps. Table 2 shows the rankings of well-known news apps among China's Top 100 apps in the past three years.

Table 2. The most frequently used news apps ranked in the Top100\*

<i>Name of app</i>	<i>February, 2017</i>	<i>January 2019</i>	<i>April, 2020</i>
腾讯新闻 <b>Tencent news</b>	12	18	19
今日头条 <b>JinriToutiao</b>	14	16	16
新浪新闻 <b>Sina News</b>	/	45	68
网易新闻 <b>NetEase News</b>	/	68	62
搜狐新闻 <b>Sohu News</b>	/	87	59

*Source:* Authors' data collection from the Internet.

If we divide the sources of information into macro and micro, then in today's era, due to the rapid development of the Internet, the macro information may have been ignored by the majority of people, or did not receive much attention. Both China and Europe need to strengthen the outreach on the Internet platforms, which are the main battlefields of soft power communication.

“The two sides agreed to continue to strengthen their cooperation to promote the exchange of ideas and the movement of people in a fair and equitable environment,” said the joint press release of the fifth China-EU High-level People-to-People Dialogue (HPPD) online conference, which was concluded on 10 November 2020.<sup>15</sup> HPPD between China and the EU is seen as the third pillar of China-EU relations. The political will and policy initiatives of both sides are naturally the fundamental driving force in promoting cooperation and development. For both sides, the logical extension of the official discourse of «equality and mutual trust» inevitably involves the mutual recognition and understanding of the peoples on both sides. More importantly, we need to know how and through what channels the Chinese people have come to know and understand the EU. In other words, how the EU spreads information about China and the BRI, how it establishes communication channels for its knowledge about China—and how we spread information and knowledge about the EU in China—, will undoubtedly play a decisive role in the whole research process.

15. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, “Joint press statement on the fifth meeting of the China-Europe High Level Cultural Exchange Dialogue Mechanism” [中欧高级别人文交流对话机制第五次会议联合新闻声明], 10 November 2020, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/moe\\_1946/fj\\_2020/202011/t20201110\\_499245.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_1946/fj_2020/202011/t20201110_499245.html).

In terms of specific cooperation activities, however, both in the fields of economic and trade and people-to-people exchanges, both sides need to constantly seek to understand each other, and broaden and deepen the mutual understanding of cooperation participants. The so-called «high-level people-to-people dialogues» requires not only the establishment of mutual understanding and trust among participating institutions, such as the government departments of culture and education, but also broad public awareness. The media both within the EU and in European countries, especially the media in the developing countries along the routes of “Belt and Road”, as well as the perception of the EU by the Chinese public and specially young students in universities and colleges. We cannot ignore the perspective of mutual recognition, understanding and dialogue between the two sides.

## Conclusion

As we have discussed how the Chinese respond to the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy, we would also like to know how the Europeans respond to the BRI or 17+1 and so on. Till the end of 2019, if we check all the published articles from CNKI which have the key words “OBOR”, or “BRI”, there are in total 55 947 Chinese papers on the BRI, among which, 7470 papers are related to the word OBOR. Outside China, from the Web of Science (VUB) which includes SCI-expanded, SSCI, A&GCI, ESCI, *etc.*, the total number is 2426 (titles + contents), all these data do not include the papers by think tanks, nor related papers at conferences. In fact, many European scholars in their articles hold negative views of OBOR initiative, although the statements in these articles cannot fully represent the views of the media and the public, it can be seen from some of the statements, China’s proposed “OBOR”, obviously touched the sensitive nerve of the Europeans in history. If the original intention or purpose of the BRI is not well publicized, discussed or explained, especially when it comes to our own modifications of the definition<sup>16</sup> and the name<sup>17</sup>, including our definition and classification of the countries along the BRI, or the participating countries. This will make it easier for negative views of these scholars to be widely spread in Europe, and bring negative attitude about the BRI to the European public, who will then have doubts about the proposal and the purpose of the BRI.

The publication of the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy document shows that the EU is fully aware of the huge potential of the Asian market and the development opportunities it offers. On the one hand, Asia has a large population and a huge market demand. “Asia, with roughly 60% of the world population

16. Note that the terms initiative, strategy and programme were all mentioned by our scholars in speeches.

17. One Belt One Road, New Silk Road, Belts and Roads – (initiative), were all officially used.

accounts for 35% of the EU's exports (€618 bn) and 45% of the EU's imports (€774 bn).<sup>18</sup> "Some estimate that Asia will require over EUR 1.3 trillion a year of infrastructure investment in the coming decades to maintain today's growth rates and to adapt to climate change. By comparison, in the EU, the investment in the Trans-European network for transport is estimated to require EUR 1.5 trillion in the period 2021-2030."<sup>19</sup> This huge growth potential provides a good opportunity for the EU to expand the Asian market and exert its influence. On the other hand, the emerging Asian countries represented by China have grown rapidly in recent years. The combined GDP of Europe and Asia is more than 60% of the world's GDP. With rapid economic development, Asia has become the region with the highest projected growth rate in the world. Strengthening cooperation and accelerating connectivity between China and the EU in the Eurasian region it is of great significance to both sides and also serves their mutual interests.

The release of the EU's EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy highlights the EU's awareness of rules, the search for fair competition and the emphasis on sustainable development, which lays a foundation for a broader cooperation between China and the EU in Asia and Europe. It can also be seen as a positive signal to connect with China's BRI with conditions. In our view, the multi-dimensional game between China and the EU on the basis of cooperation will continue, and the emphasis on healthy cooperation and mutual benefit under fair competition will be the general trend of China-EU relations in the future, which will be conducive to promoting global economic development.

---

18. European Commission, "Connecting Europe And Asia—Building Blocks For An EU Strategy," *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank*, Brussels, 19 September 2018. Chapter 1, p.1, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint\\_communication\\_-\\_connecting\\_europe\\_and\\_asia\\_-\\_building\\_blocks\\_for\\_an\\_eu\\_strategy\\_2018-09-19.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf).

19. "Asia Development Bank, Meeting Asia's Infrastructure Needs, 2017," quoted in European Commission, "Connecting Europe And Asia—Building Blocks For An EU Strategy,".