



Advance praises

“Central Asia is one of the ‘unknown’ parts of the world that never features in CNN or BBC weather forecasts. Despite a few recent attempts to foster regional unity, Central Asian countries remain disunited. Yet they dream of a collective return to their glory years of the Middle Ages. And not without reason: this vast landlocked region sandwiched between China, India and Russia has massive development potential. However, to realize this potential, Central Asia must be united and on friendly terms with all its neighbors. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will definitely help the region achieve both of these goals.

“This book presents a fresh and comprehensive analysis of the situation in the region, with special attention to its interaction with the BRI. Since Central Asia will be the main testing ground for the BRI globally, this book will be a useful tool to readers from many other parts of the world.”

Djoomart Otorbaev

Former Prime Minister, Kyrgyz Republic

“The BRI has the potential to reshape and revolutionize the role of the Central Asia and South Caucasus region in global commerce, much as the ancient Silk Road did. This book provides the insights and policy recommendations that will allow decision makers to fully realize this potential in their countries. While the book’s focus is on the Central Asia and South Caucasus region, I believe that its findings are relevant to all parts of the world where China is building the Belt and Road. I warmly commend the authors and editors for enriching the policy space with their candid and dispassionate assessment of the economic and social impact of the Belt and Road Initiative.”

Jean-Daniel Gerber

Former State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Switzerland

“My country, Georgia, has expressed its interest in China’s pathbreaking Belt and Road Initiative as it may have a huge transformative impact on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Georgia has much to gain from the development of the region as it looks forward to restoring its historic role as a trade hub. But the BRI also carries many risks. Yet, despite its massive size, promise and challenges, so far there has been a dearth of solid analytic studies on the economic merits and risks of this historic Chinese undertaking. Equally important, the perspective of the recipient countries has been missing to date. This book fills these two big voids in the literature. In my view, it is a must-read for everyone interested in the BRI, most of all policymakers in countries along the Belt and Road.”

Mikheil Janelidze

Former Vice Prime Minister, Georgia

“The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by China in 2013, has become the catchword of this second decade of the 21st century. The BRI is often seen as synonymous with the rise of China and mostly described as China’s finely tuned grand strategy to redefine and rebuild globalization under a new set of China-dominated rules. While observers may disagree—oftentimes quite passionately—on the above characterization, everybody agrees that the BRI represents the most consequential international development initiative of the last decade, even though recent geopolitical tensions have temporarily pushed the BRI to a sideshow status.

“Almost all analysis of the BRI has focused on China as its originator and ‘objectified’ partner countries. Comprehensive analysis is found wanting against a background where hard data is sparse. Most authors struggle to maintain an objective stance between overly enthusiastic backing of the BRI (e.g., exuberant support of connectivity and infrastructure construction) and overly critical assessment (e.g., white elephant investments and debt trap).

“This book stands out in two ways: first, professional economists have painstakingly parsed publicly available information and statistics and pulled together a dispassionate overview of the BRI’s economic impact at six years. The literature review alone will confer a reference status to this book. Second, the book provides unique on-the-ground ‘inside-out’ perspectives with contributions by analysts from Central Asia and the South Caucasus, as well as commentaries of experts from key ‘peer’ countries along the BRI. The main findings are woven together into a tapestry of win-win recommendations for both China and the BRI partner countries. Following this April’s Second BRI Forum in Beijing, the Chinese authorities have shown renewed receptiveness to constructive criticism in the Initiative’s continuous design-work. This book goes a long way toward turning the BRI into a truly successful international partnership—a must-read for anybody studying the BRI.”

Shigeo Katsu

President of Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan