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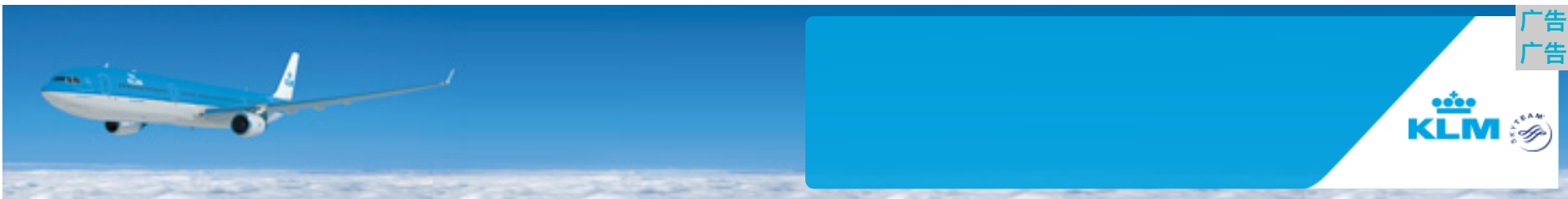
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# East must help West understand #OBOR

[Prof. Ying Zhang RSM, Erasmus University Rotterdam](#) | July 13, 2017 | [0 Comments](#)



***On the occasion to celebrate and reflect the lessons learned and experiences made since the return of HK to China 20 years ago, there was plenty of discussion of past events, current trends and foresight on how to prepare for the future. Much was said in particular about the evolving international relationships between the East and West – writes Ying Zhang, Professor & Vice Dean @ Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University***

Rotterdam, with its important strategic role on trade and international relationship between Asia and Europe, is an important voice to be heard. On June 30th 2017, the Netherlands Hong Kong Business Association, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Brussels, and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council co-organized [the seminar](#) about One-Belt-One-Road.





Ying Zhang Professor & Vice Dean @ Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

Having participated in many forums about OBOR, my general observation is: for the West, OBOR is commonly accepted as a great idea. but the topic invokes lots of questions. Nobody seems to grasp that OBOR can function only as a joint project of all the participants involved. OBOR as an initiative proposed by China, is a global and a century project for helping to rebuild a better world order, however the ownership of OBOR rest with all the involved participants and not with China alone. This becomes evident when you look at the OBOR sister-project — AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank). This project has always been labeled a “crowdfunding, crowd-owned” project.

Responding to such a concern, I believe that besides the East needs more patient and effort to help the West

understand OBOR, including its past evidence, current reality, and the proposed prosperity of the future, more stakeholders need to join, and support more proactively the design of the project. My sense is that most of the audience at current is still confused about the rationale behind it, and couldn't tell the difference between OBOR economic-social-environment formula and the current ones that each has been used to deal with for the current order of the world; meaning that different parties hold different calculations for OBOR, either desperate to attract Chinese investment, or hostile blaming unbalanced trade with China. Objectively speaking: All of these attitudes are not fact-respecting, with three arguments: Firstly, as for the world order in the past, if accepting the principle of competitive advantage, this opinion shouldn't be supported, since respecting the rationale of competitive advantage and acknowledging the consequence of competitive advantage for each participants is the condition of free-market market; Secondly, as for the world order in the future, accepting the drive of the change and the consequences of the world order revision is the condition as well. Third, as for the current, accepting emerging countries such as China coming back (or saying catching up) and even leading up especially in terms of economy is the condition for the next round of preparation for globally inclusive growth.

These three conditions going through the fact of past, current, and future have formulated the future order: we must treat each other with the principle of **Understanding-Trusting-Supporting-Joint Developing**. This principle applies to all parties. The reason is simple: with global economic, social, and climate change, exclusiveness is not an option to deal with all the issues of our human being. An absence of mindful behavior for nurturing a responsibly sustainable society, economy, and environment will be a self-extinction action, rather than to this planet. Honestly, from such a point of view, to be more inclusive is the only way to save our world. As follows, I would like to present some of my further thoughts:

- (1) Conceptually, OBOR is initiated by China, and is a great idea. It is instrumental to UN's message to build Sustainable Development Society, and to build a new inclusively ordered world for our economy, society, and environment;
- (2) Conceptually, OBOR project should be owned by all the participants. It needs more contribution from both the East and the West, to jointly design and plan for our generation and our offsprings.
- (3) The East and the West needs to be conscious that OBOR is not only an world initiative, but also a world order revisit. The history of the past gives the glimpse of how this new world order could function, with silk-road-based world trade order and culture communication. Historically, this order had pushed up global prosperity and civilization for hundreds of years. One point must be clear: OBOR shouldn't be labeled only as a China project, instead it is a global and all inclusive project.
- (4) For the West, after hundreds of years of capitalism and technological development, the ceiling of capitalism has been reached. Capital maximization should not remain the main target, instead dealing with the source of the Capitalists' Dilemma by devoting to a social-economic equality community should be an ideal. This applies to both the West and particularly the East. And from this sense, OBOR is initiated at the right moment when we have been questioning and expecting something new to make our world even better.
- (5) In terms of reaction and responses that I have seen, I believe that the West has to be more proactive and more enthusiastic about social-economic development by engaging in this global century project, and shouldn't miss this opportunity. Wait-and-see is definitely not a right attitude, instead participating as a shareholder-based stakeholder will be more effective. "Waking up and Moving faster" is the message that I want to give to those who still have the view of "wait-and-see"...

For the East, the discussion implies also many concerns, which I think both sides (the West and East) must not overlook. Both sides need to be more mindful to sync and act with one another. The issues of the East are more on practical and execution level, and involve a lot of discussion on the solution-seeking side. They typically evolve around questions on how to eliminate the defensive and competitive mentality and create a cooperative mindset for the future agenda; questions on how to make a systematic road map for a joint vision and build an inclusive community via OBOR participants contribution; questions on how to be more strategic moving forward to reach an equality-oriented society for both individual side and collectives; and questions on how to include social and environmental requirements into OBOR and its economic projects, most importantly during the negotiation and collaboration...

OBOR is a great idea. It deserves more discussion and contributions. Your insights are always very welcomed at any time!

In any case, this seminar is very insightful, and gave me a great chance to learn from those who have been working at the frontier with markets and clients here and there, for many years. No matter what reasons, their challenges and concerns are my challenges and concerns too. They are quite different from those on the political level and they do deserve us to study and assist.



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