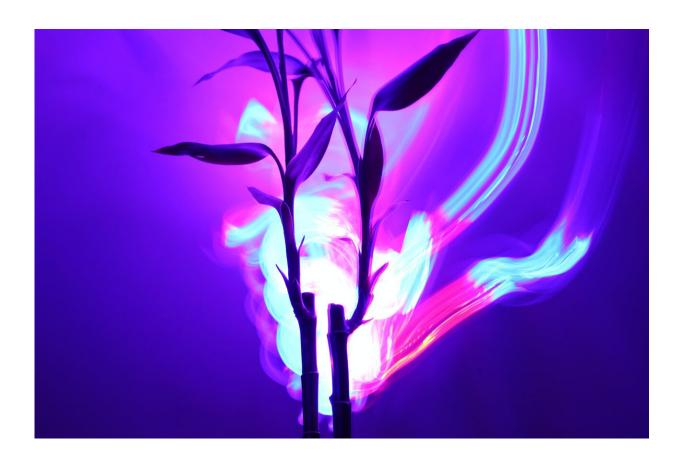# Investigating responses to China's Digital Silk Road initiative

September 1 2023, by David Bradley

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From the second century to the middle of the 15th century, the Silk Road, or more appropriately, the Silk Routes, provided a way for trade and culture to be exchanged between Asia and Europe. The routes

connected East and West across more than 6,400 kilometers, allowing economic, cultural, political, and religious exchange to take place. Research published in the *European Journal of International Management* takes a look at the online successor to the Silk Routes, China's Digital Silk Road initiative.

As China's Digital Silk Road (DSR) gains momentum, nations in Central and Eastern Europe are at a crossroads, trying to navigate the implications of more and more integration of their infrastructure with Chinese technology. There are concerns about the economic, security, and technological ramifications across the region, but the current research reveals a map of distinct approaches. Some of these could lead to gridlock in some places or open up new routes for exploration in others.

The DSR is critical to China's global technology push. With it, the nation and its technology giants are entwining digital prowess with economies worldwide, with Europe, a key part of its ambitions. The unasked question is whether Europe should get on board or be more cautious of hitching a ride with Chinese technology.

Ágnes Szunomár of the Institute of Global Studies at Corvinus University of Budapest and Institute of World Economics, Center for Economic and Regional Studies in Budapest, Hungary, has probed the responses of central and eastern European nations to the DSR challenges and opportunities. Some countries are cautiously skeptical while others are entertaining more and more collaboration.

The motivation, however, is not solely technological, nor even economic, but politically driven. Indeed, [security concerns](#) and the influence of U.S. diplomacy as well as Germany's technology and stance have often rerouted the roadmap for other nations hoping to navigate the DSL. At least one prominent company has led to various countries to stray from

the map and yet others to follow the route almost by rote.

For the DSR initiative itself, Chinese companies themselves could pivot the European response by emphasizing the global nature of the emerging technology and the opportunities and downplaying the national nature of the initiative. However, changing Western perceptions and alleviating security concerns remain formidable challenges. Even a journey of 6,400 kilometers must begin with a single step.

More information: Agnes Szunomar, To connect or not to connect Responding to the Digital Silk Road in Central and Eastern Europe, *European J. of International Management* (2022). DOI: 10.1504/EJIM.2022.10049355

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