China’s Soft Power: Culturalisation along the Belt Road Corridors

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This paper will explore the hypothesis that the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) advanced by Xi Jinping will lead to cultural exchanges and the formation of varieties of Chinese diasporic communities along the BRI corridors. Through the use of soft power in the form of foreign and humanitarian aids and expansion of education through the establishment of Confucius Institutes and classrooms and branch university campuses globally, China is persuading and nudging the global world to embrace its role on the global stage. It is also redefining the global transformation and its influence through its own terms. Through such actions, it will deepen China’s cultural connectivity with the countries along the BRI corridors. In so doing, it creates “collaborative territorial spaces” and cultural basins where it is not the economic, but cultural flows that will shape deep interactions and connectivity, resulting in the formation of hybridized imagined communities along shared social cultural interests.

Prof. Kuah Khun Eng is a visiting academic at the School of Social Sciences (Sociology). Prior to this, she was Professor of Anthropology and Head of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia, Associate Professor at the University of Hong Kong and lecturer at University of Melbourne. Her key areas of research specialization include: the Chinese Diaspora; Religion (Buddhism), Politics and Philanthropy in Southeast and East Asia; and China and philanthropy. She has published 3 sole-author books, 9 edited books and numerous journal articles and book chapters.