Belt and Road Blocks: Exploring Potential Ruptures within China's Belt and Road Initiative - The Case of Sri Lanka

by
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Recently, much scholarship has been dedicated to exploring China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The vast majority of this work has focused on global dimensions of the BRI, typically considering notions of a changing geopolitical landscape or South-South cooperation. However, these grand narratives often displace local realities, especially in the oft-overlooked and concomitant arenas of environmental degradation and local political volatility. Using post-war Sri Lanka's nation building via infrastructure as a point of departure, we explore these two potential ruptures, questioning whether existing BRI narratives critically consider local politics of place and burgeoning environmental degradation in a time of global climate change, two unstable fault lines which could hinder and disrupt China's implementation of the BRI. In what is necessarily a thought piece, we find that most narratives fail to adequately consider these potential ruptures, neglecting both the existing post-conflict political volatility in Sri Lanka, as well as the compounding effects of mega-infrastructure and associated environment.

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Date: Monday, November 25, 2019
Time: 14:00 - 16:00
Venue: CATS, EG SR 01 (010.00.21)

All are cordially invited!