

Closer to Belt & Road Initiative with R.L.Kuhn

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2017-05-15



By CGTN's Closer to China

The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation marks a transition of high symbolism in President Xi Jinping's grand vision for a new era of win-win globalization, from "blueprint to road map," from concepts on paper to projects on the ground. But there will be challenges - unforeseen events, political instability, financial problems and cultural misunderstandings. Some even suspect China's motives.

Does China have a "hidden agenda"? Closer to China examined China's three principles to guide the Belt and Road Initiative,

namely extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, to find out if they are feasible.

Five experts took part in the discussion, including Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Director of the Pakistan-China Institute, Onunaiju Charles, Director of the Center for China Studies in Nigeria, Sameh El-Shahat, President of China-I Ltd., Professor Wang Yiwei from the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University, and Chen Wenling, Chief Economist at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.



Shahat said the biggest risk facing Belt and Road is social -- the idea that people will suddenly wake up and find China everywhere. And people don't know what this would be like. "This would be a new thing for China. Chinese people are very well-intended, but

locals may find this a resistance. So Belt and Road need to have social risk mechanism, which means getting local buy-in," he noted. He explained that "local buy-in means that the Belt and Road doesn't just talk about lists of how many projects or how many corridors, but quality of the projects and corridors".



Sayed said information gap leads to misperceptions, which proliferate and amplify, creating institutionalized and structural issues in the longer term.

Chen said there are two risks. The first is about the mechanism, because the Belt and Road framework is now an initiative.

"Everybody gets involved and a lot of systems between countries are different, so this causes a lot of difficulty in promoting the initiative." The second risk comes from investment. A lot of countries need to establish bilateral investment mechanisms for

security. China is communicating with the EU and the US on whether they can establish a framework to guarantee the security of investment.



Charles said China is a latecomer in international communication, but it is trying to catch up. At the same time, there is the Belt and Road Initiative which is a new phenomenon to African academia and media. So they do not know how to introduce it to the public. China has to communicate carefully with African countries and its people. That is why promoting China-Africa academic and media cooperation is important. It is a challenge.



Wang said the world is diverse and so are the Belt and Road countries. How to achieve harmonization using different approaches and different frameworks is a big challenge. If mishandled, some countries may complain that the Belt and Road Initiative is an act of discrimination. China has to learn from the experience of the European Union.