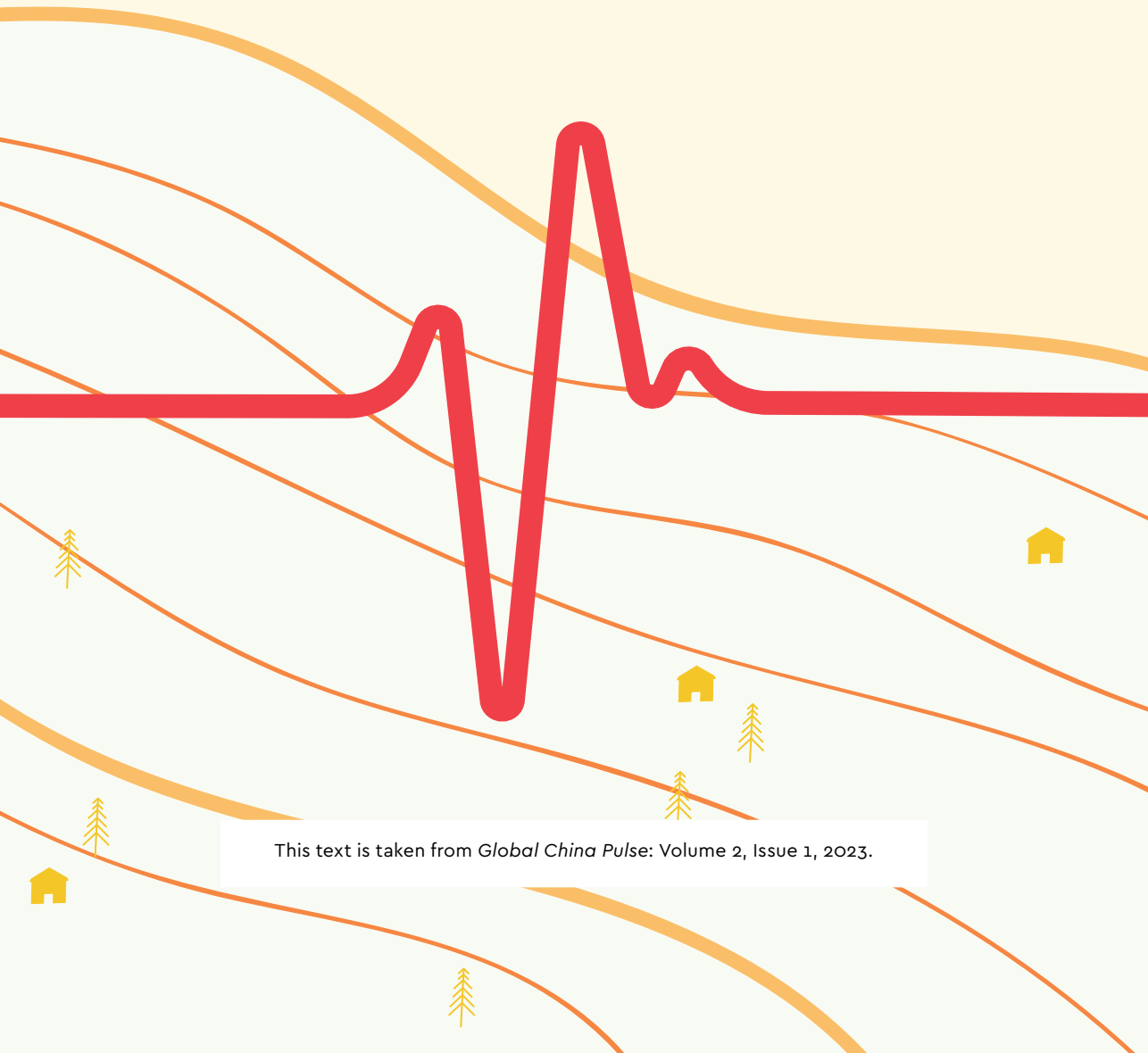


Global China

pulse

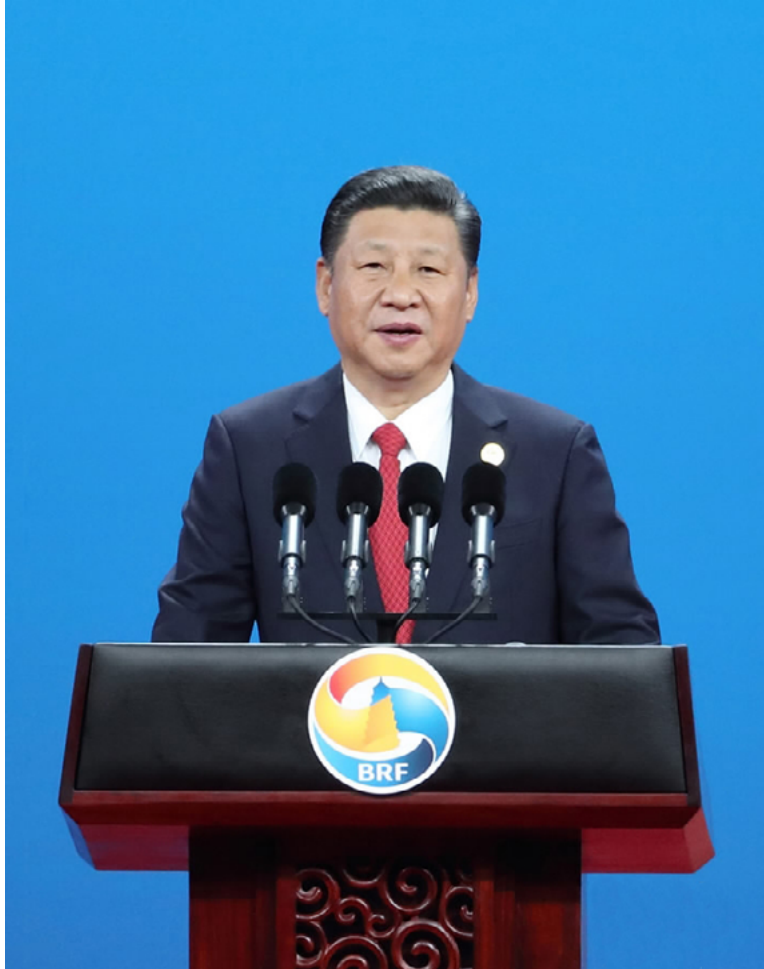
volume 2 | Issue 1 | 2023



This text is taken from *Global China Pulse*: Volume 2, Issue 1, 2023.

FORUM





A New Silk Road

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers his keynote speech during the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum at the China National Convention Center in Beijing on May 14, 2017. Source: Xinhua Photo

A Decade of the Belt and Road Initiative

Edited by Jessica DiCARLO

September 2023 marks 10 years since Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the notion of a New Silk Road, which would eventually come to be known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the past decade, more than 150 countries have signed on to the initiative, with varying degrees of engagement. The BRI is known for infrastructure-led development along economic corridors and has come to encompass digital, Arctic, and space initiatives. Its expansive implications for geopolitics, global trade, and more local geographies of change have resulted in approaches and opinions that vary tremendously. Researchers have theorised the BRI as a novel mode of global integration; explored its financial arrangements, investment, and debt; examined its impacts on trade and development; evaluated its geopolitical and geo-economic implications; and studied its role in shaping the world order. In addition, a rapidly growing body of scholarship focuses on the BRI's emergent geographies in a host of places and at multiple scales.

For the tenth anniversary of the BRI, this forum reflects on and consolidates the myriad debates, scholarship, and perspectives related to the initiative. The contributors reflect on how the BRI has evolved, exploring the contradictions that have shaped it and pressing future issues for policy and scholarship. They speak across disciplinary and methodological boundaries and raise questions about what we know about the BRI today, how it has been studied, its major impacts, and how to think about 'Global China' as the initiative enters its second decade.

In the first essay, **Igor Rogelja** reflects on tensions between the hypervisibility and invisibility of BRI infrastructure. Next, **Han Cheng** considers the BRI as discourse, project, and experience, to think through the initiative's imagined, material, and lived implications across multiple terrains and scales. **Jordan Lynton Cox** suggests a more historically grounded analysis to improve understanding of Global China. **Hong Zhang** turns to the domestic dimensions of the BRI, shedding light on the local interests it has nurtured that are dependent on continued international exchanges and their implications for China's domestic political economy. **Cecilia Springer** and **Keren Zhu** explore the changes in BRI financing trends, the evolution of BRI environmental regulations, and efforts towards a greener BRI. **Elia Apostolopoulou** discusses BRI-driven urban formations as part of a global urbanisation project that prioritises the creation of new

trade corridors and transnational connections. In the final essay, **Jessica DiCarlo** reviews grounded BRI research to advocate a more multifaceted conceptualisation of Global China in the wake of Ching Kwan Lee's pioneering work (see, for instance, Lee 2017).

Collectively, the forum reflects on how we study large, dynamic local–global processes and what we have learned through research on this subject. We question the ways research might move beyond the BRI to underscore the processes, dynamics, and materialities that make up the initiative's numerous manifestations. Indeed, in many ways, the overwhelming focus on the BRI often obscures more than it reveals. As this forum highlights, the BRI's projects and efforts will continue to influence and be influenced by dynamics such as domestic trends in China, host-country politics, sociopolitical processes, and the global geopolitical landscape. Each crucially shapes the trajectory of the BRI. As we move into the second decade of the BRI, analysis must incorporate these multiple scales and orientations. ●