Greening the Belt and Road Investments in Central Asia: A Visual Synthesis

The Big Picture: Global
Rationale

• ‘It is there’ large (1.5 trillion) and rapid infrastructure development happening now in Central Asia as world wide

• ‘Greening’ declared by all players: China, the countries of Central Asia and international organizations

• Safeguards in place through national legislation, international agreements and financial instruments and voluntary compliance
Objectives

- Regional ‘bird’s eye’ synthesis aimed at policy-makers
- Communicative and visual presentation with maps, cartograms and infographics
- Outline of possible ways forward, implementing environmental safeguards
Target Audiences in Central Asia, China and the World

• ‘influencers’ (=you) environmental policy setters (the converted)

• ‘environmental ignorants’ mainstreaming greening to actors in business, finance, investment and industry (the non-converted)

• ‘general public’ providing information as a base to react
Partnership

• Zoï Environment Network
  is a non-profit organization that helps build sustainable societies through informed analysis, visual communication, design and action.

• UN Environment
  is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

• Switzerland FOEN International Affairs
  coordinates and develops Switzerland's political and strategic positions on international environmental questions and manages international negotiations and processes in this area.
It is the longest tunnel in Central Asia

Qamchiq Tunnel: a demonstration of ‘Chinese speed’
A new route linking NW China’s Xinjiang to Uzbekistan

New trade route connects China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
Belt and Road Initiative provides development opportunity to Central Asia
Belt and Road Initiative provides development opportunity to Central Asia
Better transport links between China and Kazakhstan vital, say both presidents
Tajik citizens benefit from closer economic cooperation with China
Hitachi EX3600-6 mining excavators at Kumtor Mine, Kyrgyzstan -HD-
BRI critical to central Asia, says Kyrgyz PM
The Big Picture: Central Asia

Global comparison
Trade relations China with Central Asia

China export destinations

Total: $2.06T

Hong Kong
South Korea
Vietnam
India
Singapore
United States
Mexico
Canada
Japan
Kazakhstan
KZ
Kyrgyzstan
KZ
Turkmenistan
TKM
Uzbekistan
UZ

Central Asia

China import origins

Total: $1.32T

South Korea
Malaysia
Thailand
Vietnam
Germany
Russia
Italy
NLD
Brazil
Australia
Japan
Kazakhstan
KZ
Kyrgyzstan
KZ
Turkmenistan
TKM
Uzbekistan
UZ

Central Asia

ZOI environment network
About 100 active projects in Central Asia and Azerbaijan are directly or indirectly linked to the Belt and Road Initiative.
The Environmental Stakes

• World Environmental and Cultural Heritage Sites with tourism attractions along the ancient Silk Route

• Water and land crucial to the economies

• Vast and unique steppes, deserts and mountain areas rich in biodiversity

• Climate change and other environmental pressures already showing impact
Environmental Stakes: Heritage Sites
Environmental Stakes: Nature Protection
Environmental Stakes and BRI Corridors
Mapping Belt and Road in Central Asia

• **BRI is not a single thing** but rather a catchall term for investments, information has to be assembled from multiple sources ranging from national to global data portals, Chinese sources and also the media, including news channels.

• The nature of the BRI investments can vary considerably from engineering design and construction works to ‘resource for investments’ barter deals.

• There are significant differences between the countries of Central Asia.
Cartogram Profile: Kazakhstan
Cartogram Profile: Kyrgyzstan

Total exports: 1.0 billion

Exports to China: 0.03–0.08 billion

Imports from China: 2.6 billion

Significance on China in country's...
BRI Inventory Map: Kazakhstan
BRI Inventory Map: Kyrgyzstan
BRI Dynamics: Dry Port Khorgos
Belt and Road Safeguards

• Throughout Central Asia, *national laws* regulate water and land use, emissions and waste

• The use of environmental *impact assessments*, *bank safeguards*, *industry standards* and *voluntary compliance* provide additional environmental protections

• *Regional and global instruments* work on *transboundary environmental protection* and *issues of global significance*.
Ramifications of Belt & Road projects on transportation & communications

Follow good practices
1. Prefer small electric or gas-powered cars and electrified railroads
2. Develop tunnels to help reduce the risk of avalanches and to cut travel times and emissions
3. Plan ports and terminals to avoid congestion
4. Enhance communications that enable rapid responses to natural disasters and other emergencies

Exercise caution
- Minimize the fragmentation of natural areas, nature reserves and migratory paths caused by road and rail development
- Recognize that expanded infrastructure may bring additional environmental pressures
- Avoid excessive motorization
- Maintain reasonable, affordable tolls on tunnels and roads
Ramifications of Belt & Road projects on mining & industry

Follow good practices
1. Support local roads, schools and water supply
2. Hire a local labour force
3. Procure food locally
4. Report on operations and income and provide briefing for local communities
5. Conduct credible socio-environmental impact assessments
6. Promote and practice transparency

Exercise caution
- Limit investments in mining of coal and primary mercury
- Avoid mining in ecologically sensitive areas
- Recognize and apply national legislative requirements and international environmental and safety standards
Looking ahead
Secure local support and long-term success by practicing:

• **Transparency**: Advanced notice and information about prospective projects, both for engagement and avoidance of corruption.

• **Monitor** and apply relevant **safeguards** and engage stakeholders, including NGOs with respect.

• **Training**: for stakeholders in the countries, Chinese SoE and other enterprises.
CEP and Belt and Road

• **Multilateral Agreements**
  Impact assessment (Espoo); industrial accidents (Helsinki); Information, public participation, access to justice (Aarhus); Long-range air pollution (Geneva); Water (Helsinki)

Climate Change, Biodiversity, Desertification, Ozone

• **Assessments, Reviews**
  Environment Performance Reviews, State-of-the Environment Reports, GEO, SDGs

• **EfE2020**