

The Digital Silk Road

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Autre(s) auteur(s) : Nouwens, Meia (19..-....)

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Résumé ou extrait : Concerns about China's ambitions to return to global centre stage as a great power have recently begun to focus on the Digital Silk Road (DSR), an umbrella term for various activities – commercial and diplomatic – of interest to the Chinese government in the cyber realm. Part of (or a spin-off from) the 2013 Belt and Road Initiative, by 2020 the DSR had become a focal point of China's foreign policy. But the DSR remains ill-defined and poorly understood. At the heart of such concerns is not that Chinese technology companies are becoming globally competitive, but rather that Beijing could use them to 'rewire' the global digital architecture, from physical cables to code. Dominance by Chinese technology could shift global norms from a free cyber commons to competing systems of cyber sovereignty or cyber freedom. This Adelphi book brings together eight experts to examine the development of the DSR, explore its impact on economics, security and governance in recipient countries, and assess the broader impact on patterns of economic and technological dependence, on the emerging rules and norms of tech globalisation, and on global geopolitics and great-power relations. Beijing has grasped the opportunity to leverage the entrepreneurial strengths of its private tech sector to gain prominence in the world's digital ecosystem. But the more interventionist Beijing becomes, the more Chinese firms will be seen as instruments of the state, and the greater the pushback against Chinese technology and the DSR may be. To achieve great-power status and global centrality, Beijing might ultimately need to change tack. How it innovates in further rolling out Chinese tech across the world, and what the DSR will then look like, will have far-reaching impacts on global economics, politics and security.

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