

Interactive comment on “Brief Communication: Vehicles for development or disaster? The new Silk Route, landslides and geopolitics in Nepal” by Karen Sudmeier-Rieux et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

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The topic of this study is timely and important but the article as it currently stands does not offer significant new knowledge, conclusions, or actionable insights. While a clear connection between roads and landslides clearly exists, the scope of the article is far too wide and ambitious, such that very little traction is made with respect to any of the multiple topics addressed. The methodology of data collection and analysis also remains unclear, and appears to be a combination of popular media accounts in the BRI contexts with historical studies of land degradation (UEA study) and a paucity of primary fieldwork data. All this being said, this reviewer finds real and important potential in the study and encourages the authors to undertake a significant rewrite that focuses the paper in more direct ways (for example, this could and maybe should be more

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about roads and landslides than BRI and the politics of post-earthquake development). A single article does not (and cannot) address everything all at once!

More specifically, items of consideration include:

Lines 36-43: Second paragraph - important questions but overly simplified and too much to answer in this brief commentary

Lines 60-68: Too simplistic - road and infrastructure development and state making; legacies of Indian hegemony; earthquake; constitution and fuel blockade; Chinese humanitarianism; and BRI is TOO MUCH for one paragraph (and probably one paper)

Lines 80-81: This is an understatement and underdeveloped consideration with respect to the BRI - "Infrastructure in such mountainous terrain warrants special attention to ensure that construction does not cause environmental harm or aggravate disaster risks such as landslides and flooding." High number of references are from online and popular media sources. Where is the data? – Page 4 - Landslides and roads - Peter Laban etc. history of land degradation and landslides is important topic. But introduced suddenly and paid insufficient attention

Lines 147-152 - Statistics of road-based fatalities are tragic. But these numbers do not account for the exponentially higher number of travelers on roads today. Nor do they account for many landslides that are accounted for differently in non-road hillsides

Lines 162-167 - so is conclusion that there is no reliable connection between roads and increased landslides; more of an issue of monsoon, etc.? Please clarify this point.

Line 198 - Strongly disagree with this statement. Nepal may have good technological skills and capable people, but the natural and objective challenges of roadbuilding in the Himalaya coupled with protracted corruption and compromised leadership compound the delays, hazards, and dangers of road development in Nepal. That is, in fact it very much IS a political issue.

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