

Dear Reader,

Most people think of China as an unstoppable juggernaut, and there's no better example than infrastructure-building. While American political leaders endlessly over-promise and under-deliver on infrastructure-building projects, China has built vast systems of airports, highways, subways, and rail lines in a single generation. And now it is using infrastructure-building as an instrument of foreign policy—or, to put it more bluntly, making itself into a global imperium.

In *High-Speed Empire*, Will Doig, a talented young journalist, travels to Southeast Asia to chronicle China's ambitious attempt to build new rail lines—and along with them, new cities—in countries like Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia. These are traditionally poor and underdeveloped places with nothing like China's degree of command-and-control central dominion over political and economic life. Doig tells a vivid, often comic, and complex story, which one can read as an object lesson either in China's unstoppableness or in the limits of its ability to export its model, and its people, to other locations. This is an important and unfamiliar story that conveys a much richer picture of China's role in the world than we usually get.

Best,



Nicholas Lemann
Director, Columbia Global Reports