

Artifact Four

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The fourth proposed artifact is my research paper titled The Widening Gap A look into the Belt and Road Initiative and its Effects in Countries Leading to China's Increasing International Influence. This paper was completed after a few deployments to Djibouti Africa where I experienced firsthand the expansion of China both prior to their base there and after it went operational. The paper examines the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on global economics. The main argument of the paper is that while the BRI promotes economic development in participating countries, it also increases China's geopolitical influence and creates a long-term dependency on China.

This paper demonstrates my ability to assess the actors and process involved in policy making and continues by evaluating the policy implementation and its outcomes across different areas. My analysis identifies the key players like the Chinese government and the nations that have made partnerships as well as other nations reactions to these agreements. The focus is on how policies are implemented through infrastructure projects, trade agreements, and financial investments. The goal was not simply describing the initiative; the paper evaluates these actions influence economic development and political relationships on a long term global scale.

By looking at the BRI and its implementation across different regions, I analyze how policy makers use economic and infrastructure strategies to expand influence and achieve long-term goals. The paper uses examples that include Kenya to show how the policies are used in proactive and what outcomes are produced. Its strength, however, is using multiple regions and identifying the different interactions and their result. Improving this paper, I would evaluate the argument based on present day, including the results from Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and

Pakistan. In addition, I would look to strength it by comparing it to China's support of Russia in Ukraine and development since the US withdraw of Afghanistan. Connecting the economic policy, the political changes and the global influence over time showing its effectiveness to today's results. I would also refine the structure to make the analysis more direct and reduce repetition. Strengthening the overall evaluation and refining it to be a more completed paper to strengthen my overall evaluation of international policy making.

The Widening Gap

A Look into the Belt and Road Initiative and its effects in countries leading to China's increasing international influence dynamics

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The world isn't shrinking, but our society is becoming more efficient; more efficient at reaping resources, producing goods, transporting those goods, and ultimately selling them. Resources that enable production of advanced goods sometimes require sourcing from different regions of the world. China has identified the need to obtain these resources and transport them to China as a high priority. China working towards its globalization goals is increasing its economic influence through the Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI. China is using the BRI to be more dominate through financial investments increasing its political reach. This effects not just on the countries directly, but the world political balance to including military power projection. The focus of BRI is to build economic relationships with China, through investment in a country's infrastructure, mostly in railway, road networks and deep-water ports. Several African nations have received funding from China and have seen their economies grow as a result. Africa is an excellent area to invest in due to many untapped natural resources, specifically rare earth minerals and metal ores. Additionally, China has begun to build military bases in Africa, currently starting with Djibouti, used to project a military presence in the region, as well as protect vital trade routes in an area known for modern day piracy. Through this economic development, China places seeds of industry through its development efforts throughout Africa. Towards the Middle East, China is developing overland routes, enabling oil to be piped to deep water ports, more efficiently, then using oil tankers or trucks, enabling faster transit of more oil to China. China is working to become the preferred ASEAN trade partner as well as be the most efficient trade partners for the EU. BRI works to develop trade and economic relations in six different economic regions, these include Mongolia and Russia, Eurasian countries, Central and West Asia, Pakistan, and parts of the Indian sub-continent, as well as Indochina (OECD , 2018).

These regions offer trade corridors and markets for resources, energy as well as culture exchange.

Research

Research into this subject comes in three basic forms. Information from the BRI and Chinese state that is published via the government directly, national governments that are invested in by the BRI, and locally via journalists and third-party agencies, both for statistical research and investigative journalism. To compare the growing influence of China on a global scale the paper attempts to use third party agencies for hard statistical data and third-party journalism, in addition to localized journalism to understand firsthand experience within the affected nation. Effort was made to steer away from China or host nation government numbers when possible. Additionally, when identified the influence of other countries investing or putting effort into countering China's influence will be noted. Looking into the different regions of investments and comparing them to countries that have not had BRI investment was the first approach. However, after researching, it was identified that many of the different regions had different resources and goals regarding China, and it was difficult to compare. With over 138 countries involved with BRI comparisons were based off countries in regions that showcased "flagship" programs of BRI, or significant dynamics as well as projects that are in operational stages to where the effects can be measured, using trade increases over the last 5-15 years.

Development in Africa

The key to China's investments is focused on building infrastructure that enables a country to engage in broader world trade. Specifically, China looks to obtain the resources of an underdeveloped or secluded countries and produce goods, often selling these. Africa itself does

not represent a trade corridor for the BRI, however it does represent an area where China is building infrastructure, trade and influence. BRI does support the development of infrastructure that has enabled countries to enter higher levels of global trade. In the Horn of Africa, BRI has invested 70% of the \$3.4 billion it took to build the 750km Ethiopia-Djibouti railway (Fox, 2019). Ethiopia is a land locked country, so the construction of the railway to Djibouti's deep-water port has been essential to trade. This signaled the increase of economic development by Ethiopia, enabling it to work on paying back the estimated \$12.1 billion owed to China since 2000 (Lingala, 2019). Ethiopia's GNP has been steadily increasing by about 10% or more since 2005, which is on par with the region, however it's difficult to determine if this is a direct reflection of BRI investment due to the influx of money pouring into the region by many countries interested in developing Africa and its resources.

Do to COVID-19 foreign investment has fallen off significantly, almost a 60% decrease in Africa. Ethiopia has still been able to grow, likely due to completing some investment projects prior to COVID-19. However, the drop in economical investments does not affect Africa alone, post pandemic has seen a cut in international investments around the world while countries look internally to issues (United Nations, 2021) affecting underdeveloped economies in all places. What is slightly different for Ethiopia is some political instability within the nation as the government battles rebels that have killed thousands and displaced millions of citizens (Mackintosh, 2021). During this time of instability, the Chinese workforce as well as investments have remained somewhat stable (John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 2022). What is unique about Ethiopia is that resources and trade with Ethiopia requires the use of the Chinese constructed Djibouti/Ethiopia railway system, that carries trade from Ethiopia to the Djibouti City, a deep-water port. Djibouti City is home to the only complete military base by the

Chinese military in the world, although recently China has been looking to place another military base near Guinea's deep-water port (ANI, 2022). The projection of Chinese military power is a very clear increase of regional influence across Africa and the surrounding international waters. The US maintains the most international bases, projecting military power to six continents across the world, China is being more strategic and focused on their military infrastructure placement, using it to secure the investments made by the Chinese state corporations. Kenya and Nigeria have both received substantial investment from China's endeavors in Africa as well, However, Kenya having the largest port on east Africa has been a very good investment opportunity for China and is a good example of both the good and the bad.

Kenya's BRI investments have built the foundations of a close relationship with China (Wilson-Andoh, 2022). The Standard Gauge Railway, which is the primary Chinese project in Kenya has replaced the older British railway from its colonial days. This ambitious project has connected Kenya in ways that were no longer possible under the dilapidated older railway system, as well as worked to prove that China is positive partner with Kenya, and not taking advantage of the nation as some media portrays. The 480km railway connects the capital city Nairobi, located in the south center of the country, with Mombasa, the largest port in East Africa. The railway is being utilized to transport passengers and cargo daily as intended at 1/3 of the time it would take the much older railway system, when it was actually working. The railway was built and is operated by the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and is currently finishing another system that connects the Naivasha to the capital. The new railway system has operational since 2017, and although its leaps and bounds over the previous narrow-gauge system, it continues to operate at a loss annually. This has led some to believe that China is engaging in a type of debt trap with the countries that it's helping. The construction of the

railway system in Kenya has come out over budget and has not given the return on investment originally forecasted (Wilson-Andoh, 2022). Locally journalists have raised concerns about the amount of national debt, namely to China, currently the debt is reported to be 55% of its GDP (Fox, 2019), or roughly \$34.8B (Statista, 2022), which is lower than the 74% threshold Kenya's Treasury has set as a threshold (Fox, 2019). Of this, China holds \$7B, or 70% of Kenya's external debt holdings. Reports on Chinese workers in Africa vary year to year, 2018 saw the height of Chinese workers residing in Kenya with 9,131, which has dropped to 4,536 in 2020. These numbers can be skewed, as if a Chinese worker declares a Kenya citizenship, they are no longer counted as a Chinese working, but as a local Kenyan. Chinese corporations have maintained a foothold in Kenya, as previously stated they are managing and expanding the standard gauge railroad, however they are also building powerplants, creating manufacturing plants, as well as mining operations, managed and owned by Chinese corporations. This has led to some local journalists and papers to speak out against Chinese involvement, citing that most job positions for Kenyans are menial or hard labor jobs, both in construction and manufacturing (Mwago, 2019).

The exports to China have grown from 1.2M in 1995 to \$149M in 2020, an annualized increase of 21.3%, and is composed mostly of raw ore (OEC, 2022). China to Kenya imports compose mostly of rolled steel and electronics, valued at \$4.86B in 2020, an annualized increase of 16.6% from 1995 if \$104M (OEC, 2022). The total increase of exported goods value has increased by 6% or \$218M over the last 5 years, however Kenya's main exports are still agriculture in nature or unrefined ore. The BRI has brought Chinese workers, and investments to Kenya, helping build their infrastructure and increase their ability to export unrefined goods. Without a doubt China is reaping rewards from investing in Kenya, however Kenya is managing

its debt and working to ensure that Kenya's interests are not lost in this relationship. Since China has invested so heavily in Africa, specifically infrastructure, its influence has grown substantially, it would be surprising to see if fall off soon. Overall, the investments into Africa have been worth while for China, increasing trade, and planting seeds of Chinese infrastructure as well as culture in Africa.

Development in the Middle East

The China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor is a trade route that follows the ancient trade routes of the original Silk Road, connecting China to the Arabian Peninsula, this includes the oil rich countries of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran (OEC, n.d.). China's biggest import is crude oil, accounting for \$150B, or 10% of their imports in 2020. Most of this oil is sourced from the Middle East, however China does maintain some diversity, importing oil from Russia and South America in addition to multiple countries in the Middle East. As the recent development of Russia's invasion and the sanctions emplaced, it's become more evident than ever that having diverse trade routes sourcing the same resource from different locations is important. China's need for crude oil is predicted to continue to grow (Trough, 1999). It's not difficult to understand that this corridor will be used to transport crude oil to China via pipelines as agreements with Pakistan to pipe oil from Iran would reduce the use of over water transport and prevent using highly congested straits like the Malacca Strait, a route that China currently relies on heavily. This can lead to issues as tensions between India and China have been heating up over the years (Sutton, 2020). With China increasing its trade routes, adding additional routes, India would be hard pressed to fully blockade China, giving flexibility to how China would respond to aggression, from India or other nations. Iran's main exploration is to China, this is important because China is not able to self-support it's oil requirements. Most of China's oil

production comes from offshore drilling, which is 5-10 times the cost to refine than Middle Eastern countries (Trough, 1999). This has forced China to acknowledge the requirement of importing oil, and the reliance on maintaining influence in the region. Pipelines to Iran may be the flagship of the corridor, however it is not the only investment.

The top BRI invested country is Pakistan, originally encompassing over \$62B in projects! The ambitious projects would have rebuilt Gwadar, a deep-water port as well as build transit infrastructure to include railways from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, to the Arabic Sea (Sacks, 2021). In 2020 China exported \$14.7B to Pakistan, the majority being electronics and refined goods, while only importing \$1.97B from Pakistan, over half being cotton yarn, the remainder being refined copper and rice (OEC, 2022). As a nation, Pakistan imports its fuel and gas, and is diverse in its trades, non reliant on any one country. BRI investments have helped increase the internal infrastructure, however since 2015, Pakistan's international export trade has decreased by \$1.42B (OEC, 2022), which has caused Pakistan's external debt to increase dramatically, currently at \$130B, 80% of their GNP (CEIC, 2021). This has forced China to cut the initial investment plan, as well as reduce the BRI loans and pledges as it recognizes Pakistan's inability to repay its current loans. Pakistan has even reached out to the IMF to help secure funds to prevent a total collapse (Sacks, 2021). If Pakistan is not careful, it could be an example of China's reaction and procedures when a nation has failed to repay BRI investments. Ultimately, Chinese influence may transition to more economic control over Pakistan, as many of the corporations are state owned by China, Pakistan's primary use to China however is granting a overland route to Iran and the Arabian Sea.

After the US and its allies withdrew from Afghanistan, China has worked to build relationships with the Taliban, the ruling political party of the nation. China is working with the

Taliban to prevent violence against China, its interests and its citizens as well as revive its efforts of mining Afghani copper (Zovak, 2022). China's outreach to the Taliban showcases the disregard for the westerns influence in the region. Additionally, the efforts of China to support nations that the US and Europe have sanctioned or refused trade with, has weakened the political dominance the west has had. If China continues to grow and provide an alternate market, then the US and western nations will continue to have less political power over governments like the Taliban. The primary goal in this corridor is to provide flexibility and efficiency to transport crude oil and other resources to China, however China is also giving political alliance options for countries that have traditionally been sanctioned hard by the western nations, because of this we may see nations like Iran be affected by sanctions even less. With Pakistan boarding Afghanistan, a successful land route of trade for China could be established, increasing the need to continue investing in Pakistan's infrastructure even at a loss. However, as Russia and the US has discovered, investing in the middle east and its instability can lead to a complete loss of investment as the religious and political extremes in the area can lay waste to long term plans. Increasing the land routes, and diversity of trade routes allows China to leverage more with other countries, as China would have less to lose at the loss of a single partner, like Russia, or some nations in the Middle East. Recently with Russia Special Military Operation, it's become evident that trade diversity is a requirement to provide the needed national stability of a modern industrial nation.

China-Mongolia-Russia Development

The China Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor focuses on transport infrastructure, to include ports, as well as trade and culture alliances. The most efficient method of trading is to trade with countries that are nearest to you, there's less transport required. Additionally, however

is the need for access through surrounding countries, aiding in the transport of goods and trade with even more countries. The main trade partner in this corridor is Russia. Russia is not in need of infrastructure investments; however, they are in desperate need for high tech computer chips and quality electronics. The trade is almost balanced for Russia and China, with Russia exporting \$49.3B in 2020, half of exports shipped was crude oil and refined petroleum to China, with China exporting \$50.7B in mostly electronics. This is roughly one third of the fossil fuel energy that China imports annually (OEC, 2022). China openly supports President Putin and Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. (Jackson, 2022). From China's standpoint, they need to maintain a positive relationship with Russia, due to the amount of crude and crude products that China imports from Russia, this is apparent with the recent 30-year pipeline contract between the two countries signed in February (Jackson, 2022). Russia needs China's support as well, as most of the west has laid on heavy sanction upon Russia, as roughly a quarter of Russia's export trade comes from sending oil to China. In the case of Russia and China, it is purely a trade at this point, although a highspeed rail has been in delayed planning for years (Seetao, 2022).

Although Trade is the primary efforts for the Russia/China relationship, there is flagship BRI program to build a China to Europe via Moscow railroad system stretching 4,350 miles at an estimated cost of \$230B (Digital Supply Chain, 2020). In comparison it would be roughly twice the distance of the historic Chicago to Los Angeles Route 66 in the US. If completed, this railroad system would be one of a kind in the world and would reduce travel time from Moscow to Beijing from 6 days to 2. Additionally, the amount of transport goods that could be moved efficiently would change worldwide trade routes for Europe, Russia, and China.

Routes to Russia and the trade are very mutually needed for both China and Russia. By far however China and Russia re most reliant on each other than any other trade partner. The

sheer demand for each other's trade goods has eased the burden of sanctions on Russia. The technology that China can offer to Russia is better than anything Russia can mass produce. The Oil that Russia can provide to China is needed. If China were to sanction Russian oil, as most of the rest of the world has, oil prices would rise dramatically again, as the oil would have to be sourced from the rest of the world market, which is already at its breaking point. The primary focus will not be to aid Russia's infrastructure, but to make the logistics of trade with Russia to be a more efficient and effective means for both countries. Building a transcontinental railroad system across China, Russia and into Europe would be a game changer. However it would also give Russia major influence over how China ships goods to Europe, something China may not be inclined to allow. China maintains very little influence over Russia itself, however their relationship does give support to the idea that China is a very powerful nation, which can heavily affect other nations in the region, to include ASEAN members.

China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor Development

China's relationship with ASEAN has changed over the years. ASEAN is best viewed as a coalition of Asian trade partners. This corridor is focused on land routes that cross Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and other in the region. ASEAN has traditionally had the US as its primary trade partner; however, China has closed the gap and surpassed the US in trade with ASEAN countries in 2009, and its trade with ASEAN has grown exponentially since then (ASEAN, 2022). Although the focus is trade investment into infrastructure is very high as well. The largest ASEAN trade partnership for China is with Vietnam, who receives \$104B in Chinese Exports, while exporting \$49.4B to China, in mostly manufactured goods (OEC, 2022). Vietnam is also the second most invested country by the BRI (Pakistan being the first), with investments primarily in power generation (CDR, 2021), accounting for nearly half of the investment priority

for Vietnam (Hiep, 2018) . As Vietnam has trade agreements through ASEAN, and is centrally located to other ASEAN countries, the value of a Chinese/Vietnam relation is very high for both countries. However, China is very aggressive in the South China Sea, an area of water which Vietnam contests this aggressiveness. Originally the issues were regarding fishing and research, however with expansion of offshore drilling has increased the tension, a jump to potential conflict is possible. In 2017 China threatened violence if Vietnam did not halt oil drilling on Chinese claimed waters (International Crisis Group, 2021). This is where Vietnams relationship with ASEAN as well as it's trade agreements with China can be used to negotiate a fair agreement for South China Sea. Vietnam cannot sit toe to toe with China's military and China has influence with ASEAN and Russia, however Vietnam is a strong member of ASEAN and has long time relationships with Russia as well as India and is almost 4% of China's export market, with continuing steady growth. Although China could cut ties with Vietnam if the issues over the South China Sea were to come down to open war, China would likely loose financially in the investments it's made in Vietnam. Additional public outcry against China in Vietnam has been increasing (International Crisis Group, 2021), however Vietnam is a single party communist state, reducing the amount of instability that the public can cause across the country.

BRI in the EU and Response to BRI

China's BRI has grown exponentially with many smaller projects around the world. This has not gone unnoticed by the US or the EU. Although the EU may have much to gain in a more efficient trade with China, the EU and the US could see reduced global influence as a result. ASEAN countries are a prime example of where trade with the US has declined compared to trade with China, as the cost and locality of quality manufactured goods outweighs the need to maintain relations with the US. The shift seen with ASEAN is the same shift that China would

like to see with the EU. Countries in the EU are less inclined to formally join the BRI, however some have, in 2016, a state-owned Chinese shipping company purchased 51% of Greece's Piraeus Port Authority. Investments in Portugal are popular, with a few BRI investments taking place, leading to taking advantage of the large economy of the EU, which is doing very well (Skala-Kuhmann, 2019). Most EU countries that are receiving loans via BRI are in the east and southeast of the region, traditionally the less strong economic areas. Investments in EU countries seems to have been the wakeup call for the EU, where they have begun their own initiative, known as the "Global Gateway" with the goal of investing in recovering economies, with less focus on debt owed to the EU. The EU's plan is to help countries become "healthier" and increase their self-stability preventing the need for a BRI investment, which would in turn slow China's geopolitical increasing influence.

Conclusion

With industry comes Chinese workers and families, giving countries small concentrations of Chinese culture and influence. Trade agreements as well as more foreign industry grows as the relationship between the two countries increases through the process. Military projections showcase Chinese strength and security for its trade partners. China has also made it public of its rivalry with the US. These relationships are no different than any other developing country however there is more fear of debt traps due to the number of state-owned corporations involved in the BRI. Utilizing the developing countries for inexpensive manufacturing labor in addition to China confiscating real estate for defaulted loans are the largest counter arguments and fears to BRI investments. China has invested a lot of capital in countries, and although most are paying off in increased exports to China, some have not had the return on investment that China has enjoyed. Overall, however China's increased its influence on the world stage, it has created

investments in almost 200 countries, and it's seeing a substantial return overall. It is just now starting to see returns on these investments and is on track for making China the world market and trade. Additionally, the BRI has not made countries independent, but created a type of reliance on Chinese goods, specifically high-end manufacturing, and electronics. The trains that the BRI have built are maintained by the Chinese state railroad company, utilizing Chinese trains as well as parts. As raw resources are sent to China to be utilized in industry, these goods are traded back to nations, worth much more than the raw goods, it would not be surprising that the ore shipped to China from Kenya is processed and shipped back as parts to fix the Kenya train system. The BRI can help build relationships and spur economic growth, but without a doubt it is growing Chinese international influence and providing alternate markets if a nation is heavily sanctioned. The influence China is gaining doesn't affect most of the countries that the BRI is working with in a negative way, however the sheer amount of influence is where superpowers and regional alliances are citing issues. American citizens have increased in negative viewing of China as they build relationships with countries that have anti-American sentiment, like Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia (Christine Huang, 2022). This may continue to grow as China finds allies in nations that are shunned from the US and other western nations. China is super power and is positioning itself as the primary rival of the US, while still maintaining billions in trade with the US. Although the US is not involved with BRI, it is 10 years behind China, and counter it's influence. The current administration is using a "Build Back Better World" is inline with the EU's Global Gateway or China's BRI, but again it's behind the power curve, and if not aggressive and decisive, it may not close the gap with China.

Overall, it's evident that the BRI is changing the influences China has over regions by working with countries that have limitations on the international stage. The priority is to build

infrastructure that is reliant and/or owned by Chinese state corporations. Even superpowers like Russia have become reliant on China as a key trade partner, more so as Russia has been heavily sanctioned by the west. Additionally, more countries, like Russia, are at a minimum interested in partnering with China to increase trade route efficiency. The more China helps a nation, the more reliant that nation becomes on China, which places China as the country that more countries want to trade with, increasing the overall influence China must dictate standards and trade. The EU and the US are just recently putting in their own initiatives to counter BRI, as the worry of geopolitical hierarchy becomes a priority. Finally, the biggest winners of this emerging competition will be underdeveloped countries as they receive much needed infrastructure aid, however they must be vigilant in maintaining a watchful eye on their debt and their ability to repay.

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