



ECOSOC: Economic and Social

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Issue: Evaluating the potential changes in geostrategic and economic order following the establishment of the Belt Road Initiative

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Student Officer: Zeynep Yılmaz – President

I. Introduction

The People's Republic of China, established in 1949, has been ruled by the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong in its earlier history. Following Mao Zedong's death in 1978, Deng Xiaoping took power and he established a series of economic reforms in the People's Republic of China. The reforms led the country to open up to foreign trade and investment, as well as transitioning to a free-market economy. Since then, the People's Republic of China has been one of the fastest-growing economies of the world until its economy has reached maturity. The People's Republic of China's real GDP growth has slowed from 14.2% to 6.6% from 2007 to 2018 ("China's Economic Rise"), and this has led the government to take action on this matter. The Chinese government has announced and implemented several initiatives to make the People's Republic of China a major actor in global economic markets.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was one of the aforementioned initiatives launched by Xi Jinping in 2013, encompassing several countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. The People's Republic of China has aimed to develop strength in global trade by introducing the Belt as an overland route that connects several countries, and the Road as the sea route that again allows the People's Republic of China to have access to many other countries. The following report will examine the detailed background of the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as discussing the reactions from other nations and/or organizations around the world.

II. Involved Countries and Organizations

The People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China is the country that has initiated the Belt and Road Initiative; therefore, the whole issue revolves around the nation. The Chinese government is said to seek domination in the global trade markets through this initiative, and the People's Republic of China has made the Belt and Road Initiative a significant element of its international economic strategies.



The United States of America

The United States has a similar history of seeking economic control over a region, with the Transcontinental Railroad constructed back in 1869, and is currently considered to be the biggest global actor in the economic markets. With the economic development of the People's Republic of China, the growing trade war between the United States and the People's Republic of China has been significant distress in the international community. The United States has proposed a counter-initiative for the Belt and Road Initiative, called the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP)”, urging the independence of the countries that are currently included in the Belt and Road Initiative, and urging developments on security, economics, and governance.

The Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is the biggest endorser of the Belt and Road Initiative, reiterating the importance of collaboration with the People's Republic of China in the region. The Russian Federation receives a great amount of investment from the Belt and Road Initiative, specifically 123.87 billion US Dollars, which is four times more than the second-largest recipient, Saudi Arabia (“Russia Emerges”). The People's Republic of China favors the cooperation of the Russian Federation due to their oil and gas reserves, as well as the geostrategic advantages of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have also been conducting a similar trade route initiative to the Belt and Road Initiative: the Ice Silk Road. The Ice Silk Road would start from the People's Republic of China, pass through the northern regions of the Russian Federation, and ultimately reach to northern parts of Europe (Descamps). This would provide the Chinese government significant power in the Arctic region.

The European Union

The EU takes a rather neutral stance considering that the Belt and Road Initiative has both positive and negative effects on its policies. With the Belt and Road Initiative, Central Asian countries, Belarus and Ukraine have gained economic independence from the Russian Federation, a concept that is also desired by the EU. Therefore, the People's Republic of China is closer to the EU than it is to the Russian Federation in Eurasia; however, the emerging Chinese influence is considered problematic by the EU. Thus, the EU hesitantly supports the Belt and Road Initiative; however, several countries currently endorse the Belt and Road Initiative within the European Union.

(More examples of countries/organizations that endorse the Belt and Road Initiative can be found in the “Endorsements of the Belt and Road Initiative” section under the “Focused Overview of the Issue” section, and more examples of countries/organizations that criticize the Belt and Road Initiative



can be found in the “Criticism Directed Towards the Belt and Road Initiative” section under the “Focused Overview of the Issue” section.)

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

Xi Jinping, the president of the People’s Republic of China, has announced the Belt and Road Initiative during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia at the end of 2013. Upon commencing the initiative, the People’s Republic of China has begun to make investments in several countries along the Belt and the Road. It is one of the biggest investment projects in history, including 68+ countries, 65% of the world’s population, and 40% of the global GDP (Griffiths). As for the infrastructure of the Belt, new roads and rails are being constructed, as well as rebuilding the routes left behind from the historical Silk Road. For the Road, ports are being improved and new routes are developed. The Road is also referred to as the Maritime Silk Road, reiterating the power this project provides the People’s Republic of China as the Silk Road provided control and power to the ancient dynasties of China.

On May 14th and 15th, 2017, the People’s Republic of China held the first-ever Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation with the participation of leaders from 29 countries, representatives from more than 130 countries, and 70 international organizations (“Belt and Road Forum”). Consolidating the initiative with international forums, the Communist Party of China has integrated pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative into its constitution, turning the project into an ideal of their party.



Map 1: A map of the Belt and Road Initiative



The Belt and Road Initiative has been working efficiently since the beginning of the project, reaching “about 95% of the 279 items on the outcome list of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation as of July 2018” (“Timeline of Belt”). Thus, the People’s Republic of China has gained a significant profit in global trade. The initiative also seems to benefit other host countries than the People’s Republic of China: “in the past five years, China has also set up 82 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in countries along the Belt and Road, investing 28.9 billion US dollars and creating about 244,000 local jobs” (“Timeline of Belt”).

1. Geostrategic and Infrastructural Details

The Belt, the overland route, includes six different land corridors: “Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor, China-Central Asia-West Asia (CAWA) Economic Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula (ICP) Economic Corridor, China-Mongolia-Russian Federation (CMR) Economic Corridor, New Eurasia Land Bridge (NELB) Economic Corridor, and the China-Pakistan (CP) Economic Corridor” (Ramasamy). Since the overland route consists of many different land corridors, the People's Republic of China is able to reach out to several countries with this initiative. The Road, the maritime route, encompasses the South China Sea, the South Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean, which again allows the People's Republic of China to gain control over the trade routes and the countries that host the ports (Cigui).

2. Financial Support

The Belt and Road Initiative receives its main financial support from two organs: the Silk Road Fund, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

The Silk Road Fund is a development fund that invests in businesses in countries that are included in the Belt and Road Initiative. An example of the investments is the Karot Hydropower Project in Islamabad.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is a development bank led by the Chinese government, and there are 103 current members of this multilateral bank. The bank has received the support of the United Nations: “The Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), announced in October 2014, presents a potential for scaling up financing for sustainable development” (“World Economic Situation”).

3. Endorsements of the Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative, though has received criticism for promoting neocolonialist goals, has also been endorsed by many nations, the greatest endorser being the Russian Federation (refer to the section “Involved Countries and Organizations”). Italy, a member of the EU as well as the G7, has been



supporting the initiative since the beginning of 2019. Singapore, a strong actor in the Asian economic market, has also been endorsing the Belt and Road Initiative to strengthen ties with a fellow strong actor in the market. The Philippines have also shown support to the Chinese government upon making a change in their South China Sea policy, as the president of the Philippines desires supports from the People's Republic of China for their infrastructural plans. Finally, a significant number of Arab countries also support the initiative, considering it as a beneficial trade opportunity.

4. Criticism Directed Towards the Belt and Road Initiative

The United States criticizes the Chinese government for aiming to gain control over the region (refer to the section "Involved Countries and Organizations" for more details), and many political scientists comment on the issue with a mention of neocolonialist aims in the Belt and Road Initiative. Experts also mention that the prices of resources for the Chinese government will significantly fall with this initiative, therefore increasing the economic inequality between the People's Republic of China and the host governments.

5. Ecological Concerns

The development of infrastructure within the countries that the Belt and Road Initiative encompasses leads to significant damage to nature. Climate Home News reports that "the 126 countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, excluding China, currently account for 28 percent of global emissions. But if development continues as planned, their contributions could jump to 66 percent of global emissions by 2050. This would result in global carbon levels nearly twice what is needed to keep warming below 2 degrees Celsius, the upper limit of the Paris Agreement target" ("China's Belt").

IV. Key Vocabulary

The Transcontinental Railroad: A railroad that connects two ends of the United States of America, constructed from 1863 to 1869 ("Transcontinental Railroad"). (Refer to the section "Involved Countries and Organizations".)

The Silk Road: An ancient trade route established by the Han Dynasty of China, reaching from the Far East to Europe (Mark), the Silk Road sets the ideal for the current Belt and Road Initiative.

Neocolonialism: "The control of less-developed countries by developed countries through indirect means" ("Neocolonialism"). The People's Republic of China is said to have neocolonialist aims with the Belt and Road Initiative.



Development bank: “A national or regional financial institution designed to provide medium- and long-term capital for productive investment, often accompanied by technical assistance, in poor countries” (“Development bank”). (Refer to the section “Financial Support”).)

Development Research Center: A center working under the Chinese government, studying and analyzing short- and long-term topics in national development (“About”). (Refer to the section “United Nations Involvement”).)

South-South Cooperation: A United Nations organization that aims to connect developing countries in their journeys to developing (“What is South-South”). (Refer to the section “United Nations Involvement”).)

Memorandum of understanding: “A memorandum of understanding (MOU or MoU) is an agreement between two or more parties outlined in a formal document. It is not legally binding but signals the willingness of the parties to move forward with a contract” (Kenton). (Refer to the section “United Nations Involvement”).)

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date	Event
Late 2013	Xi Jinping has announced the Belt and Road Initiative during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia respectively.
November 8, 2014	The People’s Republic of China has announced the Silk Road Fund. (refer to the “Financial Support” section under the “Focused Overview of the Issue” section)
March 28, 2015	The People’s Republic of China has officially announced the action plan on amalgamating the overland route and the maritime road.
December 25, 2015	The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was established. (refer to the “Financial Support” section under the “Focused Overview of the Issue” section)
May 14-15, 2017	The first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing.
October 24, 2017	The Communist Party of China has integrated pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative into its constitution.



VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- <https://green-bri.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri>

The People's Republic of China has been holding bilateral meetings and signing agreements with the countries that are included in the Belt and Road Initiative. There are currently 138 countries that are included in the Belt and Road Initiative and the list of the countries can be found in the link.

- [Resolution 2344](#)

On March 17th, 2017, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2344 on the Situation of Afghanistan; however, the resolution also “backed the relevance of regional cooperation initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative as a win-win approach to promote safety, stability and development. Together with the Belt and Road Initiative, the resolution quotes the Chinese principle of creating ‘a community of shared future for mankind’” (UNDP).

- Although a common treaty was not signed during the Belt and Road Forums for International Cooperation, the forums were considered to be an environment to complete bilateral agreements between the People's Republic of China and other countries that are included in the Belt and Road Initiative.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

The agenda item requires the delegates to discuss the aftermath of the Belt and Road Initiative, and there have been many attempts by United Nations organs to regulate the geostrategic and economic order in the region. However, there are no current failed solution attempts for the regulation of the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, this report will include a “United Nations Involvement” section rather than a “Failed Solution Attempts” section, and delegates are encouraged to think deeply about the aftermath of the Belt and Road Initiative in the light of the United Nations involvement in this issue.

The World Bank Group has committed 80 billion US Dollars for the project, as well as doing thorough research “that provides independent analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative’s links to trade, investment, debt, procurement, environment, poverty reduction and infrastructure” (“Belt and Road Economics”). The World Bank Group has also released a [summary report](#) on the analysis, and delegates are encouraged to read through it.



United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has expressed its support for the Belt and Road Initiative, as Li Yong, the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization has stated: “At United Nations Industrial Development Organization, we strongly believe that the Belt and Road Initiative stands to become one of the largest and most effective platforms for international cooperation of the century. However, to reinforce the collaborative and mutually beneficial nature of this initiative, we must push for the creation of strong and practical policy coordination mechanisms” (Yong). United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Development Research Center will collaborate on inducing industrial development within the countries that are included in the Belt and Road Initiative. The People's Republic of China and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization has implemented the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund to support developing countries to implement Sustainable Development Goals.

The International Labor Organization has been working closely with the People's Republic of China on the Belt and Road Initiative by signing the following agreements: “South-South Cooperation under the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, Cooperation for the Promotion of the Effective Implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention through the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, South-South Cooperation on Work Safety Under the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative” (“China ILO Cooperation”). All of these agreements promote effective and cooperative trade within the Belt and Road Initiative. The International Labor Organization has also been providing the People's Republic of China technical assistance on the Belt and Road Initiative.

To address the ecological concerns, UN-Habitat has signed memoranda of understanding with the People's Republic of China to “promote Urban Sustainable Development, including National Urban Policies, Urban Land Use, Urban Planning, and Urban Facility Construction” (Clos). The Executive Director of UN-Habitat Dr. Joan Clos has also mentioned that UN-Habitat will support the People's Republic of China along with cooperating with other countries within the Belt and Road Initiative.

China Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Vincent Martin, has stated that: “FAO collaboration aims to maximize the poverty alleviation and rural development impact of Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt & Road Initiative involves huge investments in transportation and communications infrastructure. Matching these investments with much smaller investments supporting well designed complementary measures, the Belt and Road Initiative can make very substantial poverty alleviation achievements” (Martin). Vincent Martin has also mentioned that the Food and Agriculture Organization will be establishing a “Center for Agricultural Innovation and Partnership” to foster this goal.

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) has launched a Youth Leadership Program for agricultural cooperation with Africa. In 2018, “30 young government officials and



established young leaders in the agribusiness sector, from close to 20 African countries, joined this one-week intensive training in Beijing” (“Launch of Youth Leadership Program”). The training was focused on agricultural development and promoting cooperation.

VIII. Possible Solutions

The possible solutions must address the raised concerns by countries: some of the main ones being neocolonialism and ecological consequences of the Belt and Road Initiative. International cooperation during such concerns would be the key to taking precautionary measures for future problems, and to discuss the aftermath of the Belt and Road Initiative. Some solution alternatives are given in bullet form below; delegates are encouraged to elaborate on the points to constitute their proposed solutions and/or clauses:

- Holding a regular summit like the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held to discuss the outcomes of the initiative with host countries and all willing Member States, as well as international organizations,
- Drafting and ratifying a common treaty among the host countries of the Belt and Road Initiative to outline the legal rights and obligations each country within the boundaries of the Belt and Road Initiative,
- Establishing a supervisory committee that consists of the host countries of the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as United Nations experts to oversee the implementation of the initiative, the ongoing trade, and the preservation of nature while constructing infrastructure,
- Ensuring the transparency of the trade agreements to protect developing countries in the region from attempts of neocolonialism and prevent any other countries having claims of neocolonialism,
- Releasing regular reports about the activities that take place under the Belt and Road Initiative to ensure transparency to the global community,
- Cooperating with international organizations such as UN-Habitat for the preservation of nature and wildlife along the Belt and the Road.

IX. Useful Links

- The United Nations Development Programme report on the Belt and Road Initiative:
<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/china/docs/Publications/UNDP-CH-GGR%202017.pdf>



- The OECD report on the Belt and Road Initiative:
<https://www.oecd.org/finance/Chinas-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-in-the-global-trade-investment-and-finance-landscape.pdf>
- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the Belt and Road Initiative: <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/AWP172.pdf>
- Belt and Road News, a website dedicated to updates on the Belt and Road Initiative:
<https://www.beltandroad.news/>
- The CIA factbook for necessary preparations on your delegation:
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>



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