

## BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL ORDER

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### Abstract

*This study contributes to our understanding about Chinese security policy by providing insights into geopolitical upheavals caused by China's expanding global presence. This article discusses structural problems and geopolitical challenges brought on by the Chinese Belt Road Initiative (BRI). Paper claims that BRI may be legitimately understood as being more than merely a system of economic and military security. By promoting domestic stability and influencing countries outside of Asia, BRI really assists Chinese leaders in bridging internal and external challenges. The responsibility for helping to create a peaceful future still primarily rests with the West.*

**Keywords:** Belt Road Initiative, Great Powers, Regional Security, Global Order, Geopolitical Strategy

### INTRODUCTION

A global transportation initiative One Belt One Road, often known as the Belt and Road Initiative, is was introduced in 2013 and is widely viewed as the new Chinese geopolitical strategy to create its sphere of influence, developing new criteria (standards) for Global economic cooperation, and promoting a new world order (White, 2017). While the China's government and academics continue to support the policy adopted by China, while the US, the EU, and several of China's

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close neighbours are also mulling their plans to boost regional security and economic cooperation. This contributes to the public's sense of escalating geopolitical rivalry, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

The "America first" policy of former President Donald Trump and China's BRI, are two major developments that indicate an apparent shift in the world politics. Clearly, a significant historical transition is taking place in global politics. Two examples of these developments in China are the implementation of the Social Credit System and the expanding personality cult centred on the China's President. The European Union (EU) is undergoing a confidence crisis in democratic institutions, which resulted in the UK's decision to leave the Europe Union (Brexit). Almost similar patterns on both sides of the Atlantic point to major shifts in global politics (Amighini, 2017).

## **CHINESE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: A GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the "Belt Road Initiative" and the "21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR)" in September and October 2013, respectively. As per Chinese White Paper published in 2015, The BRI aims to establish and strengthen partnerships between the nations along the BRI, create these nations' diversified, independent, balanced, and sustainable economies by establishing multi-dimensional, multi-tiered, composite connection networks (Framework, 2015).

The White Paper outlines five key sectors and emphasises that it is "A bold economic vision of cooperation and openness among the countries along the Chinese Belt and Road" (Framework, 2015, p. 3). Despite how grandiose it now seems, the BRI was only ever a hazy idea in the beginning, reflecting a political desire to increase cooperation with neighbouring nations rather than carefully considered objectives and strategies. Due to this, the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road were first presented

independently in Indonesia and Kazakhstan (Len, 2015). Instead of as a whole on larger stages like the SCO conference or East Asian Summit. Every new leadership in the Chinese Communist Part was required to present an updated foreign policy, or at least, new slogans and goals, based upon the thorough examination of the shifting internal and external circumstances that country was confronting.

In November 2012, when Xi Jinping was chosen as the Secretary-General at the 18th CPC National Congress, Chinese strategic circle started to believe that the country is facing three main challenges: the first challenge was the industrial overcapacity and a diminishing desire for rapid economic growth need for more widespread international cooperation in order to create larger global markets; the second challenge faced by China was the potential for globalisation to slow down and maybe reverse course, which would give rise to a fresh surge of regional or subnational nationalism. Last but not the least was the “Rebalancing towards Asia” strategy announced by Obama administration, it caused China to strategically distance itself from a number of its neighbours, such as, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan.

As a result, China announced Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road as an effort to open up fresh opportunities for economic cooperation and decrease the tension in China's neighbourhood. This was in line with the Chinese ten-year-old objective for “peaceful rise” policy. Belt Road Initiative was first discussed as a single initiative at the Central Meeting on Neighbourhood Diplomacy in October 2013 and was then included into the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress (Zhang, 2018). According to a Chinese BRI specialist, the BRI was conceptualised in 2013, there was serious policy debate about it in 2014, top-level designing was prioritised in 2015, and a large international consensus was achieved through the construction of the important projects in 2016 (Mak, 2018). It is a unique instance in China's foreign policy where the BRI was announced internally and to the world before any available hazy

plan. This conduct laid the foundation for later over-expectations and over-caution among the international community.

Five years after its launch, the BRI has developed into China's primary strategy for international collaboration to assist its economic development. With more than 100 nations and international organisations, China has so far inked many cooperation agreements. More significantly, BRI has seen consistent and noticeable progress in the areas like infrastructure development, trade and investment promotion, joint development of industrial parks and free trade zones, financial cooperation, and cultural exchange that advance the economies and societies of both China and the cooperating nations (Zhang, 2018). BRI is the first idea for global economic cooperation from a developing nations, shows how keen the Chinese leadership is to start a new round of reform and opening-up, to take part more completely in the global economy, and to strengthen China's position in both economic and political realm.

### **THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: A NEW WORLD ORDER?**

The new world order is emerging via Silk Road revival. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) signifies a revolving point in Chinese national policy with its specified purposes of promoting connectivity among European, Asian and African Counties and their neighbouring seas, creating and firming corporations between the states beside Belt and Road Initiative , setting around all dimensions, multi- functional, and complex linkage and achieving different, autonomous, stable, and maintainable development in the states of Belt and Road, which signifies the turning point in Chinese national policy (Tega, 2018).

BRI, which bonded more than 65 countries and more than three billion people, is primarily a way of regional extension that places weightage on massive sub-structural plans. In the year 2015, the Action Plan assigned six corridors to the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and Maritime Silk Road Belt (MSR), respectively. Under the Communist Party of China's (CPC) project of increasing the regional

wealth and shielding friendship, understanding and peace, the roads and maritime routes will link Central Asian States and Russia to China and till Europe but particularly till African states, where are the core oil reserves which are still mostly untouched. Outside the BRI's tangible effects, China's development of security challenges via corporations rather than coalitions forms the larger normative context. China is mainly opposed to the US's regional corporation because they are assumed as 'a bulwark against the advancement of Chinese strategic aims' (Morton, 2017, p. 485).

Political leaders in the "belt" countries support BRI because it expected to expand infrastructure, increase connectivity, and encourage economic growth. According to China, assistance is provided in reaction to demand in order to meet the needs of the receivers. However, because of the corruption and privacy surrounding Chinese investments, political elites rather than the people of receiver countries are likely to get profit (Dreher, Fuchs, Hodler, Park, Raschky, Tierney, 2019).

Many academics, including (Bräutigam, 2011), (Kragelund 2011), and (Reisen & Stijns, 2011), claim that Beijing has approved African nations a certain amount of 'ownership' and 'policy space', but that these nations favour to neglect this fact. Despite the language of 'good intentions' that supports China's Aid Policy and seems to support the standard of national proprietorship verbalised in the Paris Declaration on the Aid Efficiency, the over lasting receivers of Chinese development aid are still unknown. That one is particularly true if the beneficiary's demands have to do with population growth or, as is frequently the case, with the ideas of politicians and those who support them. At the very least, reliance on asset flows results in the equilibrium that favours China and avoids recipient countries from continuing their economic independence.

## **BELT ROAD INITIATIVE: CONQUEST FOR SPACE**

The goal of the project is to guard and manage the routes used by natural resources, particularly oil and gas. The CPC just released a new set of ordering morals, which serves as the project's main dynamic power into driven. This contains relationships linking China's industrial facilities to African countries with a treasure of natural resources. The most important passage and a key component of China's larger policy is that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which links Chinese's city Kashgar with Pakistani's city of Gwadar that has the most favourable port. CPEC aims to meaningfully decrease travel time and costs, as Malacca Strait is currently the path followed by nearly 80% of the Chinese's oil imports. The huge stock required to expand Infrastructure of Pakistan, economic boost, ease energy deficiencies and possibly most importantly, make Pakistan more dependent on China over the long term. Although Pakistan already has high levels of corruption, the commercial and concessional loans used to finance these infrastructure projects could make the situation worsen (Hussain, 2017).

The Belt and Road Initiative is the best observed as an alternate vast strategy for the topmost international liberal in order of west rather than just as a means for China to proclaim its expert. This is also the reason why BRI should take into account factors other than economics, including as geopolitics, strategy, and the military. Construction of new ports and waterways serves purposes other than just commercial ones. For example, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) first overseas maritime naval facility, established in the Djibouti area in the year 2017, served as a military outpost for the Chinese navy (Lagneau, 2017). The PLA officially states that it has sent 400 personnel to boost UN peacekeeping efforts and defend Chinese naval activities, mainly in the Indian Ocean. Beyond posing a threat to US interests, India in particular is concerned about China's military build-up in the region. CPEC is a major cause of

disagreement as Sino-Indian ties are stressed by border disputes and territory beside with other local problems, the Himalayan disputes. Two high-risk areas where CPEC runs are the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and in the north-west Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. Therefore, the Chinese army is trusted with guarding ports, transit routes, and infrastructure building sites along the corridor in order to further enhance China's military presence in the area. In that way, BRI essential be seen as a strategy which advances China's security purposes in the Asia, Europe and Africa, while also benefiting Chinese corporate interests. Although stronger economic ties may raise the cost of conflict, two commonly overlooked factors are critical in this instance: BRI assists as a main four-dimensional strategy that combines military along civilian objectives beneath the guise of "security" and is the conceptual tool aimed to maintain and support China's internal command, which is measured via CPC.

### **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: A TOOL TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL STABILITY**

China has strengthened its geopolitical approach according to the Western hunts for novel global perspective. In 1978, when China allowed foreign investment and allowed peasants to keep their excess produce, capitalism was established in that nation. The nation wanted to advance from its scientific and technological backwardness by fostering the entrepreneurial spirit of its people. The mobilisation of the Chinese people under the goal of achieving wealth and prosperity strengthened national cohesion. The CPC is utilising BRI as a reason for preserving supremacy after years of economic success and amassed riches, but primarily as a tool of securing harmony, internal solidity, and national unity. Rising nationalism among the Chinese people is helping President Xi to establish his position. The authoritarian government is increasing its control on country's citizens while the China's economy has grown to play a vital role in worldwide supply chains. Surprisingly, in the direction of South China Sea, where "the government is building ports and runways on

a number of islands in the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos," China is likewise asserting its dominance on a global scale (Banik, 2019).

With the support of its favourable geopolitical location, the China's government is pursuing more emphatic foreign policy and managing all domestic economy like a multinational enterprise. To ensure improving living conditions at home, China's internal enterprises (SOEs) establish their internal and exterior economic policies in five-year plans. The CPC's specialist and regulation are made more legitimate by the ongoing provision of social services. BRI therefore mobilises the nation, maintaining China's peace, stability, and cohesion both inside and without its borders.

### **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: A SECURITY ARRANGEMENT**

The Belt and Road is largely "geostrategic-military" venture that fuses security-related civilian and military goals. We argue that a specific spatial and three-dimensional security design rather than BRI is a more accurate definition of BRI in this case. This strategy is useful since nearly every decision and the linked geographical interests of its political and commercial actors are driven action in the BRI. China's political strategy is essentially capable of simultaneously defending internal and geopolitical goals by incorporating BRI under the security wing. With this viewpoint, a number of security-related factors can be distinguished, including national sovereignty and unity, the military, the economy, the cultural sector, the social sector, the scientific sector, the technical sector, the information sector, the environment and resource sector, and finally the nuclear sector. (Behan et al., 2018). The fundamental goals of this comprehensive security plan are to maintain national unity, stop societal unrest, and legitimise President Xi and the CPC's position of authority. Xi Jinping actually advised ex-US President Obama to cooperate with China to establish a new international system in which both countries respect "one another's core interests" (Tega, 2018). This was Xi's way of saying that they should respect one another's goals in the developing



system of spatial security that the BRI has made a reality.

Even though the BRI alters the geopolitical bonds between China and other participants in initiative, both US and the China pursue a policy, which sets national welfares at the centre of their bilateral relations. In the end, what is driving Trump's "America first" agenda, China's expansion of authoritarian control, and the emerging cult of behaviour adjacent to the Xi Jinping are internal forces occurring inside a changing spatial security system that is neither just economic nor purely military. The BRI is a massive undertaking that will not be done for decades but will, in the medium term, transform the foundations of international trade; therefore, it is also crucial to take temporal issues into account.

Given that China integrates its civic, commercial, and military objectives through BRI, as previously noted, Chinese impact and geopolitical army might therefore increase under this unique spatial safety plan, with repercussions that spread outside the countries along the BRI's route and affect the Europe, US, West and particularly Eastern part of Europe. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) must be viewed as additional bonus than merely as financial project, which is assisting China in modernising its state-owned enterprises and sponsoring by enhancing contact to markets along the BRI. Given that exports are expected to remain a key component of the Chinese economy, the BRI route's enhanced profitability stabilises China's trading system. It is evident that their effects cannot be effectively quantified even though a range of aspects are simultaneously evolving under this new framework for spatial security.

## **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: REBUILDING TERRITORIALITY AND NEW WORLD POLITICS**

Ruggie (1993) predicted that we were approaching a period marked by the unbundling of territoriality on the point of the twentieth century. A world, which survives on 'a deeper and more extended temporal level, and its rebuilding involves a change not in the power

play but in the stage on which that play is performed' (p. 140) as predicted by him and other scholars, would consist of overlapping sovereign arrangements in a fluid state system. As we intended to highlight, if some-what puzzlingly, distinct security structure of BRI is in fact the new phase on which territorial space is occurring in unbundling manner. China wants to rebound the land beside the BRI into a distinguishing China's garland through it, all the while seeking domestic firmness, economic development, and armed purposes. When globalisation slows and anti-elitist sentiments return, people sense a stronger need and craving to fit in to an area, region, or state. The mechanics of international movements do not eliminate boundaries or the areas they define (Zajec, 2018). On the divergent, it is evident that countries like China, Russia and the US, still have significant geopolitical influence.

The confirmation of nations is escorting via personality factions and ideologies driven by territorial annexation and national objectives. BRI advances the Chinese ideal while also serving as a shining example of how to colonise space without relying primarily on war and terror. The motivating motive behind departing President Trump's "America first" movement, and one that is certain to continue under received President Biden, was plea to resuscitate the American vision and expand its scope of impact. In this argument, all sides agree that a successful hegemon needs a common dream on overlapping political, social, cultural, military and economic level, which seems clear in the current condition of international politics, is evolving. The global order needs to be redefined since current patterns of globalisation have produced a new, possibly conflictual and bipolar world.

Conflict as a result is showing up on many levels, including institutional, national, international, between nation states and multinational corporations, and even inside Europe. Avoid hasty fixes or overly basic outcome as compared to those pushed via populists on public media, and as a substitute pinpoint the

underlying reasons of this systemic conflict. As an alternative, we should shift our focus and possess the courageous and foresight required to establish a new system of worldwide governmental level, which is extra reasonable, fair, and receptive to both the challenges of the present and the requirements of all mortality (Banik & Lüder, 2021). How can a new framework that secures global Cosmo-political governance be created by combining these two structures of opposite standards is the crucial query. Geopolitics in France contributes to the solution. Jacques Ancel (1879–1943) gave geopolitical issues a very social notion known as the individuality of sentiment, which is based on the need for stability and harmony within a community, nation, or area (Guichonnet & Raffestin, 1974).

### **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: BEYOND BORDERS**

The European association's leaders should not undervalue the state assets of the member of nations along their citizens. By this argument, Jacques Ancel is to blame for introducing the idea of identity to geopolitics. According to this theory, groups appear grounded on a shared memory, language, culture and history, before identifying themselves inside a border. (Gauchon & Huissoud, 2019). The EU may take on an avant-garde role by pitting its values—against mercantilism—against the viability of a power. The impartial supply of goods and natural capitals throughout the world is a crucial component of this new 'Cosmo political' order, along with rational trade affairs, transaction transparency, and social fairness. Cosmo-politics must respect national sovereignty and borders if want the progress. The importance of the mortal element and the use of honourable and ethical standards cannot be overstated (Banik, 2016).

In today's interconnected world, neither the EU nor China nor the US are insulated island havens. No actor is in possession of the complete truth. The effects of global warming, rising competition for resources (such as food, water, and natural resources), conflict among national and multinational forces, and global terrorism vigour us to face new

challenges. The ideologies of nowadays, that are dominant in Europe, nationalistic China's capitalism, 'America first', personality groups, and arrival to revisionist power arrangements, all rest on illusions that must be dispelled. To overcome our differences and get closer to the 'identity of the heart', a cosmopolitical system of international governance based on human values, we must cooperate. As BRI starts to connect Asia and Europe in accordance with Jacques Ancel's geopolitical theory, let's start by constructing a 'Europe of the heart' outside of EU boundaries: The heart is the only thing that matters and must be treasured most (Ancel, 1938).

## CONCLUSION

In order to preserve a stable atmosphere/environment for Chinese development, it has previously been stated that a fundamental element driving its agenda is to reduce tensions and increase trust between China and its neighbours. Because it is said that more solidified economic ties and interpersonal relationships help to lessen hostility and improve security cooperation. Thus, the BRI contributes to maintaining a strategic environment that is advantageous to China's long-term growth. It is not, however, designed as a geopolitical strategy to challenge the US or any other country for regional hegemony or to increase China's "sphere of influence." First off, the BRI's ultimate goal is to encourage shared progress based on the concepts of involvement out of free choice and consultation on an equal footing rather than pursuing power or control through a state-centred strategy (Framework, 2015).

Secondly, the BRI has focused on specific commercial or social projects to build economic and social ties, as opposed to geostrategic issues like political and security cooperation. The third aspect of this open and inclusive methodology is the BRI, which stands for 'wide consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. It promotes involvement from all willing nations, including the US, and has traditionally adopted common international norms and conventions

while utilising tools, technology, and expertise from all around the world. Because it does not aim to establish an exclusive economic bloc or incorporate coercive institutional transformation in member nations, the BRI may therefore be regarded as China's international cooperation strategy with potential geopolitical implications.

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