

China's Belt and Road Initiative: Bold but Responsible Influence

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The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China is an important communication and connectivity programme of the 21st century. It has sparked controversy over China's strategic motives, the economic viability of its projects, and its impact on developing countries. However, it seeks to influence state behaviour through its infrastructure, finance, and long-term economic interdependence, without applying military coercion or regime engineering. The paper aims to make this argument in two steps. First, it constructs a theoretical prism that combines classical realism with another notion, realism, which emphasises an increasing awareness within major powers that often neglects the long-term interests of weaker nations. This notion of realism is inspired by complex interdependence. Second, it utilises a qualitative, descriptive approach to analyse the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the flagship project of the BRI, which is mutually beneficial to both China and Pakistan. This discussion has concluded that BRI has thus far been a somewhat responsible form of great-power influence that China aims to exert as a global player, without any hint of its military ambitions.

Keywords: China, BRI, CPEC, Global South, Unequal Military Powers (UMPs)

The 21st Century has been riddled with wars and conflicts across all regions. Afghanistan was bombed relentlessly to eliminate Al Qaida, the alleged perpetrators of 9/11, and Iraq was attacked on false pretenses. Likewise, Libya, Syria, and Yemen faced an unprecedented wave of civil wars, perhaps as the battlegrounds for more powerful stakeholders. The people of Palestine, particularly the residents of Gaza, faced existential threats due to Israeli aggression. Ukraine, which was the red line of Russia, has already lost its sizeable territory to the might of the Russian military over the last four years of an all-out war. Unfortunately, these countries will never be the same again because they were faced with UMPs. On the one hand, history's most potent military force was led by the US, and on the other, it was a small and weak state with little to no military power.

Amid the global chaos, China emerged as the sole significant power prioritising economic diplomacy and connectivity over military use and coercion. Following President Xi Jinping's announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 (McBride, Berman, & Chatzky, 2023), China actively promoted economic prosperity. China's BRI aims to connect the country within the region and beyond. In Pakistan's case too, CPEC under BRI is connecting far-flung areas including Gilgit-Baltistan (Ismail, Tykhonenko, & Fatima, 2026).

Interestingly, the momentous initiative has a significant financial impact. Still, its objectives are more aligned with China's foreign policy, which aims to influence the behaviour of other states without posing a serious threat to their territorial integrity and sovereignty. Therefore, one can assume that it was a 'Bold but Responsible Influence.'

Furthermore, while the US was engaged in wars and conflicts, other powers were consolidating their roles in the evolving international structure. Russia, for instance, consolidated its power to reassert itself, and therefore, did not hesitate in its plan to invade Ukraine, fully aware that the US-led NATO would come with full force to support the country. On the other hand, China was quietly rising without engaging in any conflict or war except for a few skirmishes with India in its northeast, which were of no consequence to it in any domain.

This may be the significant difference between the U.S. and the Chinese foreign policy imperatives. Successive US leaderships have relied more on their military muscles to achieve similar foreign policy objectives: changing the behaviour of other states. In the process, the US has lost trillions of dollars and hundreds of lives. President Trump's slogan of MAGA is indicative of the fact that the US lost its greatness to these unnecessary wars, and now it wants to regain it (Conway, 2016).

In China's case, it follows the precepts of Sun Tzu, who, over 2,500 years ago, professed that one should strive to win a war without fighting (Giles, 2000). Without demonstrating its hard power, China has earned the leadership of the Global South, which comprises over 147 developing countries (Jiang, 2025). After surpassing Japan, China is likely to surpass the US also to become the world's largest economy. The timing of this possible makeover will be interesting, as Trump will be completing his second term and the US will be in an election year.

“President Xi Jinping's speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Conference 2015 held in China discussed achieving a common destiny and a new future for Asia” (Anam & Mustafa, 2017), reflecting what Keohane and Nye had envisaged (1977). Xi's precepts are reflective of this author's assessment about China's responsible behaviour as a global player, and the realisation that this author refers in his revised realism.

Comparing two vastly distinct strategies adopted by two great powers with widely diverse approaches is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is essential given their relevance to the evolving world order. While the US is trying to maintain its hold on global affairs, China is presenting itself as an alternate power to the alienated developing world. The two rivals have adopted different strategies and follow significantly diverse philosophies.

The US continues to follow a Machiavellian philosophy of prioritising the state's interests without sharing them with others, whereas China is following Sun Tzu's dictum of avoiding wars and yet win against the opponent. Perhaps this is one reason why the US wants to maintain its position as the sole superpower. At the same time, China has decided to reach out to the rest of the world with numerous incentives, including investments and loans for development projects tailored to host countries' needs. President Trump is still coercing states to invest in the US and buy its products (Clark, 2025). In contrast, under the BRI, President Xi is undertaking projects worth billions of dollars in less developed countries across various regions. The result is obvious. The developing South, a more than 130-country-strong organisation, considers China its new leader. This is how China is growing its influence responsibly.

Theoretical Precepts

Before deploying an international theory in this research, it is essential to explain the key aspect of the topic, which the author rephrases as ‘Bold but Responsible Influence.’ The core definition under the realist paradigm denotes power as the ability to influence the behaviour of others (Morgenthau, 1948). While the colonial powers pursued realism in both letter and spirit, they continued to exert their influence over their former colonies.

There is little debate in academia that the BRI has not been immediately adopted by international players. The initiative was viewed as too ambitious and perhaps unfeasible, at least in Africa, which remained under the influence of its colonial masters. However, the most significant contribution of President Xi Jinping is not the investment in the infrastructure of developing countries under the BRI, but rather the relative relief these states have experienced from their colonial masters. For this purpose, this study redefined BRI as Bold but Responsible Influence.

China, like any other great power, aspires to influence others; however, it differs from other powers in that it invests in public-sector projects rather than supporting regimes willing to serve the interests of their colonial masters. China's bold initiative through investments in developing countries carries a responsibility to ensure that public sector infrastructure projects, including roads, railways, ports, bridges, climate protection, and energy projects, are implemented effectively. China's exercise of responsible influence is vastly different from that of earlier powers because it has invested in projects that are already yielding results for people in the least developed countries. Therefore, it is not surprising that most developing countries have begun to look up to

China as the leader of the Global South. Hence, its membership has increased to over 130 developing countries worldwide. This directly relates to the theory of Complex Interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1977), which challenges the realist paradigm and calls for more liberal cooperative engagement. This is what China appears to be doing through the BRI projects across the globe. This author's assertions on realism (with z), which is also closely aligned with the work of Keohane and Nye, 1977 in *Power and Interdependence*, are reflected in President Xi's approach to, and application of, responsible cooperation and productive engagement. By challenging the core of realism and replacing it with z as realism denotes a sense of realization among global stakeholders about the relatively minor and poor states.

This author's term realism reflects hybrid characteristics of a realist and an idealist or a liberalist. However, international relations are complex and interest based. States must tread carefully that their people do not suffer due to evolving international order (Shamsi, 2021). This framework 'realism' proved efficacious in analysing President Xi's approach to the Global South as a realizer and the utility of BRI projects in the developing countries.

International relations theories continue to evolve and perhaps lead to change the international systems at regular intervals. "It is argued that neoliberals propounded that international institutions should promote global change, cooperation, peace, and prosperity through programs for reforms" (Kegley & Eugene, 2004). Whereas "Security is essential, and institutions help to make security possible.... These interactions will occur not just on security issues but on a whole suite of international issues including human rights (a classical liberal concern), the environment, immigration, and economics" (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

Therefore, "an alternate approach 'realism' is needed to ensure a dignified survival of the humanity that is faced with continued wars and conflicts across all regions. First, it was in Europe between Russia and Ukraine, and now it is between Iran and the US. The genocide of Palestinian people continues since Gaza was specifically targeted in October 2023.

To conclude the theoretical debate for this paper, this author is cognizant of the fact that present international system is anarchic and selfish (Jackson & Sorensen, 2007).

The research design employs a mixed methodology, descriptive and explanatory, employing a qualitative approach, which is "often used in social sciences to explore patterns of individual behaviour and consumption in diverse environments" (Arnould & Craig, 2005). Deploying deductive reasoning, the paper primarily examines the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the flagship project of the BRI, drawing illustrative examples from the regions where most of the projects are near completion and benefiting the people of the host countries.

Xi Jinping's BRI: Contours, Challenges and Opportunities

The BRI, also known as the New Silk Road, is a unique initiative that connects regions through diverse infrastructure projects. President Xi Jinping conceived and launched it in 2013, soon after assuming the presidency of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Initiated with the immediate objective of connecting East Asia with Europe through road and rail, Xi continued to expand it over time. The BRI projects entered Africa, Oceania, and Latin America in less than a decade (McBride, Berman, & Chatzky, 2023).

The BRI has improved China's stature worldwide, particularly among developing countries. To date, some 147 countries are undertaking projects under BRI, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the world's population and 40 per cent of global GDP. This massive participation under one umbrella by so many countries in different regions has certainly enhanced China's political influence and given it a more pronounced purpose in the realm of reality.

President Xi's BRI is built around an ancient Chinese metaphor, 'A rising tide lifts all boats.' For instance, during pandemics, "The BRI countries benefited immensely from China's timely and liberal medical assistance. The people in the Euro-Asiatic world now dream of establishing a 'Silk Route Healthcare Corridor' just like a green corridor, digital corridor, education corridor or cultural corridor to complement infrastructure-loaded BRI" (Javed, 2020).

Moreover, “the BRI is inclusive of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road..... The 21st Century being labelled as the Asian century is exemplary of the shifting balance of political, economic and cultural power from the West to East” (Anam & Mustafa, 2017).

Significant Footprints of BRI

China's BRI embodies a grand vision to create an extensive network of trade routes, economic corridors, and infrastructure projects connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa. The initiative seeks to enhance global trade, stimulate economic growth in participating countries, and strengthen China's economic and political ties worldwide. Through investments in roads, railways, ports, and energy projects, China aims to facilitate smoother trade flows, encourage economic development, and promote cultural exchange, solidifying its position as a key player in global affairs.

China's quiet effort through the BRI has attracted at least 52 African countries and has signed numerous agreements of public significance, including roads, railways, ports, climate, and energy projects. China's BRI covers an immensely wide range of economic corridors, which have started to realise in regional connectivity and better communication among the regional societies that President Xi mentioned in the Boao Forum speech in 2015. Some of the major corridors include:

1. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
2. New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor
3. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
4. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
5. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor
6. China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor (UN ESCAP, 2021).

According to (UN ESCAP, 2021), “The Belt and Road Initiative for Seamless Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific Region”, the BRI has started to show positive results, and its impact can be felt across various regions. The report suggests that “the results of multiple studies on BRI suggest that the impacts of the Initiative's infrastructure development generally have positive effects on the economy, income, poverty reduction, employment, equity and inclusion. that annual global welfare gains would be approximately \$1.6 trillion in 2030, accounting for approximately 1.3 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP)” (UN ESCAP, 2021).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A gamechanger for Pakistan

The most significant and perhaps strategically important project of BRI is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), also labelled as the Flagship project of the initiative. Launched at the early stages of the BRI in 2013, CPEC demonstrates China's eagerness to connect its less developed western region with the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. CPEC, conceived for regional connectivity, has much greater geopolitical and geoeconomic dimensions. CPEC has significantly strengthened the long-standing politico-economic and military partnership between China and Pakistan. CPEC aims to reduce China's trade dependency on the Malacca Straits, also known as the ‘Malacca Dilemma,’ and provides China with an opportunity to trade from its western region to the Middle East and beyond, utilising the newly developed Gwadar Port on Pakistan's vast Arabian Sea coastline. China has developed not only the port but also the Gwadar Airport and a road network across the length and breadth of Pakistan, with its Kashgar border (Aqeela, Abbas, & Khan (2022). China's efforts to establish multiple trade corridors that benefit its vast territory and population are part of its “Go Global” strategy, which involves economic corridors and proactive engagement with regional states and beyond (Stietz, 2018). This author supervised a study at the NDU on ‘Pak-China Strategic Cooperation’ in 2011-12, which was presented to Prime Minister Gilani and his Cabinet in January 2012. CPEC signed in 2013 carried several recommendations from the referred study.

Why a game changer for Pakistan?

“(CPEC aims) to improve the lives of people of Pakistan and China by building an economic corridor promoting bilateral connectivity, construction, explore potential bilateral investment, economic and trade, logistics and people to people contact for regional connectivity” (CPEC Vision & Mission, 2015). The official statement of CPEC Vision and Mission primarily justifies the subheading that CPEC is proving to be a

gamechanger for Pakistan because it covers a wide range of people-oriented projects across the length and breadth of Pakistan. The international observers, too, are of the view that “the China-Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) is one of the most significant, and strategically important components of the BRI” (The Economist quoted by Chattha & Hyder, 2019).

The initial success of BRI, particularly the CPEC, has undoubtedly raised concerns among the US-led Western Blocs, including some Southeast Asian nations and India (Pence, 2018). The most significant aspect of CPEC lies in the interdependence between China and Pakistan, as China derives greater benefits from the project than Pakistan does. While Pakistan is building its infrastructure with Chinese money, it comes at a price, and the country is doing so with borrowed funds.

The US considers CPEC part of China's broader geopolitical strategy for expanding its influence in the region and beyond. Therefore, the US has expanded its strategic partnership with India through multiple bilateral agreements in various domains. Consequently, it is unsurprising that India has started raising its concerns against the CPEC on international forums. Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar criticised China and Pakistan at the United Nations General Assembly, calling them the authors of “the most concerted effort to undermine the territorial integrity of neighbouring countries” (Razdan, 2024). Jaishankar further stated that “unviable projects increase debt levels. Any linkage against sovereignty and territorial integrity becomes strategically important, mainly if it does not involve mutual collaboration” (Razdan, 2024). India's uneasiness is not without a reason. This is because the CPEC projects pass through territories in the disputed Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir region.

The most worrisome aspect of CPEC for the Western World is its financing of nearly USD 62 billion, which Pakistan could ill afford for the rehabilitation of its much-needed infrastructure at the time it was launched. However, at least four avenues of funds generation and allocation have been explained. These include investment, concessional loans, interest-free loans, and grants. “The money under investment projects is borrowed by Chinese firms that undertake the project on interest rates between 4 percent to 5 percent. The Concessional Loans are given to the Government of Pakistan at an interest rate of 2 percent...” (Chattha & Hyder, 2019).

While the major discussion in this paper remained on CPEC, it is necessary that some of the landmark projects and their progress under the BRI in different regions are also mentioned to highlight the expanded scope of China's initiative, though briefly.

China's BRI does not differentiate among the countries from other regional blocs. For instance, in Israel, the China-Israel Changzhou Innovation Park, inaugurated in January 2015, “has attracted nearly 300 joint ventures and facilitated nearly 60 technological cooperation projects. with 70 Israeli companies applying to participate, 20 of which are now registered in the park (Yang, 2025). Interestingly, the Chinese ambassador to Tel Aviv reaffirmed that China's BRI projects have not been affected by political instability in the Middle East (Yang, 2025). Likewise, the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP) is one of Bangladesh's most significant projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (Yang, 2024). Bangladesh's most extensive railway project, locally known as the “Dream Road,” began in 2018 and spans approximately 170 km. Travel time between the capital, Dhaka, and Jashore will be reduced from 10 hours to just 3 hours, benefiting some 80 million people.

In Europe as well, the BRI's footprint figures prominently. The Lajkovac-Valjevo motorway in Serbia is another project under BRI. This 18.3-kilometre motorway links the central-western Serbian cities of Valjevo and Lajkovac. It is expected to ease traffic congestion and further enhance Serbia's transport network” (Dan, 2025). The project's influential effect is demonstrated by Air Serbia's decision to operate direct flights to Shanghai.

BRI projects are not restricted to infrastructure developments only. To mitigate the effects of climate change, China extended its support to many countries in the Middle East to help develop a new energy ecosystem that includes “solar panels gleam under the relentless sun; wind turbines carve arcs against the sky; and electric cars hum along newly paved roads” (Yang, 2024).

The strength of China's BRI lies in its diversity and placements. Perhaps no region was overlooked when the BRI was launched in 2013, and the priority remained on popular projects so that locals would benefit the most. For instance, "the Jakarta-Bandung, 142.3-km high-speed railway, represents a transformative leap in Indonesia's transportation infrastructure With a maximum speed of 350 km per hour, it has cut travel time between Jakarta and Bandung from over three hours to 40 minutes" (Yang, 2017). Likewise, Pakistan has been rated as a high-risk state due to its climate for such massive investments (Hamida, Sherazi, & Imran, 2026).

The Belt and Road Initiative: An Assessment

The Belt and Road Initiative's presence across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe indicates an ambitious, impactful project. It also represents China acting as a great power, customarily trying to influence its external environment and increase its power. What is unique about BRI is not the aim of seeking influence, but the means China has chosen to pursue it. China relies on infrastructure, finance, and long-term economic interdependence as its primary instruments, rather than military bases, regime change, or coercive conditionality. This change points to the emergence of a new type of power structure, one that connects China's rise with the economic success of states that have long struggled to access capital, connectivity, and plausible development partners. In this respect, China brings along other smaller and poorer states, either intentionally or out of necessity.

A more careful examination of BRI's working dynamics reveals this dynamism. BRI projects address several gaps that have limited development over the decades. Highways that reduce the time spent on the road by several hours to several minutes, railway lines that bring remote areas into the country's markets, and power stations that regulate the flow of electricity are not abstract geopolitical signs. They are transformations that everyday citizens experience. The examples presented in this article, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), rail networks in Central Asia, ports and energy corridors in Africa, and green energy projects in the Middle East and Europe, indicate that the main face of BRI is civilian and publicly visible. These are not clandestine military bases or elitist-oriented arrangements. They are literal public goods in the form of roads, bridges, ports, hospitals, solar grids and industrial parks.

This operational profile is consistent with the concept of realism described by this author, inspired by Keohane and Nye's precepts on complex interdependence, based on the thesis that great powers are becoming more conscious that failures to pay attention to weaker states create instability that, in the long run, undermines their interests. This awareness is evident in China's investments. They demonstrate their realisation that legitimacy in the Global South cannot be built on rhetoric alone but must be supported by material contributions that improve lives. Although these projects are undoubtedly beneficial to Chinese interests, they achieve this by establishing common interests and developmental trajectories rather than using force or conditionality to enforce political demands. This is why many states see BRI as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Nevertheless, BRI does not bear the absolute responsibility and is not above criticism. The most burning issue is debt sustainability. Borrowing has often outpaced fiscal capacity in many partner countries, driven by optimistic growth projections or political considerations at home. Such pressures have raised concerns about long-term repayment and the risk of dependency. Transparency and procurement are also among the issues studied and discussed in academic and policy circles. Many contracts remain opaque, and competitive bidding is not always conducted. There are also environmental issues that have been raised but not systematically addressed, such as the effects of construction and the long-term sustainability of mega-projects. On the same note, the degree of local consultation varies across states, with some communities reporting little contribution to projects that impact their lands or livelihoods.

There is also a strategic layer which makes the responsibility narrative difficult. Ports, energy grids, fiber-optic systems, transport corridors, and other forms of leverage can be established to generate non-economic forms of leverage. The distinction between development finance and strategic positioning is blurred, with infrastructure potentially having dual-use applications or host states becoming dependent on Chinese loans, contractors, and technology. These aspects do not negate the role of BRI in development, but they show the multi-dimensionality of the Chinese influence. It also promotes China's national interests and can reconstitute regional balances of power without resorting to military pressure.

The BRI of China operates differently. It aims to foster communication, connectivity, and economic interdependence across regions, regardless of their resource base, governance systems, or political orientation. Although China is similarly seeking influence alongside the United States, Russia, and other great powers, the design and implementation of BRI are based on long-term development relationships rather than coercion. Influence is achieved through a relationship created by infrastructure, supply chains, and economic interests. Such relationships provide incentives to cooperate rather than the fear of punishment.

From the perspectives of realism, realizm, and complex interdependence, this combination of results is neither new nor contradictory. No world power is motivated by altruism. The moves by China within the BRI framework are evidently aimed at advancing its national objectives of gaining access to trade routes, expanding into broader markets, and enhancing its geopolitical standing. However, the manner in which influence is sought is as important as the endeavour itself. Throughout history, the exercise of power has often been achieved through military power, political intervention, or ideological imposition by major powers. Compared to it, the Chinese model is more infrastructure-and-finance-based, and more interdependent. It can give rise to dependencies, but it can also produce concrete public goods. It will not cause the immediate disturbance that comes with military coercion or externally imposed regime change.

Perhaps that is one reason that this author is inclined to believe that BRI can be described as a bold yet responsible influence. It is ambitious due to its magnitude, imagination, and spread over continents. It bears responsibility to the degree that it seeks to advance Chinese interests without resorting to the instruments that characterised previous periods of great-power expansion. As they bring China further into the economies and politics of Global South states, BRI projects do deliver tangible benefits to them. This is the duality in the core of BRI. Neither is it an act of benevolence to the world nor an obscure imperial project. It is a strategic program that employs development as its primary vehicle.

With a world marked by a changing balance of power and rising demands for connectivity, BRI is an ambitious initiative that recognises shared development as a stabilising factor. To most states in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world, this method is more attractive and less destabilising than the coercive pattern of the past. There are also weaknesses in the initiative, and its long-term implications will depend on how China addresses issues of debt, transparency, and sovereignty. Nonetheless, the empirical history thus far tends to confirm the thesis that BRI has been a relatively responsible form of influence in a competitive international system.

Conclusion

This paper proposes that the Belt and Road Initiative is a bold yet responsible influence. It is ambitious in terms of geographic coverage, financial size and ambitions. It is accountable because it does not rely on military intimidation, coups, or direct political manipulation, but on infrastructure, finance, and the long-term interdependence of the economy. Viewed through the prisms of classical realism, author's realizm, and complex interdependence by Keohane and Nye, the BRI reflects a great power that aims to promote its own interests, understanding that the stagnation of weaker states causes instability that would, in the end, be detrimental to its interests. This is evident by an empirical overview of BRI projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Publicly visible goods have been developed through investment in transport and energy, logistics, industrial zones, and green infrastructure. CPEC, Central Asian railways, European and African motorways, and renewable energy projects demonstrate how BRI has enhanced connectivity, reduced travel time, and increased power supply for ordinary citizens. These are not symbols alone. They are resources that alter day-to-day life and further entrench China in the economic structure of the Global South. Such a trend is consistent with the notions of complex interdependence and realizm that great powers have become compelled to prove their responsibility by tangible developmental results, not just rhetoric.

Meanwhile, the article has raised serious concerns that qualify this responsible image. There are still significant issues of debt sustainability in several partner countries, opaque partnering, a lack of local consultation and environmental risks. The new forms of leverage created by strategic investments in ports, critical infrastructure, and digital systems can also blur the distinction between development and geopolitical positioning. BRI thus represents a step forward for China's national interests and can be used to tilt the regional power balance without necessarily resorting to force. The responsibility, in this case, is not absolute, but relative

and disputable. The BRI projects are public-oriented and are billed as win-win cooperation, standard connectivity, and long-term interdependence with states of quite different magnitudes, regimes, and orientations. Overall, the discussion in this paper indicates that BRI has thus far been a comparatively responsible form of influence compared to more coercive historical trends in great-power behaviour. It has intensified the geopolitics of China and propelled the country to leadership in the Global South, but in a more visible form of infrastructure and development relationships, as opposed to military intervention. BRI will be described as a bold yet responsible influence, depending on how China and its partners address the risks of debt, transparency, environmental policies, and sovereignty issues in the coming years. Provided that the mentioned obstacles are overcome, BRI will continue to serve as a valuable example of how an emerging power can pursue influence through connectivity and shared development rather than war and coercion.

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