CHAPTER SIX

China's Belt & Road Initiative: How Can Africa Advance its Strategic Priorities?

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The rise of China as a Southern power: Why it matters for Africa [B]

The study of global politics has tended to be biased towards a strong focus on great powers. Much of the emphasis thus tends to be on countries able to exert a significant amount of influence on the international system through their individual decisions and actions. In the contemporary international landscape, China has played an increasing role and grown its influence and presence in various parts of the world. As this process unfolds, it finds itself at times under immense scrutiny in geographic locations traditionally dominated by Western powers. Africa is one such geographic space, a vast continent still trying to varying degrees to shake off the yoke of colonialism and apartheid and seek new partners to diversify its international relations.

Throughout the past few decades, the continent has witnessed, to varying degrees, other geographic locations, such as Asia, registering impressive gains through eradicating poverty and providing conditions for the improvement of the welfare of their people. Companies across Asia have also witnessed impressive growth as they compete regionally and internationally in a range of sectors. This is illustrated in Table 6.1 through the acquisitions by Chinese and Indian companies, which have been on the offensive globally. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is set to connect over 65 countries, at a cost of approximately $1 trillion, with the aim of improving the connectivity between China, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa in a process closely linked with the domestic changes in the Chinese economy. Proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, the initiative entails developing a vast network of railroads and shipping lanes between China and countries along the continental Belt and Maritime Road. Robyn Xing (2018), Morgan Stanley's chief economist on China, argues that investments in 'Belt and Road' countries will increase by 14 per cent annually during the period 2019 and 2020, with the total investment amount likely to double to $1.2–1.3 trillion by 2027.

This chapter argues that the responsibility ultimately lies with African stakeholders, at both state and non-state levels, to cooperate with China in a manner that enhances African priorities. It is important that African stakeholders mobilise support for the implementation of initiatives they see as integral to achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063. While bilateral relations remain integral to Africa's international relations, this chapter argues that Africa could use the BRI to support regional continental and maritime interconnectivity projects on the continent. It should thus be used to enhance agreed-upon priorities articulated by the regional economic communities (RECs) and the African Union (AU). The increased coordination would assist in enhancing African agency and build capacity for implementing regional infrastructure projects. The first mid-year coordination meeting of the AU and the RECs was held in July 2019 in Niger, in a move that aims to build greater cohesion and coordination across the continent.

Table 6.1: Chinese and Indian companies on the offensive

Acquisitions by Chinese Companies	***Acquisitions by Indian Companies***
• Shanghai Automotive Industrial Corporation (SAIC) acquires 49% of Ssang Yong Motors (South Korea) for \$500 million • TCL acquires Thomson Electronics (France) for \$560 million • Yanzhou Coal acquires Felix Resources (Australia) for \$2.8 billion • Sinopec acquires Addax (Switzerland) for \$7.2 billion • X'ian Aircraft International acquires 91.25% of Fischer Advanced Composite Components (Austria) for \$135 million	• Tata Motors acquires Jaguar Cars Ltd and Land Rover Ltd (UK) for \$2.3 billion • Bharti Airtel Ltd acquires Zain Africa BV (Nigeria) for \$10.3 billion • Suzlon Energy Ltd acquires 30% of Repower Systems (Germany) for \$546 million • Reliance Industries Ltd acquires 40% of Atlas Energy Inc (US) for \$339 million • GMR Infrastructure Ltd acquires 50% of InterGen NV (Netherlands) for \$1.107 billion

Source: Constructed by author based on Williamson et al. (2013: 239–77).

A non-critical examination of the often binary 'China-Africa' narrative may have one believe either that Africa is on the verge, or already in the midst, of colonialism with Chinese characteristics, or that China is the best thing to have happened to Africa since the end of colonial rule. The actual picture is more complex as China expands its relations with a vast continent of 54 nation states, home to approximately 2000 languages and cultures, and a geographic size, visualised in Figure 6.1, large enough to fit Europe, the United States, China, India and Japan (Croissant, 2017).

Figure 6.1: The Kai Krause Map: 'The True Size of Africa'

Source: Croissant (2017)

The often simplistic view of China's influence on Africa also tends to downplay the influence of the United States and European powers on the continent, which have maintained complex relations, in the aftermath of the colonial era, with former colonies. From an African point of view, it may not be constructive or useful to get caught up easily in the geopolitical disputes of great powers; this will divert limited resources away from a strict and focused implementation of domestic, regional and continental priorities. Indeed, most African countries do not have the luxury of choosing which relations to have, instead relying on co-operation with countries in the global North and South. A dispassionate view enables African stakeholders to understand that it is ultimately up to them to use their relations with the world to advance their development aspirations as captured in documents such as *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* (AUC, 2015a). The contemporary rise of China to assume a geopolitical position more in line with its strong historical role in global politics and the global economy is thus significant for the African continent, given the exponential growth in Africa's relations with China in recent decades (Mthembu, 2018). With this context in mind, African stakeholders will be keen to maximise the benefits of enhanced relations with China while seeking to minimise any potential risks.

The rise of China has coincided with a changing geopolitical landscape for the African continent, which just in the year 2000 was on the front cover of *The Economist* as the 'Hopeless Continent' (*The Economist*, 2000). That very year, much of the discussion in the West was centred on Africa as a problem area that needed to be assisted, mostly through official development assistance (ODA) to meet its development aspirations. The contrast between China and much of the West in that year is revealing in that China was busy preparing to inaugurate, with its African partners, the opening Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC). This contrast is indeed important in understanding why the rise of China as a Southern power mattered to the African continent and its position in the evolving geopolitical landscape. Indeed, there is no denying China's contribution to the rapid economic growth witnessed in many African countries over the last two decades.

Chinese ascendancy, in addition to bringing additional options for African leaders to access different forms of development finance and trade, also changed the contested policy space as the rise of China arguably expanded the policy space on various global fronts with long-held ideas from the Bretton Woods Institutions becoming more contested. Indeed for Africans, the contrast could not have been starker. Whereas it was splashed across a well-known Western publication as a hopeless continent, on the other side of the world the Chinese state was rolling out the red carpet for over 40 African leaders at ministerial and heads-of-state level in Beijing. China was thus looking at Africa from a broader perspective, rather than from a narrow aid perspective. It was preparing and encouraging its companies and policy banks to go into the continent and find opportunities for investment, trade and development finance. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) thus follows a list of grand programmes initiated by the Chinese state as it grows its global footprint. However, rather than being targeted towards a particular geographic location as in the case of the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the BRI is arguably China's largest initiative to date as the country grows increasingly confident on the international landscape. This growing confidence closely correlates with the ascendancy of President Xi Jinping to lead the country in 2013. He has arguably ushered in a different era and interpretation of China's role in the world, one more assertive and confident than under former leaders Jiang Zemin (1993–2003) and Hu Jintao (2003–2013) where China was quite happy to lie low, downplay its strengths and essentially try not to attract too much attention. This was essential at a time when the two leaders were expected to carry out the 'opening up' reforms as initiated by Deng Xiaoping.

For the African continent, especially along the Indian Ocean perimeter forming an important part of the route of the BRI, it will be crucial for African stakeholders to prioritise sustainable projects that serve as catalysts for African development priorities. These priorities include creating regional value chains, enhancing the industrial base of the various regional economic communities and augmenting intra-regional trade across the continent.

Domestic and global drivers of the Belt and Road Initiative[B]

Domestic drivers of the BRI [C]

As China has grown more prosperous in the past few decades, the wages and expectations of Chinese workers in the manufacturing sector have increased (Chenglong, 2018). This has meant that while the model of cheap labour for manufacturers in China may have worked in the past, it is certainly not going to be China's model of the future. As the material conditions of Chinese citizens have changed for the better, so too have their expectations. Companies that have worked in China during the last few decades are now well poised to look for profits along the ancient silk roads as the country offloads its excess capacity and seeks to move up the value chain to produce high-quality electronics and new technologies. The Chinese government's 'Made in China 2025' industrial policy (McBride & Chatzky, 2019) aims to make China a leader in global high-tech manufacturing. According to McBride & Chatzky (2019), the core objectives of the programme include:

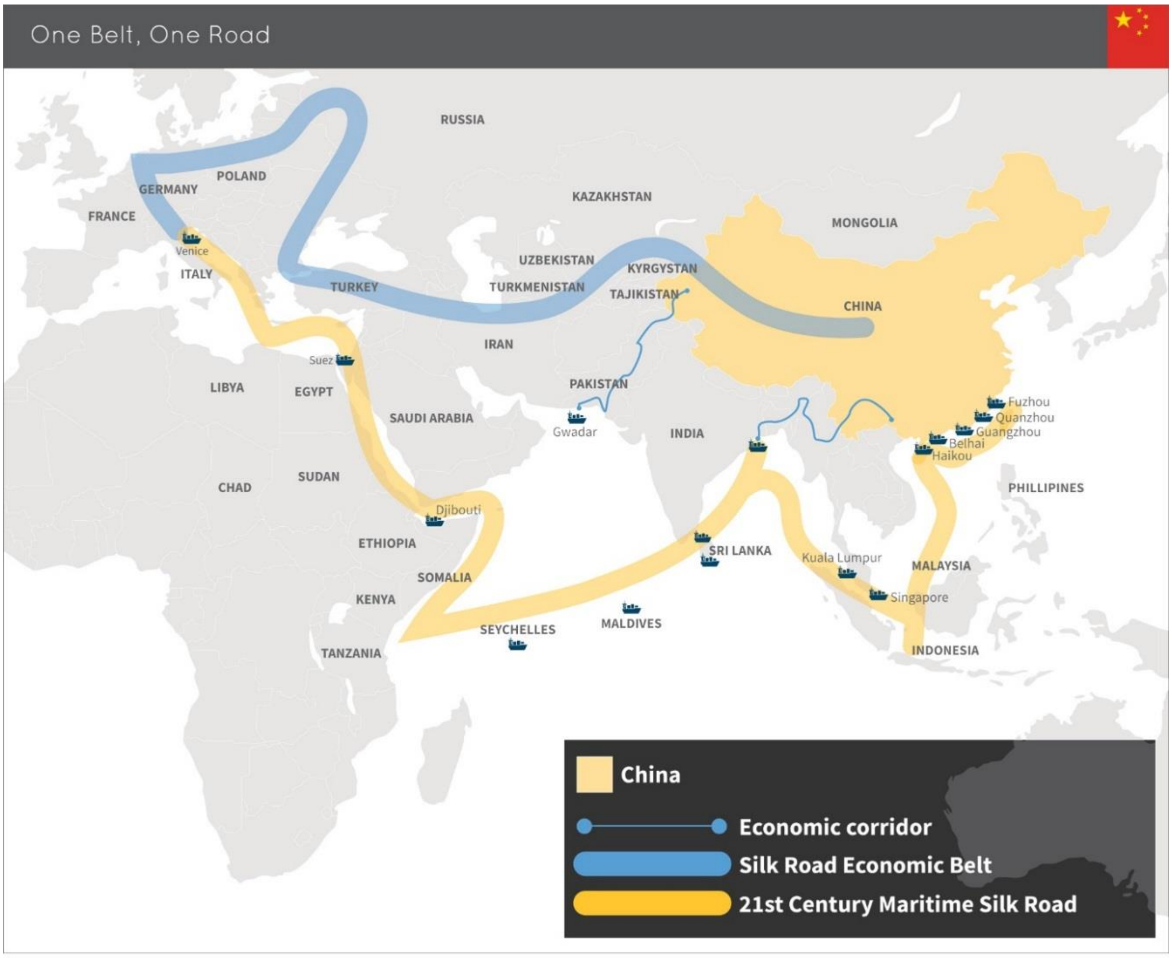
> … using government subsidies, state-owned enterprises, and pursuing intellectual property acquisition to catch up and eventually surpass Western technological prowess in advanced new industries. For the United States and other countries in the West, the policy has been looked at with great suspicion and even as a threat to their security. Announced in 2015, some of the industries being targeted include electric cars, next generation IT, telecommunications, robotics and artificial intelligence. Some of the other sectors being targeted also include agricultural technology; aerospace engineering; new synthetic materials; advanced electrical equipment; emerging bio-medicine; high-end rail infrastructure; and high-tech maritime engineering.

The successful implementation of the policy would see Beijing reduce its dependence on foreign technology while promoting home-grown, high-tech manufacturers in the global marketplace. This would be an upgrade on China’s role as the global centre of low-end manufacturing. According to experts, semiconductors are a key area of emphasis due to their centrality to almost all electronic products. With China accounting for approximately 60 per cent of the global demand for semiconductors, it still only produces about 13 per cent of the supply, creating opportunities for Chinese producers to tap into the local demand. Under ‘Made in China 2025’, the country wants to achieve 70 per cent self-sufficiency in high-tech industries by 2025 and to essentially dominate high-tech industries by 2049. That year represents a significant milestone, as the country will be celebrating its centenary as the People’s Republic of China (McBride & Chatzky, 2019).

China 2025 is thus central to transitioning the economy beyond what is often referred to as the middle-income trap (McBride & Chatzky, 2019), where wages begin to rise as growth of the economy slows down. While this has affected many developing countries in the past, the Chinese Communist Party has sought to navigate the country away from the low-wage manufacturing model. This model placed greater emphasis on mining, energy and consumer goods such as clothing and footwear, which continue to account for a significant amount, almost half, of the economy. The transition to high-tech manufacturing is thus seen as of strategic importance for achieving China’s objectives in the coming decades (McBride & Chatzky, 2019).

One of the central domestic objectives of the BRI is to address China’s deepening regional disparity in a modernising economy. The country thus hopes to link its underdeveloped hinterland west of the county to Central Asia, Southeast Asia and other centres along various transnational infrastructure projects. The government also hopes the initiative will help address the country’s chronic excess capacity; it seeks to promote effort to migrate the country’s surplus factories, rather than dumping excess products in global markets. When one couples this with the ‘Made in China 2025’ industrial policy, it becomes clear that Beijing will seek to export China’s technological and engineering standards along the BRI countries below (Cai, 2017).

Figure 2: Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative



Source: Cai (2017)

According to Guan Youqing, the head of Minsheng Securities Research Institute, provinces in China are competing against each other for BRI-related projects. Indeed it is believed that every province wanting to become a significant hub in the national strategy will reignite infrastructure spending by locals on projects related to railways, roads and airports (Cai, 2017).

China has built a considerable reputation in high-speed railway technologies, an area that the government has been heavily promoting through the BRI. Some have even coined Premier Li's marketing effort in this area as 'high-speed railway diplomacy' (Cai, 2017). Indeed Beijing considers its high-speed railway technology as one of the 'crown jewels' of its advanced manufacturing industry, and the government has galvanised over 10,000 scientists and engineers to incorporate imported technology and develop China's own high-speed rail technology (Cai, 2017).

There is generally acknowledgement that this initiative will be a decades-long one, and it is clear that Chinese bankers will play a key role in determining the success of the BRI. While expressing their support for the initiative, some have also expressed their reservations about financing sometimes risky projects in territories they are not always familiar with. The bankers ability to navigate a complex external environment will thus determine the speed at which the BRI is able to move (Cai, 2017).

Global drivers of the BRI **[C]**

China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative is set to connect over 65 countries at a cost of approximately $1 trillion, with the aim of improving the connectivity between China, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa in a process closely linked with the domestic changes in the Chinese economy. Proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, the initiative is developing a vast network of railroads and shipping lanes between China and countries along the continental belt and Maritime Road.

For China, the initiative is also likely to increase the use of the renminbi (RMB); the BRI aligns with the country's efforts to internationalise the currency. This is already taking place in some Belt and Road countries such as Malaysia, where RMB use grew by 551 per cent; Russia, where it grew by 56 per cent and Thailand, where usage grew by 50 per cent (Xing, 2018). While the Belt and Road Initiative has continued to attract more countries, this has also had the result of diluting what exactly the BRI is, and which projects can be considered to be BRI projects. Wang Yiwei, a professor of international relations at Renmin University states that too many initiatives are branding themselves as BRI, resulting in a further blurring of whether the BRI means the same for China as it does for countries along the BRI (Teddy & Kinglin, 2019).

Since inception in 2013, the BRI has continued to receive the support of a growing number of countries across the world, with China having already signed 174 cooperation documents with 126 countries and having now invested more than $90 billion (R1.3 trillion) in related projects. During his address at a BRI seminar at the Chinese embassy, China's ambassador to South Africa, H.E. Lin Songtian, said the response to the Second Beijing Forum, showed that despite some reservations about the initiative, the confidence of the international community had been growing (Boje, 2019). The Forum was attended by 5000 delegates, including 37 heads of state, guests from more than 150 countries and over 90 international organisations. In his address, the ambassador acknowledged that South Africa was the first African country to sign a BRI memorandum of understanding with China, and that China was committed to being its 'most reliable and important cooperative partner' in achieving socio-economic transformation and development (Boje, 2019).

Addressing the same seminar, Ambassador Anil Sooklal, the South African Department of International Relations and Co-operation's deputy director-general: Asia and Middle East, recapped that when the BRI idea first entered the public domain, in 2013, it had excluded South Africa. However, DIRCO had initiated a conference in 2015 to unpack the role of the initiative for Africa and South Africa. Sooklal said that while South Africa has been engaged from early on, it has arguably been slow on the uptake, and he warned that the train was now moving at great speed – and 'if one did not get on, one would be left behind' (Boje, 2019).

Addressing the Second Belt and Road Forum, President Xi placed greater emphasis on high standards and 'zero tolerance' for corruption in BRI programmes. The emphasis is thus increasingly on quality rather than quantity (Small, 2019). It can be argued that perhaps China is learning the importance of building a broader consensus for its investments in the countries it is investing in, beyond whichever government happens to be in office. Andrew Small (2019) notes:

> In a series of elections from Malaysia to the Maldives, opposition parties have sailed into power by railing against Chinese mega-projects that looked to be lining the pockets of politicians more than boosting the economy. Investments in countries such as Pakistan had already been pared back as rising debt levels limited their ability to take on new projects.

President Xi has thus sought to underscore China's commitment to transparency and building 'high-quality, sustainable, risk-resistant, reasonably priced, and inclusive infrastructure' during his keynote speech on the opening day of the most recent BRI Forum. He announced there that $64bn worth of agreements had been signed during the Forum (Romann, 2019). The joint statement released at the end of the 2019 BRI Forum repeatedly called for 'high-quality' projects and standards, while encouraging developed nations to invest in 'connectivity projects' in developing countries, saying co-operation 'will be open, green and clean'. A big win for Beijing was Italy's signing up to the BRI in March 2019, becoming the first G7 country to do so. At the recent BRI forum, some developed countries such as Austria, Switzerland and Singapore signed up for what's been referred to as third-party market co-operation. Japan, France, Canada, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Australia have already signed up, thus agreeing to help build infrastructure in developing countries (*Bloomberg News*, 2019b). This is important for Beijing as it tries to reassure the international community that the BRI is open for all countries in order to share costs and associated risks in implementing major infrastructure projects.

As Beijing seeks to demonstrate the international importance of the initiative for countries along the continental Belt and Maritime Road, third-party market cooperation and signing up a developed nation to help build infrastructure in one of the Belt and Road countries, will increasingly be the focus of the BRI. These cooperation agreements will also become important as China seeks to demonstrate that the BRI is open for everyone rather than exclusively driven by China. With President Xi championing an anti-corruption campaign at home, officials are now trying to find a mechanism to grapple with corruption linked to BRI projects overseas; Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have undertaken 3,116 BRI investment and infrastructure projects, according to the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. In 2017 and 2018, guidelines were issued, which require state enterprises to increase supervision of overseas units and personnel in an attempt to regulate how they operate abroad (*Bloomberg News*, 2019a).

As the Chinese economy continues to transform and the country works towards the targets set in the 'Made in China 2025' strategy, it will have a lasting impact on countries along the BRI. While some in the BRI countries will see opportunities presented by a new injection in development finance, particularly targeted towards large-scale infrastructure projects, others will see opportunities as the Chinese market continues to open up, whereas others will see opportunities for much sought-after foreign direct investment. However, others will also see a threat to their local industry as companies that have essentially driven China's infrastructure and manufacturing success in the past few decades look towards opportunities presented along the continental Belt and Maritime Road. It will be up to the negotiators to conclude deals that are of mutual benefit in the coming years, factoring in how these may play out in the domestic and regional political environments. This necessitates a broader engagement strategy from China, one which seeks to work not only with its government counterparts, but also with non-state actors in the respective societies in order to get broader buy-in. This could thus be seen as an even more significant wave of the 'Going Out' strategy, which saw China more systematically supporting their companies to invest abroad.

Where does Africa Fit? Advancing the continent's priorities through the BRI [B]

Recent years have seen efforts by the African continent to exercise more agency and ownership in pursuing its development efforts. This aspiration is captured in Agenda 2063, efforts on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) and priorities articulated in the report on the proposed recommendations for the institutional reform of the African Union, otherwise referred to as the Kagame Report (Kagame, 2017), which was presented to the 31st Summit of the AU in 2018. What these initiatives have in common is a contemporary effort to identify and act on African priorities, and thus spearhead an endogenous development effort on the continent. If African countries, especially those that wield greater influence on the continent, prioritise the areas identified in Agenda 2063, they will create greater cohesion in the continent's international relations. This will enhance African agency in partnering with China and other countries along the Belt and Road.

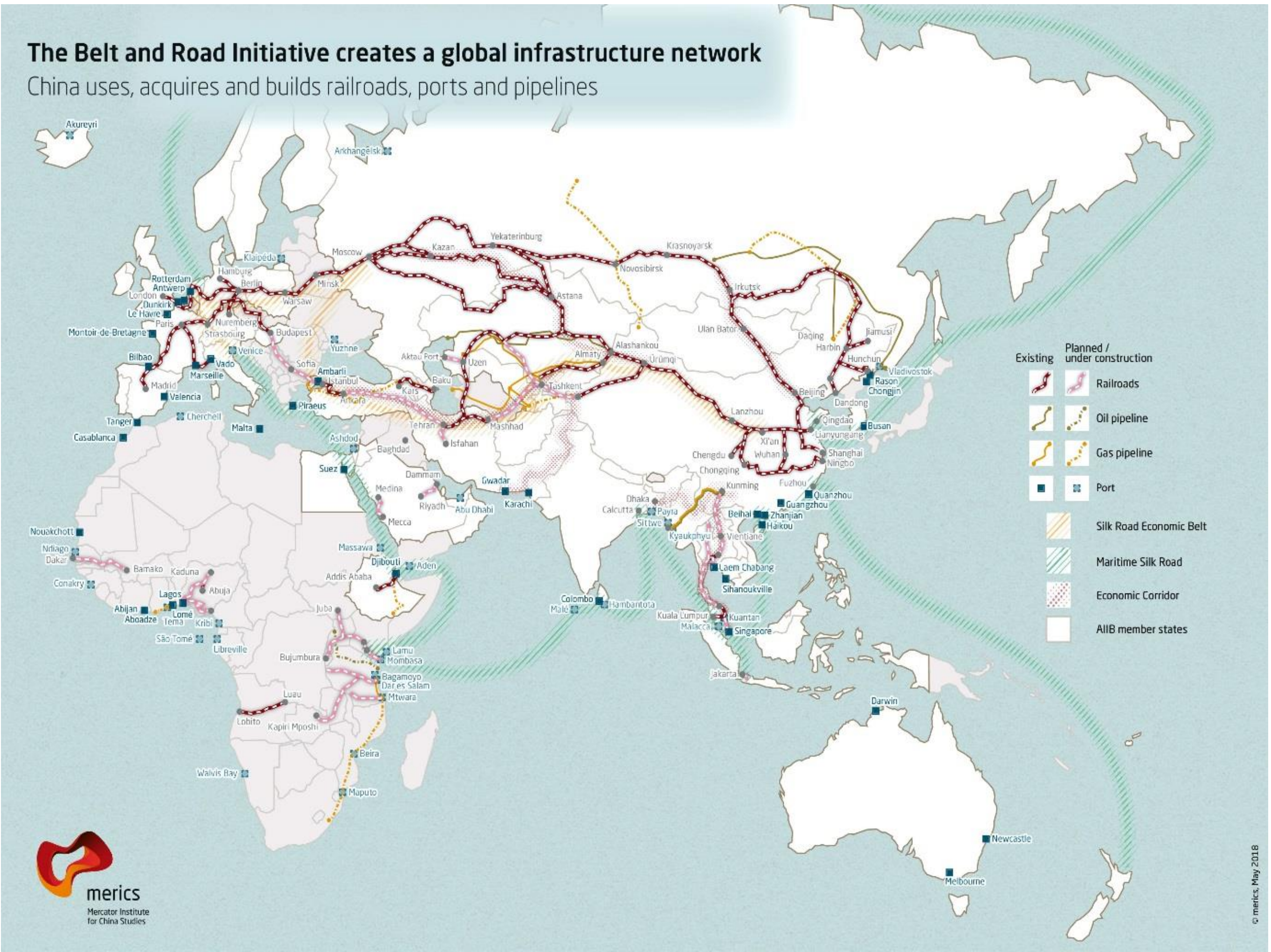
Much of the funding for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) comes from policy lenders, whose lending decisions are responsive to the Chinese government's geostrategic preferences. The more prominent policy banks include the likes of the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China

(Exim Bank), which have committed over $1 trillion. There is also a Silk Road Fund, which holds $40 billion in investment funds and is supervised by China's Central Bank. The Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank is also an important player and has a capital base of $100 billion. Additional funds can also be made available through China's foreign exchange reserves and sovereign wealth fund, which hold $7 trillion and $220 billion respectively (Nantulya, 2019).

Advocates of the BRI point to the potential for increased private Chinese investments in tourism, real estate and agriculture, alongside infrastructure projects. The BRI is also increasingly seen as a catalyst for African regional economic integration and competitiveness as seen in research funded by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Research findings were that that East Africa's exports could increase by as much as $192 million annually if new BRI projects are used diligently (Nantulya, 2019). Others caution against what has been referred to as 'debt trap diplomacy', warning Africans to not borrow from China lest their strategic assets be seized, with the case of the port in Sri Lanka often used as an example of what may happen to countries not able to pay their debts (Nantulya, 2019). Despite these contrasting perceptions, a binary view of Africa's relationship with China does not go far enough in understanding the complex dynamics at play across the spectrum of countries China is engaged in. It may be more fruitful to understand the key domestic and foreign drivers of the BRI, thereby increasing the likelihood of identifying and implementing mutually beneficial projects. At a time when the African Continental Free Trade Agreement has been adopted, and is now at the implementation phase, it will be important to ensure that the BRI improves regional connectivity and intra-Africa trade.

Because of its strategic geographic location, East Africa has become an important node in the Maritime Silk Road, connected by a series of planned and completed ports, pipelines, railways and power plants built and funded by Chinese companies and lenders. The standard gauge railway, which connects Mombasa to Nairobi, is the biggest investment in Kenya since independence and is one of the flagship BRI projects in East Africa (Nantulya, 2019).

Figure 6.3: The One Belt One Road network



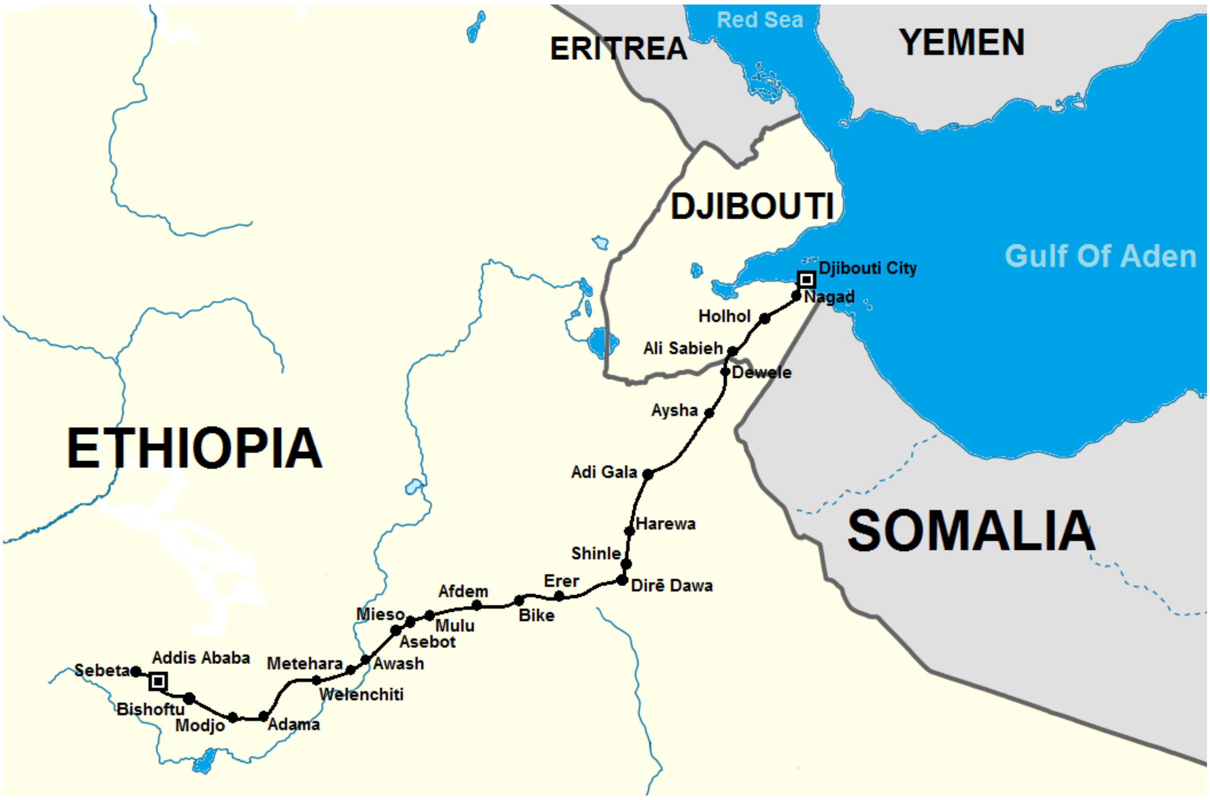
Source: Nantulya (2019)

It has become increasingly important for China to diversify its supply chains, creating what can be termed a '…China–Indian Ocean–Africa–Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage to connect Africa to new maritime corridors in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar' (Nantulya, 2019). The African continent is thus strategically located along Beijing's important supply lines, ensuring the existence of mutual interests. Indeed as the Indian Ocean grows in importance, it is imperative that African countries and regional economic communities ensure that they safeguard continental and maritime space in a manner that enhances their development interests. Beijing's military posture matches its expanding economic reach with a growing maritime and naval presence, especially in the Indian Ocean, where China's planned sea lanes find themselves at times conflicting with Indian aspirations. The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean is therefore likely to increase further. It will also be important for African stakeholders to increase their own maritime capabilities and be prepared to defend their own interests when tensions amongst the great powers flare up from time to time.

Given the overcapacities in Chinese industry and the infrastructure gaps in Africa, the continent has become an important end-user of China's industrial overcapacities, especially coal, cement, steel, glass, solar, shipbuilding and aluminium. This is evident in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Ghana and South Africa during periods of major infrastructure projects, when exports from China witness a spike to satisfy the growing demand (Nantulya, 2019). The above has not been without its challenges as it directly impacts the performance of certain industries in East Africa. For instance, in 2017 Kenya's cement exports in the region were particularly hit, falling 40 per cent due to Chinese cement. This is significant given that Tanzania and Uganda's imports from China rose by as much as 60 per cent in the past decade. Kenyan manufacturers have no doubt raised these matters, blaming Chinese firms for eroding their market share in the region (Nantulya, 2019). These are the real challenges and opportunities that African countries and regions have to navigate.

While the positive attributes of participating in the BRI are clear for various stakeholders, it is important for African countries to continue to learn from experiences in the field how to seek an ongoing partnership that mutually benefits all sides. The aim is thus to maximise the positives while minimising the potential negatives and creating spaces for honest, multi-stakeholder engagement in addressing any potential negative impacts. The above has also made abundantly clear why Africa, from a geopolitical and geo-economic perspective, matters to the overall success of the BRI. This mutual interest must work as a catalyst to building sustainable partnerships that meet Africa's development aspirations, including the manufacture of infrastructure supplies and entering global value chains.

Figure 6.4: The Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway



Source: Nantulya (2019)

The World Bank estimates that Africa needs up to $170 billion in investment a year for 10 years to meet its infrastructure requirements. The African Development Bank has posited that if Africa positions itself well, it can source some of this from the BRI and channel it to the African Union's infrastructure master plan, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) (Nantulya, 2019). However, it is equally important to understand that while African countries, especially those along the Indian Ocean perimeter, will be important for China's strategic calculations, there will be no automatic flows of capital from China. Indeed while some projects will seem to have more than just an economic rationale for China, factoring in geopolitical calculations, many of the projects financed will have to be seen to be profitable over the medium-to-long term. This is particularly the case following greater scrutiny of BRI projects and President Xi's recent rhetoric on quality, transparency and sustainability during the recent BRI Forum in Beijing. Indeed given the importance of Central Asia and Southeast Asia in China's strategic calculations, it will be important for African countries to look towards greater co-ordination of their efforts through the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities. Risks associated with large infrastructure projects could be shared through better co-ordination and supporting projects with a regional footprint, in line with Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063, which sets out to outline 'The Africa We Want' has developed its first ten-year implementation plan under the theme 'A Shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development', covering the years 2014–2023 (AUC, 2015a). This plan was adopted in June 2015 as a basis for the preparation of medium-term development plans by member states of the Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the AU organs. The document identifies priority areas, their associated targets, expected outcomes and indicative strategies for stakeholders, while highlighting the fast-track programmes and projects that will generate wins and sustained interest for the African citizenry in the African Agenda (AUC, 2015a).

All the flagship projects and programmes approved by the AU Summit are included in the First Ten Year Implementation Plan. These priority projects consist of 12 initiatives the AU would like to see implemented as catalysts for the implementation of the broader Agenda 2063 (AU Commission, 2015b). The 12 priority programmes are:

- Integrated high speed train network connecting all African capitals and commercial centres;
- An African virtual and e-university to increase access to tertiary education and to develop high-quality open, distance and e-learning resources;
- Formulation of a commodities strategy that will enable African countries to add value, earn higher returns and integrate into the global value chains drawing on on local content development;
- Establishment of an annual African forum that brings together political leadership, private sector, academia and civil society to evaluate the implementation of Agenda 2063;
- Establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area by 2017 to accelerate intra-Africa trade and strengthen Africa's voice and policy space in global trade negotiations;
- The African passport and free movement of people by 2018;
- Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project, which will generate 43,200 mw of power (PIDA) to support current regional power pools;
- The Pan-African E-Network to expand and improve e-services, especially intra-African broadband terrestrial infrastructure, cyber security and participation in the information revolution;
- Silencing the guns by 2020 to ensure the ending of all wars, civil conflicts and gender-based violence; and
- African Outer Space Strategy to strengthen Africa's use of outer space to bolster its development.

African partners must thus ensure that they coordinate better so that projects funded or implemented by China through the BRI are aligned to Africa's strategic priorities as articulated in Agenda 2063 and the Ten Year Implementation plan. This will mean overcoming the 'one and many' phenomenon. Given the scale of the Belt and Road Initiative and Africa's geographic importance along the Economic Belt and Maritime Road, it will be important to enhance African agency so that projects have not only national impact, but also align clearly with regional and continental priorities. The continent, however, is already falling behind with some of its goals, such as 'silencing the guns by 2020', the African passport and free movement of people, with a timeline of 2018, and the implementation of the Grand Inga has been on the cards for many years without sufficient buy-in to make progress. While the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area 'by 2017' did not happen, there is now important momentum as 54 countries have now signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Conclusion [B]

Having outlined the rise of China as a Southern power, this chapter has demonstrated why this phenomenon matters for Africa's contemporary place in an evolving geopolitical landscape. Importantly, China's rise as a Southern power was accompanied by its 'Going Out' strategy, which saw the state encouraging and supporting development finance institutions, state-owned enterprises and the private sector to invest in projects and opportunities abroad. This contributed to an important infrastructure boom in various countries on the continent and saw much needed foreign direct investment (FDI) from China. This period also witnessed African countries consistently featuring in the list of fastest growing economies in the world. The BRI could thus be compared to a second wave of China's 'Going Out' strategy, one that will have a significant impact in countries along the Belt and Road Initiative.

A better understanding of the domestic and global drivers of the BRI will arguably lead to mutually beneficial projects along the continental Belt and the Maritime Road. One of the reasons that China is such an important actor in the geopolitical landscape is the fact that changes within China reverberate across the global order. As the country seeks to overcome the middle-income trap and to transition away from older, pollution-heavy industries towards a greener economy and high-tech manufacturing, it will find itself competing more with industrialised countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in high-tech industries. This will also have the ripple effect of relocating many of the factories that thrived in China over the past few decades, but which are no longer sustainable in China due to rising wages and stricter environmental standards. This can create opportunities for countries along the continental Belt and Maritime Road to attract Chinese capital and manufacturing capabilities. However, as this process unfolds, it is clear that this it will have to be well managed as local companies find themselves competing with companies that have been successful in China over the past few decades. As China produces more high-tech goods, it will also be in search for markets along the Belt and Road.

It was also important to illustrate how Africa can advance its interests through the BRI, especially along the Indian Ocean perimeter given its strategic value along China's supply lines. Given the scale of the BRI, African countries would need to co-ordinate through their RECs and the African Union in order to ensure that BRI projects on the continent advance the strategic priorities agreed in Agenda 2063 and various regional strategies by the RECs. This would maximise impact and enhance African agency with China and other countries along the BRI. It is important for African countries to realise also the opportunities created along the entire Belt and Road, identifying those that are more feasible. While China leads the BRI, opportunities will be created for all of the countries along the ancient routes, providing opportunities for those countries that are better organised at the state and non-state levels. If African countries, especially those that wield greater influence on the continent prioritise the identified areas in Agenda 2063, they will create greater cohesion in the continent's international relations and so enhance African agency in partnering with China and other countries along the Belt and Road. It will also be important for African stakeholders to increase their own maritime capabilities and be prepared to mediate in their own interests when tensions amongst the great powers flare up from time to time.

Realising these opportunities will require coordination, continued dialogue and research at various levels. It will also require the research community, through think-tanks and universities across the African continent, to conduct more empirical research in partnership with Chinese institutions and embassies. This is important in order to ensure that throughout the implementation and identification of BRI projects in Africa, the research community understands the perceptions of various actors towards China and the BRI projects. This awareness could act as an early warning mechanism where there is discontent; it could also allow for multiple stakeholders to discuss research findings related to the BRI and Africa. Indeed, in an age where the weaponisation and misrepresentation of information is becoming more prevalent, it will be important that research and dialogue initiatives are ongoing to provide a balanced understanding of the empirical realities of the BRI. While the advantages of participating in the BRI are clear for various stakeholders, it is important for African countries to continue to learn by doing, and from experiences in the field, in order to seek an ongoing partnership that benefits all sides. Supporting research that seeks to monitor and evaluate the ongoing partnerships will assist in ensuring that policy arises out of evidence-based research. The aim would be to maximise the positives while minimising the potential negatives and creating spaces for multi-stakeholder engagements that assess partnerships and projects as they unfold.

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