

Chapter 15

Enhancing Resilience and Sustainability in the Wake of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans

Jetnor Kasmi

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6477-8976>

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

ABSTRACT

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has emerged as a significant global infrastructure financing initiative, connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa through extensive transportation, energy, and telecommunications networks. While the initiative brings forth investment and trading opportunities, concerns regarding China's territorial size, population, political atmosphere, and future growth rate have raised geopolitical apprehensions among state leaders and scholars. The paper aims to highlight the potential risks associated with the initiative, particularly the debt distress that some recipient countries could face. In addition, the paper aims to address China's growing influence in the Western Balkans through investments that promote shared experiences in growth, development, and connectivity. It sheds light on both the opportunities and challenges presented by China's increasing presence in the region, offering valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders involved in the study of global economic and political dynamics.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-6074-3.ch015

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has emerged as a significant global infrastructure financing initiative, connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa through extensive transportation, energy, and telecommunications networks. This paper examines the impact of China's rapid economic growth, combined with its foreign policies and the adoption of the BRI, on the Balkan region. While the initiative brings forth investment and trading opportunities, concerns regarding China's territorial size, population, political atmosphere, and future growth rate have raised geopolitical apprehensions among state leaders and scholars.

The BRI, formally adopted at the 19th National Party Congress in 2017, represents President Xi Jinping's commitment to achieving shared growth through collaboration. With an estimated \$8 trillion investment, the initiative aims to connect China's less-developed border regions with neighboring countries, utilizing both land and maritime routes. In addition, this paper analyzes China's shift toward soft power application in its foreign policy and considers historical backgrounds and past trade measures. It highlights the potential risk of debt distress in borrower countries due to current Chinese infrastructure financing practices, particularly lending to sovereign borrowers.

Moreover, the chapter investigates the rising Chinese influence in the Western Balkans through investments aimed at sharing growth experiences, fostering development, and enhancing connectivity. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the Chinese BRI and its implications for the Balkan region, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities associated with China's increasing presence in the global economic and political landscape.

The impact of rapid economic growth in China, accompanied by the 'Open Door' policy and the 'Going Out' policy adopted by the regime, is felt in both Western and Asian countries, consequently bringing forth significant investment and trading opportunities. Despite the incoming economic benefits, China's territorial and population size, plus the political atmosphere combined with its present and future economic growth rate may be identified as a possible geopolitical threat in the minds of many state leaders and scholars (Cable & Ferdinand, 1994).

The 'Going Out' policy was further strengthened at the 19th National Party Congress in 2017, China's Communist Party formally adopted the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as part of a resolution to achieve "shared growth through discussion and collaboration" under its Party Constitution. As a result, President Xi Jinping began his second term with an international engagement strategy defined by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), signaling a sustained commitment to an initiative that has already been heavily invoked by China's leadership (Cai, 2017). The Party Congress could mark the transition from lofty rhetoric to a practical program. BRI,

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/enhancing-resilience-and-sustainability-in-the-wake-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-in-central-and-eastern-europe-and-the-western-balkans/361086

Related Content

Using Digital Diplomacy in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Indian Experience

Hameed Khan and Kamal Kumar Kushwah (2023). *The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Digitalization of Diplomacy* (pp. 157-183).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-digital-diplomacy-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/321773

The Trade War of the European Union Against Russia and Its Effects on Türkiye

Ahmet Yusuf Yılmaz (2025). *International Relations Dynamics in the 21st Century: Security, Conflicts, and Wars* (pp. 215-226).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-trade-war-of-the-european-union-against-russia-and-its-effects-on-trkiye/363955

Strategic Innovations in Diplomacy: Upholding Human Rights in the 21st Century

Weam Karkout (2025). *Innovations and Tactics for 21st Century Diplomacy* (pp. 51-72).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/strategic-innovations-in-diplomacy/361074

Exploring the Complexities of India-Bangladesh Relations

Pranjal Khare and Vishambhar Raghuwanshi (2025). *International Relations Theory and Philosophical Political Insights Into Conflict Management* (pp. 209-230).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-the-complexities-of-india-bangladesh-relations/370914

Coalitions in South African Local Government and the Implications for Public Service Delivery

Thokozani Ian Nzimakwe and Sakhile Zondi (2024). *Enhancing Democracy With Coalition Governments and Politics* (pp. 263-276).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/coalitions-in-south-african-local-government-and-the-implications-for-public-service-delivery/347762