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The Belt & Road Initiative, The Impact on Kenya by way of the maritime route.

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List of Abbreviations

UN	United Nations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Economic Alliance
BRI	Belt and Road
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
SGR	The Standard Gauge Railroad
FOCAC	The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
KPA	Kenya Ports Authority
KES	Kenyan Shillings

Abstract

As China gains power and projects itself across the globe, the struggle to control perception of this new power grows. The majority of current literature regarding Diplomacy and International relations pertaining to the Belt and Road Initiative, specifically the maritime route in Kenya is written from either a Western or a Chinese perspective. The existing literature primarily focuses on the effects of MSR infrastructural projects in Kenya and China's role not only in Kenya but also in the rest of Africa. This research attempts to better understand the effects of China's role in Kenya, and if China provides a better business partner for Kenya rather than the West as was previously the case. This research strives to evade Chinese and Western attempts of persuasion concerning the issue, rather focusing on the effects of already realized Maritime route infrastructural projects and how they have affected Kenya. This paper finds that although Chinese infrastructural projects do present issues, it is too early to say if these projects are as detrimental as some say and requires further study.

Introduction

China's presence in world affairs continues to grow, particularly in the development sector. This is especially true in Africa, where China has been quick to capitalize on trade deals, infrastructural projects such as oil pipelines, roads, railways and even urban development across the African continent. Consequently, China now provides itself as a new business partner to African nations wishing to avoid doing business with their previous colonial rulers in the West. However, it remains to be seen as to if the benefit from a Chinese deal is superior to development deals previously made with the West. Is China just another colonial power with a different strategy, or do developmental projects sponsored by China offer a new way for African countries to successfully develop?

This study explores this question by focusing on one specific Chinese infrastructural project, the Silk Road Initiative, and its net positive and negative benefits on the country of Kenya. The study uses various framework for best practice in sustainable development such as those promoted by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nation's (UN) sustainable development goals (SDG) as a lens for analysis for the Kenyan case. The information gathered in this paper was collected from open-source materials including journals, books, organizational databases, previous studies, personal accounts from Kenyans, and media broadcasts.

Positionality

My enthusiasm in writing this paper derives from my travels and interests in Geopolitics and the current challenge to the mono-polar world order that exists today. Growing up in a highly developed nation and understanding the globe from an American perspective I am constantly reminded of the challenge China poses to the current Western dominated globe. The Rise of China, and alliances like the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa economic alliance or BRICS, confronts the current system and gives new possibility for the global balance of power. During my graduate study in 2022 Cape Town, South Africa, I learned more about this development and China's presence on the continent. It is here where I learned of some of the implications of the developments China has made on its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Africa, and more specifically for Kenya. As China progresses its construction of the BRI, many experts begin to question its benefit to the host nation. My aim is to neither advocate nor critique Chinese presence in Africa, rather to simply analyze and understand more accurately its implications for Kenya. This is of great interest to me as I find the future hegemony of East Africa to have great implications for the greater picture.

Literature Review

China and the Silk Road Initiative

In recent decades China has become an important actor in global economic and political development, and especially in Africa where it has launched several high-profile-infrastructure projects designed to propel it, and the world to greater prosperity. Most notably, in 2013 Chinese President Xi announced the project that has evolved to be called the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) (Robbins, 2017).

The BRI is based off the Ancient Silk Road that functioned from the 2nd century BCE to the 18th century CE that helped to connect China to Africa, Europe, and Asia and spanned over 7,000 miles to promote trade and cultural exchange (Robbins, 2017). China's Belt and Road initiative's aspiration is to be the evolution of the Ancient Silk Road, that is both an improved silk economic belt over land, and a new Maritime Sea route that connects China by way of Central Asia, to Europe, and will also connect China to much of Africa and Oceania. The BRI has now grown to connect 140 countries by signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China as of January 2021 (Wang, Nedopil, Christoph, 2021). As time passes the MoU continues to collect more signatures and currently includes countries in all continents. There are currently 6 countries in Southeast Asia, 19 BRI countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 17 BRI countries in the Middle East and North Africa, 24 BRI countries in East Asia and Oceania, 34 BRI countries in Europe and Central Asia (8 of which are a part of the European Union), and 40 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Wang, Nedopil, Christoph, 2021). If the initiative continues to incorporate more countries and becomes fully realized, the BRI could create a planet that is more efficiently connected by way of railway, road, and sea way and could possibly even create a planet much less dependent on the airline industry. The project has even more ambitious aspirations to connect China to the Americas through the Bering Strait. The Belt and Road Initiative is a massive network built up of different types of networks including railroads, oil and gas pipelines, ports, economic belts, economic corridors, and the Maritime Silk Road (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). The MSR is the massive maritime route that connects Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Viewed as a whole, the BRI is a monumental ambition with the potential to forever change the future. If successful, the BRI could propel the planet into a new age of interconnectivity and efficiency. It not only has the potential to be a cause for positive economic and diplomatic change but could also be a positive change for the health of the planet. This ambition has the potential to change the world drastically for centuries to come, although the way in which the foundation and blueprints are put in place could drastically change who and how the benefits from this project are being reaped and how the wealth is being distributed.

The Maritime Silk Road in Kenya

One of the most important hubs on the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is the Port of Mombasa, Kenya. The maritime route has various ports along the east coast of Africa, that bring goods coming from the east and the Pakistani port of Gwadar (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). Kenya began to look more to the east for more trade and business deals in 2003 when President Kibaki gained power (The East African, 2020). Kenya is an extremely crucial point on the MSR as it serves as a very important node in the chain of goods to enable a more efficient flow for goods to reach deeper into Africa. The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), a newly constructed railway that runs from Mombasa to Nairobi is debatably the most important infrastructural project on the MSR. Kenya took out a loan from the China Exim Bank in the amount of $3.6 Billion to help finance the SGR (WSJ, 2022). The idea was that despite the huge amount of debt, the success of the SGR would be the way for it to pay for itself by shipping people and goods from Nairobi to Mombasa (WSJ, 2022). By 2020, the SGR failed to fulfill this projection and had lost 200 million dollars (WSJ, 2022). The reality of this project began to sink in, and experts wondered if the SGR was good value for money (WSJ, 2022). The World Bank estimates that for the SGR to pay for itself, it would need to move 20-55 million tons of freight per year (WSJ, 2022). The following figure shows the increase of cargo on the SGR.

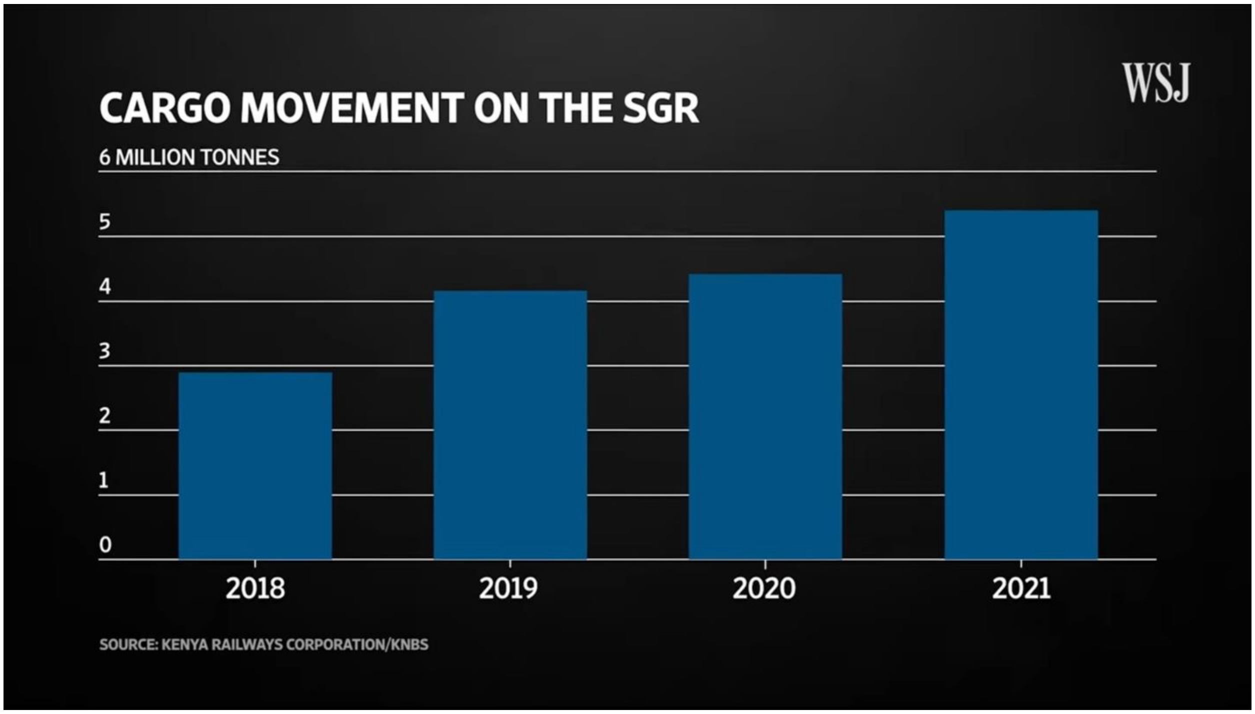

Figure 1: Cargo Movement under the SGR from 2018-2021, *graph from Kenya Railways Corporation/KNBS.*

The diversity of different projects that are being developed in Kenya are immense and have great potential to bring great things not only to Kenya but also to adjacent countries. Already underway there is the modernization of the port of Mombasa, and a state-of-the-art port being built in the city of Lamu that will serve as important points to more efficiently interconnect the African continent (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). There are plans to extend the SGR from the capital Nairobi to the neighboring countries of South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. There is also an oil pipeline that is being planned to be linked from the oil fields in South Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda to Kenya (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). China funded the Thika Road which is an 8 to 12-lane controlled access highway that runs about 50 kilometers from Nairobi to the town of Thika (Mutai, 2022). These are some of the most recent collaborations between China and Kenya, although the beginning of their relationship dates far back.

The History of Chinese and Kenyan Foreign Relations

Chinese and Kenyan foreign relations began more than two millenniums ago when the two nations engaged in economic diplomacy when what is now Kenya was on the ancient Silk Road during China's Han Dynasty from 202 BC to 220 AD.5 (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). This ancient trade route foreshadowed what is happening in in Kenya today. China continues to have great diplomatic and economic ties to Kenya and Kenya is of great importance when it comes to the Maritime Silk Road (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). Kenya's foreign policy is greatly directed by the President (Mulati, 2019). The administration in power, affects how Kenya conducts relations with China. Jomo Kenyatta's administration which was effective from 1963-1978, began modern international relations with China with the opening of the Chinese embassy in Nairobi on February 5th, 1964 (Mulati, 2019). The Kenyatta administration greatly focused on non-interference and the decolonization of Africa (Mulati, 2019). During this time, the Kenyan delegation to Beijing was dedicated to improving relations between the two nations (Mulati, 2019). Economic relations between the two nations began slowly with the Chinese delegation to Kenya committing to the construction of a textile factory and a sugar refinery (Mulati, 2019). Despite this progression, President Kenyatta was still partial to Socialism and the Soviet Union (Mulati, 2019). During this time President Kenyatta was suspicious of Chinese political interests in Kenya and was therefore cautious to commence with any large-scale cooperation with China and preferred to do business with Western Europe, Britain, and the United States (Mulati, 2019). From this point, relations between the two countries deteriorated, and by 1967, ties between China and Kenya had been severed with Chinese ambassadors leaving their stations (Mulati, 2019).

President Daniel ArapMoi's administration from 1978 until 2002, began with similar negative rhetoric from the previous administration (Mulati, 2019). Kenya was the most aligned East African nation with the West and remained skeptical of the Soviet Union and China (Mulati, 2019). Although the 1990's brought new incentive for Kenya to do business with newly emerging, non-Western economies like that of India, South Korea, Turkey, and China (Mulati, 2019). In 1978, President ArapMoi dispatched a new ambassador to the Kenyan embassy in Beijing giving new life to the bilateral relationship with the hopes of benefiting off of China's spiking economic growth (Mulati, 2019). The two nations then began to make various trips to each other's nations which also lead to the signing of two economic agreements on economic and technological cooperation and another concerning a trade agreement (Mulati, 2019). Along with the signing of these two agreements, came the construction of infrastructural projects in Kenya. China constructed and partially funded these projects with Chinese bank loans with no interest (Mulati, 2019). These projects included the Moi International Sports Center, a teaching hospital, the Gambogi-Serem highway, and provided teaching equipment at Egerton University (Mulati, 2019). The two nations also began to engage in cross cultural programs to educate the citizens of their respective nations in different capacities. China was interested in learning from Kenya's agricultural products like tea and coffee (Mulati, 2019). It is through collaborations such as these that set the tone that enabled the idea for large scale collaboration with China possible. Relations continued to improve with both countries making various visits to the other's nation. By the end of President Moi's presidency, the relationship with China had improved immensely and left great potential to the following Kenyan leader.

President Emilio Stanley Mwai Kibaki was the third president of Kenya, and his administration was in power from January 2002, until 2012. The country seemed to do well under the

Kibaki administration with dropping levels of poverty and an increasing GDP. His intention as president was also to maintain strong relations with China (Mulati, 2019). He showed this intention in action with a trip in his presidency to Beijing in August of 2005 being the first Kenya president to do so (Mulati, 2019). Along with the increase of Chinese-Kenyan relations, also came an increase of high-level political contracts and other official agreements (Mulati, 2019). One of these included the "Look East Policy", which promoted collaboration with China and other nations to the east, and not only the west as they had done in the past (Mulati, 2019). The West understood this policy to be anti-western and as a result weakened Kenyan-Western relations (Mulati, 2019). It was during the Kibaki administration where relations between China greatly improved, and relations with the West began to weaken. Under the Kibaki administration there was an increase of agreements and political visits with China, and the opposite occurred with the West.

President Uhuru Kenyatta took office in 2013 and left in 2022. President Kenyatta's administration continued to further deepen ties with China, and at this point, Kenya's relationship with China seemed stronger than that of the West. President Kenyatta visited China on August 19th, 2013 and continued to deepen ties by signing 17 agreements to enable billions of Kenyan shillings to increase the Kenyan economy with the improvement of railways, health care, environment, and security sectors (Mulati, 2019). It is in the Kenyatta era that the multi-billion SGR was conceived. Due to this massive decision concerning the SGR, Kenya and China agreed that the China-Africa Development bank would orchestrate in Nairobi further integrating the relationship between these two nations (Mulati, 2019). President Uhuru Kenyatta's job became more complicated with the visit from U.S. President Obama on July 24th, 2015. This help to steer a new direction for U.S.-Kenyan relations, and also further complicated this juggling act of East and West for the Kenyan president. The Communist vs Capitalist battle over Kenya seemed to be in full force. Despite the contentious issues of debt entrapment, and new age colonialism, the relationship between Kenya and China has thrived under President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Thus far, the new Kenyan President, William Ruto talked tough concerning China on the campaign trail, only time will tell if he follows through on this rhetoric or change his pace and continue collaboration with the Chinese power.

Critiques of the MSR

Numerous researchers and project stakeholders have written extensively on the draw-backs Kenya has experienced as a result of MSR, specifically concerning the new port being built by the Chinese in Lamu, Kenya. There has been loud criticism from western countries spe-cifically the United States on China's "neo-colonialism" in Africa (Al Mariam, 2017).

More than just critiques, there is evidence however that shows Chinese harnessed new-colo-nialism abroad and other evidence within Kenya that suggests of such tactics. The Mombasa port in Kenya plays a huge role for China's MSR as it acts as huge transfer point from East to West and would be of huge importance to China if it were to control the port. The Mombasa port acts as a gateway to East Africa and much of what comes into the port is an export or import from neighboring nations. There have been many media reports that suggest if Kenya defaults on the China EXIM bank loan, the owner of the highly lucrative and important port could later be controlled by the Chinese (Bootwalla, 2021). A trend that has already been seen for example with the Sri Lankan Port of Hambantota (Bootwalla, 2021). The construction of the SGR was a government-to-government deal, and China seemed uninterested in the deal unless Mombasa was a destination on the railway (Bootwalla, 2021). The Chinese were persistent about Mom-basa being on the railway because if Kenya were to default on the loan, they wanted the Kenya

Ports Authority (KPA) to be the guarantor (Bootwalla, 2021). Kenya now finds itself in a debt trap due to the high interest rate of 5.6%, a 15-year time span to pay it back, and a grace period of five years (Bootwalla, 2021). It is not proven that the Mombasa port could be used as collateral in the case Kenya is unable to pay back the loan. This rumor gained traction due to an unclear rhetoric that appeared in a leaked letter to the public in 2018 from the Office of Kenya's Auditor General and implied that Kenya had used its most valuable asset, the Mombasa Port, as collateral for the construction of the SGR and the repayment of the China EXIM bank loan of $3.6 billion (Executive, 2022). Kenyans fear the repercussions of the loss of the Mombasa port and what a Chinese controlled port would do for the sovereignty of Kenya (Umeh, 2020).
Clause 5.5 of the Preferential Buyer Credit Loan Agreement concerning the Mombasa-Nairobi SGR states, "Neither the borrower (Kenya) nor any of its assets is entitled to any right of immunity on the grounds of sovereignty or otherwise from arbitration, suit, execution, or any other legal process with respect to its obligations under this agreement (Umeh, 2020)." The agreement states that if Kenya was to default on the loan "any asset" Kenya possesses, is vulnerable to Chinese control, and as the Mombasa port is one of Kenya's most lucrative assets and holds economical and strategic importance for any entity who holds it makes it an obvious target (Umeh, 2020). Another fact that promotes rumors and fears among the Kenyan public concerning this issue is the lack of transparency about details of certain agreements. There are clauses of the loan pact that prohibits the Kenyan government from being fully transparent with all the details and also states that agreement will be "governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of China (Umeh, 2020)". Despite China's persistent argument that they are not conducting any sort of debt-trap diplomacy, the fact that China was not interested in funding the SGR unless it began

from Mombasa, and that the SGR must be "governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of China" gives ample room for fears to thrive (Umeh, 2020).

China is quick to deny any allegations of its debt-trap diplomacy, or neo-colonist tactics, and are always swift to prove arguments about how Chinese companies are Africa's number one choice for infrastructural projects as they are finished generally quickly and inexpensive (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). Although these projects are finished quickly relatively speaking, there has been concern that quickly finished projects could result in more issues long term (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418). In the past Chinese companies have also brought their own workers instead of hiring the local population which does not help when it comes to winning hearts and minds of the people of the respective nation where the project is being built (Farooq, Yuan, Zhu, Feroze, 2018, p.401-418).

More than six years after contracting for the loan with various lenders, Kenya has still not paid back the loan and is in default (Mutai, 2022). There is now a credible fear that through an increase in interest and penalties, it will be the average Kenyan taxpayer who will take on the responsibility to pay back these loans (Mutai, 2022). Kenya is already failing to pay back the Chinese Exim Bank loan that was used to build Nairobi's Southern Bypass Road, a 30-kilometer road in and around Nairobi (News, 2022). Nancy Gathungu, Kenya's Auditor General, has stated that in 2021 Kenya now owes the Chinese state bank around $31.3 million due to delayed payments (News, 2022). It is examples like these that my research aims to understand more accurately.

Judging Development "Success": The OECD & UN SDG framework.

The United Nation's (UN), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is a global initiative to foster peace, bring an end to poverty, and to safeguard the planet (Wanjala, 2018). The primary reason for the inception of these SDGs is to reverse the current economic, political, and environmental crises that threaten our world today (Wanjala, 2018). As Kenya faces various current and potential economic hardships posed by the MSR among other challenges, Kenya adopted the SDGs in January of 2016 (Wanjala, 2018). Because of these economic challenges the MSR poses on Kenya, the points in this section primarily focus on SDG number 8: Decent work and Economic Growth, and SDG number 17: To Enhance the methods of implementation and revive global partnerships for sustainable development.

The Organization for Economic co-operation and development (OECD) believes, to conduct successful national sustainable development strategies four conditions must be in place: 1.) policy integration, 2.) intergenerational timeframe, 3.) analysis and assessments, co-ordination and institutions, local and regional governance, stakeholder participation, indicators and targets, and 4.) monitoring and evaluation into the framework of one's nation (OECD, 2006). It is these frameworks that once implemented, seem to have proven beneficial in many western nations. Each of these conditions are explored below.

Policy integration are policies that consider the environmental, economic, and social needs with integrated approaches that are a part of national plans and reports (OECD, 2006). Kenya has put in motion various policies to attempt to protect Kenya from various threats including the deterioration of sovereignty which China presents. One such policy called the Kenya Vision 2030 is massive and encompasses all aspects of domestic interests including protecting its sovereignty while conducting large scale business deals with China. The Kenya Vision 2030 is also integrated into the UN's SDG as they both address some of the same issues (Wanjala, 2018). It is made up of four main pillars, an economic pillar, which partially aims to protect its commercial dealings with China, macro pillar that prioritizes agriculture and food security, a social pillar which prioritizes education and training, and a political pillar which prioritizes decentralization. Policies like this, woven into the constitution, yield a sustainable framework to uplift and protect the people of the nation.

Intergenerational timeframe is a national strategy that intends to adopt a long-term timeframe in which to allow inclusion of intergenerational principles and indicators (OECD, 2006). The Kenya Vision 2030 is also a prime example of a long-term economic development blueprint to elevate the nation to an industrialized, middle-income country that has been in the works since 2008 (Faling, 2020). Introduced in 2008 by then Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, has now been past to the current President William Ruto. As The Kenya Vision progresses so does its agenda. Currently the vision is focused on something they call the big four; food security, affordable housing, manufacturing, and affordable healthcare for all. Although the Kenya Vision 2030 is focused on the big four, it is a national strategy that encompasses many aspects of domestic life in Kenya. The Kenya Vision has already proven to have uplifted the nation, although it began to encumber issues when Kenya found itself unable to afford large scale projects. Although you will find no mention of China, Chinese banks, or Chinese government on the official Kenya Vision 2030 website, China capitalized on this Kenyan problem and helped the Kenya Vision 2030 achieve the first project with the construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi SGR (Wiggen, 2019).

Analysis and assessments need to be integrated into national reports of one's nation to identify the environmental, economic, and social costs and benefits of policy and strategy options (OECD, 2006). Many different entities conduct analysis and assessments in Kenya that attempt to identify issues in order to resolve them, such as the World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, Non-Governmental Organization, and Universities in Kenya and around the world. Although there seems to be a lack of integration of these analysis and assessments in Kenya in order to identify problems. This has been a complaint from critics in recent years as the Chinese debt mounted. This idea that there is a lack of analysis and assessments could spawn from the lack of transparency in Kenya specifically concerning Chinese funded projects and the loans that are taken out to pay for them. A prime example of this is the decline to release the loan contracts for the SGR to the public (Mureithi, 2022). This not only implies a lack of protective framework concerning FDI, but also a lack of analysis and assessment built into the framework of the nation to prevent issues like this from occurring.

A plethora of different governmental agencies and institutions need to be involved in the creation and implementation of national strategies, with overall responsibility in the office of the President or equivalent (OECD, 2006).

Local and regional authorities need to be fully involved in the making of national strategies, with certain delivery aspects that are responsible to sub-national levels (OECD, 2006). The people of Kenya voted in 2010 to become a decentralized government. Later in 2013, this decision took effect creating two equal bodies of government, a national level and county level government (Savage & Lumbasi, 2016). One of the driving factors of decentralizing the government was to promote accountability within the government and to protect and to promote the interests and rights of minorities in marginalized communities (Kimani, 2020). This is something the decentralization of government has yet to fully achieve. FDI from MSR projects has negatively affected many minorities, one such case effects uneducated women who work as small-scale traders who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a result of FDI due to MSR projects (Kenya Employers, 2021). While this change in government has proven to be beneficial to infrastructure, resources and changes to governing systems, experts are still unsure of the extent decentralization has had on the nation (Savage & Lumbasi, 2016).

Stake holder participation implies; businesses, investors, unions, nongovernmental organizations, etc, need to collaborate with government officials in commissions who are responsible for creating and implementing national strategies (OECD, 2006). In 1990, the Non-Governmental Organizations Co-Ordination Act was put into motion in Kenyan law to promote self-regulation, capacity building and policy intervention for NGO's that function within Kenya (Directory, 2022). This act was created to, in part, promote transparency within the government and also with FDI like the SGR, by means of NGOs.

Indicators and targets are strategies that need to be based off structured indicator systems to aid in monitoring progress and to serve as quantitative targets (OECD, 2006). In order to gauge progress and identify new problems, Kenya has aligned itself with the UN's SDG measuring the SDG indicators (6.2.1 and 7.1.1) (OECD, 2019). The Kenyan government added some of the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in its 2018-2022 medium term plan and specific sector frameworks after vast monitoring and mapping exercise (OECD, 2019). Although it is good that Kenya has shown progress in achieving the UNs SDG, there remains to be inadequate push in improving the SDGs that will protect Kenya against Chinese FDI concerning the MSR. Kenya's top concerns when it comes to UN SDGs are pushing to improve the poverty level, the fight against hunger, health care, education, gender equality, water sanitation, affordable and clean energy, and then to economic growth and infrastructure (Nations, 2022). The two SDGs that most closely strive to provide a just environment in which to conduct business

SDG 8 Decent Jobs and Economic Growth and SDG 9, Industry Innovation and infrastructure combined only amount to 1.1% of the total funds devoted to achieving the UNs SDG (Nations, 2022). This suggests that protection against unfair economic deals are just not on the top of the list of issues that are facing Kenya today.

The monitoring and evaluation of a nation's framework requires independent bodies and policies that need to be established in order to act as checks and balances in the implementation of national strategies as well as to provide recommendations for improvement (OECD, 2006). National Quality Infrastructure Policy set in place in 2019 with the intent to address complications with good governance so Kenya is better integrated with the international economy and has better access to global markets like that of China (Andoh, 2022). Gaining full access to the Chinese market is something Kenya has been trying to achieve, and despite China's verbal confirmation that they are trying to make this happen, it has yet to be seen (Bavier & Miriri, 2022).

To gauge the success of the MSR, the following table analyses the net benefits and negatives that have resulted from MSR infrastructural projects. The analyzed topics include, the general negative and positive criticisms, the infrastructural projects, and deeper Kenyan-Chinese relations net positive benefits. Along with the trade deficit & Chinese debt, lack of human capital and poor work conditions, racism, and xenophobic net negative results.

Research Design &Methodology

The research is exploratory in nature, using a case study-based methodology to a) understand the infrastructural projects that have been and are being constructed in Kenya as a result of the MSR; and b) explore the implications of the net benefits these Chinese infrastructural projects have had on Kenya using the success indicators identified in the last section of my literature review (see table).

I will be using qualitative data, along with primary and secondary sources to help me answer my research questions, above. This will be done by applying the analytical framework shown below to the Kenyan case. Source material for this study included government documents, promotional materials, and promotional speeches that have been conducted. While correlations between these indices and the MSR project are speculative, together they may be suggestive of the development trajectory of Kenya as it has embraced MSR. The above will be analyzed to determine whether project impacts are and will likely be mutually beneficial to China and Kenya.

Analytical Framework Table

Variable	Description
Macroeconomic trends	Have overall economic conditions in Kenya improved since engagement with MSR projects?
Bi-Lateral Relations	Has the MSR improved the quality of bi-lateral relations between China and Kenya?
Trade Deficits	What impact has the BSR had on the balance of trade between the two countries?
Debt	How has the MSR impacted the debt obligations of Kenya toward China?
Jobs, Human Capital and Working Conditions	Has the MSR improved the job market, human capital development, and working conditions?
Attitudinal Shifts	To what extent has the BSR impacted cross-national attitudes?

Findings

China's influence on the Kenyan Economy

While there has been progress, ultimately a lack of sustainable solutions, governmental framework, and a growing dependence on FDI seem to be the main barriers preventing Kenya from achieving the UN SDGs and OECD's rules for sustainable development (Wanjala, 2018).

To understand the implications of Chinese-Kenyan relations, I investigated the different effects from Chinese infrastructural deals and their implications on the people, and economy. China has greatly influenced the Kenyan economy since before Kenya had gained its independence. Kenya, as a British colony, would sell and export raw materials such as raw cotton, pyrethrum, sisal fiber, and wattle bark extract to China in the 1950's and 1960's (Guide, 2019). At the time of Kenya's independence from the British in 1963, Kenya was in a trade surplus with China of about 9.2 million Kenya Shillings ($1.2 million) (Guide, 2019). In the years following independence, China began to increase exports to China, now providing more variety of Chinese goods to the Kenyan population such as bicycles, hard tools, porcelain, clocks, sheet glass, textiles, cotton, stationery, and household items (Guide, 2019). Although the Chinese increased their exports to Kenya, the Kenyan export product level to China remained the same (Guide, 2019). Trade between the two nations decreased greatly in the mid 1960's due to complications in diplomatic relations, then recommenced in the 1980's with the finalization of the state-managed trade agreement (Guide, 2019). Import and export ranges of the two respective nations generally maintained at the same level until 1995 (Guide, 2019). In recent years, Kenya has grown to be an important actor for the Chinese and their BRI. The two nations began working together with the visit from former Chinese president Jiang Zemin in 1996 with Kenya's second President Moi (Abuya, 2012). As Kenya's president changed from President Moi to President

Kibaki in 2002, so did the level of bilateral relations with China. It was with the Kibaki regime where the relationship with China rose to a new level. President Kibaki made several bilateral cooperation agreements with China concerning trade, investments, socio-cultural exchanges, energy, and infrastructural developments to name a few (Waweru, 2021). These projects were funded primarily by the African Development bank, as well as both the Chinese and Kenyan governments (Waweru,2021). Trade between the two nations has also become increasingly more important. China is Kenya's primary trade partner. This trade balance although is more beneficial for the Chinese. In 2020, China exported around $753 million to Kenya and only imported $42.2 million from Kenya, resulting in a trade surplus of $710 million (OEC,2020). China seems to be involved in almost every aspect of Kenyan economic affairs namely real estate, hospitality and tourism, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship (Waweru, 2021). With the rise of Chinese industrial modernization and the availability of the Kenyan market for foreign goods, Kenya increased Chinese imports immensely, as shown in figure 1 (Guide, 2019).

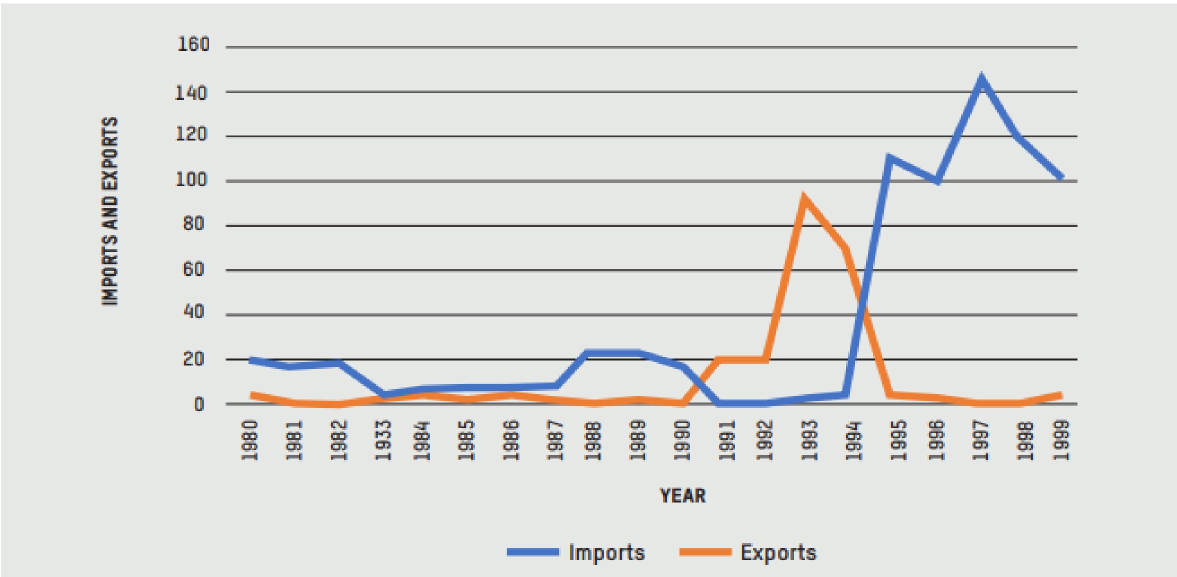

Figure 2: Kenya-China Trade Pattern, 1980-1999, graph from *Kenya-China Relations, Basic Patterns and Trends in Trade*

In more recent times, the same trend has continued with a slightly more formal touch. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in October of 2000 with the intention to promote economic cooperation between China and Africa. FOCAC has helped to promote trade deals between the two nations and trade has increased, although at quite an imbalanced rate. Figure 2 shows the extreme increase of Kenyan imports from China in more recent years.

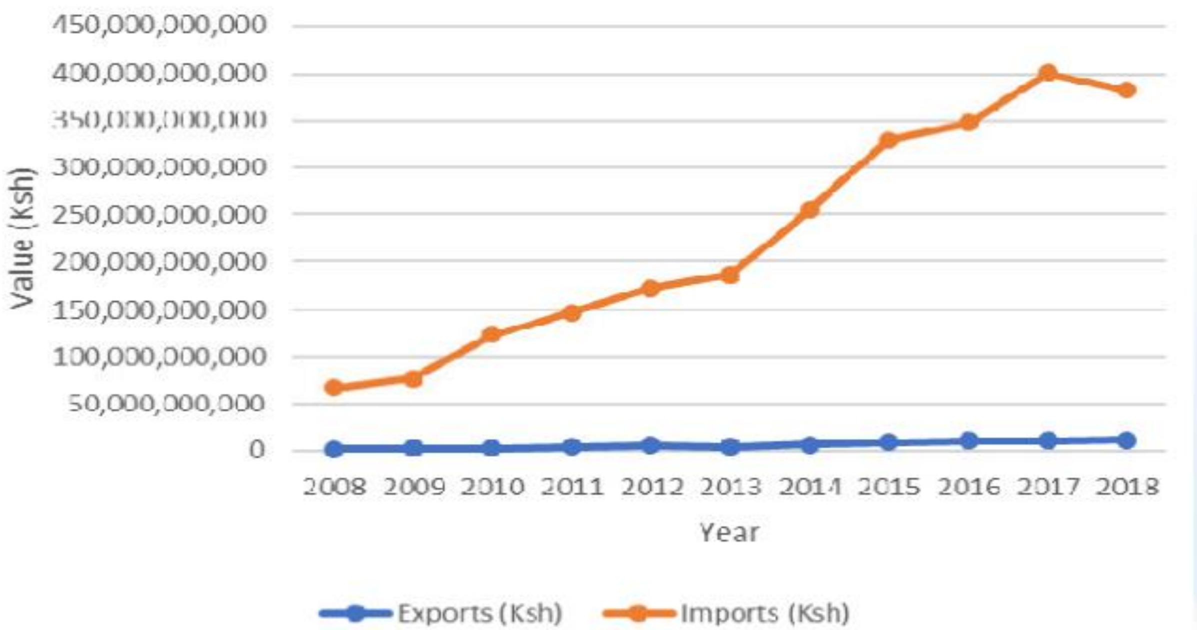

Figure 3: Kenya's Exports and Imports from China, 2008-2017, graph from *Kenya-China Relations, Basic Patters and Trends in Trade*

In 2017, Kenya's total international trade with China was 17.3% making China, Kenya's largest trading partner (Guide, 2019). Although these unbalanced trade deals leave Kenya in a trade deficit ultimately taking value from Kenya and adding it to China.

On the African continent there is a very diverse range of thought concerning the Chinese amongst policy makers, the elite, and the general public. It seems, depending on the situation of each respective nation, individual, policy member, or elite, they all form their own opinions based on their interests, whether it be an optimistic, pessimistic, or accommodative opinion towards the Chinese (Asongu, 2016, p.351). I have found that some policy makers tend to be in favor of Chinese engagement, and others tout anti-Chinese rhetoric. Having said this there does seem to be a slight trend with African policy makers and African elites that voice their optimism concerning Chinese engagement on the continent, as they are usually some of the first beneficiaries of Chinese involvement (Waweru, 2021).

Some African leaders have also been found to do the opposite. A leading presidential candidate of Zambia in the 2006 general election touted anti-Chinese rhetoric to rally support (Waweru, 2021). With the ever-lingering memory of colonialism, some African elites are cautious when it comes to Chinese engagement on the continent. The South African president Thambo Mbeki urged caution amongst African nations engaging in in-depth business deals with the Chinese as to avoid the potential of a new Chinese colonial master (Taylor, 2008, p.74). The fact that different political elites tout different opinions concerning the Chinese brings into question if they are following the interest of the nation, or rather personal interest. It seems as if sometimes, political elites will use negative or positive Chinese rhetoric depending on their economic, political, and sometimes personal interests.

Opinions about the Chinese amongst average citizens in Africa also vary. Depending on the type of infrastructural projects that are being done in the respective country, and how the projects are being conducted greatly define how citizens will view the Chinese. For example, studies have shown that Kenyans, Ethiopians, and the Sudanese generally have positive attitudes towards the Chinese (Sautman and Hairong, 2009, p. 728). This could be attributed to the infrastructural projects that will affect these nations like new gas pipelines, trains, and roads that will help to elevate these people. In general, the people of Africa tend to view the Chinese in a good light depending if the quality of their lives have been improved based on these infrastructural projects the Chinese have constructed. Although, anti-Chinese attitude amongst African citizens also thrives. These attitudes primarily spawn from negative experiences from Chinese intervention on the continent. In many cases anti-Chinese sentiment has evolved into protests and even violence. Violence against Chinese people and Chinese businesses have broken out in multiple countries including Lesotho, Malawi and Malagasy, and Tanzania. Negative Chinese sentiment seems to evolve into violence when there is evidence of a lack of fair labor practices, poor pay, or poor working conditions in Chinese owned businesses.

When it comes to Kenya, political opinion generally seems to lean positive concerning the Chinese. The construction of the SGR was praised by political elites across the political spectrum to gain popularity amongst the Kenyan population. Having said this, China does not go without criticism within Kenya. A study from the University of Karatina in Kenya focuses on the negative aspects of Chinese involvement in the nation, and who it primarily affects. The study has found that due to a lack of legal framework within the nation that governs foreign investment in small scale trade has led to the displacement of Kenya's small-scale traders and ultimately promoted anti-Chinese sentiment among the demographic (Waweru, 2021). Most of these traders are women who have a primary level of education (Kenya Employers, 2021). This directly contradicts the OECD's recommendation of adding monitoring and evaluation to the framework of Kenya. For example, because of this lack of framework a whole demographic in Kenya is being negatively affected.

The Chinese, Kenyan bilateral relationship.

Along with the numerous Chinese engagements in Kenya, also came many Chinese natives. Some of these Chinese natives are working in Chinese orchestrated infrastructural projects like the SGR, and others are entrepreneurs starting businesses like restaurants and small grocery stores. This also plays a role not only on the Kenyan economy, but also the general sentiment Kenyans have towards the Chinese. A large amount of my interest in this study is to understand how the average Kenyan citizen feels about China, especially after having experienced the many Chinese businesses and deals within the nation.

Negative Criticism

Many nations along with the west as a whole, are concerned as China rises in power and spreads their influence across the global south. Critics warn the global south to be cautious of Chinese tactics like "debt trap diplomacy" in order to prevent them from being too dependent on China and losing agency, and partial sovereignty. "Debt Trap Diplomacy", is when a state offers loans to an underdeveloped or developing nation to build infrastructural projects, with the intent that the nation cannot pay back the loan within the terms presented. The Nation then has the opportunity to take control of trade routes and other aspects of the developing nation (Ganupa, 2020). The developing nation is then more dependent on the other and is then influenced economically, politically, and potentially militarily. The American president John Adams once said, "There are two ways to conquer and enslave a country: One is by the sword; the other is by debt (Society, 2022)." As of 2021, China has surpassed traditional lenders like the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund as China now lends over 5% of the global GDP (Chellaney, 2021). China challenges the current unipolar world order the West currently enjoys which promotes this type of criticism. The United States and the West often promote the narrative that China is conducting economic imperialism with their BRI and that nations should refrain from engaging in in-depth business deals with China.

Positive Criticism

Despite the vast negative criticism concerning the Chinese relationship with Africa, there are those who are excited about the idea of Chinese cooperation on the continent. Many Africans who are impoverished perceive a nation like China constructing infrastructure and bringing potential jobs as something that promotes optimism. China's popularity in Guinea for example has an 80% approval rating (Edem, 2020). This could be attributed to the effects of Chinese mining companies have had on the local economy in Guinea (Edem, 2020). Many African politicians see China as a positive way to bring development to the nation and welcome the idea of Chinese businesses within their nation. There are opinions across the board, although regardless of one's opinion, China does not seem to be leaving the African continent anytime soon.

Net Positive Benefits, Infrastructural projects.

Chinese infrastructural projects within Kenya have generally stimulated the local economy bringing capital to the area where it would have never been otherwise. This is true in the case of the building and operation of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). The SGR has positively impacted local economies by supporting local businesses and creating new business opportunities (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). Workers along the SGR bring capital and stimulate the local economy along the 3,800 kilometer stretch of rail from Mombasa to Nairobi (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). Due to the increase of economic activity along the SGR, multiple banks have opened branches along the railway to provide bank loans for entrepreneurs who also work on the railway and have decided to begin their own small businesses. This is seen in the town of Voi, in Tata-Taveta County (Wissenbach & Wang, 2017). The increase of economic activity along the railway has created more transportation routes, new hotels, and markets (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). The SGR has also brought a new level of efficiency to the nation as it has greatly decreased travel time from Mombasa to Nairobi and improved the way goods are transported (Irandu & Owilla, 2020).

Net Positive benefits, deeper Kenyan-Chinese relations

Although Kenyan politicians have sometimes changed their opinion concerning the Chinese, the optimistic opinion concerning the Chinese is that they could be a means to close the infrastructural gap and build a more powerful economy. Kenya has benefited from a large amount of infrastructural projects constructed and produced by China including: 13 grant projects of around $102 million USD, 4 preferential loan projects of approximately $292 million USD, 14 commercial projects amounting to $8.545 billion USD, along with other investment projects approximating $564 million USD (Review, 2018). The SGR is the largest infrastructural project within Kenya since the end of British rule. The SGR amounted to 3.6 billion USD (Review, 2018). Collaboration in Kenya has also deepened relations between the two nations. In 2018 President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that he plans to create Kenyan consulates in Guangzhou and Shanghai China, to “facilitate the growing interaction between our peoples” (Review, 2018).

Trade Deficit

Net Negative benefits, Trade Deficit

Chinese presence in Kenya has also come with its complications. Investopedia defines a trade deficit when a nation imports more goods from another nation then it exports during a certain period of time (Bloomenthal, 2022). A trade deficit is also known as a negative balance of trade (BOT) (Bloomenthal, 2022). As Chinese-Kenyan relations deepen so do their trade relations. Exporting more goods to China is a Kenyan priority, and the Chinese do seem open to this although action is slow to occur. Wu Peng, China's African affairs Chief has stated that imbalances such as these were never intentional (Bavier & Miriri, 2022). China says it does aim to boost imports from Kenya (Bavier & Miriri, 2022). Trade deficits and surpluses are not uncommon in today's world. China currently profits from trade surpluses from many nations, although it is also in many trade deficits (Workman, 2022). Although, it is important to note that China's overall trade balance is in surplus from $535 billion in 2020 to $587.5 billion in 2021 (Workman, 2022). In 2020, Kenya's total imports from China amounted to 26.7% (OEC, 2020). China's total imports from Kenya in 2020 amounted to less than 0.087% (OEC, 2020). As China and Kenya are at two very different economic calibers, it is difficult to compare the two.

Debt

Net Negative Benefits, Chinese Debt.

The issue of Kenya being indebted to China is one of the main concerns Kenyan voices when asked about their opinion of China. Kenya is currently indebted to China with around 8 billion USD (Bavier & Miriri, 2022). In order to alleviate this debt, Kenya needs to pay around

631 million USD per year, although this is three times what it exported last year in 2021 (Bavier & Miriri, 2022). Within the last year, Kenya's debt to China has more than doubled due to the various Chinese funded infrastructural projects (Ani, 2022). The Kenyan treasury recently re-leased their expenditure data showing the amount to be paid to Chinese lenders has increased by 135.15% (Ani, 2022). Since 2014, Kenya began taking out large loans from China to fund their numerous infrastructural projects. Because Kenya later became a lower-middle income economy, it was unable to take out highly concessional loans from development lenders like the World Bank etc (Ani, 2022). Kenya's soul development lender is now China, leaving it more vulnerable to Chinese interests. In 2021, Kenya's treasury spent 81.4% of its total debt service of 90.26 bil-lion KES (Kenyan Shillings) to repay Chinese lenders during a nine-month period (Ani, 2022). Kenya initially attempted to save a large sum of this capital during the first half of the year, alt-hough their application for deferment to the Chinese was denied (Ani, 2022). To compensate for the massive Chinese debt, Kenya and other African nations are attempting to boost exports and gain more access to the Chinese market although this is proving to be complicated (Bavier & Miriri, 2022).

Human Capital and Working Conditions

Net Negative Benefits, lack of jobs, Human capital, & poor work conditions.

Protests and sometimes riots in Kenya due to Chinese infrastructural projects is due to the lack of human capital growth. Although China does bring jobs to Kenya, a common complaint is that not enough jobs are being developed, and there is a lack of transparency when it comes to giving Kenyans jobs. For example, there is talk about how Chinese companies are more inclined to put a Kenyan on the job when the media is doing a segment on the company. A common theme found in nations where Chinese companies are conducting infrastructural projects is that they bring workers from China instead of employing locals to build and run their projects. Some of these Chinese natives are working in Chinese orchestrated infrastructural projects like the SGR, and others are entrepreneurs starting businesses like restaurants and small grocery stores. This also plays a role not only on the Kenyan economy, but also the general sentiment Kenyans have towards the Chinese. Towards the end of 2019, there was an estimated 180,000 Chinese worker's working in Chinese state-owned companies in Kenya (Cheng, 2021). There is a bit of conflicting data when it comes to this issue. There are various Chinese companies within Kenya that have hired many Kenyan workers. Although in many cases Kenyans voice their opinion that this is not enough. Many Kenyan workers experience discrimination, poor work conditions, along with poor pay. The construction of the SGR and the employment conditions contains many relevant examples of this. There have been various reports of physical and verbal abuse from Chinese administrative workers towards Kenyan workers on the SGR. A cleaning worker on the SGR said she was hit on her back by a Chinese worker for not cleaning adequately (Mwakio, 2015). The cleaning worker felt she was unable to do anything about this as she needed the job. Another worker in the engineering department claims that workers on the SGR are underpaid, with no days off while working extra hours in harsh weather (Mwakio, 2015). In 2019 an interview was conducted with a 34-year-old father Samuel Wainaina (Kirui, 2019). He stated while working on the SGR, "Sometimes, we would be made to lie down and whipped thoroughly and there was nothing any of us could do since we needed the jobs so we could feed our families" (Kirui, 2019). Another incident involved four Chinese contractors, working for a Chinese Construction company physically abused a Kenyan engineer for denying a bribe they had offered (Kirui, 2019). The incident created so much disruption that the Kenyan government ordered that the four Chinese contractors be deported (Kirui, 2019). There have been many other examples of similar incidents occurring in other African nations from Chinese companies.

Attitudinal Shifts

Net Negative Benefits, Racism & Xenophobia.

As the Chinese presence in Kenya grows, so has racism and xenophobia in both nations. In 2018, a New York Times article was released about a relationship between a Chinese boss and his employee at a Chinese motorcycle company, where he would frequently refer to him and other Kenyans as “monkeys” (Goldstein, 2018). It happened so frequently that the Kenyan worker Richard Ochieng, was able to capture an incident on his phone (Goldstein, 2018). After the release of the video, the Chinese boss was deported back to China. It is situations such as these that promote polarization within Kenya between Kenyans and Chinese. It also reminds Kenyans of British rule when discrimination was rampant. There have also been examples of media presentations in China that cast Africans as inferior. A television show aired in Beijing in 2018 celebrating the Lunar New Year featured a well-known Chinese actress dressed up in blackface (Perlez, 2018). The television show aired to over 800 million people (Perlez, 2018). During the show, the Blackface character continuously touted pro-Chinese rhetoric exclaiming, “I love Chinese people. I love China” (Perlez, 2018).

Conclusion

The Scholarly Community Encyclopedia defines positive impact, by products and services that are created with the purpose of solving societal problems. It reflects the shift from reducing an organization’s negative footprint to achieving a significant net positive impact on society and the planet. While ultimately, I believe more research needs to be conducted. Chinese bi-lateral relations have been positively impacted by the infrastructural projects China has brought to Kenya. In some respects, I have found the previously conducted research tends to suggest that the Chinese presence in Kenya is beginning to leave a negative impression overall. Based upon my research, due to the Kenyan trade deficit with China and a lack of legal economic protective framework in the constitution, Kenya is vulnerable to the Chinese presence. A study found that due to the lack of legal framework that governs foreign investment in small scale trade, a displacement of Kenya's small-scale traders has occurred (Waweru, 2021). This has promoted anti-Chinese sentiment among the demographic (Waweru, 2021). The majority of these traders are women who have a primary level of education (Kenya Employers, 2021). This is a direct consequence of not having adequate protective framework to protect against FDI. More protective framework needs to be adopted into the Kenyan constitution in order to prevent this from happening. Studies have shown that the issues of trade and debt in Kenya are also proving to have some of the greatest impact. In 2020, China exported around $753 million to Kenya and only imported $42.2 million from Kenya, resulting in a trade surplus of $710 million (OEC,2020). This is a trend that has only continued to worsen as time goes on.

Despite the issues FDI from China poses to Kenya, FDI has yet to create extreme consequences like other issues within Kenya. The priority to lower the poverty level, provide clean drinking water, eliminate hunger, provide free health care and a quality education seem to resonate much more with voters rather than to concentrate on the unknown effects from Chinese MSR projects that have at times shown promise.

This is a matter that grows in skepticism and conviction across the board. Though what is certain is that regardless of the reality, it will yield great implications for the future to come, one that supports the current western monopolar world order, or the possible new multipolar world order.

Limitations

This paper attempts to understand the effects of the BRI in Kenya. This research was exploratory in nature and the results provide a framework for additional research on the topic and are not conclusive. One of my hopes for this research is that my contribution to this topic helps others to shed additional light on the reality of what is happening in the region.

There are various things that prevent one from seeing the effects most accurately. One of the main limitations is the overwhelming number of variables that pertain to this issue and prevent accurate interpretation. These variables will require a vast amount of research, understanding of diplomacy and international relations. My positionality also hinders my ability to see the situation as it is. A large quantity of research already conducted on this issue comes from either Western or Chinese sources who each have a stake in this topic. I also have been exposed frequently to Western media and opinions that generally tend to express negative Chinese rhetoric. This narrative war concerning BRI and its effects in Kenya is something that also creates limitations. Because of this, there exists a lack of transparency to the public, for example about certain details of Chinese bank loans.

Throughout my research I found myself desiring to know more about the global nature of the MSR and how Kenya plays a part in context of the African continent. The time I have had to conduct research inhibited my ability to delve deeper and because of this my research is purely speculative. I hope my research adds to the understanding of this topic and that others are able to pick up where I left off in order to improve our future.

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