



## China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Mapping Economic Escalation and Development Expansion Opportunities for Africa

**Dr. Nazim Rahim**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science & IR, Qurtuba University of Science & IT, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. Email: [mnazimrahim@qurtuba.edu.pk](mailto:mnazimrahim@qurtuba.edu.pk)

**Assad Mehmood Khan**, PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science & IR, Qurtuba University of Science & IT, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. Email: [mohdalimohd43@gmail.com](mailto:mohdalimohd43@gmail.com)

**Muhammad Alam**, Demonstrator, Department of Political Science, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan, Email: [malamawkum@gmail.com](mailto:malamawkum@gmail.com)

**Rubina Ali**, PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science & IR, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: [rubinaalijui@gmail.com](mailto:rubinaalijui@gmail.com)

**Asghar Ali**, PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science & IR, Qurtuba University of Science and IT, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. Email: [talha.9142963@gmail.com](mailto:talha.9142963@gmail.com)

**Abstract-** The recent 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) conference, Beijing 2019, demonstrated the increasing politico-economic engagement of China amid African states. China's BRI was initiated in 2013, focused on the endowment of infrastructure developments, while forecasting opportunities to African states to concentrate on the economic escalation and development expansion on the continent. In-turn, African leadership focused over the infrastructural growth as the major stake underneath state and continental progress. Hence, demands considerable economic sustenance of China, however, also offers vulnerabilities to indefensible debits and rising dependency of African states. This research article centers Sino-African relations, focusing on the possibility of BRI, for economic escalation and development expansion opportunities towards Africa; with anticipation of obtaining reply to some of the queries related to the subject; while suggesting ways to manage future challenges of such initiative.

**Keywords:** Africa, China, BRI, Economic, Development, Relations, Expansion, Initiative

### I. INTRODUCTION

China's contemplated large-scale program, the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) has emerged as signaling model of the state's innovative diplomatic strategy of encouraging worldwide economic escalation and development expansion, along-with mapping out new course and hub of potential opportunities as well as cooperation among China and African states (Ganguly, Scobell, & Lio, 2017). Since, the BRI initiate in 2013, it has prodded Sino-African collaboration with regard to extensiveness and deepness on the way to an emerging historic episode. Xi, China's president, visited three of African states and proposed a mutual prospect in Sino-Africa relations; precisely denoted by earnestness, true outcome, peace with reliance (Islam, 2019). Repeatedly, during Beijing Summit of the FOCAC in 2018 and BRI conference in 2019, China stressed to build up a cooperation of mutual opportunities through shared responsibilities, attaining 'win-win' support and general affluence with enhanced security and peaceful co-existence (Michael, 2019). Indeed, the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), escalated owing to large support from political leadership of Africa (Mayer, 2017). Moreover, bilateral assistance has been goaded forward increasingly over outlined directions, yet more strengthening Sino-African community of mutual prospect, the FOCAC action plan 2019-2021 and implementation of eight key initiatives with African-states have derived through new mutual relationships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Furthermore, has augmented relations by signing over one-fifty reciprocity protocols, while China appeared to be, Africa's largest business collaborator over more than ten successive years (Lingui, 2019). During 2019, as denoted by data shared by the 'General Administration of Customs of China' (GACC), within January-February, China's overall imports and exports with African states, amounted US dollar 32.16 billion, positive 3.5 percentages annual, greater than the overall escalation rates of foreign business during same duration near 7.4 percentages points; whereas, Chinese exports to African states amounted US dollar 15.92 billion, negative 1.8 percentages annual, while imports amounted US dollar 16.24 billion, positive 9.3 percentages annual with business debit amounted US dollar 320 million (MOFCOM, 2019).

According to UNCTAD's 'World Investment Report' (WIR-2018), worldwide outflow of FDI crossed US dollar 1.43 trillion during 2017, with annual closing stock amounted US dollar 30.84 trillion; where China's outflow of FDI crossed US dollar 124.6 billion, while Africa, though with 21 percentage negative inflow FDI remained US dollar 42 billion and outflow of FDI crossed US dollar 12.1 billion with positive 8 percentage (UNCTAD, 2018). However, China's out-ward FDI and annual closing stock during 2017 recorded percentages 11.1 and 5.9 of the overall global summary correspondingly; while with regards to

Africa, its out-ward FDI recorded US dollar 4.1 billion annually with positive percentage of 70.8, though, merely percentage 2.6 of its overall FDI flows (Niu, 2019). Moreover during 2017, the entirety of yearly revenues by Chinese corporations in construction ventures within Africa amounted US dollar 51.19 billion, yet negative percentage of 0.5 as of 2016 (CARI, 2019). China has huge investments in African infrastructural development ventures including the 'Grand Inga Dam', hydro-electric dam on river Congo in DR Congo; Egypt's new-fangled capital metropolitan; Kenya's technology town, worth US dollar 14.5 billion; Lagos-Calabar rail-track measuring 1,400-kilometres; Tanzania's port worth US dollar 11 billion; Mombasa-Malaba rail-track measuring 969-kilometres, costing US dollar 9.9 billion; Nigeria's hydro-power dam; and Millennium dam on river blue Nile (Makena, 2018).

China's 'Belt and Road' initiative (BRI) emerged as an extension and expansion of Chinese 'opening-up' and 'going-global' approach through regional focused of Asia, Europe, along-with Africa. Though, Africa occupies the main international growth rates, hence makes it vital that the inclusion of African states in this grand initiative to promote the long-lasting Sino-African relationships. Thus, potentially promising composition will be of more advantageous to overall participating states, together with the states of Africa. The largely objective of this research article is to review Sino-Africa relationships while Incorporating China's 'Belt and Road' initiative (BRI) and likely incorporation of majority African states in to it; focusing on the economic drivers of the BRI initiative with economic escalation and development expansions; moreover, the opportunities along-with challenges and probable way forward, resulting conclusion.

### **BRI: An Economic Escalation and Development Expansion**

China's 2nd BRI meeting at Beijing in April 2019 hosted 37 states and over 5,000 delegation-members; whereas 125 states along-with over 40 global organizations have already associated themselves with Initiative (Akram, 2019). Reflected numbers, on one side indicate the recognition of aspiration amongst emergent states to imitate the china's economic model and perception that it would offer a valuable course towards international trade and industry development, with peace, prosperity and security within developing states. The 'Belt and Road' initiative is very much ambitious venture that foresee connecting the whole Eurasia, along-with peripheral South, South-east, and West Asian regions, European, Latin-American and African regions, all the way through belt on ground and route in sea infrastructure development, economic escalation and investment expansions (Zhang, Alon, & Lattemann, 2018).

However, the initial possibilities and opportunities of economic escalation and development expansions have now also been visualized transforming into E-economy and E-business along-with establishment of BRI learning group involving academia. Moreover, Beijing session 2019, proclaimed 283 tangible domino effect forming six groupings including China's planed and offered initiatives, bi-party and multi-party agreements, bilateral collaboration apparatus, venture missions details, economic escalation ventures, and back-home development plans; furthermore, the number of participation states and agreements measuring economic escalation and investment expansions are expected to rise along-with increase funding support by non-Chinese as well as private financiers to join BRIs (BRF, 2019).

Referring, Africa in BRI, has also observed increase participation; comparing 2017 where, merely two heads of government within African states reached to the conference including Boshe, Ethiopia's former head of state and Kenyatta the president of Kenya; however, current year 2019, it included participations of presidents from Mozambique and Djibouti, while leadership from Egyptian, besides Kenya, and Ethiopia (Tiezzi, 2019). Hence, spotting out African-states on the BRI's map, China is determined to economic escalation and investment expansions plans for Africa through massive road net-workings, rail-tracks linkages, sea-ports infrastructures, and other development models with proclaimed approximations of China's principle investments starting from US dollars one trillion to US dollars eight trillions, is generally observed as part of its main strategy objectives (Hillman, 2018).

Ever since 2013, mass media has envisaged varying BRI maps along-with unreliable signals of African state's membership in the initiatives, though majority maps represent course from Indian-Ocean to African states namely Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Egypt and Eritrea unless joins Mediterranean. Moreover, Kenya holds equally strong reason of participating in BRI, owing to reasonably huge coastal state of the region, port at Mombasa (Demissie, Weigel, & Xiaoyang, 2016). China's US dollar 210 million investment in mega rail-link project of Kenya, to offer better connectivity linking Kenyan ports to adjacent non-coastal economies like South Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda, hence opening-up intra-African and worldwide business prospects in return (Herbling, 2019). During 2016, bordering Tanzania too marked US dollar 7.6 billion loan-credits for development expansions (Johnston, 2016).

However, China's intend to sight Mozambique, one of the major expected annexation to BRI during twenty-first century as 'Maritime Silk Road' (Figueiredo, 2018); and strengthening collaboration with Djibouti in making of economic escalations and development expansions is widely recognized by international observers (Nantulya, 2019). Moreover, sea-ports towards Africa's Eastern coastline,

including Kenya, Djibouti, and Tanzania along-with Mozambique, will connect to rail-tracks networking planned towards the Northern and Eastern Africa. Furthermore, few of such net-workings might possibly establish linkages towards the Western shorelines including Cameroon, Ghana, Angola, and Namibia, where China is offering equally matching opportunities to develop BRI (Nouwens, 2019). Other, major prospective members of the BRI, might include Nigeria, owns economic connotation involving the Lekki sea-port (UNDP, 2017); and the Togo, that could be the affix end towards Western Africa, if included in the initiative (Omoruyi, 2017).

Subsequently, the inclusion of the DR Congo into the BRI, comprehends economic sagacity, since the 'Maritime Silk Road' (MSR), consequently, expand towards further up North including Angola into the geo-strategically imperative Guinea-gulf (Song, Garnaut, Fang, & Johnston, 2016). While Sudan anticipates a dominant character in 'Belt and Road' Initiative (BRI), though offers an equally beneficial opportunity for China to safeguard its energy as well as resource security, while Sudan to escalate economic activities and infrastructure development expansions through China's collaboration (Xinhua, 2018). Since infrastructure development expansions among economies all along the BRI routes persuade escalation in respective economies, hence requirement for Chinese commodities and provision of services is too anticipated to increase. However, the mutual business with initially member 65 states all along the BRI was counted US dollars 962 billion during 2016, almost one-quarter of the entire. While, the contribution of exports moving into the BRI linked areas has crossed progressively to 28 percentage during 2016, almost 12 percent positive than the contribution of exports to the EU; and even as 10 percent positive than the contribution of exports the US (He, 2017).

Moreover, the president Xi expressed optimism over China's year-on-year business magnitude with BRI would cross US dollar 2.5 trillion during next decennium or so (SCMP, 2017). Intrinsically, the project anticipates to escalate economic activities and infrastructure development expansions and source-energy linkages within the region, hence peruse reach-out policies to way in product capitals, while presenting an opening before China led investment expansions to new-regions. Moreover, even with China's significant as well as fast-track development, the African states yet facing severe politico-economic and diplomatic governance's issues. However, even as it might be the reason, the China proclaims and stress that initiative has no further strings connected, as the BRI focused over escalating economies and expanding developments, moreover the structural design also signifies, for at least primarily, an escalating economic and development expansion initiatives (Pu, 2016).

China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), also plans plotting development expansion opportunities for Africa, hence the infrastructural developments will present a centered, comprehensible idea, and determined endeavor in reformation of managing economic activities and overall development expansion deals within Africa. For instance, the rail-track linkage from Angola that remains complete on one part along the border, however, not taken an advantage as neither Congo nor Zambians, put-in to link the seaport, hence hold back the exports opportunities for even own productions. Moreover, the major portion of infrastructure development expansion investments within African states, generally flow down from different banks of China, in-terms of soft credit, incorporating mutual contracts by the states. However, the investment in-flow associating BRI, would clearly be scrutinized by the AIIB as well as the 'Silk Road Fund' (SRF) (Farooq, Master, & Kai, 2018). Additionally, the idea of BRI is more reinforced through Chinese conclusion of MoU incorporating AU during 2015 to link 54 African states through high-speed rail-track linkages, sea-ports and land-routes. However, the long-established "equatorial land bridge" remains the usual business linkage connecting East with Western Africa, hence could be an initiative start BRI within Africa's development expansions; mainly connecting Kenya, Rwanda, DR Congo, Burundi, CAR, Uganda to the Western in Cameroon. (Mwatela & Changfeng, 2016). Even so, the Chinese investments linked to BRI, to all intents and purposes on escalating economic strategies and development expansion bindings involving China and respective states in Africa. Hence, signify establishing bilateral relations, benefiting equally even extended towards bordering states, though that would offer China to administer linked opportunity based additional economy related operations.

#### **Africa: Plotting Opportunities and Challenges on BRI Map**

China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), appeared and endorsed as an economic escalation approach and growth expansion prospects, however besides various opportunities, offers numerous challenges, demanding way-forward. Fore-mostly, akin to any other transnational inventiveness, the BRI will entail intelligent diplomatic-strategies to deal with beneficial bilateral relationships, and carefully executed policies to expand efficiently. Furthermore, each developing economy alongside the BRI courses, in general and African states in particular, offering inimitable grouping of opportunities with challenges. In-fact many states countenance macro-economic challenges, because of flattering exchange rates, huge liability burdens, and untenable economy structures (Liu, 2017). As said and proclaimed by the BRI's outline, Africa would be among the major areas of initiative interests. However, many African states

occupy space among the dawdling development rates internationally, thus proposal will face challenges with regards to infrastructural developments including road net-workings, power houses, and rail-links that would center on long-lasting and steady management support through-out the African region of interest (GFMag, 2019).

Moreover, many states are also facing regular political instability and uncertainty that would significantly manipulate the panning parameters, policies, implementations and out-comes yields from the initiative. However, the politico-economic instability also causes drive for a cultural change confrontation (Nazeer & Masih, 2017). Moreover, the states hosting, in general and Africa in particular, mostly be short of home labors in general and by means of the professional proficiency desired in particular; therefore, more than 1 million professionally proficient labors from China have flown towards African states to occupy such vacant spaces, owing to shortage and un-skilled labors (French, 2014). Moreover, the political instability and diplomatic governances' issues, including corrupt and ineffective measures to implement restructuring and development expansions, offers another major challenge, causing socio-political and socio-economic pressures (in addition to, in few regions, the potential threats of insecurity issues), that carry scores of un-certainties to the initiative. Furthermore, currently, quite a few states within Africa are face the challenge the uprising of political governance changes, inter community rising, and clashes (Amutabi & Nasong'o, 2012).

Dwindling on such challenges determines the necessity of mutually benefitting collaboration among African states and China's trade associates equally. Therefore, necessitates improving bilateral communications with each other's, along-with attaining a wide-ranging comprehension, deliberate preparedness, executable planning parameters, managing essential safety measures, and moreover, consulting and obtaining recommendations from respective states to overcome all such challenges by both stakeholders. In particular, Sino-Africa business collaboration necessarily required to maintain equilibrium among challenges and the opportunities, handle the odds maturely, to escalate economic patterns and attain mutually benefitting development expansion collaborations. Moreover, the vivacity of African state's economy is being perceived optimism, as the African states are anticipated to develop into a vital region in the forthcoming sign of industrial development expansion and economic escalation within emerging world order (Lingui, Africa sees the way forward, 2019). Meanwhile, increasing infrastructural expansions and rising demands have too influenced the economic escalation and development expansion inevitability. Moreover, the 'Belt and Road' initiative has shaped constructive circumstances for African states to surmount such challenges confronting its development expansions and offer opportunities for escalating economic growth (FP, 2018).

Comprehendingly, the opportunities are marked by the BRI; yet, the challenges confronting the initiative must not be overlooked. Where, the leading challenge would be the status of uninterrupted conflicts and instability being practiced right through the Africa (Wani, 2018). Hence, demands politico-economical stable states along-with improved infrastructural developments all over the continent. Even-though Africa is in the process of moving through primary development, and facing principle issues like local politico-economic and ethno-religious clashes, poor developmental factors, inadequate governance capabilities and capacities and insufficient motives towards to escalate economic growth are evenly presenting hindrances before the execution of BRI implementations. Moreover, the trade situation within Africa in general and connecting states in particular necessitates added expansions, as owing to BRI's policy objective of economic escalation and development expansion collaboration, thus caused imperative requirements of constructive trade conditions, though the issues yet appear in African states since local regulations that can magnetize and secures overseas investments are not hitherto experienced (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, special guiding principles and diplomatic services and worldwide conducive public attitude augment the overall opportunity scenario. However, there are still unjustified whispers that Sino-African collaboration would lean to a debit catastrophe, since bulk capital and reliance, challenge to take a lodge involving Sino-Africa and challenge the mutual aid (Brautigam, 2015).

Optimizing, the futuristic Sino-African relationships, BRI would maintain 'win-win' policy resulting into escalating economic conditions and development expansion opportunities for African states right on or linked with the initiative. Moreover, coalescing initiative with UN 2030 program for Africa's sustained growth includes seventeen 'Sustainable Development' objectives and 169 targets (UN, 2018); along-with the AU 2063 plan focusing growth strategies for African states, China aspires to attain advanced, corresponding and general improvement within African states. Further, implementation of BRI opportunities in Africa will entail launching of China's eight main initiatives, which includes business sponsorships, connectedness capacity, trade promotions, green-environment expansion, capacity enhancement structures, health-care and sanitation, one-on-one people interactions, yet another the peace, prosperity and protection (GBTIMES, 2018). Though, emphasizing over supporting Africa's economic escalation and development expansions momentum would strengthen Sino-African

collaboration to an advanced stage by initiating significant theory as well as models, however, introduction of third-party involvement is envisaged for strengthening of overall collaboration within Africa and partnering states. Moreover, China to maintain an endeavor for further as well as improved collaboration within African states during the course of substantial growth activities to offer a commendable model along-with contribution towards structuring a society of common opportunities (Linggui, 2019).

## II. CONCLUSION

China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), emerged and promoted as an economic escalation strategy and development expansion opportunity program that will drive business and investment ventures among collaborating states with China, hence form constructive spill-out results clear of initial plan, to assist future investments. China's efforts and drive towards 'win-win' mutual opulence and 'south-south' collaboration, along-with BRI is emergent as vital initiative through an inventive strategy for sharing mutual responsibility and remunerations. Moreover, BRI, if implemented productively, may possibly encourage to the making of Asia-Euro or else even Asia-Euro-African business coalition that would confront US driven across-Atlantic or across-Pacific business coalition structures. Other than, BRI's projected model of China's particular character within the international economic-sphere, where rising economies are more critical; China remains as equally more critical towards the African states, even today. Though, the initiative proffers opportunities to expand Sino-African collaboration, yet be expanded more by the both sides leadership. Moreover, the existing status perceived, even after recent BRI conference, Beijing 2019, the opportunities marked for Africa seems less and particular to restricted zones, that needs to be escalated and expanded through-out the African regions for optimum economic expansions as well as developmental extensions to yield. Overall, the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) will be an encouraging approach in general and in particular towards Africa since African states are in much-needed investment for economic escalation as well as development expansion, and BRI affords the possible proposal to track these opportunities.

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