

MIM in International Relations Admissions Case Study: China's Belt and Road Initiative

Introduction:

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is a large-scale infrastructure and economic development project spearheaded by China.

Announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the initiative aims to revive ancient Silk Road trade routes and connect China to Europe, Asia, and Africa through a network of railways, highways, ports, and other infrastructure projects. The initiative consists of two main components: the Silk Road Economic Belt, which is the overland route connecting China to Europe via Central Asia, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which focuses on sea routes linking China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The OBOR initiative has generated both enthusiasm and controversy. On the positive side, it has the potential to support economic development, enhance regional connectivity, and promote trade between participating countries. It is seen as a way for China to exert its influence on a global scale, as it provides financial support for infrastructure projects in participating nations. However, the initiative has faced criticism for its debt implications, environmental concerns, lack of transparency, and accusations of fostering economic dependency on China. Some countries have expressed unease about the geopolitical implications of the initiative, viewing it as a tool for China to expand its influence and assert dominance in global affairs.

The OBOR initiative continues to face challenges. Some participating countries have experienced difficulties in repaying loans, leading to concerns about debt sustainability. Global geopolitical tensions and shifting international dynamics also pose challenges to the smooth implementation of the initiative. Additionally, the environmental impact of large-scale infrastructure projects and the need for better governance and transparency remain critical issues that need to be addressed for the long-term success of the One Belt One Road initiative.

Instructions:

In Kenya, OBOR has manifested in various projects. One example is the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), an initiative that aims to connect the port city of Mombasa to Nairobi and eventually extend further into East Africa. This railway project has not only enhanced transportation efficiency but has also contributed to economic development by facilitating the movement of goods and people.



The first section of the SGR was opened in 2017 and revolutionized commuter transport in Kenya. However, the project has reached an impasse due to a lack of funding. This has hindered Kenya's ability to pay back the debt incurred by the project.

Your task is to analyze the pros and cons of the OBOR initiative in Kenya and analyze the multifaceted challenges both Kenya and the OBOR initiative have faced. This will be accomplished by completing the following tasks:

1. Read the following articles:
 - a. [China's Belt and Road Initiative: Kenya and a railway to nowhere](#)
 - b. [China's BRI Brings Roads, Rails, and Debt to Africa](#)
 - c. [China-Driven Rail Development: Lessons from Kenya and Indonesia](#)
2. Watch the following video:
 - a. [China's \\$3.8 Billion Chinese-Built Railway Shows Why Belt and Road Is Being Reworked](#)
3. Write a 1-2 page paper which answers the following questions:
 - a. Based on the articles, video, and your research, what are the main reasons Kenya was initially interested in participating in China's OBOR Initiative?
 - b. Based on the articles, video, and your research, what are the main pros and cons of the SGR project?
 - c. What factors have contributed to the economic inefficiency of the SGR?
 - d. If you were a decision-maker in the Kenyan government, what are some recommendations you would make to revitalize the SGR project and make it economically viable?
 - e. In your opinion, is China creating "debt traps" in African countries through the OBOR Initiative, or do you think that the OBOR Initiative has been a net positive for the African countries that have participated?



Artificial Intelligence Disclaimer:

You are permitted to use whatever AI productivity tools you desire to assist with this case study. The only requirement is that they properly cite the use of AI in their paper. The guidelines to do so are as follows:

1. Include a disclaimer at the end of the citation section which reads: “This project was completed with the assistance of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence was used to help write the following sections/pages:”
2. Include what sections/pages of the paper were written with the help of AI in this disclaimer.

Please note that we are assessing your critical thinking skills while you complete this case study, not how well you can prompt A.I. While you are permitted to use it as an assistant, please make sure that the answers are coming from your analysis of the articles and video.