

Resolved: The European Union should, as a joint policy, discourage its member states from joining the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

DEFINITIONS:

"Joint policy" - If the resolution is affirmed, the EU will publicly declare its position. Member states will be discouraged from joining the BRI and encouraged to withdraw if they are already partaking in it.

STRUCTURE:

R1- PRO Constructive & CON Constructive

R2-3- Fluid attack/defense. No set structure here.

RULESET:

1. No new arguments made in final round
2. No trolling
3. You must follow the debate structure
4. No plagiarism
5. Must follow debate definitions.

RULESET PENALTY:

If the ruleset is broken, the penalty will be the loss of a conduct point. By accepting the debate, the contender accepts the RULESET and the RULESET PENALTY.

R1:

PRO:

Thx, Undefeatable.

"Resolved: The European Union should, as a joint policy, discourage its member states from joining the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative."

- **RECALL** that PRO is defining the "joint policy" as a publicly declared position in which member states will be discouraged from joining the BRI and encouraged to withdraw if they are already partaking in it. This means that the EU's position will not involve the forcible usurping of international sovereignty, but instead it entails general, unified alignment against China's most ambitious geopolitical endeavor yet.
- **RECALL** that CON must provide a constructive in their R1 per the debate description. PRO permits CON to use any excess space in their R1 to refute, but CON must present a constructive beforehand.

CONSTRUCTIVE:

My Sole Contention: All Roads Lead Back to China

The Belt and Road Initiative is the biggest and most ambitious geopolitical undertaking China has attempted to date: as currently [planned](#), the BRI will involve some “7,000 separate infrastructure or extractive industry projects scattered across 70-odd nations.” This is a massive project that the Chinese government touts as a gateway for economic development of all countries involved. However, it should be clear to any observer that China is not investing anywhere from [1 to 8 trillion](#) dollars in foreign countries purely out of the goodness of their hearts. What China is doing is not charity, it is a calculated strategy to reestablish the Chinese hegemony of old.

As of now, China is fairly restrained in what it can do thanks to its Achilles’ heel: maritime trade. China’s economy absolutely depends on maritime trade to function. Just the South China Sea route alone accounts for [40%](#) of China’s trade, with much more going to the US over the Pacific. Take a [look](#) at China’s main trading partners. Almost all of them are developed countries in the West, requiring China to travel by sea (air travel can’t move this many heavy goods with any decent cost-effectiveness) to trade with them. The land infrastructure throughout Asia is simply too underdeveloped to trade with these countries by land, or to even reach trading partners like Russia, the Middle East or India. This is a massive strategic problem for a China that is looking to challenge the [US Coalition](#), a group with unrivaled naval power who could easily strangle the Chinese economy should conflict arise. Making matters worse, China relies on trade to import raw materials like [oil and ore](#). If the Chinese coast were blockaded by the US & Friends, the Chinese war machine would come toppling down very quickly.

The BRI is Xi’s answer to this problem. Should the project succeed, China will no longer be dependent on maritime trade, and can receive the crucial raw materials it needs to fuel its war machine by road & railroad. Indeed, as reflected in this [map](#) of planned BRI projects, Xi Jinping’s regime has a clear goal in mind: to rebuild the old Silk Road trade routes, with the added bonus of coastal ports in which the [Chinese navy can reside](#). There was a saying back in the days of the Roman Empire: “all roads lead back to Rome.” China’s ultimate goal seems to be amending that phrase to: “all roads lead back to China.” If this project is completed, China will be free to flex its geopolitical muscles how it sees fit. There are several aspects of this to unpack here.

The first is the obvious: right now, China is pacified and less likely to take actions that may instigate a war. But without their Achilles’ heel, China will be less deterred and more likely to pursue a path of aggressive expansion and influence abroad. And, should war break out, China would be all the more difficult to subdue. They would be more economically resilient, able to endure a war of attrition that the West likely cannot simply because of internal politics. Moreover, the corridors would allow easier mobilization of troops into neighboring countries. In the end, it could mean the difference between a US victory or a Chinese one, which has greater implications that PRO will name later.

Secondly, an ongoing, successful BRI would enable China to sway member states to do their bidding diplomatically. This can be done in multiple ways. First, China can leverage the debt small nations accrue under the initiative to help sway their policies. While this isn’t a major concern for the wealthiest of EU states, China certainly can and will do this with smaller nations. In fact, Beijing will even use the *prospect* of loans for political gain. For instance, the [CSIS in 2019](#) states: “*In recent years, for example, the prospect of Chinese infrastructure loans has helped persuade the Philippines and Cambodia to reevaluate military or diplomatic ties with the United States.*” Second, as [Jeffrey Dundon](#) explains: “*Economically, as China continues to progress and take a larger share of*

international trade, more states will become dependent on China for their economic survival. This dependency translates to more sectors vulnerable to economic coercion, and thus, more options for China to signal its resolve and desires through. China's ability to influence the internal decision-making processes of other states will increase..."

He furthers: "as China's economic sway over states increases, its ability to shape state behavior without the actual use of economic coercion increases too. Just the threat of it may influence a state."

This has already been observed on multiple occasions even within the EU. [According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2018](#),

"BRI activities have provided China with a political foothold enabling it to influence EU policies. in June 2017, Greece blocked an EU statement at the UN Human Rights Council [criticizing its human rights record](#), {and} In March 2017, [Hungary refused to sign a joint letter](#) denouncing the reported torture of detained lawyers in China, breaking EU consensus. And in July 2016, Hungary and Greece sought to block any direct reference to China in an EU statement about ...[legal claims in the South China Sea](#)."

Third, a successful BRI creates empirical imbalances favoring China, fostering economic dominance. As the [Financial Times](#) writes in 2019, *"the reality can fall short of the promise. Most Chinese investment in Europe to date has not helped build new infrastructure, but rather snapped up existing assets. In terms of greenfield investment, much more capital flows from Europe to China than the other way round."*

Fourth, the BRI's Chinese-built tech infrastructure (likely) contains backdoors allowing intel gathering on behalf of the Chinese government, undermining the security of other nations. As [CNAS](#) writes in 2019: *"China engages in widespread espionage against sensitive governmental and commercial targets, and U.S. intelligence officials and a number of allied intelligence agencies have expressed sharp concerns that global 5G telecommunications networks that depend on Chinese equipment could pose significant cyber security risks."* This would be an arm of China's larger offensive cyberstrategy to undermine the West.

Ultimately, all of this amounts to a complete reorienting of the current world order. In other words, a successful BRI means reorienting the world from a US-centered order to a Chinese-centered order. The [CSIS](#) states in another article: *"If successfully implemented, the BRI could help re-orient a large part of the world economy toward China. Increasing the amount of trade, investment, and connectivity between China and countries throughout Eurasia will also render these countries more dependent on the Chinese economy, increasing China's economic leverage over them. This may empower China to more readily shape the rules and norms that govern the economic affairs of the region."*

This is bad for many reasons, the most important being that while the US-headed world order is an order grounded in the ideals of *liberalism*, a Chinese-headed world order would be an order grounded in the ideals of *authoritarianism*. The West's position to denounce human rights abuses will thus be weakened while government systems predicated on the abuse of power will be promoted.

Under the US-based system, the world has enjoyed the following benefits (& more):

1. the [highest rise in democracy](#) in human history.
2. a worldwide acceptance of upholding human rights.
3. [unprecedented](#) economic growth.
4. the longest [world peace](#) in history.

Quoting my previous debate with Undefeatable:

"Preferring democracy (over authoritarianism) is indisputable on moral and economic fronts.

- Democracy prevents oppression by giving all citizens a voice in the governing system, whereas autocracies allow the [free oppression](#) of groups of minorities.
- Democracies are [much less likely](#) to wage war because the citizens outweigh the power hungry elite.
- Democracies are inherently interested in lowering poverty and increasing quality of life because the will of the people always is oriented towards such goals.
- [Freedom House](#) notes: *"World Bank and Freedom House data show a strong correlation between democratic institutions and respect for human rights on the one hand, and better conditions for business on the other."* (Strangely enough then, the economic benefits the BRI may or may not reap for participating countries could be outweighed by a decline in democracy.)

On the other hand, one only needs to glance at China now to see what sort of ideals a Chinese-centered world order would promote. China is an authoritarian regime who [deprives](#) their people of human rights in the name of "benevolent rule."

In fact, China is doing this even now as a direct result of their BRI program. In the past, certain Uighur muslims have campaigned for independence in the Xinjiang region. Now with the rise of the BRI, China is using that movement as an excuse to brutally repress the Uighur population as a whole. [Stanford](#) states: the BRI creates a huge motivation for the government *"to "pacify" the Uyghur population of 10 million as Xinjiang now serves as the logistics base and nexus for all of the BRI's key component projects."* Worryingly, Stanford furthers:

"The signs of a rushed final settlement with the Uyghurs are unmistakable: the mushrooming "re-education" camps for up to one-million Uyghurs swiftly set up in less than a year; the mass arrests and detentions of a large number of Uyghurs accounting for over 20 percent of all arrests in China among an ethnic minority that has only 10 million people, or 1.5 percent of China's 1.4 billion population; the draconian hi-tech all-weather, round-the-clock total electronic surveillance dragnet covering the entire Xinjiang region; the massive deployment of fully-armed multiple divisions of the Chinese People's Armed Police in addition to the multiple corps of the regular PLA troops; the nearly complete cut-off of Xinjiang from international press and the Internet, and the severe restrictions on the Uyghurs' personal freedoms of travelling, lodging, schooling, religious worshipping, even grooming as Uyghur men are banned from keeping long beards and women from wearing Uyghur ethnic attire; the lucky few Muslims who have to pledge their allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party first will have to wear a Beijing-issued electronic monitoring device on their neck on their way to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage."

With all that is at stake, then, it is utterly crucial for the EU to stop teetering on the fence on this issue. While the BRI has been facing heightened criticism and declined funding for a few years, China continues to push the initiative while small EU nations join it. As [Politico](#) writes in 2019: *“As China attempts to spread its authoritarian values across the globe, and especially as the competition between China and the United States intensifies, Europe has conspicuously avoided siding with the United States over China. European leaders remain convinced they can uphold the values and norms they share with Washington while benefitting economically from greater engagement with China. This stance is short-sighted and dangerous—putting liberal democracy in peril... Europe’s reluctance to side with the United States puts liberal democracy in danger. The closer Europe gets to China, the less opposition China will face in its efforts to re-shape norms—on issues like data and privacy, Internet freedom, AI and governance. To uphold their shared values, both the United States and Europe need to collectively push back against China’s unfair trade and investment practices, its blatant human rights abuses, and the anti-democratic norms and practices it seeks to spread. **A Europe that refuses to pick sides is exactly what Beijing seeks to achieve.**”*

Indeed, the EU needs to steer away from Chinese influence and reaffirm the values they once stood for: the BRI should not be joined by any EU nation. With such a bold, public affirmation, the BRI would surely crumble (and with it the abuse of the Uighurs). Even if it didn’t, China’s aim of bringing Europe to submission would be sorely undermined.

In the end, should the need arise, the EU would be much better off simply investing into its own infrastructure. In fact, the EU is already implementing an infrastructure plan called the Juncker Plan that’s going very well, rendering much of CON’s economic impacts non-unique even if they did achieve them.

According to [CaixaBank Research](#), *“the implementation of the (Juncker Plan) is going well. In January 2017, 31.5 billion euros of funding had already been approved for 444 operations in 28 EU countries, with an expected total investment of 168.8 billion euros, around 33% of the overall target. Most of the projects are investments in infrastructure and innovation in the sectors of energy, industry and transport.”*

Instead of undermining domestic investment efforts and becoming complicit with China's schemes, EU states should be encouraged to withdraw from China’s sphere of manipulation and reassert themselves as bastions of democracy. I see no reason for the EU to support the BRI, and every reason to stand against it. I hope the VOTER feels the same.

Onto you, Undefeatable.

CON:

THX, MR. Chris.

CONSTRUCTIVE

EU = European Union

BRI = Belt and Road Initiative

1. International Standing

The BRI on the surface seems nothing more than selfish gain, but reality has shown different results. A Professor of history explains in NY Times that BRI enforces China's claim to be a friendly international leader. He asserts that China is beginning to uphold the ideals of prosperity and harmony: *"China is also now loudly speaking the language of international development; it has announced that it is stepping up to be a global good citizen concerned about the economic well-being of its neighbors"* [1]. As they are put under scrutiny by allies and enemies alike, continuing the BRI would enforce stricter requirements on the environment, economy, and other ideals. Because BRI is currently under economic troubles, EU joining would bring it back under stability, preventing it from falling and putting another leverage to control China under democratic principles. The geographical closeness of BRI and Europe also allows the EU to join easily with very little cost, which helps my point.

Next, China has only helped the countries, rather than economically harming them, demonstrating my claim of altruism. As Fortune.com notes, "Finance Secretary of the Philippines Carlos Dominguez publicly stated that debts owed to China account for only 0.65% of the country's total debt. And Dr. Karunasena, Sri Lanka's ambassador to Beijing, dismissed the idea of "debt-trap diplomacy." [2] Indeed, nearly no country has been stuck in a debt trap due to the BRI. They have benefited for the most part, with China upgrading the transportation of Kenya as an example.

2. BRI's Economic Influence

Though building the BRI itself may not seem to have big impacts, the results will be tremendous. The speed of trade will be increased by a significant amount. World Bank's blogs admit, "Aggregate results suggest that BRI infrastructure improvements could increase total trade among BRI economies by 4.1 percent. Countries such as Uzbekistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman and Maldives benefit the most after improvements in trading times, with an increase in their exports above 9 percent" [3]. Of course, these are big numbers. Even Iran alone is 105 million dollars in exports alone [4], not to mention that this amount is multiplied greatly by each additional country benefitted. If this wasn't enough, improving the roads and railways will also greatly reduce trade costs. As Voxeu explains, "implementing all BRI transport infrastructure projects will reduce aggregate trade costs for the BRI economies by 2.8% on average with the rest of the world, and by 3.5% with other BRI economies" [5]. The large trade reductions overall would be worth the cost of the BRI, exceeding it by billions in the long run.

And on the bigger picture, the global boost of a trade by 6.5% will lift 32 million people out of poverty. [10] This massive number must be outweighed.

3. Energy Infrastructure

The BRI is not only a trading project, it is also an energy-related project. Cornell from the Atlantic Council explains that at least 200 million jobs would be created from the project due to the surge of electricity grids [6]. Not only so, but the project will also be environmentally conservative, with "President Xi propos[ing] to establish "a global energy network" to meet global power demand "with clean and green sources." [6]. Adding on the EU will allow the operation to be controlled by multiple countries, enforcing new technology that would save our ecosystems and our people alike. This is especially important in the area where China is building the BRI. As they proceed towards Europe, they will also assist developing countries. As a result, "in poor rural environments, the expansion of power grids is also important for addressing energy access, with its **multiplier effects on development and the provision of information and communications technology (ICT) services** for economic connectivity" [6].

4. Internet Access

As of now, still, 41% of the world has no access to the internet, despite it being the pillar of information and connection -- perhaps even an essential right. [7] But BRI will fix this by allowing the building of 5G internet through rail lines. As wired explains, "each of the many trans-Eurasian rail lines that are part of this mammoth project will be accompanied by fiber-optic cables carrying impossibly huge amounts of data across thousands of miles without delay". The impact is significant: a vast proportion of countries would have access to this internet. Doctors and researchers alike could instantly access information and quickly upload files to work together and improve other areas of science. Not only so, the internet innately boosts the productivity and connectivity of people.

As Brookings Institute found, "a 10 percent increase in Internet penetration in a foreign country is associated with a 1.7 percent increase in exports and a 1.1 percent increase in imports" [8]. And the investment in the internet will empower the countries to export and import, even more, fueling a cycle of an economic boost. The logic behind this makes sense too. Trading must be conducted with processes and controls. The transaction will be expedited with the addition of the internet. AmericanExpress explains, "With 5G IoT and blockchain, a digital bill of lading could automatically transfer to the buyer when a ship reaches port, with the seller automatically receiving the purchase price" [9].

With the EU joining in on China with the boost of the internet, there is no doubt that the greatest invention of the last century will significantly change developing countries' progress.

5. Public Health

One researcher supports that the BRI will greatly help the public health sector, boosting the developing countries in terms of medical care. "China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers immense opportunities for **partnership and collective actions involving multiple countries to combat globalization-linked infectious and/or chronic diseases, emerging pandemics, and outbreaks of potential threats** to both laboratory information management systems and health information management. " [10] Indeed, the researchers note that connecting the trade routes inherently allows the transportation to be more easily managed, enhancing the prowess of my trade argument. The display of outreach against the Ebola outbreak proves that China's engagement that prevents diseases will save even more lives. So let's repeat: Not only do we save people from starving to

death, but they also are prevented from getting fatal diseases and being untreated in time. The EU joining in tandem could even better help bring vaccines and solutions to people in Europe, providing fierce resistance against COVID.

So. Remember that **tens to hundreds of thousands of lives are on the line** when you are reading Con's case.

Next, Pro might try saying that even given all of these data with supporting the countries' economies, this is not enough. But people want out of their poor economic situation. As another expert notes, "existing data set showed the positive responses of local Pakistani citizens toward CPEC projects. The findings of this study will help **government officials and the representatives of the CPEC understand the attitudes of the host community and their cooperation** for the development of CPEC projects." [\[11\]](#) This links back to the connection between international pressure and cooperation. If China is doing poorly then the other countries may prevent funds or progress any time. China is not the master here. It is only one of the guiding forces to boost forward the citizens' ideals. And in terms of democracy and freedom, what could be more important than what the people desire as a whole? Is it not beneficial to release citizens of their economic despair?

6. Logic

China's BRI will soon fall apart if we do not do anything. So China is encouraged to make the new Silk Road mutually beneficial. You can have your road and eat your environment cake, too. As another expert's plan lays out, the green energy plan will enforce the environment on the next level. [\[12\]](#) As of now, the European nations on their own have difficulty working together to establish such a framework like this. But the EU is more credible and more powerful. They may have China spread the ideals of environmental importance, which in the long run can make **all** infrastructure plans work out. If we allow China to just fall apart, we encourage **countries to be separated and do what they will**. Instead of supporting them to do the right thing at a small power sacrifice, we separate our potential cooperation and have a problem. **Just how will Europe enforce the joint policy discouragement? What will happen to current joined member states?**

We assume that China is incredibly selfish such that they will not listen. But we have not even tried to unite together against them. Who knows if the EU will further fall apart as China tries to draw in extra people. The current condition is morally ambiguous since China has no environmental standard, yet economically boosts the developing countries. More European countries will join and it is too hard to stop them. We must join as a whole to enforce the environment's importance before this drags on and brings more harm.

REBUTTAL

I will counter Pro's case with a framework hinging on **pressure, as well as the motto, "keep your enemies closer"**. Pro desires a join opposition. I desire a joint joining of the BRI. Whenever a party is in danger (China), they will react with fear. This fear may lead to danger if they panic, or it may lead to cooperation if they are happy to see a savior. Pro and I both agree that democracy is excellent and perhaps the best government possible. The issue relies on, is China more stupid and reckless (Pro's presentation), or is it clever and careful?

You see, my case's advantage is that it ***threatens* Pro's case**. What does this mean? Pro says to shoot them in the head. I say be their friend for now, but ***threaten*** to shoot them in the head. Pro can't tuck his tail and run, while I have Pro's entire benefits as a knife at China's throat. We say we are friendly, but we use Pro's case as an ultimatum if China disagrees. In other words, Pro must be able to prove that China will see through my bluff and not understand all of Pro's leverage against China. The more Pro stacks on his side, the more issues he has with unique benefit with **implementing the threat**, compared to the **idea of a threat**. **Please re-read my section "Logic" if you need more support.**

Pro first presents the idea that China's power increase with trade within BRI could lead to a path of aggression. Let us think for a moment how absurd this is. One author in 2020 analyzes that the People's Liberation is the worst-trained and worst-equipped land army ever. [\[13\]](#) It could never stand up to American and Russia vehicles. The rapid deployment forces are tiny, and the only reason US hasn't crushed them first is because their defense-focused strategy. It would be impractical for either side to attack each other. Not to mention Pro never provided any reason to go to war at all. Resources? Come on, you'd lose both people ***and*** resources trying to grab the resources. Power? You're never gonna be able to fly all the way to America with your fighter jets before the entirety of UN would stop you. Unless Pro is able to prove a World War III is impending, I think it's safe to wave away this possibility.

Secondly, Pro asserts that China will leverage the debt small nations, which can be used for politic gain. But it's ambiguous what these specific "resolves and desires" are actually. There are ***threats*** here, but what do ***these*** threats do? Give me approximate numbers. Lives lost? Money down the drain? I didn't think so. There's nothing clear in the open here, other than "authoritarian government". Let us see how he gives examples. He says that BRI has caused Greece to block the EU statement, Hungary to refuse to sign the joint letter, and even blocking the direct reference.

But is it really so bad? Pro's own source says that Greece thought the criticism was unproductive. Indeed, the "soft power" currently seems to have no actual effect. Granted, I'm all for spreading the idea that human rights matter. But if China officials are stupid or ignorant, I would have to agree that spending extra time merely warning them may be a waste. Besides, the bigger picture regarding Uighur and Muslims is far more complex. 22 governments criticized China, while 50 countries supported China. US, Pro's praised country, was not on either list. [\[15\]](#) The difficulty to make any "correct decision" seems obvious here, and the situation is ambiguous. Pro has an overarching ideas about authoritarian vs democracy in general, but fails to link it to the ideas listed here. Pro brings in some "likely backdoor information", but CNAS's article is silent on the buildings provided in the BRI structure. If anything, EU hired employees can more closely watch the Chinese actions, since they can use the excuse that they are administrative personnel. How are you going to spy on them if you are discouraging member states from joining them?

Finally, the Juncker plan is perhaps Pro's most solid-grounded point, but even this idea has some flaws. One professor of Finance [\[16\]](#) analyzes that it is not enough, especially compared to my BRI numbers provided above. He states there is "no additional public money on the table" and that there is a problem of governance due to a problem in politics. He discusses that there is also a problem with time, thus requiring focusing on core countries that need fixing. Here I argue that EU's

cooperation in BRI could lead to China helping EU back within the Juncker Plan. If there is truly a sense of urgency, surely more assistance is better than lesser. Though it seems a solid argument, unless Pro knocks down that China will not mutually help in Economic situations regarding allied countries, my case will win out, and the Juncker Plan is snuffed out, because it joins in tandem with the BRI case. Like I said, "keep your enemies closer". Pro still has nothing new to offer on the table here.

Conclusion:

- China is about to lose its BRI plan without the EU's help, so the EU may add additional pressure and enforce the international promises made.
- BRI will help gain billions in revenue worldwide and prevent poverty
- BRI will encourage energy in developing areas and also establish a green energy standard
- BRI will bring internet to hundreds of thousands of developing areas, furthering their boost out of poverty
- Pro's case is incredibly vague and provides no true impacts compared to my case