



China's Belt and Road Initiative

Infrastructure and influence



Dossier



China's Belt and Road Initiative is reshaping trade routes, infrastructure and influence across the globe. Behind the ports and pipelines lies a strategic play for long-term dominance as Beijing creates new Silk Roads for the 21st century and beyond.

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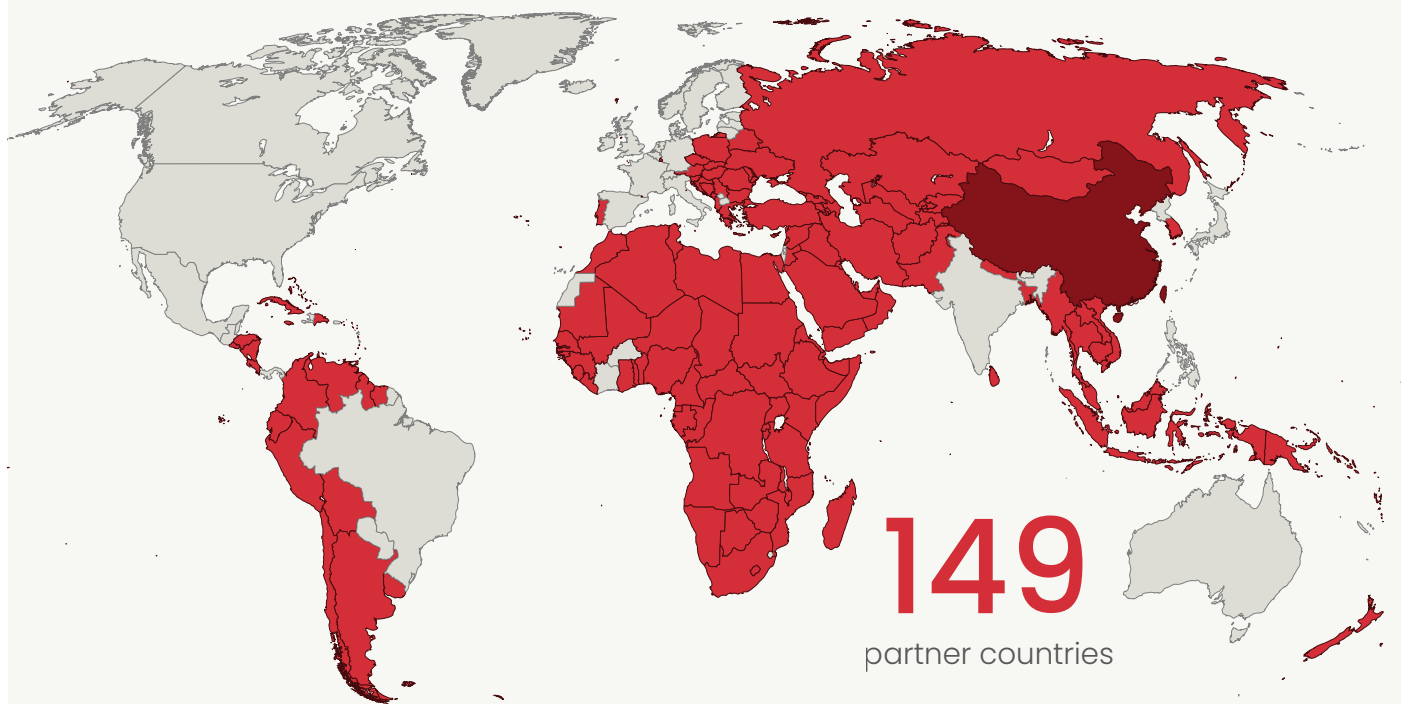


Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) stands as the defining geopolitical and geoeconomic project of 21st-century China, and Beijing's most important political and economic instrument. Designed to expand China's connectivity with Asia, Europe and Africa through vast infrastructure development, it has come to encompass ports, highways, railways, energy pipelines and digital corridors. More than 150 countries have signed cooperation documents under the BRI framework – a testament to its sweeping ambition.

Yet the initiative is also controversial. Critics point to growing debt burdens, limited job creation, inflationary pressures and the importation of Chinese labor at the expense of local workforces. Among recipients, there is a growing sense of unease. Some countries have walked back their involvement, while others – most notably India – have refused to participate altogether. The BRI has now entered a quieter phase, but its legacy and geopolitical impact will endure.

The Belt and Road Initiative



6.1 billion

Combined population of all countries involved in BRI



\$41 trillion

Combined GDP of all countries involved in BRI

\$2.3 trillion

Trade between China and BRI countries in 2021



\$1.3 trillion

Total value of investments and construction projects in BRI countries

Source: China Power





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