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## Globalization 5.0 Led by China: Powered by Positive Frames for BRI

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### 1 Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt One Road Initiative (一带一路), was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, while visiting Kazakhstan and Indonesia. By linking over 100 countries along a land-based Silk Road Economic Belt (BRI by land), an oceangoing twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road (BRI by sea), and an air-based connection with the Americas (BRI by air), the BRI creates a powerful new wave of globalization—Globalization 5.0. The Chinese government and the state-run media promote BRI to the global communities in the framework of “win-win,” in contrast to the traditional Western framework of “winner takes all.” President Xi views BRI as a massive infrastructure project to revive the Ancient Silk Road, to share the Chinese Dream, and to replicate Chinese economic miracles in the rest of the world.

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At the inaugural Belt and Road Forum on May 14, 2017, in Beijing with an audience of 1500, including many heads of state, President Xi said that in pursuing BRI, “we will not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering. What we hope to achieve is a new model of win-win cooperation.” Xi promised free trade, openness, and shared prosperity (Cai 2017). He projected China as a willing driver of global trade and investment, a contrast to Washington’s “America First” agenda, and the growing fractures in the European Union amid Brexit. Among voices of protectionism and isolationism in the West, China has emerged as a de facto new leader of globalization. President Xi affirmed China’s commitment to preserving and advancing economic globalization. At the January 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, President Xi said China had been a beneficiary and a contributor to globalization, which he praised as: “Economic globalization has powered global growth and facilitated movement of goods and capital, advances in science, technology and civilization, and interactions among peoples.” However, President Xi stressed that globalization was a “double-edged sword,” and that we needed to be tolerant of differences while maintaining economic openness (*South China Morning Post*, 2017).

This chapter claims that BRI pushes forward the new wave of Globalization 5.0, led by China and supported by a well-established ecosystem cultivated by China over the years, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the South–South Dialogue, the New Development Bank, and the Confucius Institutes. Findings from this research show that the Chinese government and state-run media intentionally frame BRI with such positive concepts as “win-win”, “peace”, “development”, “collaboration”, “partnership”, and “common destiny.”

## 2 Research Method

This research adopts a multi-method approach of textual analyses, participant observation, and applying a framing analysis to Chinese government and state media rhetoric. First, the author synthesized over 3000 Chinese and English web pages, originating from the USA, China, Africa,

and Europe. Second, from 2014 to 2017, the author practiced systematic observation of BRI development, including organizing global conferences and participating in social media discussions with global business leaders and decision makers (WeChat, Twitter, Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn groups, etc.). The author is the Chair of a large Asian business conference in the USA, in which many top Chinese companies participate, such as Huawei, ZTE, Yingli, GD Copper, and China Telecom. Third, the author applies framing analysis to the rhetoric of the Chinese government and the English versions of three state-owned media websites: Xinhua News Agency, *China Daily*, and *People's Daily*.

## 2.1 Framing Analysis

Framing theory and the methodology of framing analysis suggest that how something is presented, or framed, influences the choices readers/audience make. The elements of a communication frame include *message*, *audience*, *messenger*, *medium*, *images*, *context*, and *moral*. The conception of framing analysis can be found in cognitive psychology (Bateson 1972), sociology (Goffman 1974), linguistics and discourse analysis (Tannen 1993), organizational sciences (Weick 1979), communication and media studies (Pan and Kosicki 1993).

Frames are chosen with an audience in mind (Chong 1996). Chong and Druckman (2007) articulate a method for identifying frames in communication, and how such frames affect public opinion. The major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and can be construed as having implications for multiple values. A more precise definition of framing starts with a conventional expectancy value model of an individual's attitude (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fairhurst and Sarr 1996; Nelson et al. 1997). An attitude toward an object is the weighted sum of a series of evaluative beliefs about that object. Specifically,  $Attitude = \sum vi \times wi$ , where  $vi$  is the evaluation of the object on attribute  $i$ , and  $wi$  is the salience weight associated with that attribute. A frame in communication organizes everyday reality (Tuchman 1980) by providing "meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143). After all, the essence of a communication is

its meaning, not the words. When Chinese government and state-run media adopt proper frames for BRI, it helps international communities to understand and accept BRI projects.

### 3 Five Waves of Globalization Synthesized

Globalization (全球化) is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of peoples, worldviews, products, ideas, and cultures. Advances in infrastructure and technologies intensify globalization, and generate the further interdependence of peoples, economies, and nations. Although many scholars place the origin of globalization in modern times, others trace its history to long before the European Age of Discovery and modern times. By applying framing analysis to the leadership and causes of globalization in chronological order, the following five waves of globalization are synthesized.

#### 3.1 Globalization 1.0: Ancient Silk Road (Third Century BC—1400s)

Scholars trace the origin of the ancient Silk Road to the third century BC. Chinese Han Dynasty Official Zhang Qian (164BC—114BC) and his followers traveled to Central Asia, and brought knowledge, culture, and seeds back to China. Venetian merchant Marco Polo (1254–1324) traveled from Venice, Italy, to Beijing, the capital of the Yuan Dynasty. His travel stories were recorded in *Book of the Marvels of the World*, also known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, a book that described the wealth, size, and capital of China, and other cities and countries in Central and South Asia (Wikipedia Website 2017). Although Marco Polo was not the first European to reach China, his detailed chronicle inspired Christopher Columbus, and many other travelers, to search for the wealth of China and India. Zheng He (1371–1433), a Ming Dynasty Chinese mariner, explorer, and diplomat, commanded seven voyages to Southeast, South, and West Asia, and East Africa along the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. These were examples of the first wave of globalization. The leadership of this wave of globalization was *laissez-faire*, driven by trade,

curiosity, and restricted by human knowledge of world geography. The framework of this period was: trade, friendship, and win-win.

### **3.2 Globalization 2.0: European-Led Colonial Expansion (1450–1950)**

Stuchtey (2011) synthesized that for 500 years from 1450 to 1950 (from the Early Modern Period to the end of World War II), the colonial or imperial encirclement of the world was an integral component of European history. It was not only global colonial powers—such as Spain and the United Kingdom—but also “latecomers”—such as France, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy—who participated in the historical process of colonial expansion with which Europe decisively shaped world history. In their efforts to find a direct trade route to Asia, known from the Silk Road, European nations established colonies and semi-colonies in the Americas, Africa, India, the East Indies, West Indies, and even in coastal China. Mercantilists maintained that the colonies could serve as a source of wealth, while personal motives by rulers, statesmen, explorers, and missionaries supported the imperial belief in “Glory, God, and Gold.” In the late nineteenth century, colonialism became less popular, due to the Napoleonic Wars, the independence of the USA, the struggle for nationalism and democracy in colonies, and the cost of industrialization. The guiding frame of the colonial, or imperial, era was the domination by one country or people (Europeans or Whites) over another group of people (Africans, Asians, Native Americans, or non-Whites). In other words, the frameworks of power imbalance, winner versus loser, or winner takes all dominated the theme of this wave of globalization.

### **3.3 Globalization 3.0: US-Led Modern Economic Growth (1945–1990s)**

Large-scale globalization began in the late nineteenth century, paralleling the rise of the United States of America as a superpower, and the formation of modern states. When World War II ended in 1945, many nation states gained independence, and their educational systems and infrastructure improved. With the advancement of technologies and innovation,

the connectivity of the world's economies and cultures grew exponentially. In 2000, the International Monetary Fund identified four basic aspects of globalization in this era: trade and transactions; capital and investments; human migration; and dissemination of knowledge (IMF Website 2017). This wave of globalization created modern nation states, and organizations of global interaction, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank.

### **3.4 Globalization 4.0: Internet-Based Global Integration (1990s–2013)**

Thomas Friedman (2000) gave a succinct summary on globalization in the era of the Internet in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. In the chapter “Buy Taiwan, Hold Italy, Sell France,” Friedman writes that “plugging” your country into globalization is the equivalent to taking your company public. Friedman claims that the simple definition of globalization is the interweaving of markets, technology, information systems, and telecommunications systems in a way that is shrinking the world, which enables us to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before. Globalization in this era is characterized by “integration,” and activated by the “Internet.” The frame of this Internet-based globalization is “technology,” “digital divide,” and “economic dualism”. Most people were “dragged” into Globalization 4.0, but their benefits from globalism were restricted by their access to the Internet and opportunities. In *The World is Flat*, Friedman (2005) highlighted globalization's opportunities for individual empowerment and poverty reduction, as well as the drawbacks in environmental, social, and political imbalances. Environmental challenges such as global warming, water and air pollution, and the depletion of ocean resources are the unfortunate outcomes of this era of globalization.

### **3.5 Globalization 5.0: China-Led Global Collaboration (2013–present)**

Today, after four waves of globalization, the world is at a crossroads. While advancements in transportation and communication technologies

continues to drive the interconnectedness and interdependence of economies, peoples, and nations, such trends also create unprecedented economic dualism and challenges for global governance. Since 2013 the Chinese government and media claim that BRI seeks a common prosperity for all mankind by building infrastructure and reducing the rich–poor gap. The Chinese government and media frame BRI as a revitalization of Globalization 1.0, the ancient Silk Road that connected China with Central Asia, Europe, and Africa. While telling nostalgic stories about the ancient Silk Road, the Chinese government and media frame BRI as a vehicle to replicate the Chinese economic miracle by building infrastructure for third world countries and beyond in Globalization 5.0.

## 4 BRI Drives Globalization 5.0

Since its inauguration in 2013, over 100 countries and international organizations have signed up to the BRI, covering 63% of the world's population, three-quarters of global energy resources, and 40% of world GDP. HSBC states that BRI will generate roughly 300 billion to 500 billion yuan in railway investment, financing over 15,000 kilometers of high-speed rail (Sito 2017). Bert Hofman, the World Bank's chief in Beijing, adds that less-developed countries along the new Silk Road stand to be among the big winners. The top recipients of investment dollars from China are expected to be India, Russia, Indonesia, Iran, and Egypt (*South China Morning Post* 2017). Credit Suisse estimates that China could invest between US\$52 billion and US\$79 billion in 13 African countries. "Africa is rich in resources, and an important destination for Chinese investment over the past decade" (Sito 2017). The Asian Development Bank published a report in 2010, which said that the region requires US\$8 trillion to be invested from 2010 to 2020 in infrastructure. "The unbalanced economic development and different political systems of countries along the BRI is the main challenge," says Xu Fengxian, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Cai 2017). Compounding matters, these once freely navigable trade routes, are now slashed by festering conflicts—most notably in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Ukraine, and most of the Middle East. China's own westernmost region of Xinjiang is also prone to outbreaks of radical Islamic terrorism.

BRI matters for the new wave of globalization for three major reasons. First, the projects are vast. China says it will invest a cumulative US\$4 trillion in BRI countries. BRI is dramatically larger than the post-World War II Marshall Plan, which amounts to US\$130 billion in current dollars, initiated by US President Harry Truman (Cai 2017). Although Chinese officials reject the idea of comparing BRI to the Marshall Plan, it may provide people with the perspective that China can use such massive infrastructure projects to win geopolitical influence, and thus make China the center of the new globalization. Second, BRI underscores a benign global environment for China. President Xi has made BRI the most important feature of his foreign policy. His chief foreign adviser, Yang Jiechi, has tied BRI to China's aim of becoming a "moderately well-off society" by 2020. President Xi endorsed his predecessors' view that China faces a "period of strategic opportunity" up to 2020, meaning that China can take advantage of a mostly benign global environment to strengthen its global power without causing conflict (Campbell 2016). Third, the BRI positions China at the center of trading blocs and challenges the traditional Western view of world trade in which there are two main trading blocs—the trans-Atlantic bloc and the trans-Pacific bloc, with Europe in the first, Asia in the second, and the USA the focal point of both blocs. Two regional trade deals proposed during the Obama Era, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, embody this approach. But the BRI treats Asia and Europe as a single space, and China, not the United States, is its focal point. As a result, the Chinese government's support for BRI projects, China's foreign direct investment (FDI), is increasingly spreading along the Silk Road. In 2015, by official reckoning, Chinese FDI in BRI countries doubled (Sito 2017). BRI contracts are now more likely to involve Chinese firms managing the infrastructure they build, rather than (as in the past) building them and simply handing them over.

## 5 Frames Used to Promote BRI

Convincing other countries of the benefits of BRI can be difficult. At a time when China's growth is responsible for much of the world's economic dynamism, the Western media urge caution in the face of



expanding Chinese influence, Chinese dominance, and even a “China Threat.” These reports have criticized BRI as examples of neo-colonialism initiatives. Beijing’s overlapping disputes in the South China Seas may also galvanize suspicions that BRI is a Trojan horse for extending its geopolitical clout and dumping excess production capacity abroad. As such, peacefully resolving these territorial quarrels and building political capital will take on a new impetus for China. Despite challenges, China moves forward with BRI by presenting it in positive frames. This research synthesizes the following five major frames.

## 5.1 Frame 1: Development

Some countries involved in previous globalization waves have been left forgotten and far behind. Their desire for industrialization is a perfect fit with China’s BRI for them to benefit from developing their infrastructure. Beijing says it expects the economic contact along the Silk Roads to boost productivity in each country. “In Africa, sometimes our policy makers think the Chinese are Santa Claus,” says Ali Khan Satchu, a financial analyst in Nairobi. “No, they’re there to make a return on their investment” (Sito 2017). African nations and, above all, their leaders, have come to see the relationship with China in a positive light, as an engine for economic growth. Development has been a popular bandwagon for third world countries to jump on. Many countries want to copy China’s success in lifting millions out of poverty through development and industrialization and are eager to learn from China. The plan becomes even more attractive when there is funding available from China for large-scale infrastructure projects, from high-speed rail in Thailand, to a modern train system in Kenya, to an airport in Pakistan.

## 5.2 Frame 2: Mutual Respect and Mutual Trust

Through economic exchanges China hopes to gain closer cultural and political ties with each of the countries along the Silk Road—resulting in a new model of mutual respect and mutual trust. People in many African nations believe such respect for China includes elements of aspiring toward the developmental state. Although China is still a developing

nation, a strong (in fact, authoritarian) state has built an economy that guarantees the lives of its citizens, winning recognition for its success, and perhaps this has given people hope. Nigerians believe that the Chinese respect the sovereignty of the Nigerian nation, unlike the West, whom they feel is trying to infringe on the country's autonomy. Therefore, Nigeria welcomes Chinese investments and consequently, in Lagos there are more than 17,000 legal Chinese residents. Even when there were rumors that China sought to dominate the African continent, it was labeled as Western propaganda by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria. Mutual respect and mutual trust, not power domination, attract more interest among countries to participate in the BRI.

### **5.3 Frame 3: Seeking the Power of Narrative in the Ancient Silk Road Story**

Chinese President Xi often looks back on the Ancient Silk Road as a golden age, a time of *Pax Sinica*, when Chinese luxuries were coveted across the globe, while the Silk Road served as a conduit for diplomacy and economic expansion (Curren and Arnold 2017). Mr. Xi often speaks of such an ancient story of trade, merchants, travelers, camels, and exchanges of ancient peoples. The strategy tapping into the narrative power of story is very effective, as people of all cultures can easily relate to history and storytelling. “[It] would not form a small group to undermine stability but would instead create a harmonious family,” Xi said ancient travelers along the routes brought prosperity and civilization because “they didn’t use warhorses or long spears but camel teams and goodwill. They didn’t rely on gunboats but cargo ships and friendship” (Cai 2017).

### **5.4 Frame 4: Actions Speak Louder than Words**

Chinese companies participating in BRI move forward quickly, encouraged by policy and financial incentives from the Chinese government. In April 2017, Chinese shipping company COSCO took a 67% stake in Greece’s second-largest port, Piraeus, from which Chinese firms are

building a high-speed rail network, linking the city to Hungary and Germany. In July 2017 work started on the third stage of a Chinese-designed nuclear reactor in Pakistan. In the first five months of 2017, more than half of China's overseas contracts were signed with nations along the Silk Road. China wants to use the completion of real projects to show the world that they are there to assist with local economics, not to hinder. Actions speak louder than words.

## 5.5 Frame 5: China is a Partner, Not a Colonialist

The image of Chinese people in third-world nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is mostly positive, as compared to that of White people. For example, as a result of the Western colonization of Nigeria and the concerns about Western imperialism, Nigerian officials view partnership with the Chinese as more beneficial than with the West. Anyu and Ifedi (2008) posit that African nations still bear memories of the exploitation of its natural and human resources by Western powers. Hence, countries such as China are viewed as better alternatives for the establishment of trade relations (Brookes and Shin 2006). Neuliep (2015) states that the host country's perception of foreign investors affects its acceptance of the business involved. China was reported as being more influential in Nigeria than the USA, with China having US\$200 billion in trade per year versus US\$85 billion from the USA (Penney 2014). In Kenya, respect and confidence in China is also solid (Kitaba 2017). On May 26, 2017, Kenyan and Chinese workers completed the biggest infrastructure project in Kenya—a US\$3.8 billion, 472 kilometer (293 mile) railway that runs from the port city of Mombasa to the capital Nairobi, part of a larger Chinese-built rail network linking several countries. The new railroad is expected to handle 50% of freight from Mombasa to the border with Uganda, compared to just 4% taken by the old British colonial-built railway. The company behind the Kenyan railway project, Chinese state-backed China Road and Bridge Corporation, employed 25,000 Kenyan workers. In the ten-year period between 2004 and 2014, African countries borrowed nearly US\$10 billion for railway projects from China. At the railroad's first stop out of

Nairobi, locals like security guard Joseph have little criticism for the project. “I think it’s a great idea,” he said. “Things are going to change around here ... These people are going to start businesses, the community will get developed ... My kids may even be employed here”. Developing nations see China as a true partner for development, instead of a colonial power.

The framing analysis shows that win-win is the ultimate frame used by the Chinese government and media to promote the BRI. No longer winner takes all, no longer zero sum game, the new idea in town is win-win and mutual benefit. Throughout the world people want to be winners, not losers. The fact that more and more countries and international organizations are joining in the BRI shows that the new frame of win-win really works.

## 6 Conclusions

The BRI, an ambitious massive infrastructure and geopolitical project, has created a new wave of globalization. BRI is implemented on a large scale quickly because it has been Chinese President Xi’s priority. After all, as the CEO of China, he has the authority to complete the tasks of BRI effectively. The Chinese government and state-run media promote the BRI to global communities in the framework of win-win, in contrast with a traditional Western framework of winner takes all, in other words, the other parties involved are guaranteed to be losers. President Xi presents the BRI as a massive infrastructure project to revive the ancient Silk Road, to share the Chinese Dream, and to expand Chinese economic miracles to the rest of the world.

In 2014, China emerged as the world’s second-largest economy (Goh 2014). By 2020 Chinese global outward direct investment will amount to more than US\$1 trillion. Going Global is not only a Chinese government directed policy, but also a practical business decision by Chinese companies facing intense competition at home and abroad. The BRI provides a unique bandwagon for Chinese companies to go global. The Chinese government and state-owned media adopt positive frames to persuade countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas

to partner in massive scale, multicountry, BRI infrastructure construction projects. As stated in this chapter, frames in communication matter, because they affect the attitudes and behaviors of their audiences (Chong and Druckman 2007). Consequently, with a powerful framing effect, citizens in BRI countries are influenced to adopt such frames, and thus generate support from international communities for the BRI. This chapter synthesized the five positive frames used by the Chinese government and state media to influence the attitudes and decisions of other countries participating in the BRI.

The massive BRI projects create a new wave of globalization, one that is led by China: Globalization 5.0. This new wave of globalization is less imperialistic and more multilateral, less ideology driven and more pragmatic than those that came before. The Brexit and America First policies in the West make international communities think that somehow the UK and the USA are becoming more inward-thinking isolationists and protectionists, while the win-win approach makes China stand out as a new leader of globalization.

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