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Belt and Road Initiative: Understanding China's hallmark foreign policy through the Lens of Kenya and Tanzania

By

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Abstract: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), spearheaded by China, represents a transformative global infrastructure and economic development strategy. This thesis investigates the intricate ramifications of the BRI in East Africa, with a focus on Kenya's and Tanzania's strategic engagements. Adopting a qualitative exploratory approach grounded in secondary data sources, the study examines how these nations' involvement with the BRI aligns with their respective national development agendas and geopolitical priorities. By integrating modernization and dependency theoretical frameworks, the research endeavors to provide a nuanced perspective. The comprehensive analysis elucidates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with BRI projects, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this global initiative. While acknowledging limitations pertaining to data scope, source quality, and potential interpretative biases, the study lays the foundation for future research avenues and underscores the necessity for a profound comprehension of the BRI's localized impacts within the overarching context of global economic governance.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, East Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, modernization theory, dependency theory, infrastructure development, economic impacts, global economic governance.

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1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a hallmark of China's foreign policy and economic strategy, aiming to enhance global trade and stimulate economic development across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Conceived as a monumental political, financial, and cultural endeavor, the BRI seeks to secure commodity channels, improve economic integration, and expand China's influence across over 60 participating countries (Gong & Ding, 2015; Chen, 2018). With an estimated investment of $1 trillion, the BRI includes numerous infrastructure projects such as highways, railways, and ports, which are projected to create employment opportunities, improve market access, and foster technological advancement, thereby spurring economic growth and connectivity in partner countries (Huang, 2016).

As China's most ambitious international economic plan to date, the BRI aspires to reshape economic landscapes across Asia, Europe, and Africa, engaging 64% of the world's population and contributing to 30% of global GDP (Zhu & Hu, 2023; Gong & Ding, 2015; Chen, 2016). It purports to foster a win-win scenario, allegedly the *first non-zero-sum game* of mutual benefit and cooperation (Hu, 2018). However, opinions differ on this claim, with some interpreting the BRI as a strategic move by China to potentially supplant the American-led international economic framework by exporting the "China model," while others see opportunities for collaboration between the Chinese initiative and the existing global system (Huang, 2016). Therefore, the initiative's potential to reshape the global economic landscape has been praised and criticized (Frankopan, 2020). Western-aligned perspectives, such as those from the China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) at Johns Hopkins University, often argue that the BRI is primarily a self-interested endeavor aimed at restoring China's historical influence rather than an altruistic development project, thus denying the win-winism that the BRI champions as its banner (Chang, 2019). The analysis of the previous research underscores a dual narrative within the discourse on the BRI in Africa. While Chinese literature often underscores the benefits of the BRI and advocates for greater exploitation of these opportunities, Western analysis frequently points out risks associated with these projects, including sustainability issues and potential debt burdens (Y. Chen, 2018). This divergence highlights the necessity for a deeper exploration of the BRI's ramifications, advocating for an analysis that draws from diverse sources to minimize biases and enhance the comprehension of this complex initiative.

Moreover, despite the BRI's growing role in strengthening trade, infrastructure, and investment links between China and other countries, there is limited literature on specific countries' experiences with the initiative (Komakech & Ombati, 2023). This assertion holds particular relevance within the sub-Saharan African context.

While Africa was not originally a primary focus of the BRI, it has become increasingly significant, mainly through the Maritime Silk Road (Chen, 2018). This route aims to improve maritime and transportation infrastructure from China's eastern coast to South and Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Mediterranean, involving large-scale infrastructure projects such as cross-border railway networks and establishing special economic zones and industrial estates (Chen, 2018). Y. Chen (2018) highlights a strategic pivot in China's engagement with Africa, shifting from primarily resource-driven interests to infrastructure-centric initiatives to enhance infrastructural, industrial cooperation, and connectivity.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) revitalizes the historical concept of the ancient Silk Road, which served as a pivotal conduit for trade and cultural exchange across Asia, Africa, and Europe (Zhao, 2016; Huang, 2016; Frankopan, 2020). Following its proclamation by Xi Jinping in September 2013 in Astana, Chinese President himself has repeatedly used the imagery of the millennia-old historical roots of the Silk Road, evoking its historical significance to justify its contemporary re-implementation in the eyes of the international community (Frankopan, 2020). The Maritime Silk Road, an extension of the traditional Silk Road, connected China with various regions, including the eastern coast of Africa, facilitating the exchange of goods such as silk, porcelain, and spices, as well as the movement of people, ideas, and cultures (Zhao, 2016). Ancient ports in present-day Tanzania and Kenya played a significant role in these interactions, reflecting a long-standing relationship marked by trade, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic interactions between China and East Africa that have evolved over centuries (Zhao, 2016). Post-independence, China established stronger bilateral ties with Tanzania and Kenya, focusing on economic cooperation and infrastructural development, exemplified by the construction of the TAZARA Railway, connecting Tanzania and Zambia, a significant project funded and built by China in the 1970s (Jian & Xiaoqin, 2015). In recent years, the BRI has revitalized these historical Silk Road connections, with Kenya and Tanzania being critical partners in this initiative, receiving significant investments in infrastructure projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya and the contended Bagamoyo Port project (Githaiga & Bing, 2019).

Given their historical and strategic ties with China and their significant yet distinct engagements with the BRI, Tanzania, and Kenya have been selected for this study. While both countries play evolving roles in the BRI, they have demonstrated varying responses to Chinese investments, influenced by unique political, economic, and social factors. Understanding these varied responses will shed light on the broader implications of Chinese BRI and provide insights into how similar initiatives might be perceived or implemented in other countries of Africa and beyond.

Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap by investigating the BRI's investments in Tanzania and Kenya. It examines how these align or diverge from each country's development strategies and political agendas. The methodology of comparative case studies has been selected for its effectiveness in identifying patterns and variations across diverse contexts. In conjunction with the case studies, a SWOT analysis will be implemented for each country to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative analysis conducted as a desk review, synthesizing existing literature and secondary data sources. The following research question guides it: *How do Tanzania and Kenya's strategic approaches and responses to Belt and Road investments reflect their national development agendas and political priorities?*

By addressing this question, the thesis aims to provide a sophisticated exploration and understanding of how major international infrastructure initiatives like the BRI impact participating countries differently. It seeks to offer a comprehensive analysis that highlights outcomes and contextualizes variances in terms of broader regional and global dynamics.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter Two offers an overview of Kenya and Tanzania, along with a brief summary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Chapter Three reviews the existing literature relevant to the study. Chapter Four outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework employed in this exploratory research. Chapter Five provides a detailed description of the data and research design utilized. Chapter Six presents the results and discussion of the findings. Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the thesis and highlights key insights.

2. Context

The next chapter presents a general background to Tanzania and Kenya in the form of comprehensive country profiles, as these supply the context in which the analysis in this thesis shall be carried out. They provide crucial information regarding each country's unique socioeconomic conditions, challenges, and development stages. This section also includes an insight into the Belt and Road Initiative and its crux, thereby enriching the reader's understanding of the strategic framework that shapes these investments and assisting in grasping the broader implications of the analysis presented in this thesis.

Figure 1: Geographic Locations of Kenya and Tanzania in Africa

2.1 Tanzania

Situated in East Africa, Tanzania's eastern border along the Indian Ocean positions it as a gateway to multiple African nations, such as Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as illustrated in Figure 1.

2.1.1 Economic Profile

In recent years, Tanzania's economic landscape has demonstrated resilience and growth, achieving an average annual GDP growth rate of approximately 6%, supported by structural reforms and a business-friendly environment (Figure 2)(World Bank, 2024). These efforts culminated in the country being classified as a lower-middle-income nation in July 2020 (Bataille, 2020; World Bank, 2024).

Tanzania's economic expansion by 5.2% in 2023 reflects its sustained dynamism, primarily driven by the services sector (World Bank, 2024). However, despite being small-scale and subsistence-based, agriculture remains a cornerstone, employing a significant portion of the population and contributing 19.6% to the GDP's real growth (Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania, 2023; ILO, 2024; World Bank, 2024). The emergence of sectors like industry and construction, significantly contributing to economic growth, is seen as a promising development (Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania, 2023). The services sector, including telecommunications, banking, and tourism, has become the fastest-growing sector, substantially contributing to the GDP (Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Economic planning in Tanzania has aimed to reduce agriculture's share of GDP while enhancing productivity to fuel industrial growth (Wuyts & Kilama, 2016). However, despite the achievements mentioned above, the anticipated labor reallocation from agriculture to manufacturing was minimal, with most labor shifting to informal sectors, indicating a misalignment between policy assumptions and actual economic transformation patterns (Wuyts & Kilama, 2016).

Notwithstanding substantial advancements and continued economic expansion, income inequality remains a significant concern in Tanzania. As depicted in Figure 2, the GINI index has revealed persistent discrepancies. The GINI index declined from 40.30 in 2007 to 37.80 in 2011 but rose again to 40.5 in 2018, indicating that economic growth's fruits have not been equally shared across the populace (World Bank, 2024). According to Bourguignon's Poverty-Growth-Inequality Triangle model (2004), high-income inequality compromises efforts to reduce poverty by concentrating the benefits of economic growth into the hands of the more affluent segments of society. While it is true that Tanzania's national poverty rate shrank from 34% in 2007 to around 26% in 2018, a significant portion of the population is still living in poverty. Moreover, this reduction has not been spatially uniform, with rural areas lagging (Msinde et al., 2016; Christiaensen et al., 2018).

Figure 2: Socioeconomic Indicators for Tanzania (2000-2018)

Year	**GDP Growth Rate (%)**	**Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population)**	**GINI Index**
2000	4.9	35.7	37.30
2007	6.8	34.0	40.30
2011	6.5	28.2	37.80
2018	5.8	26.0	40.50

Notes: Source: World Bank

2.1.2 Political Environment

Tanzania's political landscape, while operating under a formally democratic framework, exhibits complexities that reflect a blend of stability and contention. According to Freedom House, Tanzania is rated as "Partly Free," with a 36 out of 100 score for 2023, slightly improved from 34 in the previous year. This score comprises sub-ratings for political rights (12 out of 40) and civil liberties (24 out of 60), indicating significant room for improvement in these areas (Freedom House, 2023).

Since transitioning from a one-party state in the early 1990s, Tanzania has held regular multi-party elections (Freedom House, 2023). However, the dominance of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party has persisted for over six decades, limiting the political opposition's influence (Freedom House, 2023). Moreover President John Magufuli's tenure in 2015 marked increased government crackdowns on political opposition, media, and civil society, leading to a restricted environment for these groups (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020;

Freedom House, 2023). Following Magufuli's passing, President Samia Suluhu Hassan's administration, which began in 2021, has seen slight improvements in the freedoms of opposition groups, media, and civil society (Freedom House, 2023). Leadership transitions have continuously shaped the national agenda, aligning with Nyerere's socialist vision while navigating new economic realities (Kelsall, 2003). Despite political stability and regular constitutional power transfers, economic liberalization efforts have faced legitimacy issues due to perceived inefficiencies in public institutions and policies (Kelsall, 2003).

2.2 Kenya

Situated in Eastern Africa and bordering the Indian Ocean, Kenya occupies a strategic geographical position akin to that of Tanzania (Ingham et al., 2024) (Figure 1).

2.2.1 Economic Profile

Kenya's economy has been marked by consistent growth, outperforming many of its sub-Saharan counterparts, with an average annual growth rate of 4.8% from 2015 to 2019 (World Bank, 2024). As for Tanzania, Kenya represents a critical gateway to the East African market, with a diverse economy where agriculture accounts for 21.17% of GDP, manufacturing, and industry make up 17.66%, and services dominate at 55.06% (O'Neill, 2024). This sectoral distribution mirrors typical sub-Saharan economic structures (O'Neill, 2024; Jimenéz et al., 2021).

Moreover, Kenya's economy is characterized by its import dependency on manufactured goods (59.9%) and petroleum and mining products (26.3%), contrasting sharply with its exports, predominantly agricultural products, comprising nearly 60% of its total exports (Jimenéz et al., 2021). This pattern underscores a critical aspect of the Kenyan economy: the reliance on importing high-value items while exporting commodities is prone to fluctuations in global prices and downward trends (Jimenéz et al., 2021). Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in Kenya's unemployment rate, which escalated to 5.7% in 2021 from 2.8% in 2016 (Figure 4) (ILO, 2024).

Despite being designated as a lower-middle-income nation since 2014, Kenya continues to grapple with persistent challenges such as corruption, unequal systems, and inadequate infrastructure, perpetuating widespread poverty and inequality (World Bank, 2024; Freedom House, 2023). Mwabu (2023) discusses the intricate relationship between income inequality and economic growth, emphasizing a cycle where reducing poverty can stimulate growth that reduces inequality, highlighting the necessity for inclusive growth strategies. The GINI index, which measures income inequality, decreased from 46.50 in 2005 to 40.80 in 2015 but then rose to 41.6 in 2018, indicating, as in the case of Tanzania, that the benefits of economic growth have not been evenly distributed (Figure 3) (World Bank, 2024). The national poverty rate in Kenya decreased from 46.80% in 2005 to approximately 36.10% in 2018. However, a substantial portion of the population remains impoverished, aggravated by rapid urbanization that has altered employment patterns and impacted poverty dynamics (Shifa & Leibbrandt, 2017). Urban poverty, particularly in secondary cities like Mombasa and Kisumu and various areas of Nairobi, is characterized by significant intra-urban disparities (Shifa & Leibbrandt, 2017).

Figure 3: Socioeconomic Indicators for Kenya (1997-2018)

Year	**GDP Growth Rate (%)**	**Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population)**	**GINI Index**
1997	0.40	52.30	45.00
2005	5.70	46.80	46.50
2015	5.70	36.10	40.80
2018	6.30	36.10	41.6

Notes: Source: World Bank

2.2.2 Political Environment

Politically, Kenya has undergone substantial transformations since gaining independence in 1963 (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The political milieu, marked by periods of authoritarian rule and efforts towards democratization, reflects a complex history of governance challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Adopting a new constitution in 2010 aimed to address these issues by establishing a presidential democratic republic and promoting a multi-party system (Nyadera et al., 2020). However, corruption and ineffective governance continue to undermine progress, as evidenced by Kenya's performance in global corruption indices and its Freedom House score of 52/100 in 2023, classifying it as "Partly Free" (Freedom House, 2023). This score highlights ongoing issues: while Kenya's media and civil society sectors are moving forward, journalists and human rights defenders face threats from restrictive laws and intimidation tactics, pointing to a political environment that still requires substantial reforms to enhance freedoms and governance (Nyadera et al., 2020; Freedom House, 2023). Despite this drawback, Kenya's performance remains marginally higher than that of Tanzania, with superior scores in both the political rights and civil liberties subindices.

2.3 Comparative Socioeconomic Table of Kenya and Tanzania

The comparative analysis of the socioeconomic conditions in Tanzania and Kenya from 1991 to 2021 reveals noteworthy disparities and similarities that reflect the developmental trajectories of these nations. Both countries have experienced substantial population growth, with Kenya's population increasing from 23.9 million in 1991 to 53.0 million in 2021 and Tanzania's from 26.9 million to 63.6 million during the same period (Figure 4). This demographic shift has been accompanied by a transition from rural to urban living, resulting in a decrease in the percentage of the rural population in both countries (Figure 4). However, Kenya remains more rural than Tanzania, with 72% of its population residing in rural areas in 2021, compared to 64% in Tanzania (Figure 4). The demographic profiles of both nations are predominantly youthful. In 2021, 44% of Tanzania's population was under 15, consistent with broader Sub-Saharan trends, presenting challenges and opportunities for the labor market (Tabutin et al., 2020; Thurlow et al., 2019). Kenya also exhibits a significant youthful population, with 38% under the age of 15, underscoring the necessity for substantial investments in education and job creation to harness this potential (Lin, 2012). Moreover, life expectancy in Kenya remained at 61 years between 2011 and 2021, while Tanzania improved from 51 years in 1991 to 66 years in 2021, surpassing Kenya by 2021 (Figure 4). Both countries have made notable strides in reducing infant mortality rates, with Kenya decreasing it from 66 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 28 in 2021 and Tanzania from 99 to 34 in the same period (Figure 4). Despite these advancements, Tanzania's mortality rate remains higher, indicating persistent healthcare challenges. Access to electricity is another area where Kenya outperforms Tanzania. In 2021, 77% of Kenya's population had access to electricity, compared to 43% in Tanzania, highlighting significant differences in infrastructure development (Figure 4). This disparity is further reflected in their Human Development Index (HDI) scores; Kenya's HDI increased from 0.480 in 1991 to 0.596 in 2021, while Tanzania's rose from 0.366 to 0.529, indicating slower progress in human development (Figure 4). Both countries have improved gender equality, with Kenya's Gender Development Index (GDI) reaching 0.954 and Tanzania's 0.951 by 2021 (Figure 4). Kenya's labor market appears to be more diversified, with lower employment in agriculture (33% in 2021) compared to Tanzania's 66%. Kenya also has higher employment in services (51%) and industry (16%) compared to Tanzania (25% and 8%, respectively), reflecting a more advanced economic transition (Figure 4). Both nations have experienced fluctuations in foreign direct investment (FDI). Kenya's FDI inflows peaked at 3.1% of GDP in 2011 but dropped to 0.4% in 2021, while Tanzania's FDI reached 3.5% in 2011 before declining to 1.7% in 2021 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Comparative Socioeconomic Indicators of Kenya (KE) and Tanzania (TZ) (1991-2021)

Indicator	KE 1991	KE 2001	KE 2011	KE 2021	TZ 1991	TZ 2001	TZ 2011	TZ 2021
Population, total (in millions)	23.9	31.8	42.6	53.0	26.9	35.4	46.4	63.6
Rural population (% of total population)	83	80	76	72	81	77	71	64
Population ages 0-14 (% of total population)	49	45	43	38	46	45	45	44
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	58	55	61	61	51	53	61	66
Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births)	66	58	38	28	99	74	46	34
Access to electricity (% of population)	N/A	17	36	77	N/A	10	14	43
Human Development Index	0.480	0.490	0.552	0.596	0.366	0.404	0.501	0.529
Gender Development Index	N/A	0.873	0.929	0.954	N/A	0.891	0.926	0.951
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)	2.9	3.0	2.7	5.7	3.6	3.0	3.5	2.9
Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	48	45	39	33	85	82	70	66
Employment in industry (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate)	14	13	13	16	3	3	6	8
Employment in services (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	38	42	48	51	13	15	24	25
Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP)	0.2	0	3.1	0.4	0	4	3.5	1.7

Notes: Source: Most indicator data sourced from World Bank (2023). Human Development Index and Gender Development Index data sourced from UNDP (2023).

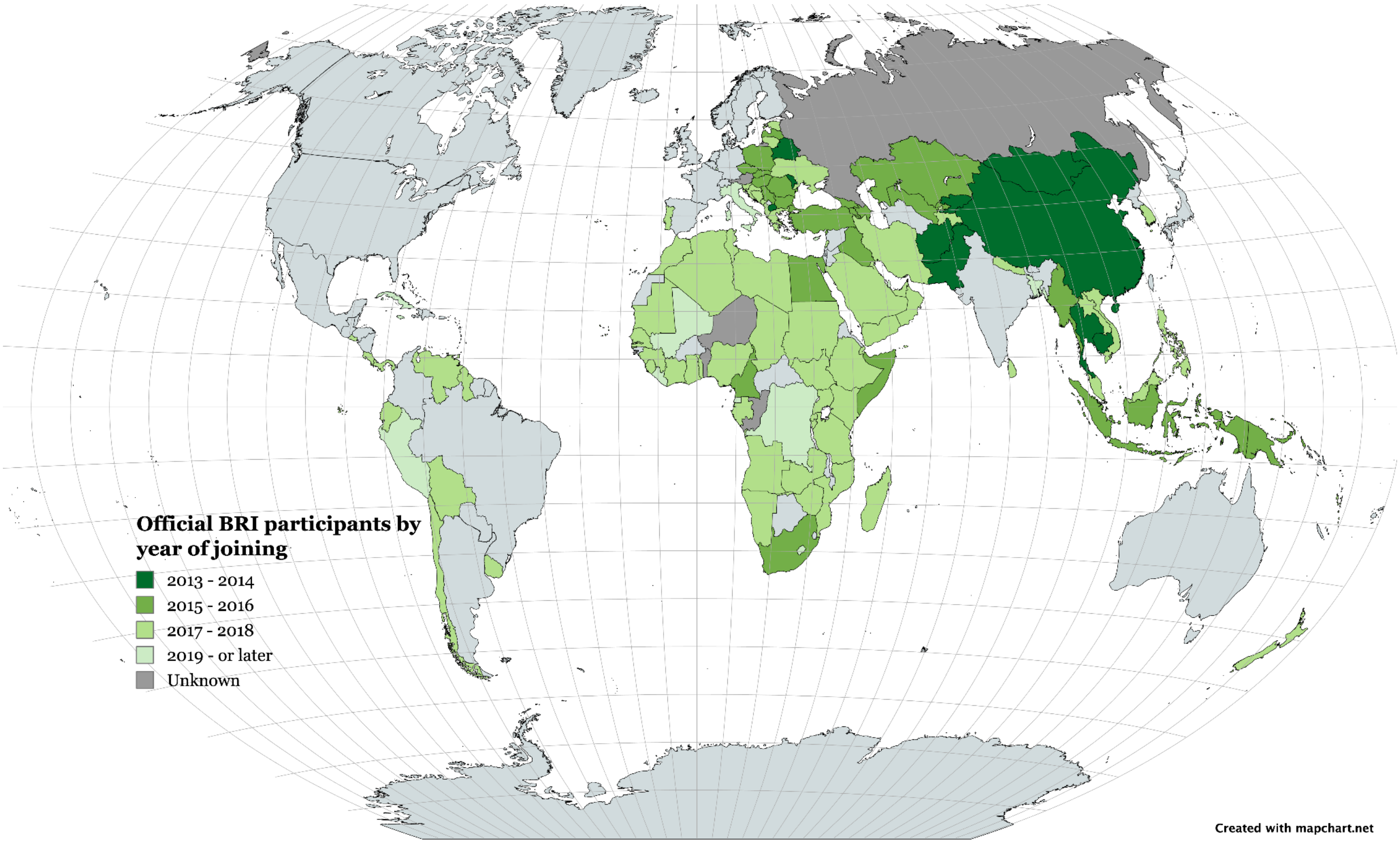
2.4 Belt and Road Initiative and its components

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) constitutes a comprehensive and ambitious global development strategy that seeks to augment regional connectivity, promote economic growth, and assert China's burgeoning influence on the international political landscape (Chen, 2018; Huang, 2016; Gong & Ding, 2015). The BRI is not a single organization or program but a broad array of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) encompassing a variety of projects and initiatives globally (Githaiga & Bing, 2019). The BRI's multifaceted approach is set to reshape the global economic order and engender a new era of economic cooperation and development across the Eurasian continent and beyond (Chen, 2018; Huang, 2016; Gong & Ding, 2015). Launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI draws inspiration from the historic Silk Road (Johnston, 2018). It comprises two primary components: the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (Dunford & Liu, 2019). The Belt component seeks to develop an expansive network of railways, roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure projects stretching from East Asia through Central Asia to Europe, improving overland trade routes (Johnston, 2018; Dunford & Liu, 2019). The Maritime Road component, on the other hand, focuses on sea routes linking China's southern coast through Southeast Asia to Africa and the Mediterranean, boosting maritime trade (Zhu & Hu, 2023; Dunford & Liu, 2019). For East and North Africa, this includes new maritime and transport infrastructure projects, including key segments of cross-border railway networks, special economic zones (SEZs), and industrial estates (Zhu & Hu, 2023; Chen, 2018; Dunford & Liu, 2019). The rapid expansion and engagement of new nations is depicted in Figure 5, which aims to represent official BRI participants by their respective years of joining.

The BRI's five significant goals—policy communication, connectivity, unimpeded trade, financing, and people-to-people bonds—reflect its comprehensive approach to fostering polyhedral cooperation (Gong & Ding, 2015; Zhu & Hu, 2023).

Despite its potential for generating substantial economic dividends, the BRI faces various challenges and criticisms, which will be appropriately analyzed in section 3 of this thesis, reflecting the intricate balance of development, diplomacy, and geopolitical strategy (Chen, 2018).

Figure 5: Official BRI participants by year of joining



Notes: Source: Sacks (2021)

3. Theory and Previous Research

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of scholarship on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly emphasizing its implementation and impact in Kenya and Tanzania. The objective is to delineate the breadth and depth of existing research on the BRI through a thematic diachronic approach, thereby mapping the historical and evolving discourse surrounding this significant global initiative. This structured thematic literature review not only synthesizes existing research but also identifies research gaps and areas for future investigation, laying a foundation for subsequent analytical work.

This review employs various academic databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and LUBSearch, for a robust and systematic analysis. Additionally, Connected Papers—a web-based tool that visually maps academic papers based on citations and content similarities—was utilized to ensure a comprehensive and interconnected understanding of the literature.

3.1 Overview of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its components

3.1.1 Theme 1: Historical Evolution and Trends in the Global Context

According to Chen et al. (1995) in their study "The Role of Foreign Direct Investment in China's Post-1978 Economic Development," the initiation of the "Open Door Policy" in 1978 marked the commencement of China's pathway toward economic liberalization. Furthermore, Qin (2007), elucidates that by joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China reaffirmed its dedication to further integration into the global trade system, thus facilitating a continuous influx of foreign investments that have contributed to the modernization of its industrial sector and its deeper integration into the global economic framework. Therefore, the evolution of China as an active global investor can be traced back to its initial engagement with international markets as an investment recipient. Buckley et al. (2008) analyzed this transition noting that at the beginning of the 2000s Chinese Outward Direct Investment (ODI) witnessed remarkable growth, influenced by strategic government policies like the "Go Global" national strategy (Buckley et al., 2008). Buckley et al. (2008) highlight how this strategy has enabled Chinese firms to move from passive investment recipients to dynamic global investors by diversifying from primarily resource-centric investments in developing regions to strategic investments in high-tech sectors and market expansions in developed economies. This strategic evolution initially cast China as a beneficiary of foreign investments while later enabling its transformation into a global investor guided by Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic philosophy of "Crossing the river by feeling the stones," symbolizing the gradual progression of China's economic reforms (Hofman, 2018, p. 107). Between 1991 and 2005, Chinese investments expanded beyond Asia to significant engagements in North America and Europe, marking a critical phase in this transformation (Buckley et al., 2008).

According to Chen (2016), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) represents China's 'Going Global Strategy' evolution. Initiated in 2013, the BRI revitalizes the historical concept of the ancient Silk Road, which served as a primary conduit for trade and cultural exchange across Asia, Africa, and Europe (Zhao, 2016; Huang, 2016; Frankopan, 2020). Following its proclamation by Xi Jinping in September 2013 in Astana, the initiative swiftly escalated in scope and ambition (Frankopan, 2020). In his discourse, Xi Jinping often referenced the historical connections between the BRI and the ancient trade routes, advocating for reinforced economic ties and creating an "economic belt along the Silk Road" to spur development across the multiple continents (Frankopan, 2020).

Historically, the Silk Road comprised two primary routes: the Land Silk Road, starting from Chang'an, now Xi'an, in central China through to Central Asia and reaching Europe, and the Maritime Silk Road, initiating from China's southeastern coast, passing through Southeast Asia to Africa and beyond (Zhao, 2016). These routes facilitated the exchange of goods like silk and spices and fostered unprecedented intercultural exchanges, spreading religion, art, and technology among civilizations. The ethos of these interactions, characterized by "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit," has been romanticized and idealized in modern narratives as the 'Silk Road Spirit'—a sentiment that the BRI aims to revive and institutionalize in contemporary geopolitical and economic contexts (Zhao, 2016; Frankopan, 2020).

The current initiative encompasses the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, focusing on building a comprehensive network of railways, roads, pipelines, and shipping lanes (Huang, 2016). The BRI's scope includes the creation of infrastructure that spans continents and oceans, intended to enhance economic integration, facilitate trade, and stimulate economic growth in dozens of participating countries (Huang, 2016). According to Huang (2016), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an essential strategy for China to expand its industrial capacities to new markets, focusing on steel and construction. This move is vital for China's economic growth and addressing issues of domestic overcapacity in industrial output (Huang, 2016). Furthermore, by improving infrastructure in developing countries, China aims to create new demand for its goods, thus maintaining the momentum of its export-led growth model (Huang, 2016).

However, the BRI is not merely an economic project; it is deeply embedded in China's strategic ambitions to reshape the global economic order and increase its influence in global governance (Chang, 2019; Frankopan, 2020). This is reflected in the initiative's inclusion in the Chinese Communist Party's constitution during the 19th National Congress, signaling the BRI's centrality to China's long-term strategic policies (Frankopan, 2020). By fostering economic dependencies and strengthening political alliances, China uses the BRI to project power and secure its interests across strategic locations around the globe (Chang, 2019; Frankopan, 2020).

Thus, while the BRI draws heavily from the historical narrative of the Silk Road, its implementation has been highlighted by multiple scholars as a calculated strategic effort by China to foster economic growth and secure a geopolitical foothold in numerous regions (e.g., Chang, 2019; Frankopan, 2020; Zhao, 2016). This blend of economic strategy and political ambition underpins the BRI's objectives, making it a critical element of China's approach to international relations in the 21st century (Chang, 2019). According to the literature reviewed in this research, the initiative is viewed as a reaction to the evolving dynamics of the global economy. As emerging markets gain significance, China seeks to reshape the global economic framework to more accurately represent the interests and conditions of the current diverse economic environment (Huang, 2016). This effort offers an alternative to the economic models traditionally led by Western institutions like the World Bank and IMF (Huang, 2016). The introduction of an initiative of this scale inevitably highlights the emergence and consolidation of a renewed multipolarism, in which the promotion of development within the litigated sphere of emerging economies is not solely the province of Western nations.

3.1.2 Theme 2: Major Sectors of Investment in the Global Context

The exhaustive body of literature consistently supports the assertion that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) strategically prioritizes infrastructure as a crucial sector on a global scale, aligning with the government's overarching narrative to enhance connectivity and foster closer regional ties (e.g., Chang, 2019; Huang, 2016; Liu et al., 2020).

Huang (2016) provides a detailed breakdown of the critical areas of investment in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), encompassing essential infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports, energy, telecommunications, and industrial development. The motivation behind these projects is to promote seamless economic integration across national borders by improving interconnectedness (Huang, 2016). The initiative involves significant investments in energy projects, including pipelines and electric grids, to ensure energy integration and regional market stability (Huang, 2016; Shia & Yao, 2019). Improvements in telecommunications infrastructure are pursued to support modern economic development and linkage, enabling broader access to Internet and communication technologies (Huang, 2016). Furthermore, establishing industrial parks and special economic zones is seen as a strategic move to stimulate local economies through direct investments, ultimately leading to increased employment and industrial output (Huang, 2016). This modernist development approach mirrors China's trajectory following its economic liberalization and the reforms in 1978, opening up to external investments.

Furthermore, Chang (2019) underscores the significance of financial integration in bolstering the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments across various sectors. Although specific sectors are not explicitly identified in their analysis, they emphasize the establishment of robust economic corridors to facilitate the flow of trade and investment (Chang, 2019). In support of this analysis, the research conducted by Liu et al. (2020) thoroughly examines China's distinct financing approach for the BRI, which they characterize as development finance with Chinese characteristics. This approach diverges from traditional Official Development Finance (ODF) as the development finance is more concessional and development-oriented, aiming to foster sustainable development among BRI partner countries (Liu et al., 2020).

3.1.3 Theme 3: Scale, Scope, and Distinctive Trends of BRI Investments in Sub-Saharan Africa

While Africa was not originally a primary focus of the BRI, it has become increasingly important, mainly through the Maritime Silk Road (Y. Chen, 2018). Funding for these projects primarily comes from the Silk Road Fund and Chinese financial institutions such as China Eximbank and China Development Bank (Y. Chen, 2018).

Despite these expansive developments, H. Chen (2016) notes that the scale of Chinese investments in Africa, although increasing significantly over the past decade, has not kept pace with the broader surge in Chinese outward investments. This observation suggests that while investments are growing, their relative magnitude and impact might be constrained compared to other regions (H. Chen, 2016).

Y. Chen (2018) highlights a strategic pivot in China's engagement with Africa, shifting from primarily resource-driven interests to infrastructure-centric initiatives to enhance infrastructural, industrial cooperation, and connectivity. This transition includes the 'corridorization' of infrastructure investments, creating economic corridors facilitating cross-border trade and regional integration (Y. Chen, 2018). Moreover, the BRI is also spearheading expansions in digital infrastructure and promoting technological transfers, which is essential for African nations seeking to diversify and ascend the global value chain (Y. Chen, 2018).

Research by Gyamerah et al. (2021) illustrates that the BRI's approach in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is extensive and inclusive. It engages small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in projects crucial for regional economic integration and development (Gyamerah et al., 2021). These projects, valued at nearly USD 5 billion, mark a significant investment in the continent's connectivity and industrial capabilities, presenting new opportunities for economic advancement (Gyamerah et al., 2021). Guo et al. (2021) further argue that the BRI substantially enhances China's economic and infrastructural engagement in Africa, fostering deeper integration of the continent into global trade networks and strengthening Sino-African cooperation.

Recognizing that Chinese investments under the BRI framework possess distinct characteristics is essential. Unlike investments from traditional sources, BRI investments are primarily driven by the state and are aligned with China's political interests (Huang, 2016). While most foreign direct investments (FDIs) are motivated by private sector companies seeking competitive advantages and market entry, BRI projects are primarily financed through loans and credits from Chinese banks, with terms that may lack transparency and could result in significant debt for the host countries (Liu et al., 2020). Additionally, BRI investments are often accompanied by bilateral agreements between China and the host country, whereas traditional FDIs typically operate within the frameworks of multilateral trade agreements and international investment treaties, creating a more standardized and predictable investment environment (Alden & Large, 2019; Power et al., 2018).

This literature review underscores a dual narrative within the discourse on the BRI in Africa. While Chinese literature often underscores the benefits of the BRI and advocates for greater exploitation of these opportunities, Western analysis frequently points out risks associated with these projects, including sustainability issues and potential debt burdens (Y. Chen, 2018). This divergence highlights the necessity for a nuanced exploration of the BRI's ramification, advocating for an analysis that draws from diverse sources to minimize biases and enhance the comprehension of this complex, multidimensional initiative.

3.2 BRI in Kenya and Tanzania

By 2023, a total of 52 African nations, along with the African Union, have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Komakech & Ombati, 2023). In the context of the BRI, an MoU signifies a formal agreement between China and the respective participating countries or organizations to foster cooperation on various projects. These MoUs, although not legally binding, serve as frameworks for collaboration on infrastructure development, trade enhancement, and investment facilitation (Bhattarai, 2019). As highlighted in the previous section, the primary incentives for these countries to sign MoUs include the desire to address infrastructure deficits, attract foreign investment, boost trade, and mitigate poverty (Komakech & Ombati, 2023).

Kenya formally joined the BRI in May 2017, becoming the third African country after South Africa and Egypt (Manga, 2022). Sinceeven before then, Kenya has seen significant Chinese-financed infrastructural projects, including the Standard Gauge Railway linking Mombasa, Nairobi, and Naivasha, upgrades to the Mombasa port, and the construction of the Lamu deep-sea port (Manga, 2022). Tanzania followed in 2018, formally participating in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in Beijing, underscored by local media as a significant step in enhancing economic and infrastructural collaboration between Tanzania and China (The Citizen, 2021).

3.2.1 Theme 1: Economic and Social Impact in Kenya

In analyzing the existing literature concerning the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya, it becomes apparent that scholarly attention is predominantly directed towards assessing the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) project. Such infrastructure megaproject stands out as a flagship BRI undertaking in Kenya, connecting the port city of Mombasa to Nairobi. This project has significantly improved transport efficiency by reducing travel time and transportation costs, boosting trade, and facilitating regional integration despite being previously assessed as non-viable by the World Bank (Wissenbach, 2020). According to Githaiga and Bing (2019) and Irandu and Owilla (2020), the SGR enhances socio-economic development by creating a more efficient transportation corridor, generating revenue through transportation levies and trade facilitation. However, the financial sustainability of such large-scale projects remains a concern. The SGR has significantly increased Kenya's debt burden, prompting discussions on the long-term viability of such financial commitments (Wissenbach, 2020). While Kenya has developed fiscal instruments to manage loan repayments, the economic viability of these investments continues to be scrutinized (Wissenbach, 2020).

The Kenya-China Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project has been identified as a crucial factor in improving the quality of vocational education, according to Musyimi et al. (2018). This initiative has led to higher employment rates and skill development among the Kenyan workforce, addressing critical gaps in technical expertise (Musyimi et al., 2018). However, the political dynamics associated with BRI projects have brought challenges, such as increased corruption and political factionalism (Anthony, 2019). These issues have significantly impacted Kenya's political environment, emphasizing the need for robust governance mechanisms to oversee and manage BRI projects (Anthony, 2019).

3.2.2 Theme 2: Economic and Social Impact in Tanzania

The impact of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on infrastructure development in Tanzania has been meaningful, akin to the experiences observed in Kenya. Notably, the construction of the Nyerere Bridge (Kigamboni Bridge) by Chinese firms has reduced travel time between Dar es Salaam and the Kigamboni area, exemplifying the transformative effect of BRI infrastructure projects on local transportation efficiency (The Citizen, 2021). Besides, the Tanzanian National ICT Backbone Infrastructure project, implemented by Chinese companies, seeks to improve internet connectivity and telecommunications across Tanzania, bridging the digital divide and supporting economic activities reliant on dependable internet services (The Citizen, 2021).

Moreover, one of the most significant projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Tanzania is the expansion of the Port of Bagamoyo. Despite the scarcity of academic sources on this project, Tanzanian and international media have highlighted its importance as a pivotal but debated component of the BRI in Tanzania (The Citizen, 2021; Hursh, 2019). Initial negotiations between the Tanzanian government and China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI) stalled over investment terms perceived as commercially unviable and excessively favorable to China, prompting a renegotiation (The Citizen, 2021; Hursh, 2019). Furthermore, President John Magufuli halted the project upon taking office, citing the unfavorable terms set by his predecessor and demanding better conditions for Tanzania, further delaying the implementation (Hursh, 2019; Barton, 2021). Recent developments, however, indicate progress. In April 2024, the Tanzanian government allocated 22 billion Tanzanian Shillings for the 2024/2025 financial year for the Bagamoyo port project (Luhwago, 2024). The project, valued at approximately $10 billion, involves a collaborative effort primarily between China, Oman, and Tanzania (CGTN, 2023). China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI) is tasked with the port's construction, while the Omani government's State General Reserve Fund is funding the associated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) near the port (CGTN, 2023). The Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) oversees the project's development and implementation (CGTN, 2023). This strategic port is expected to significantly enhance business activities at the Bagamoyo Special Economic Zone, with plans to handle 20 million TEUs by 2045, making it the largest port in East Africa (Luhwago, 2024; BBC, 2016). These developments highlight the complexities of negotiating large-scale infrastructure projects, especially those involving foreign investments.

Tanzania's infrastructure projects are significantly less documented than those in Kenya, underscoring a need for further research to comprehensively understand the full scope and impact of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments in Tanzania. Moreover, a need exists for more comprehensive data on the impact on employment in Tanzania, underscoring the necessity for further research in this area. The paucity of detailed studies on Tanzanian engagement with China highlights a critical gap in the existing literature that this research aims to address.

3.3 Conclusion

3.3.1 Synthesis of Findings

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a relatively recent, multidimensional cooperation and development project championed by China—a rising star in the multipolar landscape that emerged post-Cold War. The international community's perspectives on this initiative are notably mixed (Huang, 2016). Some scholars compare it to America's Marshall Plan following World War II, while others view it primarily as a mechanism for international economic cooperation rather than aid (Huang, 2016; Y. Chen, 2018). Opinions diverge further, with some interpreting the BRI as a means for China to potentially supplant the America-led international economic framework by exporting the "China model," whereas others see opportunities for cooperation between the Chinese initiative and the existing global system (Huang, 2016). The initiative's potential to reshape the global economic landscape has been lauded and criticized, particularly by institutions and scholars in the United States (Frankopan, 2020). Former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis articulated a significant critique, asserting that no single nation should dominate global infrastructure development, implicitly criticizing the BRI's expansive reach (US Senate, Committee on Armed Services, 2017; Frankopan, 2020). American perspectives, such as those from the China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) at Johns Hopkins University, often argue that the BRI is a self-interested endeavor to restore China's historical influence rather than an altruistic development project (Chang, 2019). This perspective suggests that the BRI enhances China's economic development, security, and strategic positioning (Chang, 2019). It is about the rejuvenation of China, boosting national economic development, enhancing domestic security, strengthening relations with neighboring countries along the BRI routes, and securing strategic positions on land and sea to consolidate its central status and influence over surrounding regions (Chang, 2019). Conversely, authors like Xian and Xiaoqin (2015) and Guo et al. (2021) suggest that the BRI represents a significant expansion of China's economic and infrastructural engagement in Africa, aimed at bolstering Sino-African cooperation and integrating the african continent more deeply into global trade networks.

As highlighted throughout this chapter, academic research reflects political tensions and rivalries related to the potential emergence of a new hegemony. The literature reveals two politically aligned narratives, highlighting a significant need for a less partisan middle ground. This bias obstructs a more objective analysis while allowing for considerable interpretation through the political lenses of various authors and institutions.

Furthermore, the literature has a discernible gap concerning comprehensive research on the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) influence in East Africa. This gap is particularly critical given East Africa's strategic importance within the BRI framework and the immense potential arising from the region's current demographic boom and sustained economic growth and expansion. The lack of targeted research on the BRI's ramifications in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania underscores the potential for more focused investigations to fill this scholarly void (Komakech & Ombati, 2023).

3.3.2 Implications for Research

From this literature review, an apparent issue emerges: the need for a more balanced perspective in academic research on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Current literature often reflects politically polarized narratives, which hinder objective analysis and promote interpretations heavily influenced by political ideologies (Huang, 2016; Frankopan, 2020). Future studies should aim for greater impartiality.

Furthermore, the paucity of literature on the specific impact of the BRI in East Africa presents a significant research opportunity. While many studies address the BRI's global and continental implications, detailed analyses focused on the unique socio-economic, political, and environmental contexts of East African countries like Kenya and Tanzania are noticeably absent (Komakech & Ombati, 2023). Given the growing importance of this region within the BRI framework and its current developmental stage—with a young and growing population that could result in either a youth bulge or a demographic dividend—there is a pressing need for targeted research to explore the nuanced implications of the initiative in East Africa.

Filling these research gaps will enhance academic debates, policymaking, and implementation. Comprehensive studies on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in East Africa will provide a foundation for making informed decisions regarding infrastructure investments, economic partnerships, and regional integration, ensuring that the initiative's benefits are maximized while mitigating potential risks. Furthermore, a thorough understanding of the BRI's local impacts will contribute meaningfully to broader discussions on global economic governance and the role of emerging powers within it.

4. Theoretical Framework

The analysis conducted in the previous section of this thesis reveals a significant trend within the literature: the alignment of academic and media narratives into two distinct, politically oriented factions. Literature and major journalistic sources generally aligned with the Chinese sphere of influence emphasize the substantial benefits of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, advocating for increased participation (e.g., Huang, 2016; Y. Chen, 2018). Conversely, narratives aligned with Western and United States perspectives offer a more critical view, highlighting issues such as debt traps and the emergence of China as a neo-colonial power driven by expansionist objectives (e.g., Frankopan, 2020).

Therefore, this thesis integrates modernization and dependency theory to critically analyze Tanzania and Kenya's strategic approaches and responses to the investments of the BRI and its Maritime Silk Road component, striving to provide a balanced perspective.

Incorporating these theoretical frameworks into an exploratory research design enhances the study's depth and breadth. This approach enriches the exploration by structuring the inquiry around key theoretical insights, despite the primary goal being to explore emergent patterns rather than to confirm specific hypotheses. This methodology not only strengthens the analytical rigor of the study but also ensures a more systematic exploration of the dynamics at play.

4.1 Modernization Theory

The modernization theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century, provides a framework for understanding the evolution of societies from traditional to modern states. This theory emphasizes economic development, industrialization, and the adoption of Western political and social norms (Bernstein, 1971). Classical modernization theory posits that all societies follow a linear development path, ultimately leading to modernity characterized by industrialization, urbanization, and democratization (Tipps, 1973). The theory has been utilized to explain various societal changes, including shifts in cultural values, economic development, and political structures (Goorha, 2010). According to Inglehart and Baker (2000), economic development under modernization theory is often associated with cultural changes toward more rational, tolerant, and participatory values, which promote democratization.

Modernization theorists argue that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a required engine for economic growth in developing countries. By injecting capital, technology, and management expertise, FDI stimulates economic activities and enhances productivity (Balasubramanyam et al., 1999). FDI is seen as a means to modernize the economy by introducing new processes, technologies, and managerial skills, transforming traditional economies into more diversified and industrialized ones (Babawulle, 2020). Additionally, FDI contributes to capital formation, essential for building infrastructure and enhancing economic capacity, and is crucial for developing physical infrastructure such as transportation and communication systems (Akujuobi, 2008).

However, one of the primary criticisms of classical modernization theory is its deterministic perspective and assumption that all societies must adhere to a Western development model. Critics argue that this viewpoint fails to consider cultural and historical differences (Appleby, 1978). The theory has been criticized for oversimplifying the complexities of societal transformations and disregarding the potential for diverse paths to modernity (Pogosyan, 2021). Critics from the dependency theory perspective argue that foreign direct investment (FDI) can create economic dependency and exploitation rather than genuine development. They contend that reliance on foreign capital can lead to unequal power dynamics and economic vulnerabilities (Akujuobi, 2008).

Rooted in the premise that development follows a linear progression from traditional to modern phases, modernization theory will assess how the infrastructure investments under the BRI could potentially transform economic structures and social conditions in Tanzania and Kenya, aligning or not with their national development strategies and economic policies. This theory suggests that external investments, like those from China, catalyze development by introducing advanced technologies, improving infrastructure, and fostering economic integration with the global market. By applying modernization theory, this research will evaluate how BRI investments might drive development and modernization in Tanzania and Kenya, aligning with or enhancing their national development agendas. It will help explore how infrastructure improvements and increased global connectivity could advance economic and social conditions, contributing positively to the countries' long-term development goals.

4.2 Dependency Theory

Dependency theory provides a critical framework and alternative perspective to modernization theory for understanding the economic underdevelopment of countries in the global South. It posits that their economic positions are shaped by their dependence on more developed countries. Emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s as a response to the perceived shortcomings of modernization theory, dependency theory critiques the linear development trajectories by modernization theorists (Fu, 2005). Instead, it contends that the historical and structural conditions of underdevelopment in developing nations fundamentally differ from those in developed countries (Fu, 2005).

Dependency theory posits a core-periphery structure in the global economy, where developed (core) countries exploit developing (periphery) countries, perpetuating economic dependency and underdevelopment in the periphery (Kaufman et al., 1975). The mechanisms highlighted by dependency theorists include unequal exchange, where goods from developing countries are undervalued, and terms of trade that favor developed countries, resulting in capital flight and the perpetuation of economic imbalances (Namkoong, 1999). FDI is often viewed critically within this framework, seen as a channel for economic domination where multinational corporations from developed countries exploit the resources and labor of developing nations, leading to unequal exchange that benefits the developed world while perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment in host countries (Akujuobi, 2008). According to this theory, the influx of FDI often leads to foreign control over key sectors of the economy, undermining the sovereignty of developing nations and leading to a form of neo-colonialism (Smith, 1981).

Critics argue that dependency theory is overly deterministic and fails to account for the agency of developing countries and the potential for internal factors to drive development (Friedmann & Wayne, 1977). Moreover, the relevance of dependency theory in the context of globalization is debated; some scholars argue that global economic changes have altered the dynamics of dependency, while others believe that the core principles of the theory remain applicable, particularly in analyzing global inequalities and the impact of multinational corporations (Kvangraven, 2020). Nevertheless, dependency theory has influenced policy discussions in developing countries, advocating for economic diversification, protectionism, and regional integration strategies to reduce dependency and promote autonomous development (Ahiakpor, 1985). Furthermore, dependency theory remains pertinent in highlighting the dangers of economic reliance and the necessity of enacting policies that ensure FDI contributes to sustainable development—highlighting the imperative for nations to strike a balance between attracting FDI and retaining control over their economic policies and development strategies (Kvangraven, 2020). This perspective is essential for analyzing whether BRI projects lead to economic dependency in Tanzania and Kenya, causing them to rely excessively on Chinese investments and technology. It also allows for understanding the approaches the two countries have employed toward these investments. Dependency theory will be instrumental in assessing the power imbalances between China and the host countries, potentially uncovering exploitative practices or economic controls that could hinder local economic autonomy and sustainable development.

4.3 Contextual Application

As some scholars advocate for integrating dependency and modernization theories to achieve a more balanced analysis, this hybrid approach recognizes that while Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) can lead to dependency and underdevelopment, it also has the potential to drive modernization and economic growth if managed properly (Denisia, 2010). This analysis will be informed by a dual framework, shedding light on the different responses of Tanzania and Kenya to BRI projects. Modernization theory will emphasize the opportunities and advancements in development, while dependency theory will uncover the constraints and challenges posed by these investments. This approach ensures a balanced exploration of the beneficial and detrimental aspects of the BRI. In the SWOT analysis, insights from modernization theory will help identify the strengths and opportunities presented by the BRI, such as technological advancements and infrastructure development. On the other hand, dependency theory will be crucial in pinpointing the weaknesses and threats, such as economic dependency and potential neo-colonialism, faced by Tanzania and Kenya due to their participation in the initiative.

5. Methodology

This chapter presents a carefully constructed methodological framework. The methodology section is structured into several distinct subsections, each designed to articulate the detailed approach employed in this research. These subsections elaborate on the framework and methodologies utilized to collect and analyze data, clearly depicting the methodological rigor and the extent of the study. Anchored in the scholarly principles of qualitative research as outlined in multiple research design manuals such as Social Research Methods by Alan Bryman (2012), Qualitative Research from Start to Finish by Robert K. Yin (2016), and Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences: What is Exploration? by Robert A. Stebbins (2001), this study is framed as a qualitative exploratory analysis.

5.1 Research Design

The research design of this thesis is inherently qualitative. It adopts an exploratory framework to investigate the complex and nuanced aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its maritime component in Kenya and Tanzania while examining how Tanzania's and Kenya's engagements with the BRI reflect their national development strategies and geopolitical priorities. The rationale for selecting this approach stems from the need to explore the under-researched domain of BRI's influence on the economic, social, and infrastructural dynamics within East Africa (Stebbins, 2001). Characterized by its flexibility, this approach enables an in-depth examination of emergent phenomena without the constraints typically associated with hypothesis-driven research (Stebbins, 2001). Consequently, it is adept at investigating the effects and responses to the BRI, representing a novel and dynamic area of inquiry in East African development.

5.2 Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Approach

As articulated by Yin (2016, p.85) and Maxwell (2013, pp. 3–7), the process of designing qualitative research is inherently recursive, facilitating iterative adjustments throughout the study's progression. This inherent flexibility is essential for accommodating emerging data and insights, particularly salient in exploratory research where predefined hypotheses do not serve as the initial framework (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 3–7). Joseph Maxwell's concept of an "interactive" approach complements this design, highlighting the ongoing interaction among the research questions, conceptual context, and methodologies employed (Maxwell, 2013, pp.

3–7; Yin, 2016, p.85). Consequently, this research process has been characterized by continuous methodological refinement in response to evolving findings. Given the researcher's latitude to make midstream adjustments, it is fundamental to uphold a vigilant commitment to scholarly rigor and objectivity, thereby underscoring the pivotal role of researcher integrity in this dynamic process (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 3–7; Yin, 2016, p.85). The author of this thesis has addressed the necessity for such integrity through strict adherence to and implementation of the principles espoused by Yin (2016, pp. 44-47) throughout the entire research process. These principles encompass disclosures to clarify potential conflicts of interest, the reduction of biases through enhanced self-awareness, the incorporation of multiple and diverse data sources, and ongoing reflection to critically evaluate the research approach and findings (Yin, 2016, pp. 44-47).

As previously mentioned, following the guidance of Stebbins (2001), this thesis is framed as an exploratory study that leverages existing literature and secondary data. This approach is particularly suited for the inductive nature of the research, where the goal is to uncover patterns, ideas, or theories that have not been previously considered (Stebbins, 2001). The explorative approach's flexibility allows for a broad examination of the phenomena, making it ideal for the initial empirical scrutiny needed in areas that are either poorly understood or experiencing new developments (Stebbins, 2001).

5.3 Research Methods

A multi-method qualitative research approach has been adopted to comprehensively investigate and respond to the research questions that guide this study. Specifically, the research design integrates comparative case study analysis with SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. By using this approach, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the research problem under investigation.

5.3.1 Comparative Case Study

The methodology of comparative case studies has been selected for its effectiveness in identifying patterns and variations across diverse contexts; this is particularly important for examining how Tanzania's and Kenya's engagements with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reflect their national development strategies and geopolitical priorities while understanding the unique circumstances and outcomes associated with such projects in each country under study (Yin, 2016, p. 68). This approach provides a deep understanding of each case within its real-life environment, generating specific knowledge while allowing theoretical generalization (Yin, 2016, p. 68). Focusing on the cases themselves yields detailed insights into the mechanisms driving specific outcomes within particular settings (Yin, 2016, p. 68; Bryman, 2016, pp. 66-69).

Each case will be carefully analyzed within its socio-economic and political framework, as it is essential to understand the broader context in which BRI investments are made to interpret the countries under analysis' responses to it. Following the analysis of each case, a comparative analysis will be conducted to uncover patterns and discrepancies between the cases. For instance, the research will explore why BRI projects may encounter more opposition or achieve success in one country versus another. Factors such as governmental policies, community involvement, and the characteristics of the investments will be examined.

5.3.2 SWOT Analysis

In conjunction with the case studies, a SWOT analysis will be implemented for each country to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. This analytical framework is instrumental in identifying internal and external factors that could influence the outcomes of these initiatives (Pickton & Wright, 1998; Helms & Nixon, 2010). While SWOT analysis is traditionally employed in strategic planning and management, it is equally applicable in academic research to systematically examine factors that may affect the studied phenomenon (Helms & Nixon, 2010). The SWOT analysis will be graphically depicted using a 2x2 matrix, with each quadrant dedicated to one of the elements—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This matrix will be filled with data relevant to each category, providing a clear visual representation of the analysis (Pickton & Wright, 1998; Helms & Nixon, 2010). This approach augments the in-depth analysis from the case studies by offering a structured assessment of variables that can impact the broader strategic context of BRI projects in Kenya and Tanzania.

5.3.3 Benefits of Integrating Methods

The integration of comparative case studies and SWOT analysis within this thesis offers a multifaceted approach to exploring the ramifications of the Belt and Road Initiative in Kenya and Tanzania, yielding several analytical advantages:

Depth and Breadth: Comparative case studies facilitate an in-depth examination of the specific circumstances and outcomes within each country, providing granular insights into the nuances and complexities of the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2016, p. 68; Bryman, 2016, pp. 66-69). Concurrently, the SWOT analysis extends the scope of inquiry by assessing a broader array of internal and external factors influencing the respective countries' responses to these infrastructure projects (Pickton & Wright, 1998; Helms & Nixon, 2010).
Cross-Validation: The utilization of both methodological approaches enhances the validity and robustness of the research findings. The triangulation of data and perspectives derived from the comparative case studies and SWOT analysis strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn, as noted by Bryman (2016, p.392).
Comprehensive Analysis: This integration facilitates a holistic exploration of the varied dimensions of the topic under investigation, permitting a comprehensive analysis that accounts for the multifaceted nature of the phenomena in question.

5.2 Data

This thesis adopts a secondary data collection approach, drawing extensively on various previously published materials. This approach is informed by the study's exploratory nature, which seeks to uncover how Tanzania's and Kenya's engagements with the BRI reflect their national development strategies and geopolitical priorities while conducting a comprehensive analysis to identify the primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the BRI projects in these countries. This choice facilitates a comprehensive understanding without the temporal limitations associated with collecting primary data, addressing the constraints imposed by the specific timelines of this independent research.

5.2.1 Collection

The data for this thesis has been carefully collected from multiple authoritative and credible sources and organized into distinct categories.
Databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and LUBSearch were utilized for a systematic and exhaustive academic literature search. Additionally, Connected Papers, a web-based tool that visually maps the connections between academic papers through citations and content similarities, was employed. This tool aids in uncovering the academic landscape and evolution of research areas pertinent to the BRI.

A strategic combination of keywords was employed to efficiently locate relevant papers and articles across various databases and journals. The primary set of keywords included terms like "Chinese investments," "Belt and Road Initiative," "Maritime Silk Road Initiative," "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," and "Chinese outward FDI." To specifically target economic development outcomes, proxy keywords such as "economy," "debt," "infrastructure," "development," and "trade" were used. Additionally, the geographical focus was maintained by incorporating keywords such as "Kenya," "Tanzania," "East Africa," and "Africa." For literature addressing international relations aspects, terms like "debate," "issues," "potentials," "hegemony," and "power" were included. The combinations of these keywords varied, typically integrating multiple sets to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research scope. This data collection strategy ensures a robust and well-rounded foundation for analyzing the subject of this research, aligning with the exploratory and qualitative nature of the thesis.

5.2.2 Delimiting

For this thesis, a broad spectrum of data sources has been selected to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The included sources encompass peer-reviewed journals, both academic and non-peer-reviewed, as well as grey literature, which provides for book chapters, policy reports, and study documents.

Certain types of sources were deemed inappropriate for the scope of this study and were therefore excluded. Bachelor's and Master's theses, for instance, were not considered due to potential concerns over the depth and rigor of their analyses compared to more established academic publications. Furthermore, studies that deviated significantly from the operational definitions established in the Data Collection section were omitted from the analysis. This exclusion ensures that the data retained for examination aligns closely with the defined research parameters, thereby enhancing the integrity and focus of the research findings.

5.3 Limitations

This thesis employs a qualitative exploratory methodology primarily based on secondary data sources. While this approach provides a broad understanding of the phenomenon under study, it inherently presents several limitations:

1. Scope of Data: Relying exclusively on secondary sources may limit the scope of empirical data available, as the research does not include primary data collection, such as interviews or surveys that could provide additional insights and firsthand accounts of the BRI's impacts.

This reliance affect the depth of the analysis concerning current dynamics and stakeholders' perspectives, which are not thoroughly documented in the existing literature.
2. Quality and Bias of Sources: The analysis is contingent on the quality and objectivity of the sources consulted. Since publications may vary in rigor and bias, especially grey literature and media reports, there is a risk of encountering skewed or incomplete information, which could influence the conclusions drawn (Bryman, 2016, p.543).
3. Interpretative Biases: As with any research, this study is subject to interpretative biases introduced by the researcher's perspectives and the theoretical frameworks employed (Yin, 2016, pp. 14, 40-41). While efforts are made to mitigate these through rigorous methodology and reflective practices, complete neutrality is challenging to accomplish (Yin, 2016, pp. 44-47).
4. Generalizability and Causality: The exploratory nature of the research aims to generate hypotheses and insights rather than confirm generalizable truths or assert causal relationships (Stebbins, 2001).

Acknowledging these limitations, this thesis aims to contribute to understanding the BRI's role in East Africa by systematically exploring and synthesizing the available secondary data. It also lays the groundwork for future research, suggesting areas where primary data collection could further enrich the understanding of the BRI's multifaceted impacts. This study acknowledges these limitations and suggests them as avenues for future research to build upon the foundational insights provided herein.

6. Empirical Results and Discussion

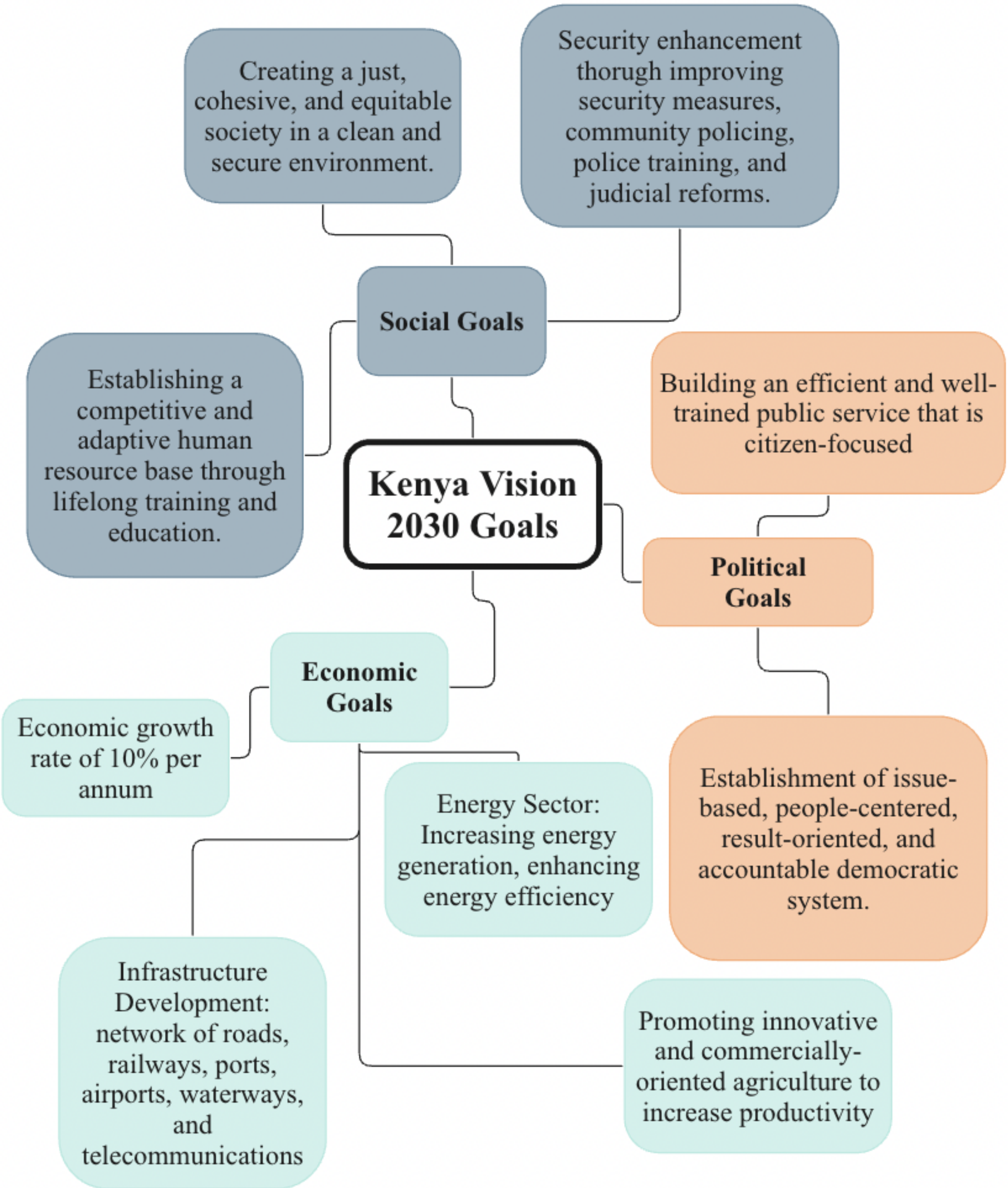
This chapter presents the study's empirical results, offering a comprehensive understanding of the intricate implications of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya and Tanzania. The primary focus is on how these countries' strategic involvements with the BRI align with their national development agendas and geopolitical priorities. Moreover, the chapter aims to pinpoint the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with implementing BRI projects in these nations, thereby contributing to the academic discourse on the BRI's ramifications.

As outlined in the methodology chapter, this section analyzes the data using comparative case studies and SWOT analysis. The findings presented in this chapter are instrumental in addressing the research questions that underpin this thesis. They also contribute to the broader academic discourse on the emerging Chinese hybrid cooperation model, which combines elements of both South-South and North-South cooperation and the expanding Chinese presence on the African continent.

6.1 Kenya Case Study

The Kenya Vision 2030, launched in 2008, represents an ambitious long-term development plan to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country by 2030, providing its citizens with a high quality of life within a secure and sustainable environment (Jacobsen et al., 2023). Structured around three core pillars – economic, social, and political – and supported by successive five-year Medium-Term Plans (MTPs), Vision 2030 seeks to address poverty reduction, equitable wealth distribution, and sustainable development (Figure 6)(Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). The economic mainstay of this development agenda aims at achieving and sustaining an annual economic growth rate of 10%, implementing flagship projects across various sectors, and directly addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in critical areas such as agriculture, education, health, water, and the environment (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Figure 6: Kenya Vision 2030 Goals



Notes: Source: Government of the Republic of Kenya (2007)

The social cornerstone aims to create a just, cohesive, and equitable society within a clean and secure environment by promoting equity and wealth creation opportunities for people experiencing poverty (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). The political governance pillar is dedicated to realizing an issue-based, people-centered, result-oriented, and accountable democratic system by deepening and accelerating governance reforms to create a conducive environment for business, protect individual rights, and support institutions as safeguards against abuse of power (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). This comprehensive approach underscores Kenya's commitment to sustainable and inclusive development, setting a clear path towards a more prosperous future led by economic transformation (Jacobsen et al., 2023; Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Despite concerted efforts, the overall economic growth rate under Kenya Vision 2030 has been slower than anticipated, averaging around half of the targeted 10% per annum (Mwaniki et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the vision's emphasis on technology and innovation has driven significant investments in ICT infrastructure, particularly in Nairobi, where the growth of e-commerce and e-governance is becoming increasingly pronounced (Mwaniki et al., 2017). Moreover, implementing the 2010 constitution has been a pivotal aspect of Vision 2030, aiming to enhance governance and ensure the equitable distribution of resources through devolution (Hope, 2015; Nyadera et al., 2020). As of 2024, Kenya Vision 2030 has achieved some successes, particularly in infrastructure development and ICT integration (Mwaniki et al., 2017). However, challenges such as achieving the desired economic growth rates, ensuring adequate resource allocation in education and health, and addressing social equity issues persist (Mwaniki et al., 2017).

In addition to its commitment to Kenya Vision 2030, Kenya has also implemented the Big Four Agenda, initiated in 2017, emphasizing manufacturing, affordable housing, universal healthcare, and food security (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2020). The Big Four Agenda is designed to accelerate the attainment of Kenya Vision 2030 by aligning with its overarching goals while being incorporated into the Third Medium-Term Plan 2018-2022 (MTPIII) (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2020). One of the primary objectives of such policy was to increase the manufacturing sector's GDP share to 15% by 2022 (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2020). However, this target has faced significant challenges, including slower-than-expected growth and issues related to international competitiveness, and as of 2022, the manufacturing sector's GDP share is still at 8%

(Mwasiaji, 2019; World Bank, 2024). Moreover, Kenya has heavily relied on external borrowing to finance its ambitious development projects, raising concerns about debt sustainability (Bett, 2018). This reliance on external funds has sparked debates regarding public debt management, with calls for more robust policies to avert a potential debt crisis (Bett, 2018). A substantial portion of these borrowed funds has been channeled into significant infrastructure investments, driven by the belief that such developments would catalyze economic growth (Bett, 2018).

The current Vision 2030 agenda, described by its creators as a blueprint approach, reflects a development strategy that aligns closely with the principles of modernization theory (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). This policy integrates essential guiding principles of modernization theory at its core, such as striving for high and sustained economic growth, implementing flagship projects, and addressing critical sectors to facilitate the movement of labor and resources from lower- to higher-productivity sectors, thereby demonstrating a commitment to structural change (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007; Bernstein, 1971; Tipps, 1973). Furthermore, the policy emphasizes political progress toward democratic transition, linked by the modernization theory to cultural shifts toward more rational, tolerant, and participatory values resulting from economic growth (Goorha, 2010; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). The Kenyan legislator's focus on social emancipation is evident in the vision's goal of creating a just, cohesive, and equitable society with opportunities for all citizens and emphasizing governance reforms, transparency, and accountability, thereby reflecting a recognition of the importance of good governance in facilitating development highlighted in modernization theory (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007; Goorha, 2010; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Furthermore, Kenya Vision 2030 perceives Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a key driver of economic growth and development (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). It further acknowledges the critical role of private sector investment, particularly from international investors attracted by favorable sovereign credit ratings and benchmark bonds, reflecting a positive stance on FDI as a capital source for development initiatives (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2020). These elements are in complete alignment with the principles of modernization theory.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aligns with modernization theory in several ways, reflecting the core principles of economic development, infrastructure improvement, and global integration (Chang, 2019; Huang, 2016; Liu et al., 2020). This emphasis on developing infrastructure and increasing the integration of international markets aligns with the objectives set forth in Kenya Vision 2030 and its subsidiary policies. As a result, Kenya's participation in China's BRI can signifie a substantial advancement in its economic and infrastructural landscape, harmonizing closely with its overarching development agenda.

To substantiate this assertion, the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Mombasa to Nairobi and the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor serve as exemplary cases. The SGR, a flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project in Kenya, aims to enhance transportation efficiency and reduce costs, thereby fostering economic growth (Githaiga & Bing, 2019). Similarly, the LAPSSET Corridor seeks to promote regional integration and economic development in East Africa (Mkutu, 2022). These BRI projects have the potential to significantly enhance Kenya's trade capabilities through upgraded infrastructure, thereby bolstering trade and economic integration within the region while conforming to the principles outlined by modernization theory (Dumor & Yao, 2019).
Therefore, the optimistic prospects heralded by engagement with Chinese investments under the Belt and Road Initiative cohere with the objectives of Kenya Vision 2030. These investments promise to achieve strategic goals that support the economic transformation envisioned in Kenya's development agenda, further reinforcing the distinctly modernist approach emphasized in this initiative.

Despite this, critical issues emerge that require due attention. Although the BRI has facilitated infrastructure development, improving connectivity and economic activities, it has also significantly increased Kenya's debt burden, raising questions about the sustainability of these projects given the high levels of borrowing involved (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). This perspective is particularly relevant when considering the principles of dependency theory, which critically views Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a mechanism for economic domination (Smith, 1981; Akujuobi, 2008). Dependency theory posits that FDI often serves as a channel through which multinational corporations from developed countries exploit the resources and labor of developing nations, leading to an unequal exchange that primarily benefits the developed world while perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment in the host countries (Akujuobi, 2008). In Kenya, this dynamic is evident as the influx of BRI-related Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has resulted in foreign control over critical infrastructure, posing risks to the nation's sovereignty. While significant, the BRI's contribution to Kenya's infrastructure development must be weighed against these dependency-related risks, which underscore the potential for long-term economic domination and reduced sovereignty for the host nation (Githaiga & Bing, 2019).

As of March 2023, Chinese loans amounted to $6.3 billion, representing approximately 64 percent of Kenya's bilateral external debt and 17 percent of its total external public debt (Kell, 2023). Although significant, Chinese lending is not the dominant source of Kenya's external borrowing; multilateral borrowing, particularly from the World Bank, constitutes nearly double the bilateral total, making the World Bank Kenya's most significant single external creditor (Kell, 2023). This context highlights that while Chinese financing plays a significant and growing role, it is part of a broader debt landscape. The repayment burden of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) loans has been substantial (Kell, 2023; Githaiga & Bing, 2019). However, the greater issue lies in the railway's inflated construction costs and its ongoing inability to generate sufficient revenue, even with government mandates to redirect cargo traffic (Kell, 2023). This situation underscores a legacy of poor decision-making and planning within the Kenyan government, influenced more by short-term electoral gains than strategic necessity, and is indicative of a broader pattern of fiscal mismanagement and unsustainable debt accumulation (Kell, 2023). This perspective reallocates greater responsibility to the Kenyan government for its failure to maximize the potential benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative investments rather than merely portraying it as a victim of neocolonialism, as suggested by dependency theory.

6.1.1 Kenya SWOT Analysis

The subsequent section endeavors to present a systematic evaluation of the implications associated with the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya, employing the analytical framework of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. This approach does not purport to establish causality but aims to explore the multifaceted impacts of BRI investments on Kenya's national development agenda through a structured examination. By scrutinizing the internal and external factors influencing these investments, the SWOT analysis provides critical insights into the alignment between the BRI and Kenya's strategic objectives and development priorities.

The analysis will be presented as a comprehensive 2x2 matrix, facilitating a detailed overview of the benefits, challenges, and potential strategies for optimizing BRI investments in Kenya within the broader context of the country's development trajectories.

Figure 7: SWOT matrix Kenya

Strengths: ● Infrastructure Development ● Economic Growth and Transformation ● Job creation	Weaknesses: ● Debt Sustainability ● Economic Dependency
Opportunities: ● Regional Integration ● Technological Advancement ● Increased Trade ● Attraction of FDI	Threats: ● Geopolitical Risks ● Social Discontent ● Environmental Concerns ● Vulnerability to Global Economic Fluctuation ● Project Implementation Issues

Notes: elaborated by the author of this thesis

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has catalyzed significant infrastructure development in Kenya, notably through the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor. These projects could enhance transportation efficiency, reduce costs, and foster economic growth by facilitating trade and regional integration (Githaiga & Bing, 2019; Dumor & Yao, 2019). Furthermore, the increased investments driven by the BRI in sectors such as manufacturing and technology can contribute to economic diversification and growth, attracting more foreign direct investment (FDI) (Musyimi et al., 2018). As already covered in the case study, these strengths related to implementing the BRI coincide with Kenya's current development agenda. Additionally, BRI projects can generate numerous employment opportunities during construction and subsequent operations (Musyimi et al., 2018). This aspect represents a prospective opportunity for Kenya to address the prevalent issue of unemployment, particularly among the substantial youth population, while simultaneously ensuring skills development opportunities (Filmer & Fox, 2014). Moreover, the BRI projects present opportunities for enhanced regional integration, facilitating trade, strengthening economic ties, and promoting collective economic growth in East Africa (Mkutu, 2022). Collaboration with China under the BRI framework can lead to technology transfer and innovation, helping Kenya develop its technological capabilities and enhance its competitive advantage in various sectors (Dumor &

Yao, 2019). Furthermore, enhanced connectivity through BRI infrastructure projects can boost Kenya's trade capabilities by improving access to international markets, increasing exports, and stimulating economic growth (Musyimi et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the high levels of borrowing associated with BRI projects have raised concerns regarding debt sustainability, with Kenya's debt-to-GDP ratio significantly increasing, posing risks to fiscal stability and economic sovereignty (Irandu & Owilla, 2020; Kell, 2023). The heavy reliance on Chinese loans and investments may lead to economic dependency, undermining Kenya's economic autonomy and exposing it to external economic shocks (Githaiga & Bing, 2019). Challenges such as inflated construction costs, delays, and insufficient revenue generation from projects like the SGR highlight inefficiencies in project implementation and planning (Kell, 2023).
Moreover, the geopolitical dynamics surrounding the BRI, including tensions between China and other global powers, can pose risks to Kenya's political and economic stability. Aligning too closely with China may affect Kenya's relationships with other international partners (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is significantly boosting China's geopolitical influence in East Africa by strategically developing infrastructure that aligns with its broader regional goals. Projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in Kenya enhance economic connectivity and secure vital trade routes while creating long-term involvement with Chinese companies, bolstering China's soft power in the region (Flint & Zhu, 2019; Gu & Qiu, 2019). This integration facilitates greater Chinese participation in East African economic activities, solidifying its position as an emerging player in the region's development and governance structures. Consequently, China's investment in infrastructure through the BRI is perceived as a strategic move to embed itself in Kenya's economic framework, ensuring long-term advantages and stronger bilateral ties (Alden & Large, 2019; Power et al., 2018). These dynamics highlight the BRI's dual economic and geopolitical objectives, underscoring its role in enhancing China's global influence and setting the stage for further discussions. Moreover, large-scale infrastructure projects can lead to significant environmental impacts, including habitat destruction, pollution, and displacement of communities, necessitating measures to address these environmental concerns and ensure sustainable development (Schindler et al., 2019). Additionally, issues related to land acquisition, displacement, and insufficient stakeholder engagement can lead to social discontent and resistance to BRI projects, potentially disrupting project implementation and affecting social cohesion (Anthony, 2019).

6.2 Tanzania Case Study

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025, or TDV 2025, is the fundamental framework for Tanzania's national development strategy. Its primary goal is to elevate the country to a middle-income status with a high quality of life by 2025 (FAO, 2023). Although initiated in the mid-1990s, TDV 2025 has encountered considerable obstacles in effectively harmonizing political and economic objectives (Morwa, 2017). TDV 2025 is organized around three core objectives illustrated in Figure 7.

Building on past national goals such as the Independence Vision and the Arusha Declaration of 1967, TDV 2025 aims to address previous shortcomings like over-reliance on state control and external aid, weak economic management, and governance issues, which hindered the full realization of earlier visions (Morwa, 2017).

Several critical strategic areas have been envisioned to ensure the successful implementation of the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 (TDV 2025). Firstly, there is an emphasis on promoting a developmental mindset and competitiveness, which involves sound economic management, substantial infrastructure investments, fostering self-reliance, and enhancing human capital development (FAO, 2023). Additionally, there is a focus on promoting democratization and popular participation, intending to foster an open and democratic society that provides equal opportunities, upholds leadership integrity, improves public services, and decentralizes political and fiscal responsibilities (FAO, 2023). Furthermore, the establishment of continuous monitoring and evaluation frameworks, including setting up performance benchmarks and robust communication systems to ensure accountability and track progress and lastly, enhancing governance and the rule of law, aiming to improve accountability, integrity, and transparency across public sectors, civil society, and law enforcement, while embedding the vision's core values into the Union Constitution to solidify these principles (FAO, 2023).

Figure 8: TDV 2025 Goals

Notes: Source: FAO, 2023.

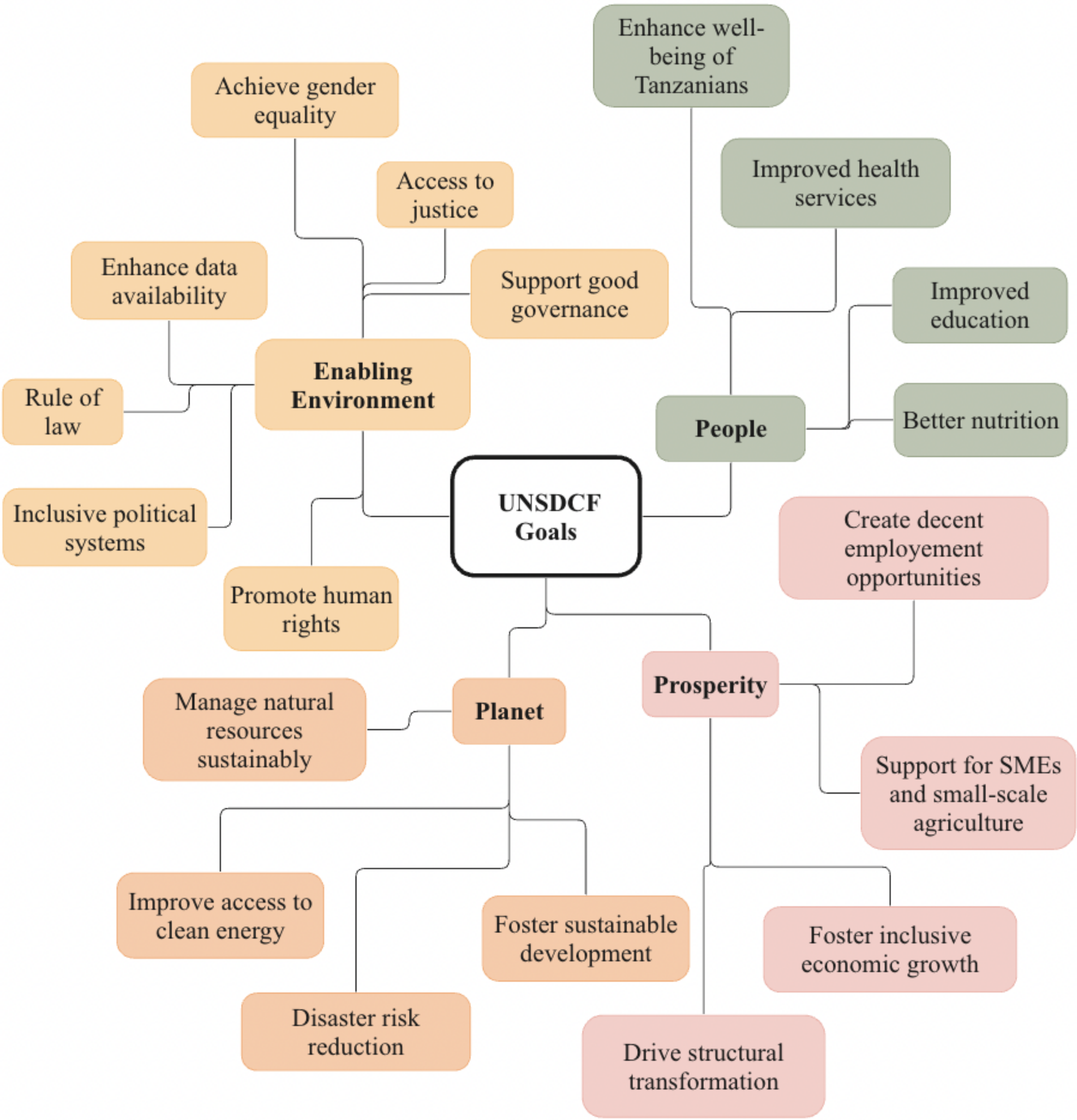
Moreover, TDV 2025 is supported by a series of Five-Year Development Plans (FYDPs), including the Third National Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP III) for 2021/22 to 2025/26. FYDP III focuses on industrialization, improving agricultural productivity, infrastructure development, and enhancing social services such as education and healthcare (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2021).

Therefore, the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 (TDV 2025) is a comprehensive roadmap for achieving sustainable growth and equitable wealth distribution. Although it aimed to elevate Tanzania to middle-income status by 2025, realizing this target has faced significant challenges, as persistent poverty and the necessity for a revised development model have made the goals increasingly challenging to attain (Mandalu & Costa, 2018). Despite these obstacles, TDV 2025 continues to provide a structured approach toward addressing economic and social disparities, underscoring the importance of adaptive strategies to meet the evolving needs of the nation.

In addition to Tanzania's commitment to the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, the country has also pledged to uphold the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by integrating its national strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations in Tanzania, 2022; FAO, 2023). The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2022-2027, developed in partnership with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania (GURT), outlines a coordinated plan to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the national development goals outlined in the third National Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP III) and the Zanzibar Development Plan (ZADEP) for 2021-2026. The UNSDCF also aims to meet regional commitments, including the East Africa Community Vision 2050 and the Africa Agenda 2063 (United Nations in Tanzania, 2022; FAO, 2023).

The UNSDCF 2022-2027 centers on four strategic goals, summarized in the Figure 8. To attain these objectives, the UN will bolster legislative and regulatory frameworks, develop innovative planning and financing mechanisms, strengthen institutional capabilities, and increase community engagement in development processes (United Nations in Tanzania, 2022). These endeavors are designed to ensure inclusive development, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations, aligning closely with the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 goals.

Figure 9: UNSDCF 2022-2027 Goals



Notes: Source: United Nations in Tanzania (2017).

The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 exhibits some alignment with principles of modernization theory, particularly in its emphasis on economic growth, technological advancement, governance, and infrastructure development. TDV 2025 underscores the need for a robust and competitive economy as a primary driver for sustainable development (FAO, 2023), which aligns with modernization theory's focus on economic growth and industrialization as essential for societal advancement (Tipps, 1973; Bernstein, 1971). Additionally, TDV 2025 highlights the importance of adapting to changing market and technological conditions (FAO, 2023), resonating with modernization theory's emphasis on technological innovation in driving economic and social progress (Babawulle, 2020). Governance and institutions are also central to TDV 2025, emphasizing good governance, the rule of law, and public participation in development (FAO, 2023); aligning with modernization theory suggests that effective governance and institutions are crucial for facilitating modernization and societal advancement (Bernstein, 1971).

While there are clear points of alignment with modernization theory, the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 also incorporates elements of dependency theory. TDV 2025 addresses the issue of donor dependency and the need to break away from it (FAO, 2023), reflecting dependency theory's critique of how developing countries can become reliant on external aid, which hinders their self-sufficiency and autonomy (Akujuobi, 2008). TDV 2025 also emphasizes national unity and cohesion for development (FAO, 2023), echoing dependency theory's focus on internal solidarity and collective action to counter external influences that perpetuate dependency (Angotti, 1981). Additionally, TDV 2025 promotes self-reliance by mobilizing Tanzania's capabilities for development (FAO, 2023), consistent with dependency theory's advocacy for strategies that reduce reliance on external actors for economic progress (Smith, 1981; Namkoong, 1999).

The priorities highlighted in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, supported by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2022-2027, also appear to partially align with the objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments. The BRI presents an opportunity for Tanzania to develop infrastructure that can foster economic development and transformation, thereby ensuring greater independence for the country while enhancing infrastructure is expected to lower the cost of doing business and improve the competitiveness of Tanzanian goods in the global market (Taylor & Zajontz, 2020).

The Bagamoyo Port project is a significant case study for understanding the reception of BRI investments in Tanzania and their perceived alignment with the Tanzanian national development agenda. As already explored in section 3 of this thesis, this project, a key initiative under the BRI, aims to enhance Tanzania's maritime infrastructure and boost economic growth (Barton, 2021). Initial negotiations underscored the strategic importance of the Bagamoyo Port for Tanzania's economic development and its potential to become a significant trade hub in East Africa (Li et al., 2013). The Chinese government and firms offered a package deal, including loans and investments across multiple sectors, with significant financial support for the port's construction (Li et al., 2013). However, negotiations involved terms of loans, interest rates, and repayment schedules, with Tanzania aiming to secure favorable terms to avoid future debt distress (Barton, 2021). Control and ownership of the port upon completion were also critical aspects of the negotiations, with Tanzania seeking substantial control to safeguard national interests, while China preferred significant operational oversight to ensure efficiency and return on investment (Barton, 2021). Magufuli's nationalist and developmentalist stance led to a more cautious approach towards foreign investments, emphasizing national sovereignty and control over strategic assets (Barton, 2021; The Citizen, 2021; Hursh, 2019). Concerns about the social and environmental impacts of the port project, including displacement and environmental degradation, were critical discussion points (Schindler et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, recent developments indicate progress towards realizing this megaproject, with the Tanzanian government allocating significant funds for it in the 2024/2025 financial year (Luhwago, 2024). This $10 billion project will involve collaboration primarily between China, Oman, and Tanzania, with China Merchants Holdings International (CMHI) tasked with the construction and the Omani government's State General Reserve Fund funding the associated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) (CGTN, 2023). The Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) oversees the project's development and implementation, aiming to make the Bagamoyo Port the largest in East Africa by handling 20 million TEUs by 2045 (Luhwago, 2024; BBC, 2016). Therefore, in this instance, Tanzania will be able to exercise more substantial control over implementing this BRI project.

In conclusion, the bargaining process between Tanzania and China over the Bagamoyo Port project exemplifies the complexities inherent in large-scale infrastructure negotiations within the BRI framework. In Tanzania's case, determining whether the investments proposed by the Belt and Road Initiative align with the national development agenda is more problematic. This complexity arises from conflicts of interest and ideologies, as Tanzania's development agenda incorporates principles from opposite social theories that require significant decisional effort to be synchronously and equitably fulfilled. Additionally, the enduring influence of Tanzanian Ujamaa, Nyerere's African socialism, the Independence Vision, and the Arusha Declaration of 1967 compels Tanzania towards greater caution in opening up to the BRI’s projects (Kelsall, 2003; Morwa, 2017).

Despite these challenges, the data suggests that the BRI can align with Tanzania's development agenda. The Bagamoyo Port case will serve as a critical testing ground for Tanzania in the optimal management of investments under the Belt and Road Initiative, ultimately leaving the difficult judgment to future research.

6.2.1 Tanzania SWOT Analysis

This section systematically evaluates the ramifications associated with implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Tanzania, utilizing the analytical framework of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Akin to the precedent SWOT analysis of Kenya, this approach does not seek to establish causality but aims to explore the implications of BRI investments on Tanzania's national development agenda through a structured examination.

The analysis will be presented as a comprehensive 2x2 matrix, facilitating a detailed overview of the benefits, challenges, and potential strategies for optimizing BRI investments in Tanzania within the broader context of the country's development trajectories.

Figure 10: SWOT matrix Tanzania

Strengths: ● Infrastructure Development ● Economic Growth ● Employment Opportunities	Weaknesses: ● Debt Sustainability ● Economic Dependency ● Limited Local Involvement ● Negotiation Challenges
Opportunities: ● Regional Integration ● Industrialization ● Enhanced Global Connectivity ● Capacity Building	Threats: ● Sovereignty Concerns ● Social Discontent ● Environmental Concerns ● Geopolitical Implications

Notes: elaborated by the author of this thesis

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has facilitated substantial infrastructure development in Tanzania, encompassing improvements in roads, ports, and railways, the significance of which for the country's economic growth and regional connectivity has been elucidated in preceding chapters (Taylor & Zajontz, 2020). For instance, projects like the Bagamoyo Port are anticipated to transform Tanzania into a significant trade hub in East Africa (Barton, 2021; Luhwago, 2024; BBC, 2016). Moreover, akin to the case of Kenya, BRI projects possess the potential to generate employment opportunities for local populations, contributing to skill development and reducing unemployment rates, although this aspect has yet to be thoroughly evaluated by independent research (Musyimi et al., 2018). Nonetheless, foreign direct investment (FDI) in general, and BRI investments in particular, bring advanced technology and expertise, aiding Tanzania in modernizing its infrastructure and industries (FAO, 2023). The BRI also offers opportunities for enhanced regional integration, improving trade routes and economic ties with neighboring countries (Mkutu, 2022). Infrastructure improvements can attract more industrial investments, promoting diversification and modernization of Tanzania's economy (FAO, 2023). Furthermore, projects like the Bagamoyo Port enhance Tanzania's position in global trade networks, potentially increasing exports and economic influence (Taylor & Zajontz, 2020). Collaboration with Chinese firms can lead to technology transfer and capacity building, enhancing local expertise and industry standards (Musyimi et al., 2018).

However, the increased borrowing to finance BRI projects has raised concerns about Tanzania's debt sustainability and the potential for financial instability (Irandu & Owilla, 2020). Furthermore, the dominance of Chinese firms in BRI projects may limit opportunities for local companies and workers, potentially leading to economic disparities (Schindler et al., 2019). As in the case of Kenya, available data suggests that the BRI has significantly bolstered China's political influence in Tanzania. This influence extends to shaping political decisions and aligning Tanzania's development strategies with Chinese interests, thus integrating Tanzanian economic growth more closely with China's global economic plans (Khan et al., 2018). The involvement of Chinese companies in Tanzanian infrastructure projects has occasionally sparked local political tensions and debates about sovereignty and control over national assets (Hursh, 2019). The Bagamoyo Port, in particular, is envisioned as a critical node in the maritime Silk Road, particularly enhancing China's influence over regional maritime trade (BBC, 2016; Haralambides & Merk, 2020; Luhwago, 2024). Once operational, this port is expected to boost Tanzania's role in global trade, aligning with

China's strategic objectives of increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean and securing vital sea lanes for trade and energy supplies (Haralambides & Merk, 2020). These developments underscore China's strategy to establish a stronghold in East Africa, ensuring long-term economic and geopolitical benefits through strategic infrastructure investments, leaving ample space for further analysis in the Tanzanian context. Moreover, heavy reliance on Chinese investment and loans may lead to economic dependence, reducing Tanzania's financial autonomy (Smith, 1981; Akujuobi, 2008). Foreign control over critical infrastructure could undermine Tanzania's sovereignty and decision-making autonomy (Githaiga & Bing, 2019).

These concerns have been at the center of the debate regarding implementing the Bagamoyo project, as securing favorable terms in BRI agreements has been challenging, with concerns over the terms of loans and control over main assets (Barton, 2021). These aspects have led Tanzania's engagement with the BRI to clash with the principles of the country's national development agenda.

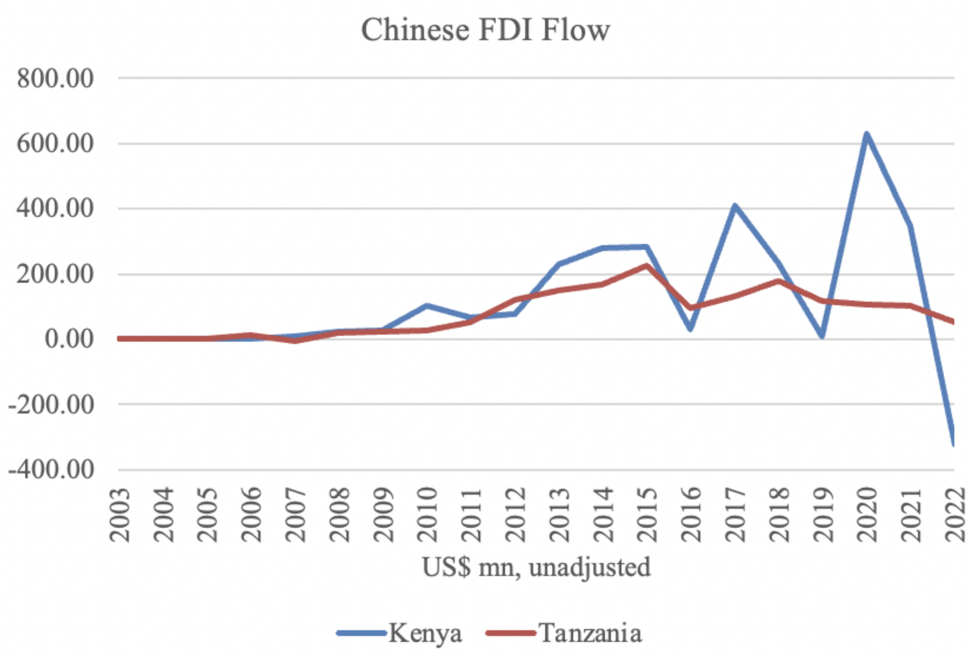
6.3 Comparative Analysis

Despite Kenya and Tanzania formally signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2017 and 2018, respectively, the nature of Chinese investments and engagement with these countries post-2013 indicates that infrastructure projects, even those initiated before the BRI era, can be classified as BRI projects (Hairong & Sautman, 2023).

The trends in Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to Kenya and Tanzania over the past 14 years, as illustrated in Figure 11, indicate a marked escalation in Chinese investments in both countries around 2010, coinciding with the period immediately preceding the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Kenya's FDI flow exhibits greater volatility than Tanzania's, with notable spikes in 2015, 2017, and 2020. This fluctuation might indicate Kenya's larger-scale projects and potentially higher-risk ventures that attract substantial, albeit inconsistent, investment inflows. However, the drastic decline in 2022 could signify a shift in investment dynamics or external economic pressures, such as debt distress driven by suboptimal domestic policy decisions (Kell, 2023).

Conversely, Tanzania's Chinese FDI flow appears more stable yet consistently lower than Kenya's post-2010. This steadier trend might reflect a more conservative or systematic approach to Chinese investment, potentially recalling Tanzania's cautious stance towards foreign investments and its relentless negotiation processes, as exemplified in the Bagamoyo Port project (Barton, 2021).

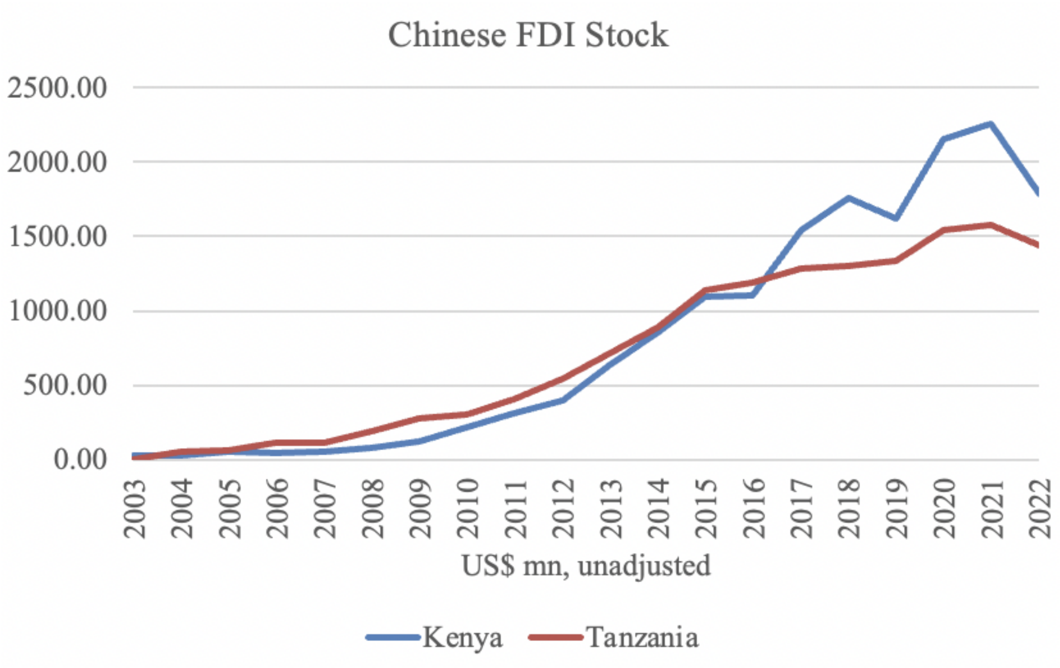
Figure 11: Chinese FDI Flow to Kenya and Tanzania in US$ mn, unadjusted



Notes: Source: Johns Hopkins Univeristy SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative (2024), visualized by the author of this thesis.

Figure 12 illustrates the cumulative Chinese FDI stock, offering a broader perspective on long-term investment trends. Both countries exhibit a steady increase in Chinese FDI stock from 2003 to 2022, with significant growth after 2010. Notably, Kenya surpasses Tanzania's total FDI stock, particularly from 2016 onwards. This divergence aligns with Kenya's strategic efforts to position itself as a regional hub through large-scale infrastructure projects like the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, which have drawn substantial and continuous Chinese investments (Wissenbach, 2020). While Tanzania demonstrates consistent growth in its FDI stock, it exhibits a more moderated increase, reflecting its balanced yet cautious approach to integrating Chinese investments within its development framework. Kenya's more aggressive and expansive approach towards attracting Chinese FDI is evident in the flow and stock figures, aligning with its ambitious pro-FDI Vision 2030 agenda.

Figure 12: *Chinese FDI Stock in Kenya and Tanzania in US$ mn, unadjusted*



Notes: Source: Johns Hopkins Univeristy SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative (2024), visualized by the author of this thesis.

Tanzania's steadier increase in FDI flow and stock reflects a more measured integration of Chinese investments, consistent with its Tanzania Development Vision 2025. Unlike Kenya, Tanzania has adopted a more cautious approach to BRI investments, influenced by the principles of African socialism and historical circumspection towards foreign investment (Kelsall, 2003; Morwa, 2017). The Bagamoyo Port project exemplifies this strategic caution, with negotiations focusing on securing favorable terms to avoid future debt distress and ensuring substantial national control over the port's operations (Barton, 2021).

Kenya's and Tanzania's differing approaches to BRI investments underscore the importance of aligning foreign investments with national development priorities. Kenya's alignment with modernization principles contrasts with Tanzania's nuanced approach, balancing modernization aspirations with concerns about dependency and sovereignty.

In conclusion, while both countries have and will benefit from Chinese investments under the Belt and Road framework, their differing strategic approaches reveal varied implications for their respective development agendas. Kenya's rapid but volatile investment inflows underscore an aggressive modernization drive, whereas Tanzania's stable yet conservative investment patterns reflect a cautious but potentially more sustainable trajectory.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has thoroughly explored China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya and Tanzania. By integrating modernization and dependency theories, the study has offered a balanced perspective on the BRI's influences in these countries, highlighting the opportunities and challenges that arise from deepening ties with .

The main findings reveal that BRI projects have the potential to significantly enhance Kenya's trade capabilities through upgraded infrastructure, thereby supporting trade and economic integration within the region while conforming to the principles outlined by modernization theory (Dumor & Yao, 2019). Consequently, the optimistic prospects heralded by engagement with Chinese investments under the Belt and Road Initiative align with the objectives of Kenya Vision 2030, supporting the economic transformation envisioned in Kenya's development agenda.

In contrast, Tanzania's engagement with the BRI is more complex. Determining whether the investments proposed by the Belt and Road Initiative align with the national development agenda has proved to be challenging due to conflicts of interest and ideologies. Tanzania's development agenda incorporates principles from various social theories and political principles that require significant decisional effort to be synchronously and equitably fulfilled. Additionally, the enduring influence of Tanzanian Ujamaa, Nyerere's African socialism, the Independence Vision, and the Arusha Declaration of 1967 compels Tanzania towards greater caution in opening up to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Kelsall, 2003; Morwa, 2017). Despite these challenges, data suggests that the BRI can align with Tanzania's development agenda, with the Bagamoyo Port case serving as a critical testing ground for the optimal management of BRI investments.

Moreover, the findings have revealed intricate dynamics surrounding BRI projects in these two African countries, emphasizing the need for targeted research to explore these initiatives' specific socio-economic, political, and environmental impacts. This study identifies multiple research gaps, presenting opportunities for further investigation into the local implications of the BRI in Kenya and Tanzania, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of China's role in the broader region.

The analysis of secondary sources has further revealed that the BRI's significant infrastructure investments in ports, railways, and other key projects align with modernization theory by facilitating economic growth, job creation, and trade facilitation (e.g., Taylor & Zajontz, 2020; Musyimi et al., 2018). However, dependency on external actors raises concerns about economic vulnerabilities, aligning with critiques from dependency theory (e.g., Irandu & Owilla, 2020).

The study highlights the strategic considerations and policy implications of China's expanding influence in East Africa. Understanding how Kenya and Tanzania balance their national interests with strategic partnerships with China offers valuable lessons for other nations engaging with the BRI. Kenya and Tanzania's experiences underscore the complexities of managing dependencies on external actors while safeguarding national sovereignty and advocating for strong institutions that prioritize national well-being (e.g., Barton, 2021; Githaiga & Bing, 2019). Additionally, the findings show that BRI can potentially enhance regional connectivity and cooperation in East Africa (e.g., Guo et al., 2021; Gyamerah et al., 2021; Y. Chen, 2018). By fostering regional integration, these investments can contribute to broader economic development and job creation in the region, supporting the governments in addressing the challenges posed by a fast-growing population and youth bulge (Lin, 2012).

Based on the insights gained from this research, recommendations are proposed for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders involved in shaping the future of China's BRI in East Africa. For instance, more targeted research is needed on the specific impacts of BRI projects in Kenya and Tanzania, considering their unique socio-economic and political contexts (Komakech & Ombati, 2023). Future research should explore the broader implications of infrastructure investments and economic partnerships facilitated by the BRI, extending beyond mere economic growth. For instance, studies should assess the impact of this strategic engagement on various socio-economic dimensions, including gender inequality and human rights engagement, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the initiative's effects. Policymakers and researchers should strive to maintain a balanced perspective when assessing the benefits and risks of the BRI in East Africa. By incorporating diverse viewpoints and considering the long-term implications of deepening ties with China, stakeholders can make informed decisions that align with national interests. Ultimately, continuous monitoring and evaluation of BRI projects in East Africa are crucial to assess their effectiveness and address any potential challenges. Stakeholders should establish mechanisms for tracking the progress of infrastructure investments and evaluating their socio-economic impacts on local communities.

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