Introduction

According to one observer, the People’s Republic of China (PRC/China)’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), one of two components of its larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is “All about Africa.”¹ Another analyst asserts, more ominously, that the MSRI in Africa is an integral part of a Chinese attempt to build a new Sinocentric system and consolidate China’s position as a global superpower.² Looking northward, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which is the “physical heart of the BRI” will “play a decisive role in the building of” China’s ambitious venture.³ Similar to the case of Africa, China’s aims to exploit its initiative in MENA to “expand its reach and influence”

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J.-M. F. Blanchard (✉)
Mr. & Mrs. S.H. Wong Center for the Study of Multinational Corporations, Los Gatos, CA, USA
e-mail: executive_director@mnccenter.org

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and reshape the “economic balance.” Aside from the issues raised above about China’s true motivations, the relevance of Africa and MENA to the MSRI and its cousin the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), and the geopolitical impact of China’s scheme, two other critical empirical questions are what is the actual progress of the MSRI and what are the net benefits of MSRI projects. After all, it is hard to envision the MSRI transforming country behaviors and regional orders (much less the global one), if projects are not completed and/or fail to deliver the desired outcomes.

The existing literature has a limited ability to shed light on these issues partly because it is relatively scant. This defect, however, is not the biggest one. One noteworthy issue is the tendency to analyze the entire BRI, rather than to research just the MSRI or the SREB. A second is the failure to delve into a specific region or country, problematic given the experiences of individual countries can be quite heterogeneous. A third is that analyses of the MSRI and SREB in Africa and MENA that stress an individual country often deliver a review of the relevant country’s overall ties with China instead of a genuine MSRI study. A fourth is the tendency to equate headlines, official communiqués, or Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with concrete action or outcomes. A fifth is the dearth of systematic studies of the net benefits of MSRI projects. A sixth is the failure to unpack carefully the factors driving host country domestic and foreign policy decisions, which too often are associated exclusively with the economic stimuli flowing from the MSRI or a participant country’s broader economic ties with China. To address some of these issues, this book concentrates solely on the MSRI and, beyond this, select countries within the Africa and MENA regions. In addition, contributors emphasize analysis of the MSRI. Furthermore, chapter writers evaluating the drivers of particular country’s policies contemplate multiple factors, not just economic ones.

Some question the payoff of exploring the MSRI in Africa and MENA. One set of scholars asserted, “Africa’s inclusion in the Belt and Road Initiative is minute.” A MENA specialist wondered about the wisdom of academics “dancing to the Chinese tune,” devoting so much time studying something so vague.” While these points are well taken, Africa deserves attention because of China’s significant presence there, the prominence given to the MSRI and SREB in Africa-Chinese institutions such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), and the existence of major MSRI projects in many African countries. MENA
warrants attention because it is central in global energy affairs, strategically located, and becoming China’s “most important region” outside the Asia-Pacific Region (APR). Aside from this, individual MENA MSRI countries such as Iran significantly influence regional and global political and security dynamics. From a conceptual standpoint, study of the MSRI in Africa and MENA can enhance our knowledge of how politics and economics interact to shape participant country attitudes towards the MSRI, its implementation, and its political and economic effects. The business case for studying the MSRI in Africa and MENA is to develop a richer understanding of the non-market environment as well as the business opportunities (or not) flowing from MSRI as well as SREB projects.

This book offers several findings. First, the MSRI appears to have advanced more in Africa than MENA and major land projects (e.g., railways) seem to have progressed more than maritime ones. Second, the MSRI is far from being realized, with some projects canceled (e.g., in Tanzania), nonexistent (e.g., Iraq), and many in-progress (e.g., Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Gulf Cooperation Council/GCC states, and Iran). Third, as shown by case studies of Egypt, Iraq, and Tanzania, history, good relations, and/or economic need do not ensure MSRI project implementation. Fourth, the MSRI is promoting connectivity, but this connectivity may not be “win-win,” but asymmetric or negative. Fifth, the economic attractions of the MSRI and broader economic links with China do not suffice to explain the stance countries such as Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, GCC states, Iran, and Tanzania have taken toward the MSRI, China, or China-favored positions such as the “One China policy.” Also relevant are the domestic political needs and national interest perceptions of leaders, internal security imperatives, development ideologies, external security threats, China’s interests and situation, and the availability (or not) of appealing alternatives such as international financial institutions (IFIs) or the United States (US).

The next (second) section of this chapter supplies background on the MSRI in its entirety. The third gives an overview of Africa-China and MENA-China ties and their drivers from 1949 through the present, focusing on the period prior to the birth of the MSRI in 2013. The fourth turns to examining the MSRI in Africa before providing an in-depth treatment of the MSRI in MENA. Among other themes, the fourth section reflects on China’s objectives as well as the goals of MSRI participants in Africa and MENA. It also identifies some of the issues—e.g.,
neocolonialism—that have come up in connection with discussions of the MSRI. The fifth consists of focused summaries of the contributions in this volume. The sixth and final part offers summary remarks, details some implications of the introduction and book chapters, and identifies several areas for future research.

**The MSRI**

This part of the chapter provides a primer on the MSRI broadly speaking (the MSRI in Africa and MENA receives extensive coverage below), though it is abbreviated since the MSRI has been covered extensively elsewhere. This section initially offers a basic overview of the MSRI. Following this, it identifies some of the purposes of the MSRI. Next, it notes a number of the features of the MSRI, focusing on hard infrastructure. The financing of the MSRI is tackled in the sub-section entitled “Issues associated with the MSRI in Africa and MENA” later in this chapter. The fourth component of this section is a review of some of the issues frequently raised in connection with the MSRI. The fifth piece delivers some thoughts about the prospects for the MSRI which, for some of the more pessimistic writers, are encountering endless potholes, have been derailed, or are on life support.14

The route of the MSRI is illustrated in numerous maps. While they lack official imprimatur and often are vague, it remains clear that the MSRI aims to link China with the Europe through a, primarily but not exclusively, maritime route. In its general form, the MSRI originates from China’s east coast, runs southward through the South China Sea, and then transverses through the Indian Ocean. After this, it branches westward to the east coast of Africa and northwestward through the Arabian Sea before connecting to the Mediterranean and ultimately the European landmass, where it will merge with the SREB. Countries involved in the MSRI, some to be discussed later, include Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt, Oman, and Iran. The MSRI draws attention not only because its length runs several thousand kilometers and the populations involved run into the billions, but also because hundreds of billions of dollars of trade—especially precious energy cargos—cross the MSRI route annually.15

For China, the MSRI has manifold purposes, domestic and international, spanning the economic and political realms. On the economic
front, it aims inter alia to boost exports, yield new money-making opportunities for Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs), and improve China’s access to resources. It further seeks to help China make better use of its immense foreign currency reserves as well as advance the development of interior subnational actors. On the political front, China hopes to leverage the MSRI to build relationships, bolster its soft power, and fight terrorism and political instability. It further seeks to reduce internal parochialism and establish a legacy for China’s current paramount leader Xi Jinping.Beiing continues to emphasize its positive objectives: “building a community of shared future,” “shared growth and development,” and providing a development solution that fits the needs of developing countries. Of note, many MSRI projects may advance multiple objectives. For instance, seaports can facilitate trade, bolster contracting, foreign direct investment (FDI), and service opportunities for Chinese MNCs, enhance Chinese energy security, strengthen political ties with participants, and increase prospects for seaports in China.

Since there is no publicly available, definitive official list of MSRI projects, analysts must make their own judgments regarding the suitability of deeming an individual project an MSRI project. Projects having to do with seaports, quite logically, are commonly deemed MSRI projects. Projects connecting the sea with the land—e.g., railways, roads, and certain pipelines—also have been labeled MSRI projects. Aside from this, given connectivity (with a maritime flavor) rather than the sea itself is the core of the MSRI, projects that “connect” such as airports, bridges, and power transmission lines have been designated MSRI projects. Finally, projects that advance MSRI goals such as unobstructed trade, financial integration, and people-to-people exchange have been viewed as MSRI projects. Illustrations include airports, power generation projects, and special economic zones (SEZs).

Since its birth in 2013, the MSRI has engendered much controversy. Some of the worries mirror those associated with the SREB, but others are different partly because participants as well as affected regions and countries are different. To illustrate, India and Japan are much more concerned about the changes that might flow from the MSRI in places such as South and Southeast Asia than they are about the SREB’s ramifications in Central Asia. In any event, anxieties relate to a gamut of potential political and economic outcomes. One concern is that China’s MSRI and the larger BRI will change power orders regionally and/or globally. A second is that countries will find themselves locked into a Chinese order
or under China’s sway. A third is that China will displace non-Chinese goods, MNCs, and so on in regions and as participant nations. A fourth is that China’s MSRI will displace extant international standards such as technical or lending standards. A fifth is that China’s MSRI will results in excessive debt burdens, authoritarianism, and environmental and social dislocation in participant states. These anxieties are unwarranted in the minds of Chinese officials and many Chinese academics, however. Among other things, they counter that the MSRI is an economic (not a political scheme), that the initiative is not exclusive or closed, and that the “debt trap” accusation is baseless.

In 2017, Sri Lanka gave a Chinese company a long lease on its Hambantota seaport in exchange for debt relief. The next year, Malaysia canceled various MSRI projects such as the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), deriding them as a “new colonialism.” These events triggered a wave of skepticism about the future of the MSRI with some forecasting its demise and others predicting a major retrenchment. Since then, the atmosphere of pessimism only has grown. There is no doubt the MSRI is under pressure. Culprits include China’s slowing growth, the excessive debts of some MSRI participants, anxieties about the implications of the MSRI, increased Chinese caution, and most recently the Covid-19 pandemic. The MSRI, however, is far from dead, with diverse projects continuing. More generally, participants direly need connectivity infrastructure. Relatedly, China continues to be one of the only plausible sources of FDI, loans, and contracting. Beyond this, the purposes motivating the MSRI have not disappeared. Most probably, the MSRI will be reconfigured, refocused, and relaxed. Projects will be downsized as was the ECRL. More emphasis will be given to connectivity projects such as the Digital Silk Road that were not stressed before. The implementation of some projects will be slowed. As the studies here and elsewhere show, the MSRI’s implementation was never going to be smooth as silk, but this hardly means it will cease.

A Primer on Africa-China and MENA-China Ties

This section surveys Africa and MENA’s ties with China from 1949 through the 2010s, parsed into five periods: 1949–1979, the 1980s, the 1990s, the 2000s, and the 2010s. It aims to provide background on Africa-China and MENA-China political and economic interactions and highlight some of the factors that have shaped these dynamics. Given the
size and political, economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of Africa and MENA, country-specific nuance undoubtedly is lost through a discussion stressing ties between regions and China. Nonetheless, there are regional patterns and readers favoring country-specific treatments can, among other things, turn to the chapters herein for richer details.

1949 Through the 1970s

Africa had relatively stunted political dealings with China for most of the 1950s despite the hype surrounding the PRC’s involvement in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference (also called the “Bandung Conference”). During the 1960s and 1970s, interactions grew dramatically. Yet, the many countries had relations with China that were cool or even hostile because of the PRC’s promotion of revolution, often against established governments, throughout the African sub-continent, Chinese frictions with the Soviet Union (a key partner for many African countries), the close relations of some countries like Ethiopia with the US China’s backing for the “wrong” groups such as the Pan Africanist Congress in South Africa, and the PRC’s inward focus for much of these two periods. Nevertheless, between the 1960s and 1970s, several African states such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia established diplomatic relations with China. Moreover, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Sudan, and Tanzania signed commercial agreements and so-called Friendship Treaties with China. Africa countries ultimately would be key players in the PRC successful campaign to assume the Republic of China (Taiwan)’s place in the United Nations (UN) at the beginning of the 1970s.

Africa’s economic dealings with China from 1949 through the 1970s were trivial. Looking at trade, total exports for the entire 1970s did not even top $1.5 billion (up from a miniscule $15 million in the 1950s) with imports slightly topping $3.5 billion for the period versus $21 million for the 1950s. Available statistics indicate that Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Ghana had the largest trade relations with China from 1949 to 1979. African countries did not receive meaningful amounts of Chinese outward FDI (OFDI) during this period, though there nevertheless were some marquee investment projects such as the TanZam (Tanzania and Zambia) railway, which was an economic and political endeavor. For a portion of this period, Africa drew relatively notable amounts of foreign aid and loans from China, which sought to compete against the Soviet Union and secure support for its effort to reenter the
1949–1979 further witnessed Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia striking a variety of economic accords with China, benefitting from the dispatch of Chinese experts, receiving trade credits and loans, and obtaining Chinese industrial equipment and help in completing factories and diverse development projects. Turning to MENA, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen all established diplomatic relations with China in 1956. Two years later, Algeria recognized China. Despite this, from 1955 through the 1970s, there were many MENA countries such as Egypt, Iran, and Iraq that had troubled relations with China because of disagreements over domestic and foreign policies, though the degree to which such policies impeded ties with Beijing had much to do with these countries’ roles in China’s struggle against the Soviets. For instance, the conservative, anti-Communist Shah of Iran found it possible to deal with Beijing due to his strong anti-Soviet stance. Yet others such as Saudi Arabia completely shunned the PRC. In the 1960s, MENA-China ties intensified (though the situation varied by country) due to Beijing’s efforts to strengthen the PRC’s position in this part of the world and counter the Soviets. The unwillingness of MENA countries to abandon the Soviet Union coupled with China’s inward turn and China’s meddling in the internal affairs of MENA countries during the Cultural Revolution severely undercut this intensification. The volte face of many MENA countries against the Soviet Union and China’s reduced support for revolution later would provide a basis for resuming or bolstering relations.

As with the case of Africa, MENA’s economic linkages with China between 1949 and 1979 were relatively trivial despite the proliferation of trade and other economic arrangements that occurred following Bandung and Premier Zhou Enlai’s visit to the region in 1965. Whereas MENA’s exports to China ran $225.50 million for the 1950s, they only reached $1.22 billion for the entire 1970s. MENA’s imports from China were $268.20 million for the 1950s and aggregated $4.6 billion for the 1970s. Trade data indicates that Egypt, Syria, and Kuwait had the most extensive ties with China. China acquired goods from MENA mainly to enhance political ties and indeed seems to have acted to maintain a trade balance in favor of MENA countries to facilitate better political ties. Regarding Chinese OFDI (COFDI), sources do not suggest any notable flows to MENA between 1949 and 1979. In any event, diverse MENA countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen entered into economic and technical
cooperation accords, assistance and loan agreements, and industrial deals with China during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{The 1980s}

For the bulk of the 1980s, Africa generally remained distant from China. There were diverse reasons for this, one which was China’s focus on the West which could provide it with the capital, markets, and expertise it needed to develop. In addition, improved relations between Beijing and Moscow reduced Africa’s value to China as a battleground for confronting the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there was lingering resentment in some African capitals over the support Beijing had given to revolutionary or opposition forces in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s because these forces were anti-Soviet.\textsuperscript{37} Even so, there were countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, and Zambia that pursued closer ties with China to obtain economic goods (Ethiopia), political backing (Sudan or Zambia), or weapons (Sudan). The 1989 Tiananmen crackdown was a seminal moment for Africa–China political relations because it drove China to court African states and pushed some African states, long tired of Western human rights pressures, closer to China.\textsuperscript{38}

African economic interactions with China in the 1980s were quite limited, though notably higher than 1949–1979. They were bounded because, as noted, China’s attention was directed at the West and China husbanded its resources for its own development. They grew because of growth of African and Chinese economies, the Soviet Union’s diminished reliability as an aid supplier, and country-level factors. In any event, total trade for the entire 1980s ran around $6.6 billion. Nigeria, Sudan, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Mauritius maintained the largest trade relations with China, with oil-rich Nigeria dominant by far.\textsuperscript{39} Although COFDI was near unnoticeable and Chinese aid flows dropped, African countries still concluded economic cooperation, barter, and trade agreements with China, collaborated with it on agriculture and industrial projects, and welcomed Chinese involvement in a handful of infrastructure projects. They also obtained preferential loans and trade credits from China. Relevant states include Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{40}

In the 1980s, MENA’s political relations with China broadened and deepened for a variety of reasons. One was Chinese arms sales such as missiles to countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. A second was
intense Western pressures on certain MENA countries, particularly relevant in the case of Iran. A third was the need of MENA countries such as Iran and Iraq for FDI, infrastructure, and other economic assistance to recover from the devastation caused by war or internal strife. A fourth, particularly pertinent for GCC states was Saudi Arabia’s newfound willingness to maintain closer relations with China. Finally, China’s support for revolutionary groups in the Middle East had notably declined.41

MENA’s trade with China jumped considerably in the 1980s, with exports hitting $2.52 billion and imports reaching $12.17 billion. The countries having the largest trade with China feature countries with impressive energy endowments such as Saudi Arabia (the largest trader with China by far), Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with Iraq and Morocco also having noteworthy trade ties with China.42 Sources do not indicate any meaningful amounts of COFDI going into MENA in the 1980s. Still, China was active in infrastructure in some countries. For instance, it built bridges, water reservoirs, and irrigation projects as well as a major hydroelectric dam in Iraq. States such as Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia also concluded economic cooperation agreements with China that related to agriculture and health care, labor and service contracts, and trade.43

The 1990s

The 1990s witnessed a flourishing of Africa’s relations with China. As mentioned, China sought closer ties with Africa countries to counter post-1989 pressures. It further hoped to weaken Taiwan’s position. Aside from this, it wanted to access to more natural resources and to improve its resource security. During this period, African countries hosted top Chinese leaders such as Presidents Yang Shangkun and Jiang Zemin who strongly supported policies favored by African decision-makers, offered unconditional FDI, grants, and loans and increased trade, and welcomed economic and technical cooperation agreements with Africa countries. All of this was immensely appealing to African states which needed new economic partners, disliked Western human rights demands and the conditions Western countries and financial institutions attached to their aid and loans, and sought new economic models to replace the Western economic development dogmas they rejected. While policymakers in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia had their own specific logics for embracing to China, attracting COFDI, aid,
and loans generally were salient as was gaining more latitude from the West and securing their domestic political position.  

For the 1990s, Africa’s exports to China hit $5.68 billion while imports ran $13.09 billion. This was significantly higher than amounts witnessed in the 1980s, but paled in comparison to Africa’s trade with Europe and the US. Nigeria yet again was the country having the largest trade relationship with China, with South African, Angolan, and Sudanese trade also notable. As in the past, trade consisted of African countries sending resources to China in exchange for textiles and clothing, machinery and electronics, and processed metals. There is no good data on COFDI in Africa for this period. We do know, however, that Chinese firms made investments in energy in Angola and Sudan; mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia; and iron and steel ventures in Zimbabwe. In the 1990s, Africa won grants, loans, and various other forms of assistance from China which sought support after 1989, worked to isolate Taiwan further, and was increasingly interested in African resources. Of course, there were factors specific to individual African countries that drove them economically closer toward China such as the desire to diversify away from their metropoles or strengthen political relations.

The 1990s also witnessed closer MENA–China relations. As in the case of Africa–China links, China’s rising natural resource demands as well as Tiananmen fueled closer MENA interactions with China. In addition, some countries such as Egypt viewed China as a partner in their efforts to boost their growth, infrastructure, and trade. Other such as Iran and Saudi Arabia found China a willing seller of weapons, while yet others found China pursuing warmer ties as part of its continuing effort to undermine Taiwan. Yet others such as Iran saw closer ties with China as a way to defend against serious pressures emanating from the US and its allies. China’s treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang did engender some tensions with MENA countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, but the available evidence indicates these tensions were neither long-standing nor serious.

MENA’s trade with China exploded in the 1990s. Exports for the period ran $18.17 billion while imports totaled $40.33 billion. Still, MENA’s trade with China was a fraction of its economic dealings with Europe and the US. The countries having the largest trade dealings with China were the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, with Oman and Yemen’s trade relationships with China also quite large.
fuels and to a much lesser extent chemicals and metals to China and purchased textiles and clothing, machinery and electronics, and metals from China.\textsuperscript{51} It is not possible to provide any aggregate statistics on MENA’s receipt of COFDI during the period. We do see, however, Chinese investments in oil refineries in Algeria and aluminum in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, mines in Iran, and energy exploration and development in Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen and infrastructure deals with Iran (e.g., subways), Iraq (e.g., power stations), and Saudi Arabia (e.g., petrochemicals). Not surprisingly, there were major oil and natural gas purchase agreements, too.\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{The 2000s}

In 2000s, Africa–China political ties hit new heights, with a newly created institution—that is, FOCAC—becoming an integral part of bilateral dynamics. FOCAC meetings in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009 featured high-level attendees, statements of common principles, the establishment of mechanisms for various ongoing meetings, a plethora of economic programs, and efforts to synchronize Chinese programs with African development plans. FOCAC gatherings also witnessed dramatic Chinese promises: zero tariffs for least developed African states; ambitious trade targets; debt forgiveness; $5 billion (later boosted to $10 billion) in loans; donations of equipment and projects; and myriad training programs.\textsuperscript{53} In the 2000s, African countries repeatedly demonstrated strong support for China in international organizations and for the PRC’s “One China” policy.\textsuperscript{54} Individual Africa countries moved closer to China as specific political, military, and economic needs dictated. For instance, Chad and Liberia sought PRC support for the dispatch of UN peacekeepers; Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe’s ruling elites sought to secure their position at home; and South Africa and Zimbabwe sought economic benefits from closer China ties.\textsuperscript{55}

In the 2000s, Africa’s trade with China grew impressively, with China becoming Africa’s largest trade partner in 2009.\textsuperscript{56} Whereas annual exports were $3.25 billion in 2000, they exceeded $29.81 billion in 2009. As for imports, they ran $2.54 billion in 2000 and reached $31.04 billion in 2009. Angola, South Africa, and Nigeria maintained the largest trading relationships with China.\textsuperscript{57} For the period, Africa exported fuel, minerals, and metals to China and purchased machinery, electronics, and textiles and clothing.\textsuperscript{58} UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
data shows an increase in COFDI flows to Africa, albeit after 2007.\textsuperscript{59} It and AEI-Heritage Foundation \textit{China Global Investment Tracker} (hereinafter AEI-Heritage Foundation CGIT) statistics suggest the bulk of COFDI went to South Africa, with notable amounts going to Nigeria, too.\textsuperscript{60} Very large COFDI deals include Industrial and Commercial Bank of China’s 2007 purchase of a major stake in South Africa’s Standard Bank for $5.5 billion, Sinopec’s 2009 purchase of Addax Petroleum for $7.2 billion, and a $2.7 billion investment in Nigerian oil fields. China also invested in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, refineries, telecommunications, and utilities in places such as Angola, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Sudan. Contracting also was noteworthy with countries such as the DRC entering into billion-dollar deals with Chinese companies to construct dams, power generation and distribution systems, railways, and roads. Beyond the above, some countries like Angola found China a financial savior.\textsuperscript{61}

In the 2000s, MENA–China relations continued to strengthen, featuring more interactions through regional organizations like the GCC and Arab League and FOCAC-like mechanisms such as the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCIF). Broadly speaking, MENA countries viewed deeper relations with China as alluring politically and economically. Above all, China was an increasingly vital energy customer. In addition, states such as Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia viewed China as an important partner for diversifying their economies and energy mix, increasing their energy production, and boosting their infrastructure and access to FDI and loans. Politically, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Washington’s stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Western pressures for political liberalization, the chance to promote a less US/Western-centric international order, and common political principles (e.g., respect for sovereignty) made it appealing to deepen ties with China. Furthermore, China offered a model that appealed to many MENA countries that wanted to develop economically without liberalizing their political sphere. Aside from this, while China was not seen as a protector akin to the United States, some GCC states believed better ties with China might help to reduce threats posed by Iran, among others. Lastly, some states like Qatar sought military cooperation with China.\textsuperscript{62}

In the 2000s, a surge in fuel exports to China led to a situation where MENA registered trade surpluses every year of the decade. MENA exports to China were $18.01 billion in 2000 and surged to $61.50 billion by 2009. MENA imports from China were $7.37 billion at the
start of the decade and totaled $54.54 billion in 2009. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE had the largest trade with China.63 As for the composition of trade, we see MENA exporting large amounts of fuels and relatively smaller, but still significant, amounts of chemicals, plastics, and rubber to China and, in return, buying increasingly large amounts of machinery and electronics as well as notable amounts of textiles and clothing, metals, and transportation equipment.64 UNCTAD data on COFDI reflects relatively almost no COFDI going to MENA. The AEI-Heritage Foundation CGIT, though, indicates $10.72 billion went into the Middle East in 2009 alone with $7.05 billion flowing into MENA between 2005 and 2008. The bulk of this money appears to have gone into energy and metals with Iraq, Iran, and Syria garnering the largest share of COFDI.65

2010 TO THE PRESENT

FOCAC gatherings in 2012, 2015, and 2018 witnessed the transformation of the Africa–China ties into a comprehensive strategic partnership, rhetoric about stellar bilateral relations and the role of Africa in the BRI, and Chinese funding promises such as a pledge of $60 billion at the 2018 FOCAC. On top of this, African countries such as the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Zimbabwe hosted Chinese leaders such as President Xi Jinping. African leaders heard Chinese policymakers pledge greater COFDI and trade flows, highlight synergies between China’s BRI and African development strategies such as the African Union’s Agenda 2063, and tout deeper cooperation on inter alia agriculture, industrialization, and poverty reduction. Beyond this, Africa began to work more directly with China on “peace and security matters.” During this period, Africa moved ever closer to China for economic and non-economic reasons. Regarding the former, African countries viewed China as a key market, fount of financial resources, a relevant development model, a pathway to industrialization, and a route to economic diversification. As for the latter, African states generally favored or were sympathetic to many Chinese political principles and China’s democratization of international relations. Moreover, African states or the regimes that ruled them benefitted from Chinese political support. Some countries like Nigeria obtained military assistance from China.66

In the 2010s, Africa’s trade with China continued to rise, reflecting significantly higher annual amounts than in the past. Its exports to China were $40.85 billion in 2010, $37.86 billion in 2015, and $48.76
billion in 2017. Imports from China ran $37.02 billion in 2010, $58.02 billion in 2015, and $54.30 billion in 2017. The African countries having the most trade with China were resource-rich states like Angola, South Africa, and Nigeria. African oil and gas exports constituted the vast proportion of trade with minerals also significant. African countries purchased machinery and electronics, textiles and clothing, and metals from China. Data indicates China was one of Africa’s most important investors, with COFDI totaling $55 billion between 2010 and 2017. Major recipients include the DRC, Guinea, Mozambique, South Africa, and Uganda. On a sectoral basis, the moneys went into metals (mining) and energy in places like DRC, South Africa, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. African countries such as Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, and Tanzania contracted with China on major hydropower, logistics, railway, road, seaport, and other projects and, in many cases, received aid and loans from China to support these initiatives.

Turning to MENA, structures such as the CASCF seemed to acquire greater prominence in MENA’s political relations with China over the course of the 2010s. The CASCF itself provided a venue for the creation of mechanisms to support regular MENA–China interactions in areas like economics, energy, and culture. CASCF meetings in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 featured discussions of inter alia the BRI, the establishment of a strategic partnership, calls for coordination on regional and global affairs, the promulgation of development action plans, Chinese promises of tens of billions in loans, aid, and FDI, and Chinese support for MENA positions such as the Palestinian issue. A parade of GCC leaders from Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia voyaged to China while countries such as Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia welcomed top Chinese leaders such as President Xi. Spurring greater MENA interest in China were factors similar to those in the 2000s that have been enumerated, worries emanating from the Arab Spring (which threatened authoritarian regimes), a sense that the US was no longer a reliable ally, and the desire for leverage against the US. On an individual country level, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia bolstered their ties with China and signed MoUs and agreements to lubricate the way for China to enhance their infrastructure, increase energy production while diversifying their economies, and obtain debt relief, FDI, and loans. They further established strategic or comprehensive strategic partnerships and strengthened military and security cooperation (e.g., weapons purchases or exercises) with China.
MENA–China economic interactions continued to grow dramatically over the 2010s. Indeed, in 2010, China replaced the US as the Arab world’s main trading partner.\textsuperscript{71} Whereas MENA exports to China were $91.87 billion in 2010, they jumped to $104.70 billion by 2015, and rose to $104.76 billion by 2017. MENA imports from China ran $68.07 billion in 2010, hit $111.89 billion in 2015, and reached $130.55 billion in 2017. Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran led the way in terms of trade with China.\textsuperscript{72} The composition of exports was dominated by fuels with chemicals and plastic and rubber also salient. Machinery and electronics constituted the largest import category with textiles and clothing as well as metals representing other notable imports.\textsuperscript{73} COFDI flows to MENA became more noticeable in the 2010s, in many years exceeding $2 billion and reaching almost $9.23 billion in 2016. The UAE and Egypt garnered the largest amount of COFDI, with most COFDI going into the energy, entertainment (software), and agricultural sectors.\textsuperscript{74} As detailed in the chapters herein by Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”), Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”), and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”), Iran, Iraq, various GCC states such as Oman and Saudi Arabia, and Egypt also received substantial investments from Chinese firms and/or signed major contracting deals for energy (e.g., refineries), power generation (e.g., nuclear and solar), railway, seaports, and telecommunications.

Analysis

Reflecting on the periods covered above, it is clear Africa and MENA’s political and economic bonds with China have continuously broadened and deepened, though the change has not been linear. In addition, it is indisputable that trade (not FDI or contracting) is the foundation of economic linkages between the vast majority of African and MENA states and China, with trade primarily equating to countries in these regions sending natural resources to China in exchange for manufactured goods. Even so, Chinese capital (FDI, aid, and contracting) have become increasingly important with the passage of time. Lastly, the historical record indicates that politics and/or security logics were in command from
1949 until 1989 (roughly), with economics starting to become a more prominent component of the relationship in the 1990s. Indeed, for some periods and/or some countries economics has been the driver of relations.

Regardless, politics has mattered greatly. For example, when China posed an internal threat such as occurred during the 1960s, African and MENA countries have proved willing to shun or oppose China. In contrast, when China has proven a protector against foes internal and/or external or viable alternatives are few or nonexistent, then decision-makers have strengthened links with Beijing. Of course, China can lubricate the process with political, military, and/or economic lures as it attempted to do in the late 1960s and did successfully post-1989. Noting this raises the issue of China’s priorities. African and MENA states may covet more interactions with China, but this may be to no avail if China’s attention is elsewhere as it was in the 1980s. Shared principles, common objectives, and bilateral institutions such as FOCAC and CASCF seem to facilitate better Africa–China and MENA–China ties, but it is not clear they are cause rather than consequence. There are various implications of the preceding points for thinking about the MSRI. One is that economics (the core of the MSRI) likely will have no unidirectional influence on the political behavior of African or MENA states. A second is that internal politics in African and MENA countries will shape how they approach China and Chinese “offerings.” A third is that what China does will matter greatly for the implementation of the MSRI and its ramifications.

**The MSRI in Africa and MENA**

This section examines the MSRI in Africa as well as in MENA. It initially provides a primer on the MSRI in Africa before examining some of its manifestations. It then contemplates some of the objectives associated with the MSRI for China and participating African countries. The section next turns to the MSRI in MENA. It supplies background on the MSRI in MENA prior to describing some of its features. It then examines the aims of the MSRI in MENA for China and MENA countries. It concludes by exploring some of the issues that have been raised about the MSRI in Africa and MENA such “neocolonialism” and financing problems, which encompasses, but is a broader issue than, the “debt trap” issue.
The genesis of the MSRI in Africa is not entirely clear, though various analyses seem to situate it in 2015 when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Africa and expressed China’s interest in helping Africa realize the dream of linking all African capitals by HSR, which would sync nicely with one of the prominent features of China’s ambitious connectivity initiative. Looking at maps and MoUs, some early observers concluded very few African countries—and perhaps just one; that is, Kenya—were participants in the MSRI. Others, however, believed, while recognizing the centrality of East Africa, that many African countries have a prominent place in the MSRI. Indeed, various official PRC documents and statements about the BRI and MSRI clearly speak to China’s intent to involve all Africa, not just parts of Africa. While the contributions in this book emphasize East Africa (above all, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania), they make clear the MSRI also involves interior countries such as South Sudan, Rwanda, and Zambia.

As shown in the contributions by Mboya (chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa”), Blanchard and Ziso (chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways”), Styan (chapter “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations”), and Masabo (chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” awaits Alignment with the African One”), seaports, not surprisingly, are a prominent feature of the MSRI in Africa. Relevant seaport projects include Lamu in Kenya, Bagamoyo and Dar el Salam in Tanzania, and the Doraleh Multipurpose Port (MPP) in Djibouti. One finds seaport developments a component of the MSRI in Madagascar, Mozambique, and Senegal, too. The book’s chapters and other studies identify numerous other MSRI projects where Chinese firms are involved as designer, contractor, operator, investor, or lender. These projects entail the following: power generation (e.g., hydro, solar, and biogas) and distribution projects in Ethiopia and Uganda; airports in Djibouti, Gabon, Togo; railway projects in Djibouti (the Ethiopia-Djibouti SGR), Ethiopia (the Ethio-Djibouti SGR and the Mekelle-Woldia-Hara-Gebeya project), Kenya (the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway), Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Rwanda; oil and water pipelines in Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan; industrial parks/SEZs and Free Trade Zones in Djibouti and Ethiopia; highways;
Analysts focused on Africa uniformly highlight that one payoff to China from the MSRI in Africa is opportunities for greater trade with and inside Africa. Given its major footprint in global maritime affairs as, e.g., a port operator, shipper, and servicer, it has the potential to “receive the lion’s share of income and resources” from increased maritime activity. Greater connectivity further will boost the volume of natural resources China can access, diversify its markets as well as suppliers, and help it limit its dependence on any particular routes or chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca for commerce or energy trade. MSRI projects also profit Chinese companies since they garner opportunities as contractors, investors (e.g., if they produce in Africa, they obtain new distribution channels), lenders, operators, and suppliers and, of course, benefit from access to more, cheaper, and/or more reliable resource supplies. Regarding China’s potential political gains from the MSRI in Africa, for many, it advances China’s goal of becoming a great and/or global power. Relatedly, it can dilute the West’s position in the region while strengthening China’s position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). In addition, the MSRI improves China’s security because of its inter alia positive contribution to China’s resource situation. On the soft power front, the MSRI represents yet another signal of China’s commitment to Africa. It is a validation, too, at least in concept, of the “China Model” of development through infrastructure and trade. Finally, it can help China enhance its relations with diverse African states.

As far as African policymakers are concerned, they seem most attracted to the COFDI inflows and loans as well as connectivity infrastructure, which is a related, but different issue, that are expected to flow from participation in the MSRI. Infrastructure is viewed as a path to integration internally and externally, to reducing transportation times and costs, and to establishing industrial zones. All of this, in turn, will promote growth, job creation, agricultural modernization, the development of natural resource sectors, tourism, industrialization, and, ideally, technology transfer, and trade. It also will fuel more COFDI and FDI from other countries, which will support more growth, job creation, agricultural modernization, industrialization, and technology transfer. Styan (chapter “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations”) and Masabo (chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” Awaits Alignment”...
with the African One”) also highlight the importance of seaports and associated ventures like SEZs for boosting government revenues. To date, China’s ability and willingness to supply capital and FDI, with more acceptable or no conditions, only has added to the appeal of the MSRI given the immense capital needs of African countries, their inability to generate sufficient resources themselves, and the lack of suitable alternatives.81

The Middle East: The consensus appears to be that Chinese President Xi put both the MSRI and SREB on the MENA–China agenda during his address to the 6th China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in 2014. Indeed, one former Chinese diplomat described this deed as the “biggest highlight of the conference.”82 China’s desire to incorporate MENA into the MSRI as well as SREB also was made explicit during President Xi’s meetings with the Secretary General of the GCC in 2016 as well as in China’s 2016 Arab Policy Paper.83 MENA’s involvement deepened from 2016 onward with Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Libya, the UAE, and other states signing BRI agreements, striking partnerships with Chinese financial institutions, speaking positively about China’s program, coordinating domestic development programs with the BRI, and participating in the 1st Belt and Road Forum held in 2017. Maps of the MSRI are not very useful in illuminating which MENA countries are MSRI participants and MENA receives scant mention in official MSRI/BRI documents.84 In any event, the chapters herein by Dorraj and Blanchard, Payne, Fulton, and Chaziza and various other materials suggest Egypt, all the GCC states, various states in the Levant, Iraq, and Iran are involved, albeit in different degrees.85

Generally speaking, MENA–China cooperation is centered around China’s 1+2+3 cooperation scheme, which takes energy as the core, infrastructure and trade/FDI as two “wings,” and cooperation in aerospace, new energy, and nuclear power as three breakthroughs.86 MSRI projects in MENA relate to this framework, though they are not purely derivative of it. More specifically, they include seaports projects in Egypt, Iran, Oman, Qatar, and UAE. Chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise” (Dorraj and Blanchard), chapter "The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation" (Fulton), and chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities” (Chaziza) reveal that these projects entail port expansion and improvements (e.g., Qeshm, Neka, and Bandar Imam Khomeini in Iran,
Ain Sokhna in Egypt, and Khalifa in UAE), the construction of logistics and warehousing facilities, and the development of SEZs and free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran, Egypt, Oman, and the UAE. The MSRI further entails energy infrastructure such as solar, oil pipelines, coal-fired power generation plants, refineries, petrochemical plants, and power distribution in Egypt, Iran, Oman, and the UAE. Transportation infrastructure also is part of mix of MSRI projects in MENA. We see railway initiatives in Egypt, Iran, and Kuwait; roads in Kuwait and bridges in Egypt; and airport projects in Kuwait. Aside from this, there is Chinese investment in its MENA industrial parks and SEZs in Egypt, Oman, and the UAE in areas like construction materials, aluminum production and recycling, energy exploration equipment, food processing, and tires.87

At an abstract level, the MSRI in MENA is a way to bond or link China and MENA, quite à propos at a time when China is looking “West” and MENA is looking East. It also is quite natural given MENA is one of the places where the MSRI and SREB come together.88 Observers uniformly stress that the MSRI in MENA is critical to China because of the region’s importance for China’s oil and gas supplies. Furthermore, trade with MENA is becoming increasingly significant to China—in large part due to its voracious energy appetite, but also because MENA offers increasing populations, growing middle classes, and rising wealth. Furthermore, the region has immense infrastructure requirements, which creates opportunities for Chinese firms. It should be noted in regard to trade that China is attracted to the region not only for its market, but also because of MENA’s location, which makes it a springboard for accessing Africa, Europe, and the IOR.89 On the political front, some believe China seeks to exploit the MSRI to become dominant or overturn the existing order in the region.90 For others, however, China has less grand aims. Specifically, the MSRI is an extension of its traditional economics first stance towards MENA as well as a way to project soft power, to strengthen relations with regional countries, to improve its position vis-à-vis the West, especially the US, and to combat extremism, terrorism, and separatism.91 Certain countries have their own specific attractions. For instance, GCC states appeal to China as MSRI participants because of their location, immense resource endowments, and importance within the Arab League.92

MENA countries have many reasons for participating in the MSRI.93 Not surprisingly, many mirror the aims of participating African countries. MENA states hope to secure and increase access to their biggest
market, critical at a time when energy demand and/or prices are under pressure. Policymakers in MENA countries like Iran, Iraq, and Egypt also covet Chinese FDI, loans, and infrastructure construction capabilities. The GCC states, of course, are in a much better financial shape than other MENA participants such as Egypt, but they still welcome more capital given their immense infrastructure requirements, lower energy demand and prices, and China’s comparative advantages in infrastructure. As the works by Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”), Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”), and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”) show, the MSRI also promises infrastructure that can help MENA participants advance their development strategies, diversify their economies, free up energy for external sale rather than internal use, satiate internal energy production and distribution requirements, and enhance transportation networks. Chaziza points out job creation is a powerful motivation for some MENA MSRI participants like Egypt. Turning to political motivations, participation in the MSRI is a way for countries not just to strengthen links with China, but to gain protection (Iran) or increased bargaining leverage vis-à-vis other parties such as the US or international institutions (Iraq and Egypt). Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”) points out the GCC also views the MSRI as a potential tool to get China to play a more active security role in the region.

Issues associated with the MSRI in Africa and MENA: This subsection delves into various issues associated with the MSRI in Africa and MENA. One set of issues focuses on the actual and potential negative political (e.g., loss of sovereignty), financial (e.g., excessive debt burdens), and social and environmental consequences of the MSRI for participants in these regions. Another set relates to factors that can affect the MSRI’s implementation in these two regions. Long before the birth of the MSRI, critics accused China of neocolonialism in connection with its involvement in Africa. From one vantage point, they were simply labeling the economic relationship between Africa and China, which was one where Africa sent primary goods to China in exchange for manufactured goods, a pattern witnessed during the period when African states were colonized and sent raw materials back to the
“metropole” or colonizer which dominated their economic life. They, however, were further asserting African countries were sacrificing their sovereignty and policy autonomy to Beijing due to their economic dependencies. Such charges also have been raised in connection with the MSRI, albeit much more so in the case of African than MENA participants.96 None of the chapters herein refute the notion that the pattern of trade between MSRI participants and China is neocolonial in character. Indeed, chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa” (Mboya) suggests Chinese infrastructure is tying participant countries ever closer to the metropole rather than to each other or others. Despite the above, it should be noted that the case studies in the book do not allow us to forecast if MSRI projects ultimately will put participant countries on the path to less neocolonial economic patterns. Regarding the political dimension of neocolonialism, the contributions herein uniformly show countries have warmed ties with China, with some like Ethiopia, Iran, and Egypt appearing, in varying degrees near proxies of Beijing. The chapters, however, show participant country stances towards China are hardly derivative of economics, but also relate to, numerous political factors.

Financing issues have become part and parcel of the negative discourse about the MSRI. There are three specific charges.97 First, loans associated with MSRI projects such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Rail (SGR) or Ethiopia-Djibouti SGR or prospective projects such as Bagamoyo in Tanzania are creating excessive debts for those involved in China’s initiative. Second, the projects comprising China’s MSRI are economically unviable which means that they will not generate the revenues needed to repay loans and will drain scarce resources from government budgets. Third, China is using generous (or costly) financing to ensnare borrowers in a “debt trap” from which they only can escape by giving up valuable assets to China. It is true that some MSRI countries have borrowed huge amounts for MSRI projects and that some like Kenya owe large sums of money to China. It is not clear, though, that these countries’ debt burdens can be blamed on China or China’s MSRI. Beyond this, Chinese loans often are the only or the best financing option for countries that need to borrow to finance their infrastructure activities.98 As for the economic viability of MSRI projects, it is a real issue. However, the evidence does not show China engaged in any kind of deception, but rather that participant countries may not have properly planned, implemented, or coordinated projects internally or with neighboring countries. Regardless, unless African and MENA countries
involved in the MSRI resolve such issues, projects will neither deliver the anticipated benefits nor revenues. Focusing on the debt trap, this is a concern, but none of the chapters show any assets being turned over to China and indeed countries like Djibouti and Ethiopia had no problems renegotiating their debts. 99

It is indisputable that MSRI ventures have caused various negative social and environmental externalities in African and MENA countries, though it is not readily apparent that they are worse than those produced by non-Chinese parties. Social problems typical relate to the relocation of people to create space for projects or the inadequate or tardy compensation of those that are relocated. In some cases, such as Ethiopia, relocation has led to or exacerbated ethnic conflict because of the populations that are being relocated. Environmental issues may tie to hydropower or resource exploitation endeavors which affect land and water, transportation infrastructure such as railways which disrupt wildlife (an issue in Kenya), and seaport projects which affect pristine environmental areas (a problem associated with Bagamoyo). On the whole, however, while acknowledging that problems exist, the contributions in this edited volume do not indicate negative social and environmental externalities are major issues, though they have caused delays or disruptions. 100

Turning to challenges for MSRI implementation, we first look at financial issues. The majority of those studying the MSRI have identified five main funding channels. The first is Chinese policy institutions such as the China Development Bank. The second is the Silk Road Fund. The third are Chinese state-owned or -controlled financial entities such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China or the China Investment Corporation (CIC), a sovereign wealth fund. 101 The fourth is regionally focused investment funds such as the China-Arab Investment Fund. The fifth is Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and PRC and non-PRC private companies. Many deem the Asian Infrastructure Investment Fund (AIIB) a funding vehicle for the MSRI and the SREB, but this is problematic. While things could change, the AIIB, to date, has provided little funding for BRI-related projects and indeed is providing an increasing number of non-infrastructure related loans. Until 2018 or so, there was little doubt about the sufficiency of funding given China is the world’s 2nd largest economy, has more than $3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, and COFDI was growing rapidly. 102 China’s slowing economic growth rate, the extreme debts and/or financial weakness of some MSRI participants, debt defaults, concerns about Chinese capital outflows, the
backlash emanating from the debt trap debate, and caution from non-Chinese policy bank lenders and MSRI participants, however, has called into question the MSRI’s funding situation generally as well as in countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Iran, and Egypt. Many now expect China to lend less or to impose stricter lending criteria, or for projects to be suspended or terminated. The degree to which funding ultimately will decline, however, is quite uncertain at this point.

It is well known that conflict and instability—resulting from interstate war, intrastate strife, regime change, shifts in leaders, political unrest, or terrorism—can delay or prevent the implementation of the MSRI or result in projects within, between, or among countries not reaching their full potential. As far as Africa and MENA are concerned, some of these types of issues, in diverse degrees and with varying impacts, have emerged in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Iraq, and Egypt as indicated in the contributions by Mboya (chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa”), Blanchard and Ziso (chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways”), Masabo (chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” awaits Alignment with the African One”), Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”). Beyond this, Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”) and Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”) show that the beneficial effects of the MSRI/SREB for other countries can make participant countries such as Iran or GCC states less enamored of the MSRI or BRI writ large since it can increase competition, reduce leverage, and/or empower competitors. Conflict also has been festering over China’s demands for the use of Chinese contractors and equipment; the presence of Chinese workers (though the use of Chinese workers often is exaggerated); and corruption associated with some Chinese projects.

The last potential obstacle to MSRI implementation and the full realization of MSRI benefits to be discussed is the role of third parties. In concept, third parties such as India, Japan, and the United States can affect the progress of the MSRI in three ways. One is to interfere directly such as by pressuring participant governments to terminate or redesign projects. A second is to offer competing infrastructure programs. A third
is to avoid participation in China’s MSRI or to undermine its credibility through negative rhetoric, reporting, or actions in international venues. To date, there is no evidence of third parties adopting the first tack. India has embraced the second and third tacks in MENA as evidenced by its involvement in Chabahar port project in Iran. However, the intensity of its actions in MENA pale in comparison to its actions in South Asia, where they seem meaningfully impacted the MSRI’s progress. For a period of time, Japan raised criticisms about the MSRI/SREB. In April 2017, it also advanced a competing scheme called the Quality Infrastructure Initiative (QII), which promotes higher standards for lending and projects, and, the same year, partnered with India on the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.\textsuperscript{106} For its part, the US, along with Japan and Australia, put forth the “Blue Dot Network” in late 2019. Like Japan’s QII, it stresses higher standards for project financing and projects.\textsuperscript{107} The US also has widely and strongly criticized the MSRI in Africa.\textsuperscript{108} While the chapters in this book do not show any evidence Japanese or American activities have affected adversely the MSRI in Africa or MENA, the possibility exists.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa” (Mboya) entitled “Connecting and Disconnecting Africa: The Maritime Silk Road Initiative’s Conflicting Effects on Eastern Africa” examines how much China’s MSRI is connecting Africa and which parties are gaining from the railways, roads, and other infrastructure China is constructing in Eastern Africa. After reviewing the state of various MSRI projects in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, Mboya, tackling an issue that has not received sufficient attention, concludes the MSRI indeed seems to have boosted linkages and trade flows (“Connecting”)—as many touted the MSRI would do—but that the distribution of flows is not “win-win” with flows clearly skewed towards China rather than the region (“Disconnecting”). He also highlights a myriad of challenges—e.g., insufficient usage, high debts, competition with other projects, and poor coordination—that are hindering the implementation of MSRI projects or the realization of their objectives. Mboya recommends various steps China and African countries should follow to mitigate these obstacles. In toto, then, he addresses three issues of continuing interest to analysts: the state of the MSRI; the factors hindering the realization of the MSRI; and the effects of the MSRI.
In Chapter 3 ("The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways"), Blanchard and Ziso probe the MSRI in Ethiopia. They examine the progress of *inter alia* MSRI hydropower projects, railways, and SEZs in Ethiopia and find they have been advancing relatively smoothly because of Ethiopian and Chinese interests, the resources both states possess, and, to date, a supportive political environment in Ethiopia. Even so, the chapter reveals obstacles exist that may prevent these projects from reaching their full potential. Some contend Addis Ababa has become a Chinese client state because of its need for Chinese markets, FDI, and loans and the MSRI’s economic allure. Blanchard and Ziso demonstrate, though, that the view Ethiopia has sacrificed political agency for economic goods is overly simplistic. More specifically, it has its own reasons for embracing China and the MSRI and many relate to politics. Moreover, Ethiopia’s participation in the MSRI and ties with China actually have given it greater agency. Overall, the chapter adds to our knowledge about the progress of the MSRI and impediments to it and the MSRI’s domestic and international political effects.

Styan’s “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations” (chapter “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations”) also engages the debate about political agency. Delving into the case of Djibouti where China has located its first overseas military base and is deeply involved in infrastructure, Styan rejects the thesis that Djibouti is critically dependent on China. In his view, Djibouti actually possesses substantial agency as reflected in its ability to extract considerable basing fees and renegotiate its debts. The chapter also identifies quite clearly why China picked Djibouti for its military base. In his piece, Styan further argues China Merchants Group, the key Chinese investor in Djiboutian infrastructure, was driven by commercial, not political, considerations; that the debt trap argument is exaggerated; and that there currently is little evidence that China will embark on a naval port building spree elsewhere. Aside from enriching our knowledge about the MSRI in Djibouti, Styan enhances our understanding of the political effects of the MSRI.

In “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The ‘Chinese Dream’ Awaits Alignment with the African One” (Chapter 5), Masabo investigates why the Bagamoyo Port Complex (BPC), the marquee MSRI project in Tanzania, died despite the fact that Tanzania and China have had long and very
close dealings. Indeed, Tanzania was one of the earliest African participants in China’s MSRI and many expected significant accomplishments. Masabo’s argument is that the unexpected turn of events was a function of economic problems associated with the project and Tanzania’s economic situation, the rise of a more nationalistic Tanzanian leader worried about the potentially negative sovereignty and economic independence risks associated with large infrastructure projects and associated loans, and the emergence of new actors in the Tanzania-China dynamic. The preferences of third parties and the existence of alternative economic options reduced the appeal of the BPC, too. In his chapter Masabo also offers several suggestions for improving the MSRI’s prospects in Tanzania. Beyond updating us on the MSRI’s situation in Tanzania, the chapter speaks to the factors shaping MSRI implementation, stressing the salience of individuals and political factors.

Iran in the MSRI is the focus of “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Flowing Forward Albeit Not at Full Speed” (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise” by Dorraj and Blanchard). Iran’s needs, its broad and deep economic and political relationship with China, and its centrality in the MSRI in MENA implied that the MSRI would proceed along multiple fronts at a rapid pace. Dorraj and Blanchard’s chapter, however, indicates that reality does not track with such expectations. While Tehran greatly values its dealings with and needs China and its MSRI, there are political and economic issues on the Iranian side—e.g., concerns about sovereignty and Iranian centrality as well as weak energy prices—that have limited the progress of the MSRI. In addition, China and Chinese firms are cautious about moving forward aggressively on the MSRI in Iran given sanctions on Iran, the global energy situation, and China’s current economic challenges. In short, there is no automatic correspondence between extensive, positive relations and the MSRI’s realization. Overall, Chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise” details the state of the MSRI in Iran and identifies a variety of domestic and/or international political and economic factors that have hindered its rapid and extensive implementation.

Payne’s “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity” (Chapter 7) looks at Iraq. Payne notes that there is little sign of the MSRI in Iraq and that the focus to date has been on energy projects, first and
foremost, and an assortment of rather unimpressive land-focused connectivity projects, many discussed rather than implemented. The former tracks with past Iraq–China relations. The latter has much to do with Iraq’s decade-long tumultuous political situation, especially the incursion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in 2013. It is the case that Iraqi needs, China’s value as an alternative partner, and Chinese endowments create prospects for the BRI in Iraq in the future, but Iraq’s economic condition, problematic business environment, and continuing sectarian divisions will constrain what can be achieved. Relevant for this volume, some of these problems actually may fuel the development of the MSRI, particularly the Port of Faw, since Iraq’s south, which adjoins the sea, is relatively more stable and proximate to growing regional connectivity schemes. Payne’s chapter, then, offers an angle not taken elsewhere in this volume because it makes us reflect on what actually might fuel the MSRI rather than obstruct it.

Chapter 8 (Fulton) is entitled “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s ‘Visions’ of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation.” As Fulton demonstrates, GCC states have strongly embraced both China’s MSRI as well as its SREB. This has to do with the fact that the MSRI and BRI advance a variety of their domestic and international economic and political needs ranging from delivering the economic goods to their populaces to diversifying their economies to building new partnerships that advance their external security. Unlike some other states covered in this volume, the MSRI is progressing well in the GCC because of, among other things, the economic capacities of GCC states, the fact that some of the downsides associated with the MSRI are not relevant, and China’s strong interest in GCC states. The chapter shows, too, that the MSRI has different features in different GCC states due to the nature of projects, among other things. Ultimately, this chapter not only enhances our awareness of the MSRI progress in various GCC states, but also brings into relief how successful MSRI implementation requires a conducive environment on many fronts as well as that implementation results are contingent on country- and project-specific factors.

The final chapter in the book is Chaziza’s “Egypt in the MSRI: Relations cannot Surmount Realities” (Chapter 9). The chapter provides rich information about the MSRI in Egypt, with which China has extensive ties. At present, the MSRI is manifest in Egypt in seaport projects, transportation initiatives, power generation projects, the massive Suez Canal Economic Zone, and manufacturing investments. Egypt has a strong
interest in the MSRI because it covets Chinese capital (loans and FDI), needs to create jobs, and wants to improve its infrastructure. Politically, Egypt wants to diversify its political partners and political elites need to legitimate themselves by delivering the economic goods. The MSRI is progressing due to Egyptian and Chinese needs, Chinese resources, and the ruling regime’s ability to suppress dissent. Still, despite Egypt’s long-standing ties with China and China’s strong interest in Egypt, MSRI results are bounded. The causes of this include Egypt’s economic and political problems which limit Egypt’s ability to implement the MSRI as well as the desire of China and Chinese MNCs to allocate more resources to the MSRI. In the final analysis, chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities” illuminates the MSRI’s situation in Egypt plus the factors shaping the progress of the MSRI.

CONCLUSION

This chapter serves three purposes. First, it lays a foundation for the rest of the contributions in the volume. It does this by providing background on the MSRI and related issues, Africa as well as MENA’s relations with China, and the MSRI in Africa and the MENA. This is not just a matter of providing facts, however. Second, it highlights some of the domestic and international political and economic variables driving dynamics in these areas, partly to sensitize readers to the broad universe of factors treated in the diverse pieces in the book. Third, it supplies a focused summary of the chapters in the book. This conclusion reiterates some of the main findings flowing from this chapter and the case studies in the book (and notes a couple of other findings), discusses their policy and theoretical implications, and notes several potentially fruitful areas for further study.

In terms of findings, one, derived purely from this chapter, is that Africa and MENA’s relations with China are fluid. While the trend since the 1990s has largely been upward, the interactions of countries in these regions with China depends upon a myriad of factors, both political and economic, at multiple levels (national, regional, and global). In short, things can and do change. A second is that the MSRI is progressing in Africa and MENA, but not advancing as rapidly as or having the implications originally expected. A third, related to the second, is that the MSRI is moving forward despite China and Chinese companies’ economic and financial challenges. A fourth is that the allure of the MSRI coupled with
the attractions of Chinese FDI, loans, aid, and trade have not enslaved MSRI participants in Africa and MENA. They retain agency; pursue warmer or pro-China policies for multiple reasons; and, in some cases, have been empowered by the MSRI and links with China. A fifth is that domestic politics weighs quite consequentially on the course of the MSRI.

With respect to policy implications, decision-makers “outside” the MSRI should be far less anxious about the MSRI. There likely will be no dramatic transformations, though there may be noteworthy consequences if MSRI projects are completed and if they deliver the expected benefits, which the studies here and elsewhere show, cannot be automatically assumed. For those wishing to advance the MSRI, the contributions herein show that participant countries, China, and involved MNCs need to be attentive to internal dynamics in participant countries, though how and how much depend upon conditions in the relevant state. Those seeking to undermine the MSRI need to offer alternatives that meaningfully deliver what (political and/or economic) goods that African and MENA states seek to obtain from participating in the MSRI. As for conceptual implications, there are at least three. To start, political economic lenses provide one of the most fruitful analytical frameworks for thinking about the MSRI. In addition, it cannot be assumed that economic stimuli will automatically dictate political behaviors. Lastly, it is essential to take into account domestic politics to understand the ways MSRI participants react to and are affected by economic stimuli.

One limitation (though it also is a strength) of this book is that it primarily analyzes the MSRI from the vantage point of African and MENA participants. Obviously, China as well as Chinese companies play a crucial role in the embrace of the MSRI, its implementation, and the reaction of 3rd parties. Thus, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the MSRI, future studies of the MSRI need to delve into the actions and reactions of China and Chinese MNCs. Another shortcoming is that the book’s case studies are based almost entirely on the use of secondary sources, a necessity given restrictions on accessing key MSRI decision-makers and obtaining internal documents and official studies. As the opportunity presents itself, analysts should try to exploit such materials. A final limitation to be noted is that the book emphasizes the “implementation” issue. The costs and benefits of MSRI projects need to be evaluated more systematically (albeit in a focused way), however, for observers to better analyze the ultimate ramifications of the MSRI.
It is no longer too early to evaluate the MSRI. The studies in this volume make clear there is no “boom or bust” with respect to the MSRI and that only a systematic consideration of a myriad of political and economic variables at multiple levels can illuminate what has happened, what is happening, and what, likely, will happen. China’s MSRI may be “little more than…old wine in new bottles,” but it has an aroma that appeals to both China and participants alike and its complexity will never be fully appreciated unless one goes beyond the labels.

**Notes**

1. Brian Eyler, “China’s Maritime Silk Road Is All About Africa,” *East by Southeast*, November 17, 2014, [http://www.eastbysoutheast.com/chinas-maritime-silk-road-africa](http://www.eastbysoutheast.com/chinas-maritime-silk-road-africa).
2. Diego Pautasso, “The Role of Africa in the New Maritime Silk Road,” *Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016): 128.
3. Mordechai Chaziza, “China’s New Silk Road Strategy and the Middle East,” *BESA Center Perspectives*, no. 1473 (2020), [https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/china-silk-road-middle-east](https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/china-silk-road-middle-east).
4. Deborah Lehr, “The Middle East Is the Hub for China’s Modern Silk Road,” *Middle East Institute*, August 15, 2017, [https://www.mei.edu/publications/middle-east-hub-chinas-modern-silk-road](https://www.mei.edu/publications/middle-east-hub-chinas-modern-silk-road).
5. Admittedly, it is expanding. Recent works include Thokozani Simelane and Lavhelesani Managa, eds., *Belt and Road Initiative: Alternative Development Path for Africa* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2018); Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Niv Horesh, eds., *China’s Presence in the Middle East: The Implications of the One Belt One Road Initiative* (London: Routledge, 2018); and Mordechai Chaziza, *China’s Middle East Diplomacy: The Belt and Road Strategic Partnership* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2020).
6. This problem also afflicts analyses concentrating on Southeast Asia and South Asia.
7. David Dollar, “Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa,” *Global China*, September, 2019, [https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Understanding_Chinas_belt_and_road.pdf](https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Understanding_Chinas_belt_and_road.pdf), 1.
8. Similar strategies are followed in Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, ed., *China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia: A Political Economic Analysis of Its Purposes, Perils, and Promises* (Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); and Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, ed., *China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Southeast Asia: Dilemmas, Doubts, and Determination* (Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019). A recent work that
stresses the analysis of BRI regions is Jonathan Fulton, ed., Regions in the Belt and Road Initiative (London: Routledge, 2020).

9. Muhammad Sabig Farooq, Nazia Feroze, and Yuan Tong Kai, “An Analysis of China and Africa Relations with Special Focus on ‘One Belt and One Road’,” India Quarterly 75, no. 3 (2019): 372. Dollar takes the view Africa is deeply involved (“Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa,” 2).

10. Yitzhak Shichor, “Vision, Revision, and Supervision: The Politics of China’s OBOR and AIIB and their Implications for the Middle East,” in China’s Presence in the Middle East: The Implications of the One Belt, One Road Initiative, ed. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Niv Horesh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 38–39.

11. Jonathan Fulton, “The G.C.C. Countries and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Curbing Their Enthusiasm,” Middle East Institute, October 17, 2017, https://www.mei.edu/publications/gcc-countries-and-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-curbing-their-enthusiasm.

12. For related findings in regard to other MSRI contexts, see Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia; Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, “China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and Southeast Asia: A Chinese ‘Pond’ Not ‘Lake’ in the Works,” Journal of Contemporary China 27, no. 111 (2018): 329–343; and Shaofeng Chen, “Regional Responses to China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia,” Journal of Contemporary China 27, no. 111 (2018): 344–361.

13. Soft infrastructure (trade accords, bilateral investment treaties, and aviation accords), which is an integral part of the MSRI (as well as the SREB), is covered further in Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Colin Flint, “The Geopolitics of China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” Geopolitics 22, no. 2 (2017): 227–228.

14. “Why China Is Running into Political Potholes on Its ‘New Silk Road’,” South China Morning Post, January 11, 2018, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2127792/why-china-running-political-potholes-its-new-silk-road; James Griffiths, “Are the Wheels Coming off China’s Belt and Road Megaproject,” CNN, December 31, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/31/asia/china-kenya-belt-road-bri-intl/index.html; and Nadege Rolland, “Reports of Belt and Road’s Death Are Greatly Exaggerated,” Foreign Affairs, January 29, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-01-29/reports-belt-and-roads-death-are-greatly-exaggerated.

15. This paragraph draws upon Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia, 4–6; Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Southeast Asia, 4; and Jean-Marc F. Blanchard,
“Problematic Prognostications About China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Lessons from Africa and the Middle East,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 122 (2020): 161.

16. Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, “Probing China’s Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): An Examination of MSRI Narratives,” *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2017): 251–253.

17. Ibid., 255–258.

18. “China Offers Wisdom in Global Governance,” *China Daily*, October 4, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-10/04/content_32830475.htm; “Xi Says Belt and Road Initiative Is Not an Intrigue of China,” *China Daily*, April 11, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201804/11/WS5ace28d1a3105cdecf6517ad3.html; and Chu Daye, “B&R Kindles Confidence, Inspiration Around World,” *Global Times*, August 26, 2018, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1117134.shtml.

19. Since the MSRI came into being in 2013, it is reasonable to exclude projects, even maritime-oriented ones, that began before 2013. Even so, some projects that began before 2013 gained renewed vigor after the MSRI’s birth. Thus, analysts need to apply the 2013 “cut-off” in a flexible manner.

20. For numerous concrete examples, see the relevant chapters in Blanchard, ed., *China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia*; and Blanchard, ed., *China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Southeast Asia*.

21. “Our bulldozers, Our Rules,” *The Economist*, July 2, 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/china/21701505-chinas-foreign-policy-could-reshape-good-part-world-economy-our-bulldozers-our-rules; David Tweed, “China’s Silk Road,” *Bloomberg*, September 8, 2016, https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/china-s-silk-road; “China’s ‘Silk Road’ Stirs Unease Over Its Strategic Goals,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/05/10/world/asia/ap-as-china-new-silk-road-abridged.html; Charles Parton, “Belt and Road Is Globalization with Chinese Characteristics,” *Financial Times*, October 3, 2018; and Dollar, “Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa.” Many of these issues are discussed further below in the sub-section entitled “Issues associated with the MSRI in Africa and MENA.”

22. Blanchard, “Probing China’s Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI),” 249–251; Wang Cong, “B&R Accusations Groundless, But Problems Need to be Addressed: Analysts,” *Global Times*, August 27, 2018, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1117301.shtml; and Siviwe Fektha, “Chinese Envoy to SA Slams Suggestions China Belt, Road Initiative Seeks to Dominate Poor African Countries,” *IOL*, August 6, 2020, https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/chinese-envoy-to-
sa-slams-suggestions-china-belt-and-road-initiative-seeks-to-dominate-poor-african-countries-bc3cea20-1a18-4d45-a977-879ab026efc2.

23. Richard Javad Heydarian, “Malaysia’s Bold Play Against China,” Washington Post, November 14, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/11/14/Malaysia.

24. For related points, see David Dodwell, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative Is Here to Stay, Whether the US Likes It or Not,” South China Morning Post, February 2, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/print/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2184602/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-here-stay; John Calabrese, “China’s Maritime Silk Road and the Middle East: Tacking Against the Wind,” Middle East Institute, May 19, 2020, https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinas-maritime-silk-road-and-middle-east-tacking-against-wind; and “The Pandemic Is Hurting China’s Belt and Road Initiative,” The Economist, June 4, 2020, https://www.economist.com/china/2020/06/04/the-pandemic-is-hurting-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative.

25. Ian Taylor, China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 17–34; Marcus Power, Giles Mohan and May Tan-Mullins, China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa: Powering Development? (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 40–43; and David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, China and Africa: A Century of Engagement (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 30–41, 57–66.

26. Taylor, China and Africa, 40.

27. International Monetary Fund, “Direction of Trade Statistics,” https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712 [hereinafter IMF, “DOTS.”].

28. For more on the TanZam railway, see Taylor, China and Africa, 38–40.

29. Power, Mohan and Tan-Mullins, China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa, 43–45.

30. See, e.g., Jan S. Prybyla, “Communist China’s Economic Relations with Africa 1960–1964,” Asian Survey 4, no. 11 (1964): 1136–1142; Taylor, China and Africa; and Dele Seteolu and Abdul-Gafar Tobi Oshodi, “Oscillation of Two Giants: Sino-Nigeria Relations and the Global South,” Journal of Chinese Political Science 23, no. 3 (2018): 257–285.

31. Muhamad S. Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II: A Bilateral Approach (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 4–5.

32. Prybyla, “Communist China’s Economic Relations with Africa 1960–1964,” 1141–1142; Yitzhak Shichor, The Middle East in China’s Foreign Policy: 1949–1977 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and various chapters in Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II.

33. Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II, Chapter 12.

34. Shichor, The Middle East in China’s Foreign Policy.
35. IMF, “DOTS.”
36. Shichor, The Middle East in China’s Foreign Policy, 42–44, 113–114.
37. See, e.g., Anshan Li, “China and Africa: Policy and Challenges,” China Security 3, no. 3 (2007): 72–73; Power, Mohan and Tan-Mullins, China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa, 50–51; and Shinn and Eisenman, China and Africa, 43–45, 111–114.
38. Taylor, China and Africa, 62–65, 121–123; Power, Mohan and Tan-Mullins, China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa, 53–54, 226; and Shinn and Eisenman, China and Africa, 45–46.
39. IMF, “DOTS.”
40. Taylor, China and Africa; Power, Mohan and Tan-Mullins, China’s Resource Diplomacy in Africa; and Shinn and Eisenman, China and Africa.
41. Geoffrey Kemp, The East Moves West: India, China, and Asia’s Growing Presence in the Middle East (Washington: The Brookings Institute Press, 2010), 80–84; Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II; Andrew Scobell and Alireza Nader, China in the Middle East: The Wary Dragon (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016), Chapters 3–4; Niv Horesh, ed., Toward Well-Oiled Relations? China’s Presence in the Middle East Following the Arab Spring (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), chapters 6, 9, and 12; and James M. Dorsey, China and the Middle East: Venturing into the Maelstrom (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 88–89, 93, 97–98.
42. IMF, “DOTS.”
43. Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II, chapters 7 and 12; Yasser M. Gadallah, “An Analysis of the Evolution of Sino-Egyptian Economic Relations,” in Toward Well-Oiled Relations? China’s Presence in the Middle East Following the Arab Spring, ed. Niv Horesh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 95; and Scobell and Nader, China in the Middle East, 26.
44. Richard J. Payne and Cassandra R. Veney, “China’s Post-Cold War African Policy,” Asian Survey 38, no. 9 (1998): 876–879; Taylor, China and Africa, chapters 4, 7–9; Robert G. Sutter, Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 312–314; Shinn and Eisenman, China and Africa, 45–47, 71–75; and Cheng Ai Qin and Cai Jian Hong, “China’s Energy Diplomacy Towards Africa from the Perspective of Politics,” in China and Africa: A New Paradigm of Global Business, ed. Young-Chan Kim (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 128–129; and Seteolu and Oshodi, “Oscillation of Two Giants.”
45. IMF, “DOTS.”
46. World Bank, “World Integrated Trade Solutions,” http://wits.worldbank.org/WITS [hereinafter World Bank, “WITS.”].
47. Payne and Veney, “China’s Post-Cold War African Policy,” 877; Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 313; and Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, chapters 9–11.

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49. John Calabrese, “Peaceful or Dangerous Collaborators? China’s Relations with the Gulf Countries,” *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 4 (1993): 471–485; Olimat, *China and the Middle East Since World War II* (2014); and Scobell and Nader, *China in the Middle East*, chapters 3–4.

50. IMF, “DOTS.”

51. World Bank, “WITS.”

52. Calabrese, “Peaceful or Dangerous Collaborators?” 480; Chris Alden, “China in Africa,” *Survival* 47, no. 3 (2005): 148; Mo Chen, “Exploring Economic Relations Between China and the GCC States,” *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 5, no. 4 (2011): 95–98; Olimat, *China and the Middle East Since World War II*. See also Manochehr Dorraj and Jean-Marc F. Blanchard’s piece on Iran (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”), Jeffrey Payne’s Iraq case (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), and Mordechai Chaziza’s discussion of Egypt (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”) in this volume.

53. Taylor, *China and Africa*, 68–69; Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, chapters 2, 5; and Anja Lahtinen, *China’s Diplomacy and Economic Activities in Africa: Relations on the Move* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 20–21.

54. See, e.g., Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, 96–97.

55. Taylor, *China and Africa*, 124–126; Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, 71–75; and Lahtinen, *China’s Diplomacy and Economic Activities in Africa*, 26–27.

56. Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, 52.

57. IMF, “DOTS.”

58. World Bank, “WITS.”

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60. The AEI-Heritage Foundation CGIT is available at https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker.

61. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 321–322; Shinn and Eisenman, *China and Africa*, chapters 9–11; and Lahtinen, *China’s Diplomacy and Economic Activities in Africa*, 40–43.
62. Jinglie Wang, “Review and Thoughts Over the Relationship Between China and the Middle East,” *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 4, no. 1 (2010): 25–26; and Olimat, *China and the Middle East Since World War II*. See also the contributions by Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”) and Jonathan Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”) in this volume.

63. IMF, “DOTS.”

64. World Bank, “WITS.”

65. Further details on COFDI and contracting activities in Iran and Iraq can be found in, respectively, chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise” (Dorraj and Blanchard) and chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity” (Payne) herein.

66. Useful sources include Hany Besada and Ben O’Brien, “Maturing Sino-African Relations,” *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2017): 655–677; Chris Alden, Abiodun Alao, Zhang Chun and Laura Barbers, eds., *China and Africa: Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), chapters 1–3; and Olayiwola Abegunrin and Charity Manyeruke, *China’s Power in Africa: A New Global Order* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), chapters 2–3.

67. IMF, “DOTS.”

68. World Bank, “WITS.”

69. AEI-Heritage Foundation CGIT. For more on specific Chinese investments and contracting endeavors, see Chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa” (Cliff Mboya), chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways” (Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Edson Ziso), chapter “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations” (David Styan), and chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” awaits Alignment with the African One” (Conrad John Masabo).

70. For discussion of the political links of some of these and other MENA countries with China, see the pieces in this book by Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”), Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”), and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”). Also useful are Olimat, *China and the Middle East Since World War II*; Neil Quilliam, “China and the Gulf Co-operation Council: The
Rebound Relationship,” in Toward Well-Oiled Relations? China’s Presence in the Middle East Following the Arab Spring, ed. Niv Horesh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 148–161; and Xuming Qian and Jonathan Fulton, “China-Gulf Economic Relationship Under the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies 11, no. 3 (2017): 12–21.

71. Olimat, China and the Middle East Since World War II, 13.
72. IMF, “DOTS.”
73. World Bank, “WITS.”
74. AEI-Heritage Foundation CGIT.
75. See, e.g., Atul Aneja, “China Steps Up Drive to Integrate Africa with Maritime Silk Road,” The Hindu, January 19, 2015, https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/china-steps-up-to-integrate-africa-with-maritime-silk-road/article6802385.ece; and Shannon Tiezzi, “China’s Maritime Silk Road: Don’t Forget Africa,” The Diplomat, January 29, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/chinas-maritime-silk-road-dont-forget-africa.
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80. Tiezzi, “China’s Maritime Silk Road”; Lim, “Africa and China’s 21st Century Maritime Silk Road,” 3; Pautasso, “The Role of Africa in the New Maritime Silk Road,” 126–129; Breuer, “Two Belts, One Road?” 2–5; Chen, “Silk Road to the Sahel,” 3; Farooq, Feroze and Kai, “An Analysis of China and Africa Relations with Special Focus on ‘One Belt and One Road’,” 369–375; and Nantulya, “Implications for Africa from China’s One Belt One Road Strategy.”

81. See Blanchard and Ziso (chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways”) and Masabo (chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” Awaits Alignment with the African One”). Also useful are Michael Mitchell Omoruyi Ehizuelen, “More Africa Countries on the Route: The Positive and Negative Impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative,” Transnational Corporations Review 9, no. 4 (2017): 342–356; Chen, “Silk Road to the Sahel,” 1, 4; “Belt & Road Initiative Promotes Transformation and Upgrading of China-Africa Trade,” Xinhua, September 14, 2018, http://en.silkroad.news.cn/2018/0914/109373.shtml; Farooq, Feroze and Kai, “An Analysis of China and Africa Relations with Special Focus on ‘One Belt and One Road’,” 372–373; and Nantulya, “Implications for Africa from China’s One Belt One Road Strategy.”

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83. Min Wei, “China-Middle East Cooperation in the Field of Infrastructure Under the Framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies 11, no. 3 (2017): 23; Wang Jian, “One Belt One Road: A Vision for the Future of China-Middle East Relations,” Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, May 9, 2017, https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2017/05/belt-road-vision-future-china-middle-east-relations-170509102227548.html, 3; and Liu Li and Wang Zesheng, “Belt and Road Initiative in the Gulf Region: Progress and Challenges,” China Institute of International Studies, November 9, 2017, http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2017-11/09/content_40063037.htm. The China Institute of International Studies is a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs think tank.

84. Shichor, “Vision, Revision, and Supervision,” 47.

85. Qian and Fulton, “China-Gulf Economic Relationship Under the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” 18–19; “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: An Opportunity for Iraq,” Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies,
April 4, 2018, https://www.bayancenter.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/867563522.pdf; Shichor, “Vision, Revision, and Supervision,” 47–48; and Mordechai Chaziza, “The Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative: The Role of the Mediterranean,” Mediterranean Quarterly 29, no. 2 (2018): 54–69.

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87. For more on Oman, see Mordechai Chaziza, “The Significant Role of Oman in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” Contemporary Review of the Middle East 6, no. 1 (2019): 44–57.

88. Wu, “The Strategic Docking Between China and Middle East Countries Under the ‘Belt and Road’ Framework,” 2–5; Wang, “‘One Belt One Road’,” 3; and Lehr, “The Middle East is the Hub for China’s Modern Silk Road.”

89. Wang, “‘One Belt One Road’”; “Belt and Road Initiative to Strengthen China-Kuwait Ties: Chinese Envoy,” China Daily, August 21, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-08/21/content_30913532.htm; Lehr, “The Middle East Is the Hub for China’s Modern Silk Road”; Liu and Wang, “Belt and Road Initiative in the Gulf Region”; Wei, “China-Middle East Cooperation in the Field of Infrastructure under the Framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” 23–24, 26–28. Also relevant are chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise” (Dorraj and Blanchard), chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s ‘Visions’ of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation” (Fulton), and chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities” (Chaziza).

90. Lehr, “The Middle East is the Hub for China’s Modern Silk Road.”

91. Wu, “The Strategic Docking between China and Middle East Countries under the ‘Belt and Road’ Framework,” 9; Liu and Wang, “Belt and Road Initiative in the Gulf Region”; and the contributions by Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”) and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”). On China’s traditional economics first strategy, see Degang Sun and Yahia H. Zoubir, “China’s Economic Diplomacy Towards the Arab Countries: Challenges Ahead?” Journal of Contemporary China, 24, no. 95 (2015): 903–921.

92. Liu and Wang, “Belt and Road Initiative in the Gulf Region.”

93. Wu, “The Strategic Docking between China and Middle East Countries under the ‘Belt and Road’ Framework,” 9.
94. Related points appears in Wu, “The Strategic Docking between China and Middle East Countries Under the ‘Belt and Road’ Framework,” 7–9; Wang, “One Belt One Road’,” 4; and Wei, “China-Middle East Cooperation in the Field of Infrastructure Under the Framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” 23–26.

95. See the chapters by Dorraj and Blanchard (chapter “Iran in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Bounded Progress and Bounded Promise”), Payne (chapter “The Missing MSRI in Iraq: The Southern Opportunity”), and Chaziza (chapter “Egypt in China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Relations Cannot Surmount Realities”).

96. Farooq, Feroze and Kai, “An Analysis of China and Africa Relations with Special Focus on ‘One Belt and One Road’,” 367.

97. This paragraph draws upon chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Connecting Africa” (Mboya), chapter “The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Ethiopia: Transforming Policies, Institutions, and Politics in Expected and Unexpected Ways” (Blanchard and Ziso), chapter “Djibouti and Small State Agency in the Maritime Silk Road: The Domestic and International Foundations” (Styan), and chapter “Tanzania in China’s MSRI: The “Chinese Dream” awaits Alignment with the African One” (Masabo). It also makes use of Chen, “Silk Road to the Sahel”; Anzetse Were, “Debt Trap? Chinese Loans and Africa’s Development Option,” South Africa Institute of International Affairs Policy Insights, no. 66 (2018); “Double Debt Risk for African Countries that Turn to China,” DW, July 25, 2018, https://www.dw.com/en/double-debt-risk-for-african-countries-that-turn-to-china/a-44819336; Nantulya, “Implications for Africa from China’s One Belt One Road Strategy”; and Dollar, “Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa.”

98. Dollar, “Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa,” 4–5.

99. Fulton (chapter “The Gulf Cooperation Council’s “Visions” of Maritime Silk Road Initiative Cooperation”) argues the debt trap is a non-issue for GCC states.

100. Breuer, “Two Bests, One Road?”; “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: An Opportunity for Iraq”; and Farooq, Feroze and Kai, “An Analysis of China and Africa Relations with Special Focus on ‘One Belt and One Road’,” 376–377. Most studies typically highlight the same episodes and there do not seem to be any systematic studies of the social and/or environmental impact of the MSRI in these two regions.

101. Shu Zhang and Matthew Miller, “Behind China’s Silk Road Vision: Cheap Funds, Heavy Debt, Growing Risks,” Reuters, May 15, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-silkroad-finance-idUSKCN18B0YS; and Kane Wu and Julie Zhu, “Exclusive: China’s
102. COFDI trends are covered in Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, “Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment (COFDI): A Primer and Assessment of the State of COFDI,” in Handbook on the International Political Economy of China, ed. Ka Zeng (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2019), 76–97.

103. See, e.g., James Kyne, “China’s Belt and Road Projects Drive Overseas Debt Fears,” Financial Times, August 8, 2018; “The Perils of China’s ‘Debt-Trap Diplomacy’,” The Economist, September 6, 2018, https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/09/08/the-perils-of-chinas-debt-trap-diplomacy; and “The Pandemic is Hurting China’s Belt and Road Initiative.”

104. See the discussion in various chapters in Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia; and Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Southeast Asia. A recent illustration is David Green, “Renewed Conflict in Myanmar Slows China’s Belt and Road Projects,” Nikkei Asian Review, October 6, 2019, https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Renewed-conflict-in-Myanmar-slows-China-s-Belt-and-Road-projects.

105. Aside from the chapters herein, discussion can be found in Wei, “China-Middle East Cooperation in the Field of Infrastructure Under the Framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” 30–31; Breuer, “Two Bests, One Road?”; and Dollar, “Understanding China’s Belt and Road Infrastructure Projects in Africa,” 7.

106. Andreea Brinza, “Japan’s Belt and Road Balancing Act,” The Diplomat, November 8, 2018, https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/japans-belt-and-road-balancing-act.

107. Matthew P. Goodman, Daniel F. Runde and Jonathan E. Hillman, “Connecting the Blue Dots,” CSIS Commentary, February 26, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/connecting-blue-dots.

108. Abdi Latif Dahir, “The Trump Administration’s Africa Policy Is All About Countering China’s Influence,” Quartz, December 14, 2018, https://qz.com/africa/1495859/bolton-unveils-trump-africa-strategy-to-counter-china-russia.

109. Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia; and Blanchard, ed., China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Southeast Asia.
110. Examples of works stressing political economic lenses include Blanchard and Flint, “The Geopolitics of China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative”; Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, “Brazil’s Samba with China: Economics Brought Them Closer, But Failed to Ensure Their Tango,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 24, no. 4 (2019): 583–603; and Bas Hooijmaaijers, *Unpacking EU Policy-Making Towards China: How Member States, Bureaucracies, and Institutions Shape its China Economic Policy* (Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021 forthcoming).

111. Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Norrin M. Ripsman, *Economic Statecraft and Foreign Policy: Sanctions, Incentives, and Target State Calculations* (London: Routledge, 2013).

112. This charge was made several years ago in Shichor, “Vision, Revision, and Supervision,” 48.

113. The quote is from David H. Shinn, “Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Meets the Belt and Road,” *East Asia Forum*, October 17, 2018, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/10/18/forum-on-china-africa-cooperation-meets-the-belt-and-road.

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