

# The Belt and Road Initiative

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BETWEEN PITFALLS AND PROMISES TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE PATH

Stephan Rothlin, CEO

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The BRI is an **opportunity** for  
reciprocity, peace and cooperation,  
mutual learning and mutual benefit.

# The spiritual nature and promise of the BRI:

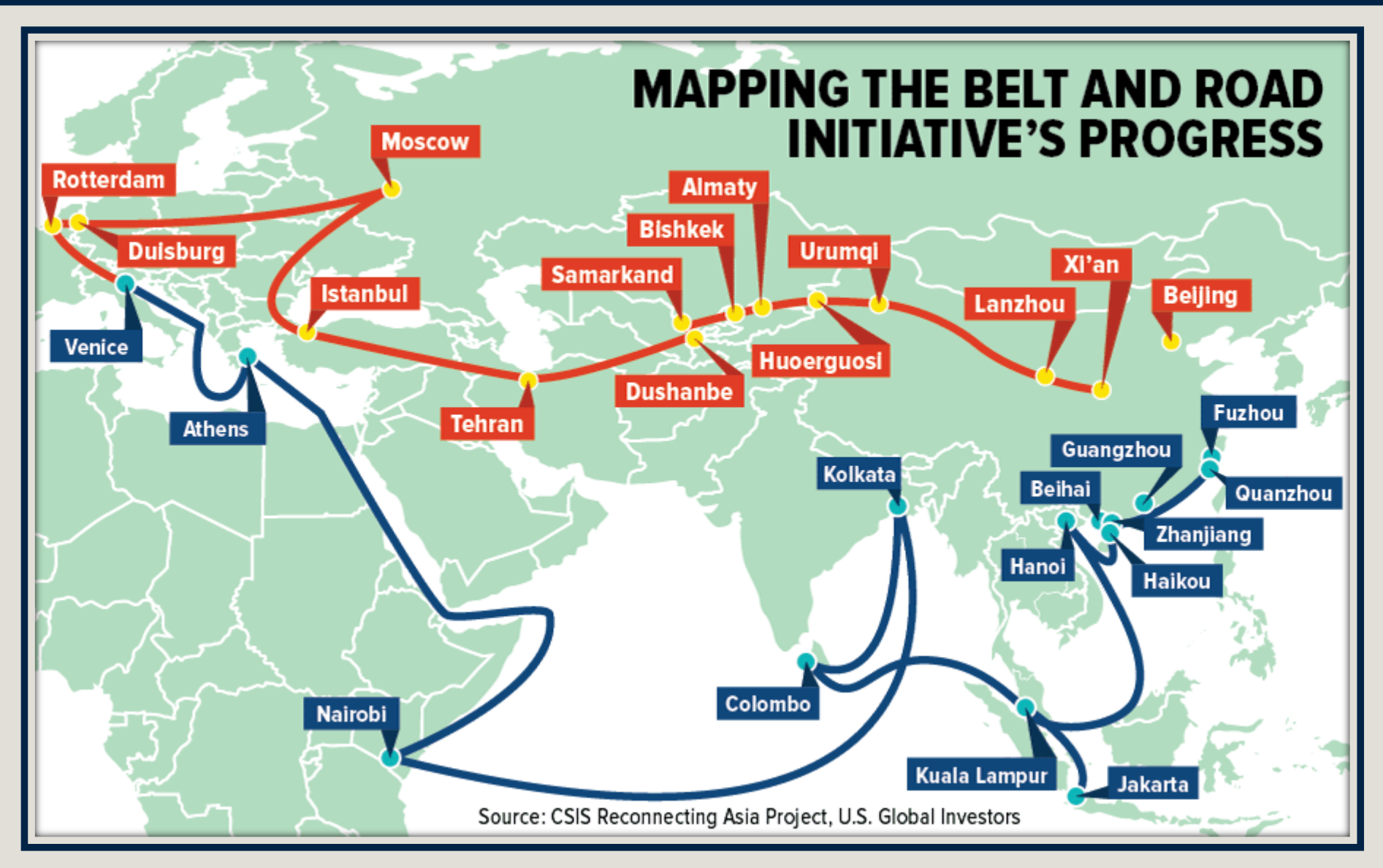
Confucian reciprocity  
Openness & inclusiveness

# Participation in the BRI (2013-2018):

125 countries

173 signed agreements

US\$ 90bn in Chinese investment



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# Xi Jinping's 5 guiding principles for the bri:

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1. A road for peace: “The ancient silk routes thrived in times of peace, but lost vigour in times of war.”

# Xi Jinping's 5 guiding principles for the bri:

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**2. A road of prosperity:** “Development holds the master key to solving all problems. . . Infrastructure connectivity is the foundation of development through cooperation.”

# Xi Jinping's 5 guiding principles for the bri:

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3. A road of opening up: “Opening up brings progress while isolation results in backwardness [. . .] We should build an open platform of cooperation and uphold and grow an open world economy”



# Xi Jinping's 5 guiding principles for the bri:

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**4. A road of innovation:** “We should pursue innovation-driven development and intensify cooperation in frontier areas such as digital economy, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and quantum computing [. . .] we should pursue the new vision of green development [. . .]”

# Xi Jinping's 5 guiding principles for the bri:

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5. A road connecting different civilizations: “We should ensure that when it comes to different civilizations, exchange will replace estrangement, mutual learning will replace clashes, and coexistence will replace a sense of superiority.”

# BRI: Areas of concern

Cross border crime and the role of police cooperation against drug dealers, smugglers, organ harvesters, etc.

# BRI: Areas of concern

“Debt trap diplomacy” and the challenge of empowering instead of enslaving the BRI’s participating countries.

# BRI: Areas of concern

Disregarding as opposed to respecting and learning from the religions (e.g. Islam) along the BRI, and the challenge of development across a pluralistic world.

# BRI: Areas of concern

Corruption and the challenge of pursuing win-win outcomes between China and its African business partners.

# BRI: Areas of concern

Environmentally destructive projects, and the risk of committing to a **development approach** at odds with the need for **sustainability**.

# BRI: the view from Africa

**Attribution:**

Francis C. Nwachukwu, *Is the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa Sustainable?*

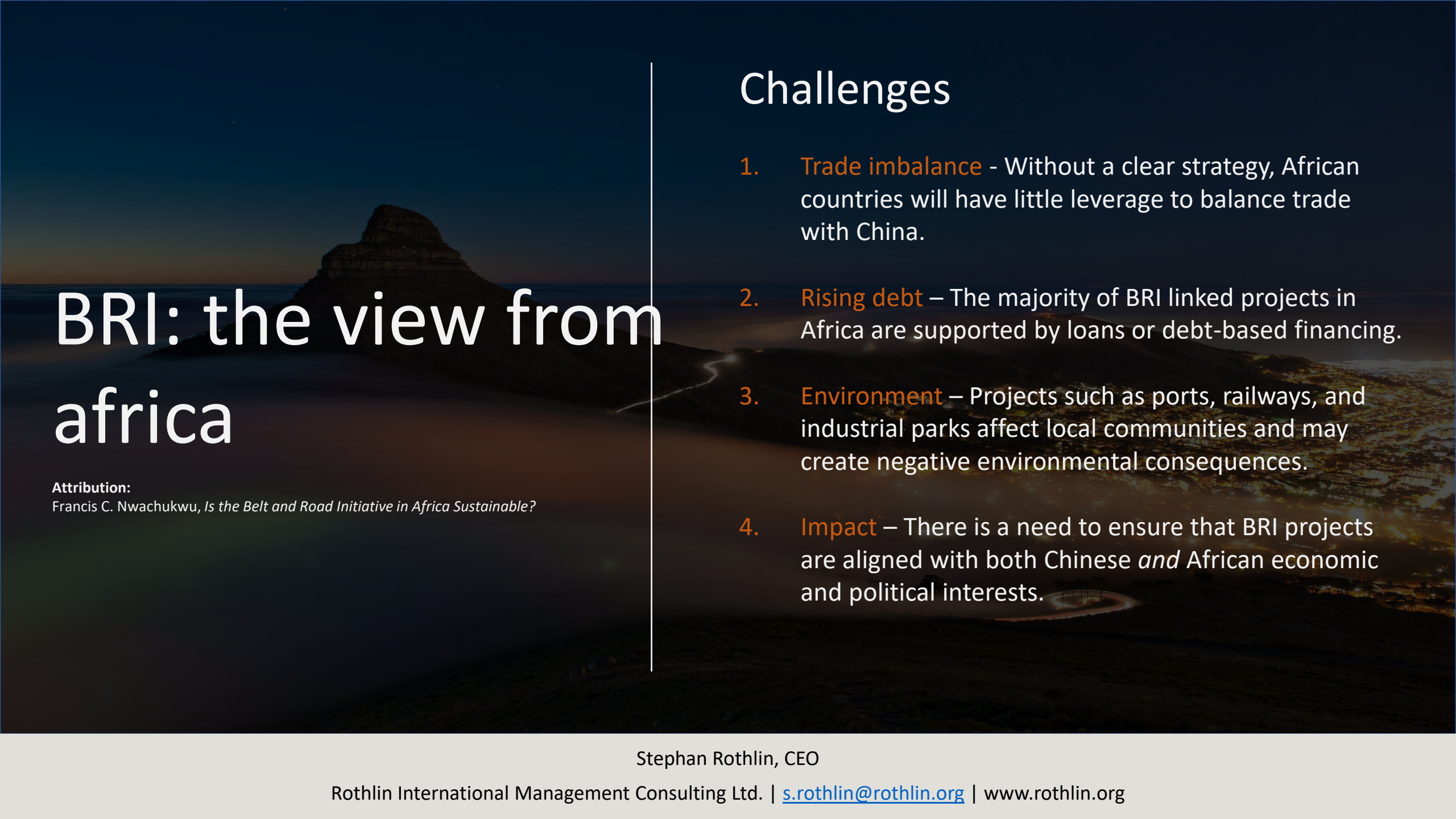
## Benefits

1. **Industrial capacity** – Chinese companies influenced by the BRI are establishing business operations in African countries
2. **Infrastructure** – Africa is in need of infrastructural development. BRI projects, such as ports and railways, will boost infrastructure.
3. **Economic growth** - Both industrial capacity and improved infrastructure contribute to economic growth.

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# BRI: the view from africa

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## Challenges

1. **Trade imbalance** - Without a clear strategy, African countries will have little leverage to balance trade with China.
2. **Rising debt** – The majority of BRI linked projects in Africa are supported by loans or debt-based financing.
3. **Environment** – Projects such as ports, railways, and industrial parks affect local communities and may create negative environmental consequences.
4. **Impact** – There is a need to ensure that BRI projects are aligned with both Chinese *and* African economic and political interests.

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BRI projects in East Africa (Chen, 2018; Sow, 2017; Xinhua, 2018)		
Ethiopia	Addis-Djibouti SGR	US\$4 billion loan financed by China Exim bank
Kenya	Nairobi- Mombasa Madaraka Express	US\$3.2 billion loan financed by China Exim bank (with rail network plans to Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and Ethiopia)
Djibouti	Doraleh Multipurpose port	US\$294 million loan financed by China Exim bank
Djibouti	Damerjog Livestock Port	US\$51 million loan financed by China Exim bank
Djibouti	Multipurpose Free Trade Zone	US\$150 million credit from China Merchants

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# BRI: Areas of promise

Spiritual principles and creative forms of cooperation are indispensable for bringing about a humanistic and sustainable development in the BRI.

# BRI: Areas of promise

Adhering to **universal human values** is not only the right thing to do, it is also the likeliest strategy for success in the long run.

# BRI: Areas of promise

Moving from “Africa as a recipient of aid” to  
“African nations as business partners,” and the  
business model of the BRI.

# BRI: Areas of promise

The main ethical challenge for the partners in the BRI process seems to be whether they are willing share basic common values such as dignity, honesty, truthfulness, reliability and integrity.

# BRI: Areas of promise

The role of the arts, cultural exchange, and religious dialogue; the model of Matteo Ricci and his contemporary Jesuits.

The background of the slide is a dark, high-contrast photograph of a construction site. It features a complex network of metal scaffolding and rebar structures. Two workers are visible: one in the foreground wearing a yellow hard hat and an orange safety vest, and another higher up on the scaffolding. The overall tone is industrial and professional.

# BRI: Important takeaways

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Openness and inclusiveness are essential to the success of the BRI.

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# BRI: Important takeaways

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The resolution of legal uncertainties is essential to building trust and confidence among BRI players.

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A dark, atmospheric photograph of a construction site. Several large tower cranes are visible against a cloudy sky. In the foreground, two construction workers wearing hard hats and safety vests are standing on a structure, looking towards the right. The overall scene is dimly lit, emphasizing the industrial and collaborative nature of the project.

# BRI: Important takeaways

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The pursuit of mutual friendship between  
China and its partners is essential for  
harmonious collaboration.

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# BRI: Important takeaways

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Drawing from the convergent insights from wisdom traditions along the BRI will hedge against unfavorable economic and environmental outcomes.

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# BRI: Important takeaways

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It is short-sighted to view the BRI merely as an alliance of trade and commerce; its success rests on a authentic and global vision of the common good.

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# Thank you!

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