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EDC
Chair Report
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WMUN 4.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Chair Report

“One Belt, One Road”

Meet the EDC Secretariat

President of EDC- Sebastian Smith

My name is Sebastian Smith and I am the creator of the EDC committee within WMUN. Some returning delegates may remember me from the last conference. Despite being from the UK with a British passport, I have had wonderful experiences living in the UK, China, South Africa, and now Saudi Arabia, where I attend the American International School of Riyadh. Personally, I love to debate, and when I heard that MUN entails proper debates about real-world issues, I became hooked. I initially joined MUN in 8th grade, and since then I have attended several conferences, earned awards for top delegates, written tons of position papers, and helped write many resolutions. Now I sit on the Secretariat team of WMUN as the Head of Economic Affairs and I also hold the position of Deputy Secretary-General at AIS-R MUN. Besides MUN, I love mathematics, physics, philosophy, finance and stock-market investing. I welcome all new delegates and I'm excited to see where our discussions take us.

USG for Economical and Business Affairs- Yousaf Ahmed Bilal

My name is Yousaf Ahmed Bilal and I am the new Under-Secretary-General of the WMUN Economic Development Council. I am in Year 12 at the British International School of Riyadh and this is my first year

of participating in MUN conferences. MUN is something that I have increasingly seen as essential given that it not only hones your debating and argumentative skills, but also allows for a greater appreciation for different political perspectives. I particularly appreciate this perspective aspect as, over the years, moving between the vastly contrasting settings of Pakistan, Denmark, Britain, and Saudi Arabia, the importance of appreciating other people's perspectives has become clear. General interest in international diplomacy and the art of politics - spinning your own narrative around the same event - have also played a part in my interest. The agenda at hand, China's Belt and Road initiative, is quite an important one as it is said to have the potential of changing to world order itself, and I hope the scale, severity, and nuance of this topic is well-reflected in the debate. Good luck!

Chairperson- Abdulaziz AlSharif

My name is Abdulaziz AlSharif and I am the new deputy of the EDC committee within WMUN. My history with MUN began last year, when a friend of mine encouraged me to sign up, and since then, I've absolutely loved every conference and debate I've had. Participating in MUN has helped me in classes such as Global Politics, as it allowed for me to truly understand the perspectives of each nation when talking about different issues. Although I am relatively new to MUN, I have made sure to make every conference I have been in so far, my best. Through the writing of countless resolutions, research, and position papers, I've managed to allow myself to gain experience, in order to do my best in my current position at WMUN, the Deputy of the EDC.

I. Statement of the Problem

The Belt and Road Initiative by China involves countless colossal infrastructure projects, planned to be developed in 70+ countries. Currently, this involves roughly 800 projects, spending's of US \$50-100 billion per year, and projected total costs of US \$4-8 trillion. The initiative is often compared to the ancient silk road in its attempt to connect the East to the West. It defines five major priorities: policy coordination; infrastructure connectivity; unimpeded trade; financial integration; and connecting people.

These infrastructure investments are occurring all over the world, in places such as Pakistan, Montenegro, Sri Lanka, and countless nations in Africa, allowing for them to create roads, bridges, and ports, that they would otherwise have not been able to do so without the help of China's finances, skills, and labour. Notably, many of these countries are economically weak and indebted. On paper, this may seem as a great thing; China is supporting countries with weaker economies to build infrastructure while simultaneously increasing their own trade in what seems like a win-win situation, but it's of course not that simple. Some nations speculate that China is lending these countries massive amounts of money in order to place them in debt traps - thus, China has been accused of neocolonialism. For example, if a country could not pay off the debt for a port, they would end up giving China ownership of that port. Opposers therefore claim the initiative is hostile and violates the sovereignty of nations through exploitation. Alarms have also been raised in terms of the implications of this as a grand geo-political strategy to expand.

The disparities between the ground realities of the Belt and Road Initiative and what its hyped up need to be considered to, with some

observers pointing at potential overestimation resulting from a combination of propaganda by backers and alarmism by opposers.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative is China's attempt at connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia through massive infrastructure investments. China has already poured trillions across the three continents. If successful, China's economic and political influence across the world will jump significantly.

Trade War

A trade war is when two countries attempt to increase their trade volume, while also weakening another nations ability to trade through things such as tariffs.

Tariff

A tariff is a form of tax imposed by governments on the import or export of goods by other nations. For example, the US placing tariffs on Chinese goods means that people in the US who want to buy chinese goods from overseas have to pay a tax.

Debt

Debt (in this case) is when one nation takes a loan from another nation. The country that took the loan now owes that money back to the nation that gave it to them.

Debt Trap

A debt trap is when a country gives another country a loan which they know they cannot pay back, in order to take assets from them that would have otherwise been much more expensive to acquire, or simply impossible to acquire.

Economic Colonisation (aka Neocolonialism)

In the past, colonialism involved direct control either through military control, or controlling the administration indirectly (installing puppet leaders). Neocolonialism, or economic colonisation, is the 'new' process of using economics, globalisation, cultural imperialism and conditional aid to influence a country.

CPEC

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is considered to be the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative at an estimated \$60 billion. Investments have increased by the billions over the years, but Pakistan's national stability has threatened the project's efficiency and potential success.

FOIP

The "Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy" (FOIP) is a counter-initiative from the US. It has three pillars – security, economics, and governance. The four stated principles are – respect for sovereignty and independence; peaceful resolution of disputes; free, fair, and reciprocal trade; and adherence to international rules and norms.

Quad powers

This is an informal diplomatic and military arrangement between the US, Japan, Australia, and India, widely viewed as a response to

increased Chinese economic and military power. Recently, negotiations have increased.

Chinese Salami Slicing

China's salami slicing refers to a series of many small actions performed by China (People's Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China), none of which serves as casus belli (an event that justifies war) by itself, that cumulatively produces a much larger action or result in its favour that would be difficult or unlawful to perform all at once. China's actions in the South Sea are also seen under this lens a grand geopolitical strategy

Strait of Malacca

One of the most heavily travelled shipping channels in the world - it is the shortest distance between India and China. It links the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

IMPORTANT: These terms are not here to only help your understanding; they are also here to help guide your research. Use these terms in your research and analyse them to better understand what specific sub-issues exist within this topic and can be tackled in a resolution. Also, since a lot of these terms are different, they will require different means of solving them. Please keep this in mind throughout your research process.

*If you have any questions about this see our contact information further on.

III. History of the Problem

Beginnings

China's President Xi Jinping coined the name in 2013, drawing inspiration from the historical Silk Road of the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago – an ancient network of trade routes that, for centuries, connected China to the Mediterranean Sea via Eurasia. Until 2016, the BRI has also been referred to as 'One Belt One Road'.

Sri Lanka

One of the most common examples of colonialism in the discourse of China's Belt and Road Initiative is Sri Lanka. On July 28, 2017, Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe announced the lease would be signed on the Hambantota Port to China Merchant Port Holdings for 99 years. Hambantota is close to major sea lanes, the most significant being the Strait of Malacca. Certain U.S. officials have even described Sri Lanka as having “effectively ceded sovereignty over a key asset”

Pakistan

This collaboration was first announced in 2013, when then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif met Chinese prime minister Li Keqiang in Beijing. The meeting focused on connecting China with the Pakistani port of Gwadar through highway, rail and pipeline infrastructure - all from Chinese investments. Project plans originally had a five-year horizon for implementation, and the costs involved – ranging between US \$10-20 billion – were moderate compared to China's current ambitions in Pakistan.

These activities were later reframed as part of the so-called “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC), which had an official launch in 2015 when China’s president Xi Jinping visited Pakistan. Emphasis shifted towards power generation in Pakistan, and estimated costs ballooned to 46 billion USD. A long-term plan was established, expanding the projected timeline for implementation up to 2030. Projected costs moved up to 62 billion USD.

Pakistan is, as of 2021, the biggest receiver of Chinese funding. In CPEC, the most significant project is considered to be Gwadar port, which will give China direct access to the Arabian Gulf. The Karakoram highway has also been built to supplement this. Opposers have warned of this being a debt-trap, especially given Pakistan’s struggling economy.

Tajikistan

Beijing pressured an allegedly debt trapped Tajikistan to hand over 1,158 km² territory which still owes China US\$1.2b out of total \$2.9b debt.

Africa

Since the 80s, China has been investing in Africa. But, in the lavish 2006 China-Africa summit, China drastically increased its efforts. Africa's abundance of raw materials is seen as a motivating factor. There are also political motivations to invest in Africa as an opportunity of increasing global presence and influence. Africa is also an emerging market and offers China a chance to achieve growth and high returns from its investments. Around 10,000 Chinese-owned firms operate currently in the African continent, and the value of Chinese business there since 2005 amounts to more than \$2 trillion, with \$300 billion in

investments planned for later. In 2018, a whopping \$60 billion African aid package - Africa is expected to increasingly turn to the East.

IV. Previous Attempts at Solutions

Although there haven't been any treaties/laws implemented so far, the International community has expressed their frustration with China's debt traps. Nations such as Italy, however, seem to have no problem with China's plans at all, as it may bring them economic benefits. Smaller nations across Africa have begun to adapt to China's form of economic colonisation and have become more wary of any loans that Beijing may offer them. Washington has begun warning countless nations of China's debt traps, however, the reason for that is likely to not allow China to complete their Belt & Road initiative, as this would place China far, far ahead of the US in terms of exports/imports.

V. Possible Solutions

- Encourage greater general transparency on deals and systems regarding the BRI, from both Chinese companies and the governments that accept them.
 - Encourage CCP to properly define the BRI to prevent exploitation of vague rules
- Urge the Chinese government to not infringe on the sovereignty of indebted countries by
 - Using conditional aid in a hostile manner
 - Extorting unfair leases on ports or other territory
- Promote an international UN commission which properly defines neo-colonialism and sets systems to address the issue and identify when it's happening

- Do not intervene, given potential mischaracterization of the BRI and the fact that the deals are two-way, requiring full consent from the other country.

VI. Research Tips

When researching, one useful tip would be to group your research into 5 categories: a) your delegation/country's history with the issue, b) what relationship your delegation currently has to the issue and what is currently being done in terms of a solution that your delegation is involved with, and c) what your delegation would like to see in the future and some proposed solutions that would achieve that.

- What is the source of the problem?
- Your delegation/country's history with the issue
- What relationship your delegation currently has to the issue and what is currently being done in terms of a solution that your delegation is involved with
- What your delegation would like to see in the future and some proposed solutions that would achieve that
- What resources may your nation require in order to help the situation?

By no means does your research have to contain every aspect of this, nor does it have to follow this guideline. It is just a recommendation.

Remember, always make sure that when you summarize your country's stance on the issue in your opening speech, it **MUST** be consistent with what that country actually wants/believes, and your behaviour throughout the entire conference must be consistent with this - there is no room for personal opinion.

If you have any more questions or require any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact any of the committee's chairs or president:

- Sebastian Smith: sjsmith@aisr.org
- Aziz Alsharif: aaltaraif@air.org
- Yousaf Bilal: yousafbilal212@gmail.com or 07bilal@bistr.com.sa

VII. References - See these for further reading!

- A research paper on claims of Debt Traps in the Belt and Road initiative -
 - [Debunking the Myth of 'Debt-trap Diplomacy' | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank](#)
 - Note: the page only shows a summary, the PDF is downloadable on the right and can be used for further info
- Debate on
 - [The Belt & Road Initiative Is a Trillion-Dollar Blunder || Debate #2 - YouTube](#)
- Unbiased report filled with useful information about the Belt & Road initiative
 - [China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative - Council on Foreign Relations](#)

I. MUN Procedure Reminder

Many resources will have already been sent you, but here is quick recap of some of the information that has been covered in the training sessions

- Every delegate will join their assigned committee on discord and rename themselves to: Delegate of [insert nation name]
- Each delegate will then give their small opening speech, which should be no longer than 2 minutes:
 - This should be a brief summary of your country's stance on the topic that is being discussed (China's Belt and Road Project),
 - This will be important for other delegates to determine if you will be a potential ally for the time in the conference and who will be signatories/co-submitters on which resolution.
- Discussion of the resolution will then begin
 - The resolution will be presented by the main submitters (the USA will present one resolution and China will present another) who will then read out the operative clauses of the resolution and entertain questions from other delegations,
 - Amendments may be sent in and entertained during this time to resolve conflicts or make the resolution better,
 - These amendments will be voted on, and eventually the resolution as a whole will be voted on.