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CHINA'S NEW SILK ROAD

Navigating the organized crime risk

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The Mombasa–Nairobi railway project. Infrastructure developments linked to the Belt and Road Initiative may open up new avenues for criminal trade. © Yasuyoshi Chiba via Getty Images

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GDP	gross domestic product
SEZ	special economic zone
SGR	Standard Gauge Railway
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

▲ A China–Europe freight train passes through the China–Russia border. Increased connectivity provided by the BRI may afford new opportunities to criminal networks. © Li Rui/VCG via Getty Images



China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is Beijing's flagship programme for expanding its international trade opportunities and promoting infrastructure development. The New Silk Road, as it is often referred to, now encompasses 138 countries, and its unprecedented reach attracts the attention of policymakers and businesses worldwide – and criminals alike.

BRI-related projects bring (or will do so once completed) investments, services, employment opportunities and prosperity to countries across Asia, Africa and beyond. However, like all development projects, they are also likely to have unintended consequences – including corruption, criminal exploitation and infiltration.

Specifically, increases in licit trade prompted by the building or expansion of road and railway networks, ports and special economic zones provide openings for illicit trade, which ever-entrepreneurial criminal networks are quick to exploit. Indeed, the main pathways and means of illicit trade are usually also the main pathways of licit trade.

Failing to acknowledge that development and trade create vulnerabilities in contexts where governance and regulatory capacity is weak, crime levels are high and illicit markets are well established opens up the risk of systematic criminal exploitation of the BRI, either through boosting existing illicit routes or facilitating the emergence of new ones. In other words, these risks call for the need to 'crime-proof' development initiatives.

The regions at the core of this study – South East Asia and central and East Africa – present a number of vulnerabilities pertaining to the quality of governance, the socio-economic landscape, the security sphere and the environment. As such, they are already the target of criminal enterprises and are home to some of the largest narcotics, human trafficking and illicit environmental markets in the world. From the perspective of criminal actors, increased connectivity brought about by the BRI equates to easier access to source regions and consumer markets. Larger trade volumes also provide more opportunities to conceal illicit goods among cargoes and to avoid detection at borders, ports and airports. Evidence suggests that the maritime sector in these regions is particularly susceptible to criminal activities as a result of BRI-linked ports and route expansions. Yet the BRI's reach is much further still, with supply chains extending all the way into Europe and BRI-related projects reaching Latin America and the Caribbean, which may form the focus of a future study.

Data collated for this research underscores how one of the BRI's key economic networks – the China-Indochina corridor, which crosses Myanmar, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand – overlaps with both existing economic routes and established trafficking routes and transit hubs. The key paths of the initiative correspond to and elongate transnational trafficking routes, with illicit goods blending in with the larger volume of trade. In areas where the BRI routes do not overlap with established trafficking routes, new transport infrastructure will link the Chinese market with new trading partners, amplifying the opportunities for illicit trade.

For criminal actors, increased connectivity brought about by the BRI equates to easier access to source regions and consumer markets.

On the African continent, the combination of railway developments and port expansions by the Chinese is opening access to trading markets for landlocked countries and inland cities, many of which are also rich in natural resources and serve as trade sites for illicit commodities. BRI projects appear to overlap with (and in some cases extend) existing trafficking routes in the eastern, southern and central regions. Two main railway projects are of specific interest: the Northern Corridor, leading from Mombasa on the east coast to the Great Lakes region and eventually reaching the west coast of Africa; and the Central Corridor, from the Tanzanian port Dar es Salaam inland to Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

As the first mapping of the convergence between BRI infrastructure and criminal flows, this report is aimed at a wide audience: from crime specialists to sinologists; from development practitioners to law enforcement; from regional experts to policy makers, and beyond. As such, it is conceived to be equally accessible to readers from all these disciplines.

This report consists of three sections after a general background on the BRI. First, an overview of the key regional criminal markets in South East Asia and central and East Africa, which identifies the main trends and risks that relate to the trafficking of narcotics, people and environmental commodities. This is followed by a discussion of the BRI's purpose, scale and types of initiative included in its broad agenda.

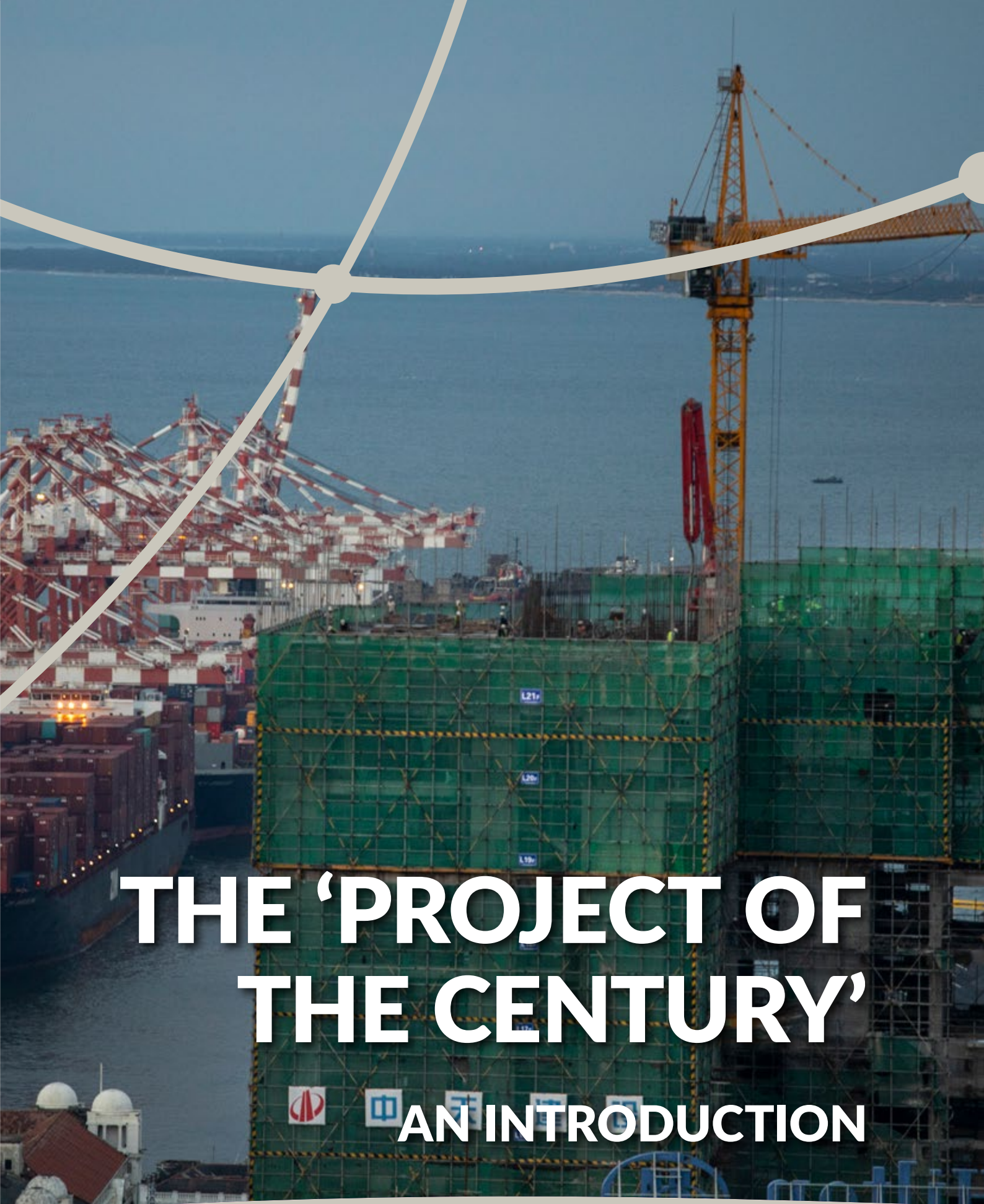
With the context and background having been set, the third section forms the core of the report: an examination of how illicit flows converge and overlap with projects of the BRI. Maps support the text to highlight how hubs, ports, border crossings and critical railway and road infrastructure that facilitate current and future trade can also be exploited for illicit purposes. This is complemented by extensive qualitative data annexed to the report, describing commodities associated with key locations and specific vulnerabilities identified in relation to BRI projects.

Methodology

This report is informed by a desk review, in-person interviews conducted in Vietnam in 2020, and telephone interviews with key informants and port authorities in South East Asia and East Africa, as well as with shipping industry specialists and a number of researchers focusing on China and the BRI.

Although any predictions regarding the impact of the BRI on transnational organized crime are, for the most part, speculative, they are informed by evidence of existing criminal markets and flows, and prior trends in infrastructure development. As such, the report intends to make some sensible observations regarding the potential effects of the BRI on crime, as an initial basis for further tracking and analysis. In addition, although every effort has been taken to understand and map trafficking routes and associated commodities, the nature of these issues is subject to constant change and, as such, the information may alter accordingly.

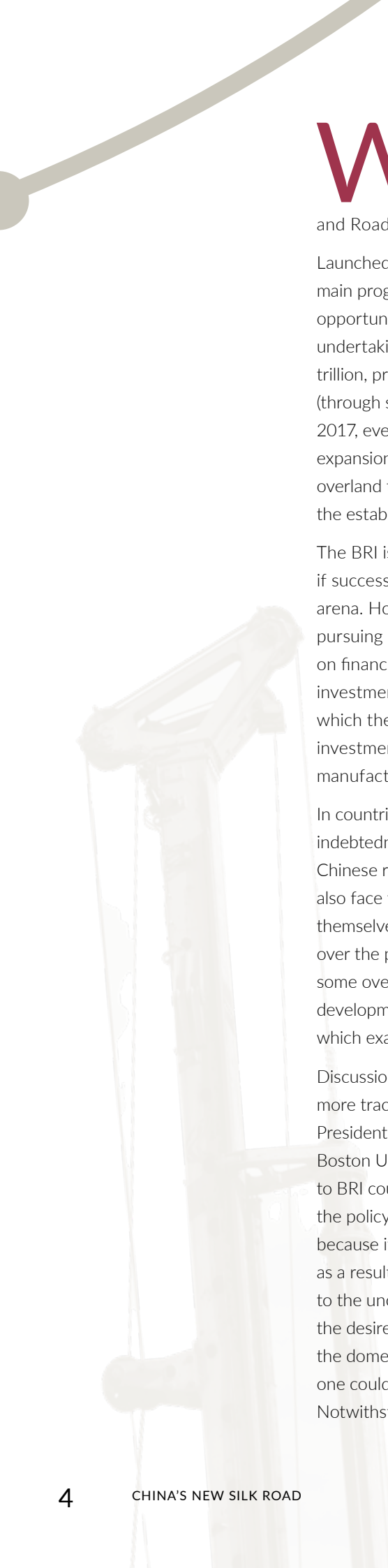
This report is complemented by an interactive digital tool – **Mapping BRI, organized crime and illicit trade** – available at bri.globalinitiative.net



THE 'PROJECT OF THE CENTURY'

     AN INTRODUCTION

▲ Chinese-managed construction projects in Colombo, Sri Lanka. © Paula Bronstein via Getty Images



When new business opportunities emerge, criminal actors are never far behind. This is true in most contexts, and certainly also with regard to the infrastructure and commercial improvements that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is expected to deliver.

Launched in 2013 with an unofficial estimated \$900 billion budget,¹ the BRI is Beijing's main programme for furthering international trade and infrastructure development opportunities and, as of 2020, encompasses 138 participating countries.² This undertaking, of which project funding is now estimated to be in the region of \$1.3 trillion, promises to increase connectivity between East Asia and Western Europe (through south-eastern, southern and central Asia), East and central Africa and, as of 2017, even Latin America and the Caribbean. At the core of the BRI is the building or expansion of ports and airports, increased maritime trade routes, and improvements in overland transportation networks through high-speed railways, energy pipelines and the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs).

The BRI is portrayed as a game changer not only in economic contexts but also, if successful, for giving China a central and strategic position in the geopolitical arena. However, the initiative is not without controversy. China has been accused of pursuing 'debt-trap diplomacy' at the expense of developing countries. Projects rely on financing schemes that involve access to natural resources, control over the asset investments themselves or diplomatic conditions included in the financing agreement, which themselves sometimes involve unsustainable rates of payment. Other BRI investments have been made conditional on the establishment of free trade and manufacturing zones.

In countries with weaker economies, there is a tangible risk that the extent of the indebtedness creates leverage over the government and political class to accede to Chinese requests, such as having preferential access to natural resources. Countries also face the risk of losing control over some of their strategic assets if they find themselves unable to pay off debts, as is illustrated by the case of Sri Lanka handing over the port of Hambantota to China on a 99-year lease in 2017.³ Servicing debts in some over-leveraged countries has also come at the expense of investment in national development priorities such as education, health and other service-delivery projects, which exacerbates the enabling environment for illicit economies and criminal groups.

Discussions around China's overseas lending, debts and debt negotiations gained even more traction in the course of 2020, raising doubts over the sustainability of what President Xi Jinping had described as the 'project of the century'.⁴ Data released by Boston University in December 2020 showed that lending by Chinese institutions to BRI countries had fallen dramatically in the 2016–2019 period, suggesting that the policy of lending to countries with shaky finances was unsustainable, in part because it involves multiple debt renegotiations along the way (further proliferated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related hardship).⁵ Analysts also pointed to the uncertainty resulting from the trade war with the United States (2018–2019), the desire to consolidate existing investments and a shift towards investments in the domestic market as factors behind reduced Chinese foreign lending. To this list, one could add the notion that the BRI has not always helped China's reputation.⁶ Notwithstanding concerns about the financing model, which may have far-reaching

consequences especially for low-income countries that rely heavily on China for building their national infrastructures, China is not going to withdraw from the BRI, although it can be expected that lending might increasingly involve international financial institutions.

Another controversial aspect of the BRI concerns the inclusion of countries into the initiative's ecosystem, which is often seen as part of a bigger strategy. To mention one, the 2020 memorandum of understanding signed with Kiribati (in addition to those signed with all the Pacific islands that have diplomatic relations with Beijing) was centred on the integration of the BRI with Kiribati's 20-Year Vision development plan.⁷ Apart from the concerns relating to the specifics of the agreement, which came mere months after the restoration of ties between the two countries, it cannot be ignored that Kiribati and its exclusive economic zones are strategically located in the Pacific Ocean. The construction of two transshipment hubs as part of the development plan, as well as land reclamation, lends credence to the notion that the atoll could become a future Chinese military base and also grant China access to large fishing and mineral resources in the deep sea.⁸

Lastly, whereas much has been written about the New Silk Road and its accompanying Maritime Silk Road, a great deal of opacity remains: neither a comprehensive list of all BRI projects nor criteria for prospective projects are officially available. In addition, some projects that had started prior to 2013 now appear to be discussed as part of the BRI and others that were conceived as independent from the BRI have been absorbed into the initiative's universe. A notable example is the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which now represents the bulk of BRI-related initiatives in Pakistan and is a flagship component of the overall BRI effort.⁹

Notwithstanding such gaps in the available data and the observation that many BRI-related infrastructure projects are yet to be completed, it is already possible to identify some actual and potential implications for transnational crime and the trafficking of illicit

goods. The analysis in this report illustrates how BRI-associated economic corridors, trade routes and major infrastructure developments such as railways and ports coincide or intersect with established trafficking routes and criminal hubs in South East Asia and East and central Africa. The report also examines which by-products of BRI connectivity (e.g. an increase in the volume of container shipping) are likely to be exploited by criminal enterprises.

Although beyond the scope of this report, opacity and lack of a BRI governing body or strong oversight from Beijing have opened up opportunities for other illicit activities. For example, Chinese investors associated with criminal groups have been known for promoting various projects in China's neighbouring countries, fraudulently claiming their being associated with the BRI.¹⁰ Most egregious was the case of the so-called China–Thailand–Myanmar Economic Corridor and associated Yatai New City (considered a gambling and money laundering mecca), which, in an official statement in August 2020, the Chinese embassy in Myanmar made clear 'had nothing to do' with the BRI.¹¹ The case suggests China is now attempting to crack down on crime connected to the BRI. However, despite its clout and desire to stop some of these illicit activities, Beijing's power has its limits. This is exemplified by the fact that Chinese fugitive criminals have been able to acquire foreign passports, e.g. from Cambodia or Myanmar, and operate from BRI-linked infrastructures such as casinos across South East Asia where they have also managed to nurture relationships with local elites.¹²

To note, Chinese law enforcement cooperates with regional counterparts on joint patrols and operations, especially within the framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation including China, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.¹³ In 2017, the six countries set up a joint law enforcement centre to share intelligence and increase coordination with a focus on tackling cross border crime.¹⁴ These efforts appear to have limited impact on the criminal challenges described in this study.



OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL CRIME TRENDS AND MARKETS

▲ Cross-border illicit trade is rife in South East Asia, and East and central Africa. Above, Chinese customs display a seizure of heroin made on a ship that had sailed from Thailand. © Robert Ng via Getty Images



In 2014, customs officials in Hong Kong seized a container that reportedly came from Uganda via Kenya and Malaysia. To their surprise, the inspection revealed 1 tonne of pangolin scales, instead of the expected plastic waste as stated on the official bill of lading; it is not clear whether officials found any of the official 'goods'.¹⁵ Thai customs officials made a similar discovery in 2015: a container en route to Lao PDR, originally from the Port of Mombasa, Kenya, and that had travelled through ports in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore, contained more than 3 tonnes of ivory – instead of the officially indicated 'tea leaves'.¹⁶

South East Asia: An overview of criminal activities

Asia is home to many of the world's emerging economies; however, these areas of wealth often exist alongside extreme poverty. This proximity, along with corruption and a lack of law enforcement capacity, drives many types of organized crime. Rapid integration among members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹⁷ and their neighbours has created considerable security challenges, with organized crime appearing to be expanding and diversifying. In addition, trafficking in narcotics and environmental commodities such as timber contributes to the coffers of groups involved in armed conflict in parts of the region, such as Myanmar.

In developing the regional economic market, barriers are being reduced to facilitate the efficient crossing of borders for people, money and goods. However, the associated risks have not been managed by regional governance mechanisms to the same extent as in other, more regulated regions such as Europe. Neither the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation¹⁸ nor ASEAN has been able to keep up with regional cross-border criminal activities.¹⁹ Substantial investment in infrastructure and cross-border trade initiatives has not been matched with investments in security and protection or a fully functioning framework for dealing with cross-border crime. Although border control has improved notably in many areas, a lack of capacity and weak border security remain in many of the countries in the region.²⁰ Increasing cross-border crime is a particularly serious issue for less-developed yet resource-rich countries, such as those in South East Asia. Emerging economies frequently rely on the export of raw materials, but may have limited capacity to regulate the exploitation of these natural resources.

In South East Asia, infrastructure development will be of great benefit, affording greater access to China and other important connected markets along the route. However, this also inadvertently opens access to illicit markets and is already attracting the attention of criminals eager to control infrastructure as a way to legitimize their business, as in the case of trafficker Zhao Wei's activities in the Golden Triangle SEZ (discussed later). Surrounded by major markets for illicit activities in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, South East Asia is especially vulnerable to the impacts of transnational organized-crime groups. Being a source, destination or transit location, South East Asia is already one of the major players in the global illicit trade in drugs such as methamphetamine and heroin, environmental products such as wildlife and timber, counterfeit goods and medicines, and people.

The majority of the illicit trade flows in South East Asia use the same infrastructure and routes as legitimate trade and there appears to be consensus on the likelihood that new BRI routes would follow the same path. The increase in both cross-border trade and migration suggests that the following four subregions have become more reliant on transnational connections, accompanied by an upward trend in related crimes since 1991, when the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) started collecting regional data:²¹

- The Greater Mekong Subregion: Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, southern China, Cambodia, Vietnam and eastern India.
- Maritime South East Asia: Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.
- The Bay of Bengal: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia.
- The Gulf of Thailand: Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

The information boxes on the following pages give an overview of the three key criminal markets in South East Asia.



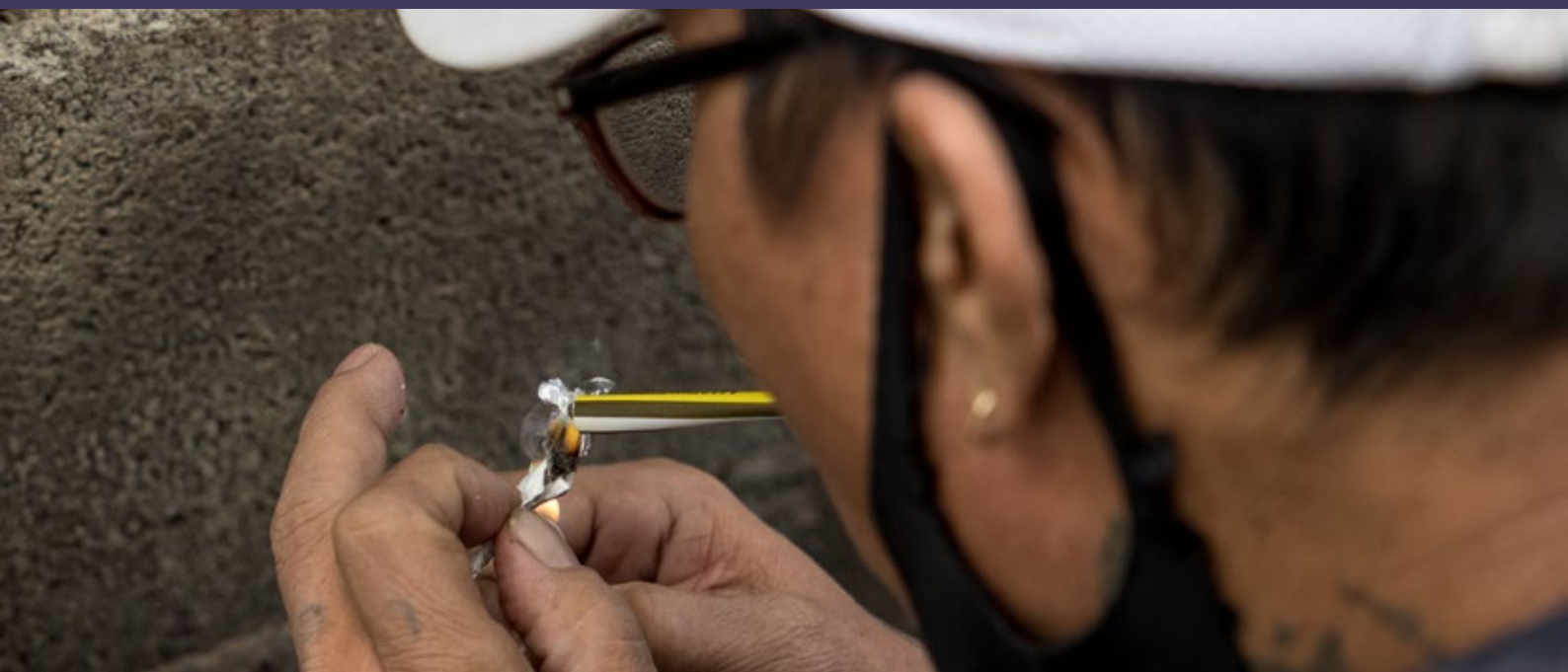
Narcotics trafficking

- Cross-border trafficking of synthetic drugs is among the most serious criminal challenges.
- Increased production, especially of methamphetamine, is driving prices down, with effects felt further afield (e.g. lower prices in Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea).²²
- Year-on-year increases in seizures of methamphetamine were recorded in East and South East Asia throughout the 2010s – something that was not observed in any other part of the world.²³
- Cambodia is a major transit country for drug trafficking. It is the main producer of cannabis in South East Asia and the Koh Kong province is a known hotspot for methamphetamine trafficking.
- Heroin is the most frequently trafficked drug after methamphetamine.
- The so-called Golden Triangle in Myanmar, Lao PDR and Thailand produces up to a third of the world's opium. The majority originates in Myanmar.²⁴
- Vietnam is the principal destination for heroin trafficking, accounting for approximately 36% of all heroin seized in South East Asia from 2013 to 2018.²⁵
- The production of heroin relies on the precursor chemical acetic anhydride, which is mostly sourced from India and China.
- The production of methamphetamine also relies on precursors and licit pharmaceuticals from neighbouring countries, including India, China and Thailand.
- Singapore and Hong Kong are key transit hubs for counterfeit pharmaceuticals from China (where 50% of these medicines originate), destined for consumer markets in Africa, Europe and the United States.²⁶

EXPECTED RISKS

The narcotics trade is highly exploitative of regional integration and increased connectivity. Improving infrastructure and the reduction of border controls within the Greater Mekong Subregion and with China and India may be contributing to the significant growth in the production, trafficking and consumption of heroin and methamphetamine. The production and consumption of methamphetamine have also begun

to move beyond traditional markets in the subregion itself, now flowing into neighbouring countries such as the Philippines, Brunei and Singapore. In India, the development of infrastructure to connect its eastern region to the Greater Mekong Subregion has led to an increase in the production of both ketamine and methamphetamine.





Human trafficking and migrant smuggling

- Two-thirds of the world's human trafficking victims (approximately 25 million people) are from East Asia and the Pacific.²⁷ The Koh Kong province of Cambodia is a known hotspot for human trafficking.
- The primary routes for migrant smuggling run from South Asia and the Middle East through South East Asia to Australia, and from Myanmar and Bangladesh to Malaysia and Indonesia.²⁸
- Approximately a third of irregular migrants in the region use major roads and cross at official checkpoints.²⁹
- Thailand is a magnet for irregular labour in the region: just over half a million migrants are smuggled in annually, mostly from Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia, at a profit of nearly \$200 million.³⁰
- Migrant smuggling is also prevalent in Vietnam, with many Bangladeshis lured by false promises of job opportunities.³¹ In addition to being a hub for drug smuggling, the city of Vinh is also a known location of migrant smuggling.
- Several key provinces in Vietnam have been identified as source locations for victims of trafficking from Vietnam to Europe.
- Main trafficking routes run between Vientiane in Lao PDR and the Yunnan province in China via Luang Namtha. Nong Khai is also a popular location for flows of irregular migrants.³²
- Throughout the Greater Mekong Subregion, smugglers are able to take migrants across official borders on foot or by motorcycle, vehicle or boat.

EXPECTED RISKS

Facilitating travel is an important aspect of business and social connections in South East Asia, yet this also facilitates illicit activities such as labour exploitation, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. A number of claims have been made linking enhanced regional connectivity and stronger business ties with China with exploitation of vulnerable people. Examples include the rising number of women trafficked throughout Asia, including from Lao PDR, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar, for the purpose of forced marriages, forced labour and prostitution.³³ A further risk is represented by the incursion of Chinese labour brokers, which has been associated with the trafficking of Chinese and third country nationals into South East Asia.

Vientiane, Lao PDR. The city is a hotspot for human trafficking. © Thomas Ima via Getty Images





Trafficking in environmental commodities

- South East Asia is home to some of the world's largest illicit wildlife markets, and the crackdown on illicit wildlife trade in China has prompted criminals to look at the region for supply.
- The region is a source, transit location and destination for a range of trafficked wildlife and related products, such as elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolins, reptiles, tigers and songbirds.³⁴
- Vietnam is probably the most important country for the illicit wildlife trade in South East Asia owing to its location. Various types of trafficking commonly occur in Hai Phong, as it has both ports and an airport.
- ASEAN countries account for less than 3% of the world's land mass and 8% of the global population, yet an estimated 25% of the global illicit wildlife trade passes through the region.³⁵
- The region is an entryway into Japan and China, the world's largest consumer markets for illicit wildlife. Demand in Vietnam is also on the rise.³⁶
- In the Asia-Pacific region, the illegal timber trade is estimated to be worth \$11 billion annually, which is approximately 30% of the region's total trade in wood products.³⁷ Major timber producers include Indonesia, Malaysia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.
- Indonesia is thought to be the single largest deforester in the world, losing an estimated 1.6–2.8 million hectares to illegal logging and land conversion each year.³⁸
- Cambodia has a long history of being a transit location for ivory and rhino horn between Africa and East Asia.

EXPECTED RISKS

Traditionally, the majority of wildlife trafficked in the region was locally sourced. However, owing to the rapid biodiversity depletion experienced in the region and the growing demand for exotic species, there is a significant increase in transcontinental resource trafficking.³⁹ Illicit trade in both wildlife and timber appears to be conducted alongside legal trade, with products often concealed in legitimate cargo, or trade

operating through fraudulent or corrupt methods. Greater connectivity, especially with Africa – another key source region for illicit wildlife products – is expected to increase these criminal activities.

The explosion of Chinese tourism into the region and the increasing difficulty of obtaining illegal wildlife in China also risk boosting illicit trade in wildlife.

Growing demand for exotic species has increased transcontinental resource trafficking. Below, men are arrested for illegally trespassing in a protected forest in Indonesia. © Jefta Images/Barcroft Media via Getty Images



Central and East Africa: An overview of criminal activities

The security situation in central and East Africa is multifaceted and involves criminal markets and illicit economies, conflict, violent extremism and terrorism, and political tensions. Conflict parties and groups aligned with al-Qaeda and ISIS are known for their reliance on illicit markets to sustain their operations. As a result, an area such as northern Mozambique is currently battling, with limited resources, a multitude of converging security problems. At the same time, conflict creates multiple opportunities for criminal networks.

Although several countries have been combined into a single region for the purpose of this study (i.e. as areas along BRI routes), the report acknowledges that this area represents a large and heterogeneous portion of the continent, which consists of multiple subregions (e.g. the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes), with varying levels of economic development, institutional strength and ethnic make-up. They also feature a variety of lower-level criminality, ranging from cattle rustling to organized theft and cross-border smuggling of foodstuffs, alcohol and fuel, which is excluded from this study.

Similar to the situation in Asia, construction of infrastructure and the promotion of both intra- and interregional trade integration are seen as key to social and economic development. In this context, high expectations surround the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will be implemented, in stages, from January 2021. AfCFTA, which has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has the potential of increasing intra-African trade by 50% by 2035 – bringing 30 million people out of extreme poverty, increasing the incomes of 68 million others who live on less than \$5.50 per day and injecting \$76 billion into the rest of the world's income.⁴⁰ China has endorsed AfCFTA and officials have spoken of ways to strengthen cooperation between China and Africa by developing synergies between the BRI and AfCFTA.⁴¹

Once again, these advances offer opportunities for criminal networks. Kenya, to mention a key example, is the economic powerhouse of the region, and the largest exporter and importer in East Africa. It has experienced sustained economic growth as a result of political, structural and economic reforms over the last decade, and it is now a lower-middle-income economy with, according to 2019 figures, a per capita GDP of \$1 816.50.⁴² However, the combination of the country's relatively advanced infrastructure, for both transport and financial transactions, and its proximity to conflict-based criminal economies in the region seemingly facilitates a high level of criminal activity.⁴³

The illicit markets in narcotics, people and environmental commodities, often enabled by cyber capabilities and illicit flows in small arms and light weapons, are the key regional concerns that may increase as criminals try to exploit BRI-related developments. In addition, financial crime and fraud, the production of counterfeit goods, and maritime piracy are persistent criminal challenges in East Africa.

The information boxes on the following pages give an overview of the three key criminal markets in central and East Africa.



Narcotics trafficking

- East Africa is a major hub for globally trafficked narcotics, including heroin, cannabis, cocaine, methamphetamine, khat and precursors of synthetic drugs. Nairobi and Mombasa are key locations.
- Trafficking is suspected to be on the rise and driving local consumption.⁴⁴
- The 2020 World Drug Report indicated Kenya as one of the countries reporting some of the largest quantities of opiates seized in 2018, with heroin seizures reaching 1.5 tonnes.⁴⁵
- Central Africa is less of a hub for intercontinental drug trafficking compared with East Africa. Yet, the Cameroonian cities of Yaoundé and Douala facilitate significant regional trafficking, especially of cocaine, through their international airports.⁴⁶
- Cannabis production and trafficking are important revenue streams for both rebel groups and the military in the DRC.⁴⁷
- As is the case in other regions, trafficking in counterfeit pharmaceuticals is also a concern. Seaports in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique are entry points for shipments originating from China and India.⁴⁸

EXPECTED RISKS

In light of the major BRI-related development, coastal areas are particularly at risk of experiencing an increase in illicit trafficking. Notably, China sees Mombasa as the maritime pivot for the BRI in Africa as it is the largest port in East and southern Africa for handling large volumes of containers and among

the most efficient.⁴⁹ The current port expansion (thanks to Chinese investments), together with Mombasa already being a key trafficking hub for narcotics and other illicit commodities such as wildlife, makes it a magnet for further criminal activities.

A heroin seizure in Mombasa, Kenya. The city is a key trafficking hub for narcotics and other illicit commodities. © Tony Karumba/AFP via Getty Images





Human trafficking and migrant smuggling

- Conflict-induced human displacement and economic migration are widely exploited by people smugglers and traffickers.
- People from East Africa are usually trafficked to Europe, the Middle East and southern Africa. Domestic (intra-regional) trafficking of women and children is widespread, albeit underreported.⁵⁰
- In Central Africa, there are numerous cases of children being sent to urban centres under false pretences, who then fall victim to forced labour and sex trafficking.⁵¹
- Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are key source countries.⁵²
- As is the case in other regions, trafficking, which involves international criminal networks, is heavily reliant on the internet.

EXPECTED RISKS

People traffickers and migrant smugglers already use some of the routes that are part of BRI-planned rail and road networks. Infrastructure improvement may facilitate trafficking. In addition, the prospect of new job

opportunities brought about by Chinese investments in the region may prompt an influx of regional migrants into key cities along BRI routes. Vulnerable individuals might become easy prey of labour and sexual exploitation.

Human smugglers in Khartoum, Sudan. The country is a key source of human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the region.

© Ebrahim Hamid/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images





Trafficking in environmental commodities

- The Horn of Africa has emerged as a key region for wildlife crime, both as a source and a transit area for illicit products and live animals.
- The Port of Mombasa is an epicentre of wildlife traffic and, until 2016/17, also the leading exit point for illegal ivory together with Dar es Salaam Port.⁵³ China and Thailand are the biggest illegal ivory consumers.⁵⁴
- Small quantities of ivory are shipped to Asia from Mozambique from ports such as Beira and Nacala, which, until 2018, used to be prominent exit points. Volumes have significantly decreased owing to the shrinking elephant population.⁵⁵
- In the Congo Basin/central Africa, targeted species include elephants, pangolins, tortoises, chimpanzees, gorillas, crocodiles, giraffe, hippopotamus, buffalo, lions and leopards.⁵⁶
- Each year, 2.71 million pangolins from three different species are killed in six central African countries, including the DRC.⁵⁷
- Illegal exploitation of natural resources in the eastern DRC alone is valued at over \$1.25 billion a year.⁵⁸ Conflict linked to the control of natural resources (e.g. so-called conflict minerals) has fuelled instability for decades.
- Northern Mozambique is a key source location for gemstones, including ruby and tourmaline.

EXPECTED RISKS

African criminal networks work closely with counterparts in Asia – the main consumer market for wildlife. Mombasa, as a key trafficking hub for multiple illicit commodities, is likely to become particularly susceptible to further criminal activities. Gaining access to a wider consumer market might also incentivize those involved in the trafficking of minerals and gems to intensify activities, especially once the planned railway reaches the resource-rich eastern part of the DRC.


The Horn of Africa is a key region for wildlife crime. Here, elephant tusks are seized in Mombasa, Kenya.
© STRINGER/AFP via Getty Images





THE MAKING OF THE BRI

▲ Chinese construction workers in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Infrastructure developments under the BRI are wide-ranging, but the risks of possible criminal infiltration do not seem to have been considered. © Paula Bronstein via Getty Images



China's ambitious BRI (previously referred to as 'One Belt, One Road') aims to develop robust infrastructure to connect key hubs of economic activity throughout the world.⁵⁹

Five major priorities at the core of the initiative, namely policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds, are aimed at fostering closer connections among nations and boost economic development by facilitating and improving opportunities for trade, investment and the cross-border movement of people.⁶⁰ The overall agenda is not new; it is built upon Chinese overseas infrastructure development activities that have been pursued over the last 25 years, with many of these projects being subsumed within the BRI framework. What is unique, though, is the magnitude of the initiative.

The enormous scale of the BRI is demonstrated by the cumulative GDP of around \$21 trillion, which is planned to account for about one-third of the world's GDP.⁶¹ The trading routes are anticipated to reach two-thirds of the world's population. It has been established as an open arrangement, with all countries welcome to participate. The initiative's geographical scope continues to expand, with cooperation agreements having been signed with 138 countries and at least 70 countries already actively involved (according to official Chinese sources).⁶²

Notably, the risks of possible criminal infiltration do not seem to have been taken into account in designing the BRI, although the Chinese government has envisioned the development of infrastructure to be a stabilizing measure. For example, it seeks to use railways connecting neighbouring countries to encourage political stability through economic development.⁶³

A land, maritime and digital web

The projects under the BRI are wide-ranging, although they commonly focus on infrastructure development in transportation (such as roads, railways, airports and seaports); energy development (such as oil and natural gas pipelines and utility grids); and mining, telecommunications, digital networks (as part of the Digital Silk Road), industrial parks, tourism and urban development.

The initiative involves developing connections between Asia, Europe and Africa that emulate the ancient Silk Road and is based around the following six major economic corridors (see map in Figure 1):⁶⁴

- 1.** China–Mongolia–Russia Economic Corridor
- 2.** New Eurasian Land Bridge
- 3.** China–Central Asia–Western Asia Corridor
- 4.** China–Indochina Peninsula
- 5.** China–Pakistan Economic Corridor
- 6.** Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Corridor⁶⁵

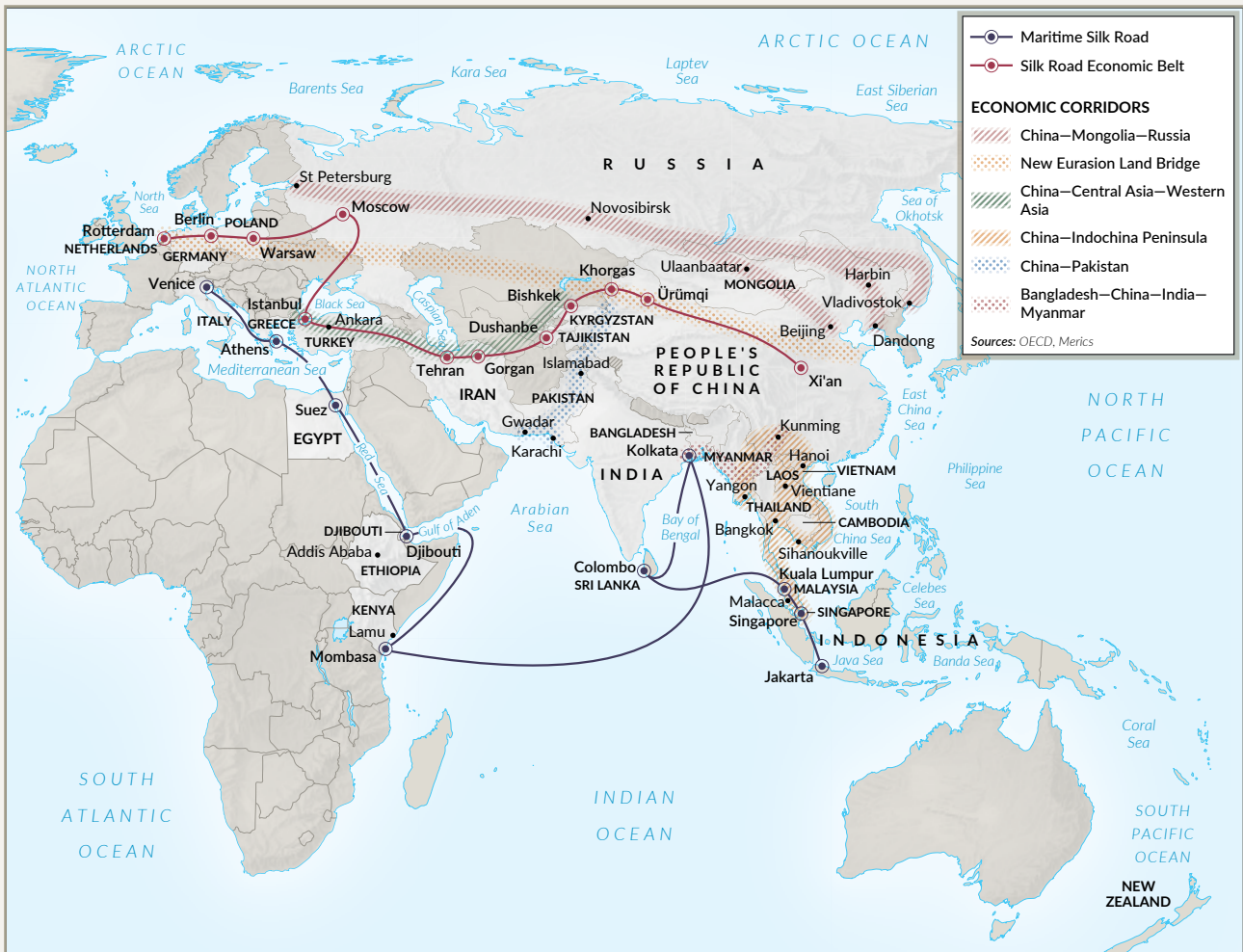


FIGURE 1 BRI economic corridors and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road.

The overland routes are collectively known as the Silk Road Economic Belt. The maritime routes, known as the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, connect the South China Sea, the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The development of the Maritime Silk Road involves nautical corridors and ports throughout Asia, South East Asia and East Africa. The initiative will also provide alternative trade routes for China's landlocked southern and western regions.

In addition to the overland and maritime routes, BRI plans foresee the building of 50 SEZs.⁶⁶ SEZs, the first of which was launched in the Chinese city of Shenzhen in 1980, are aimed at attracting foreign (but also domestic) investors through tax incentives, a market-oriented outlook and the fact that local authorities enjoy a degree of independence from the central government with regard to international trade activities. Over time, China has developed different types of SEZ: some include free-trade areas; others facilitate technological innovation through the building of industry parks; some are within the perimeter of cities; others cover a whole province. The SEZ landscape also includes open coastal cities and financial reform pilot areas. Within China, it is estimated that back in 2007 'SEZs [had] contributed 22% of China's GDP, 45% of total national foreign direct investment, and 60% of



Mongla, a remote town on Myanmar's border with China, is home to many casinos, brothels and wildlife markets, and attracts many visitors from China. © Ben Davies/LightRocket via Getty Images

exports' (more recent estimates are not available)⁶⁷ and therefore it is no surprise that they feature prominently in the BRI plans. A notable example is Kyaukphyu, where the government of Myanmar has awarded contracts to a China-led consortium for constructing a deep-sea port and an SEZ (one of three in the country). This is arguably the most strategically important Myanmar-based project for China, as it gives Beijing access to the Indian Ocean, which offers an alternative shipping route to the vulnerable Strait of Malacca and boosts development in the landlocked Yunnan province.⁶⁸ These projects were initiated before the official launch of the BRI, but are now linked to the wider economic strategy.

The building of SEZs has proven detrimental to the fight against illicit trade. These zones are not only customs and tax havens but also manufacturing zones, linked to the considerable rise in illicit trade, human trafficking, and the production of counterfeit goods and medicines. This trend is not the result of weak national capacity to monitor and interdict illicit flows, but rather stems from

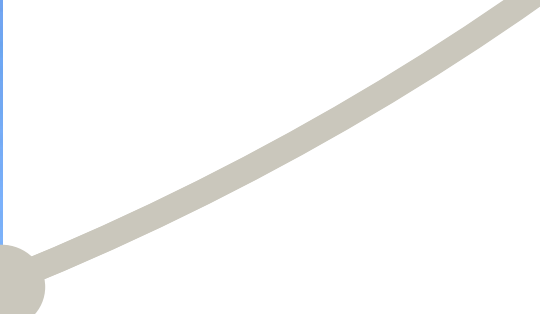
an agreement that a country will waive their right to any kind of surveillance of what commodities or financial flows transit through the zones.⁶⁹

Like most activities in 2020, the BRI has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2020, the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs revealed that although 40% of projects had suffered little impact, 20% had been 'seriously affected' and the remainder had been somewhat impacted.⁷⁰ No further details were made available, but progress updates from projects around the world indicated disruptions, such as in Cambodia's Sihanoukville SEZ and issues relating to the building of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway in Indonesia.⁷¹ The shrinking Chinese economy and supply chain disruptions, both as a result of the pandemic, are among the driving factors behind these disruptions. Chinese state banks have since put in place programmes to support projects that had suffered as a result of COVID-19, and following a dip in the first half of 2020, non-financial outward direct investment in BRI countries has increased in the latter part of the year.⁷²



CONVERGENCE OF BRI-ASSOCIATED NETWORKS, ILLICIT FLOWS AND CRIMINAL HUBS

▲ Sihanoukville, a port city in Cambodia with substantial Chinese infrastructure investment, is becoming increasingly established as an illicit economic hub. © Tang Chhin Sothy via Getty Images



The relationship between crime and development can be paradoxical.⁷³ Development brings about legitimate business opportunities and can promote more inclusive economies and prosperity. In Africa, for example, Chinese initiatives in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and elsewhere are stepping stones towards the realization of the African Union Commission's Vision 2040 for Railway in Africa, adopted in 2014 and strongly supported by China in 2015. The vision is to turn the fragmented, outdated and inadequate colonial railway systems into an integrated and modern network that would boost prosperity.

Yet, it is also proven that, particularly in the context of infrastructure-based development, countries featuring weak governance, limited regulatory capacity and large informal economies might become more vulnerable to criminal activities. In other words, criminal actors are likely to exploit new investments in infrastructure or try to capture service delivery. This reality poses a dilemma for recipient countries that are faced with finding the balance between welcoming needed investments and trying to protect themselves from the accompanying challenges and risks.

This reasoning also applies to BRI-related projects. The World Bank estimates that, once completed, BRI-associated transport projects could "increase trade between 2.7% and 9.7%, increase income by up to 3.4% and lift 7.6 million people from extreme poverty."⁷⁴ The majority of the projects are taking place in regions that suffer from a shortage of infrastructure investment funding. The BRI addresses this need for improvement in infrastructure, and to move many countries out of the low- and middle-income traps. The Asia Development Bank previously estimated that \$22.6 trillion would be needed in the lead-up to 2030 for the Eurasia region, with \$8.22 trillion needed for the fast-growing regions in Asia, including South East Asia.⁷⁵ The BRI will go a long way towards partially solving this funding gap.

But there is another side to the story. The UNODC has pointed towards the BRI, along with other projects fostering inter-regional economic integration, as a typical facilitator of transnational organized crime in South East Asia, including drug smuggling and human trafficking.⁷⁶ Although countries in this region are geared towards the trade and integration agenda, law enforcement and protection are lacking, and levels of corruption are often high: of the South East Asian countries that form part of the BRI, only Singapore features among the 30 least corrupt in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (and none in Africa).⁷⁷

In the context of infrastructure-based development, countries with weak governance might become more vulnerable to criminal activities.

A potential side effect of Chinese infrastructure projects and the associated influx of Chinese workers and subsequent establishment of communities relates to the typical trafficking mechanisms employed by Chinese criminal networks. These rely on the cultural practice of *guanxi* (defined as ‘the basic dynamic in Chinese personalized networks of influence and refers to favours gained from social connections’)⁷⁸ and high levels of social control and trust derived from ethnic kinship and family ties.⁷⁹ These criminals also tend to be involved in, and control, the entire supply chain from source to distribution into the Chinese market. This introduces the risk that criminals might penetrate Chinese communities established in BRI-linked countries and leverage social ties to engage, or coerce, fellow Chinese nationals into illicit activities. A wildlife trader in Kunming (China) shared the following insight during an interview with researchers Daan van Uhm and Rebecca Wong:

Pangolin hunters in Myanmar and Indonesia, rhino poachers in South Africa or hunters of saiga antelopes in Kazakhstan and Mongolia all have contacts with the Chinese in those areas. Usually those ethnic Chinese persons own small shops as a cover for their illegal business. They deliver their valuable wildlife products and are paid by Chinese middlemen who have connections to my people.⁸⁰

Other studies have highlighted the large number of ethnic Chinese nationals involved in the trade of pangolin scales, bear bile and tiger bones in Mong La (Myanmar)⁸¹ and Chinese middlemen’s role in South Africa’s rhino horn trade.⁸² An examination of court cases tried in Beijing and elsewhere in China between 2017 and 2019 implicates Chinese nationals living in countries such as Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and even Italy in trafficking illicit wildlife into Chinese airports.⁸³

The specific link between Chinese criminal networks and the BRI was highlighted by the US Treasury upon imposing sanctions on Wan Kuok-koi in December 2020. Wan, known as ‘Broken Tooth’, is described by American authorities as ‘a member of the Communist Party of China’s Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and is a leader of the 14K triad, one of the largest Chinese organized criminal organizations in the world that engages in drug trafficking, illegal gambling, racketeering, human trafficking, and a range of other criminal activities.’⁸⁴ Through establishing a chapter of the World Hongmen History and Culture Association (a Chinese fraternal organization that is synonymous with triads) in Cambodia, he tried to legitimize the 14K triad, co-opting individuals in Cambodia and Malaysia and building a facade of legitimacy by claiming association with BRI projects. According to the US Treasury, this fits a well-established pattern of Chinese criminal organizations that have in common involvement in casinos and cryptocurrencies and claim connections to the Chinese government.⁸⁵ This is also the case with an internationally known narcotics trafficker, Zhao Wei, who is closely linked to the development of the Kings Romans Casino in the Golden Triangle SEZ in the northwest of Lao PDR. Zhao, who is also sanctioned by the US Treasury, is believed to run an international criminal network active in drugs, prostitution and illicit wildlife trade from here.⁸⁶

However, it would be wrong to blankly criminalize Chinese nationals living in BRI countries. It is the *convergence* of criminal actors, financial opportunities for traffickers, the social dynamics described earlier and a significant Chinese presence abroad (as of 2016, an estimated 2 million Chinese nationals were employed outside of China, 90% of them in BRI countries in Africa and Asia)⁸⁷ that might be exploited for criminal purposes. Among these factors, the creation of SEZs at BRI infrastructure hubs, which simplifies the manufacture and movement of illicit goods, will likely be the greatest facilitator of illicit trade, and likely completely beyond the surveillance of the states in question.

Existing and potential hotspots

In the course of the current study, examples of new BRI-related infrastructures have been identified that create easier connections between rural areas of countries, such as parts of Lao PDR and Mozambique, and trade hubs and supply chains. These remote areas are often sources of sought-after environmental commodities and although currently not exposed to environmental and other forms of crime, the situation might change once the construction of new roads is completed – with significant repercussions for the local economy, communities and ecosystems.

The following pages offer an overview of what our research points out to be particularly vulnerable locations owing to the combination of existing illicit flows and the expansion of roads and railways, mining sites and ports. A more exhaustive list of vulnerabilities is included in the annex.

The China–Indochina Corridor: Key crime concerns

As one of the key economic corridors of the BRI, the China–Indochina Corridor overlaps with both established economic routes and established trafficking routes and transit hubs in Myanmar, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand. As smuggling and trafficking of illicit goods often piggyback on the trade of licit goods, the key paths in this corridor correspond to and expand existing transnational trafficking routes, as discussed with reference to the map in Figure 2.⁸⁸ In areas where the BRI routes do not overlap with established trafficking routes, new transportation infrastructure will likely link the Chinese market with new trading partners.



FIGURE 2 The China-Indochina Corridor.

1. The port city of **Sihanoukville**, Cambodia, has been transformed through substantial Chinese investment into an enclave of Chinese-run casinos, restaurants, high-rise office buildings and power plants, and is becoming increasingly established as an illicit economic hub. The city is vulnerable to the trafficking of environmental commodities, often involving Chinese and Vietnamese criminal networks. Significant seizures of mostly ivory but also of pangolin, rhino horn, timber and, more recently, illicit plastic waste have been reported. The construction of **National Road 10**, connecting the city to the Cambodia–Thai border, is likely to open up further avenues for illicit activities, both known and new.

- **Sihanoukville Autonomous Port**, Cambodia’s only deep-sea port, has a flourishing but poorly regulated casino industry almost exclusively targeted at Chinese gamblers, who often become easy prey to fraud and scams. This lack of regulation is also reflected in the **Sihanoukville SEZ**, from where many foreign (especially Chinese) companies operate. The US government has accused some of these entities of exploiting SEZs and falsifying the origin of their goods to evade duties.
- The construction of **National Road 10** will increase access to Cambodia’s **Koh Kong province** on the border with Thailand. The province is a key site for illegal clearing of mangrove forests, human trafficking and methamphetamine smuggling. Increased criminal connectivity is likely to impact both Cambodia and Thailand.

2. The **Vietnamese border with Cambodia** is a key trafficking hotspot for the smuggling of people, drugs and other illicit goods, with a common crossing point being between the **Kandal province** in Cambodia and the **An Giang province** in Vietnam. Contraband goods are regularly smuggled through the **Ha Tien–Kien Giang border**.⁸⁹ The improvements of transport infrastructure along the **Southern Coastal Corridor**, designed to improve trade between locations such as Ha Tien with Cambodia could facilitate further illicit trade. The

development of **National Road 8**, connecting the Kandal province to the Vietnamese border, and generally improving access to the Cambodia–Vietnam border, could subsequently facilitate cross-border trafficking.

There are also established opium and heroin smuggling routes in southern Vietnam, between the Vietnamese and Cambodian borders. A large proportion of methamphetamines in Vietnam comes via Cambodia. In addition, the trafficking of heroin out of Vietnam to **Australia**, by mules departing from the airport in **Ho Chi Minh City**, remains a big issue. The proximity of Ho Chi Minh City to the Cambodian border appears to facilitate the use of the overland route between the two countries.⁹⁰

3. In north-central Vietnam, **Vinh** and its port are a known hotspot for methamphetamine smuggling and human trafficking. Vinh is the capital city of the Nghe An province, which has a long history of drug production and trafficking. Improvements in transport infrastructure between **Vinh** and **Ho Chi Minh City**, also a known area for narcotics smuggling, could facilitate these activities.
4. The railway project from **Hai Phong through Hanoi to Lao Cai** connects to China, potentially facilitating further movement of goods across Vietnam and into the Chinese market. Notably, when completed it will link **Kunming to Ho Chi Minh City**. There is also a major highway linkage from **Hekou to Kunming**.

The area around the border may see even more traffic, as people punt across the narrow river and pay a small transport tax to get themselves and their goods across informally.⁹¹ The **Hekou–Lao Cai border crossing** is also frequently used to traffic heroin from Myanmar.⁹² With Lao Cai being a hotspot for drug trafficking, improved infrastructure could result in an increase in cross-border trafficking in both directions. Furthermore, the expansion of mining linked to the iron mine project in Lao Cai, and the resulting increase in local population and infrastructure, could incentivize more smuggling across the border with China, intensifying the existing smuggling routes for minerals and ores between the two countries.

5. In the Greater Mekong Subregion, the **border between Vietnam and Lao PDR** has become one of the most active hubs for the trafficking of wildlife and timber. Increasing maritime trade in the region, partly as a result of Chinese investment in ports but also partly as a result of increasing globalization, has resulted in the easier passage of illegal goods via sea. Substantial amounts of illegally logged wood and wildlife from Indonesia and the Philippines are shipped to ports in Singapore and China. From these ports, they can be transferred to trucks and other forms of overland transportation, to be moved throughout the region.
6. Vietnamese criminal networks specialized in the trafficking of ivory from Mozambique and other African countries have begun diverting consignments destined for Vietnam to intermediate locations. This is done in order to break what is a well-known ivory trafficking route and evade detection. Malaysia is a key transshipment country used for this purpose and corrupt officials at **Johor Port** in the south are believed to facilitate operations before consignments are transported to **Kuala Lumpur International Airport**.⁹³ Railway projects might facilitate this and other forms of trafficking in Malaysia.
 - **The East Coast Rail Link**, due to be completed in 2026, will connect one of the main ports in the region, **Port Klang** (near Kuala Lumpur) and which is also a site of wildlife seizures, to the north of the country where it borders Thailand.⁹⁴
 - The more modest railway improvements represented by the **Gemas–Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project**, due to be completed in 2022, will connect Johor Port with the interior and, eventually, be part of a continuous railway connection between Vietnam and Thailand.⁹⁵
7. Lao PDR is possibly the fastest growing ivory market in the world. Some of the main physical markets are located in the capital **Vientiane** and in the **Luang Namtha province** on the Chinese border (e.g. the one in **Boten**).⁹⁶ The high-speed railway from **Kunming to Vientiane via Boten** may provide opportunities to transport illicit wildlife both through Lao PDR and across the border into China. The **Boten SEZ** (or Beautiful Land SEZ, as it is officially known), which was established before the BRI, has been further developed and is now controlled by a private Chinese developer, Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group.⁹⁷
8. The Kunming–Vientiane high-speed railway will also link **Vientiane with Nong Khai** in Thailand – already a major route for human trafficking and smuggling opium and methamphetamines from Myanmar. It will also connect China’s **Yunnan province to Luang Namtha**, facilitating another known human trafficking route.⁹⁸ The combination of the **Phongsaly–Yunnan Road**, connecting Phongsaly in Lao PDR to China, and the high-speed railway that will connect **Luang Namtha to Vientiane** might also boost drug trafficking, as heroin from Myanmar is frequently trafficked into Lao PDR through Luang Namtha and Phongsaly.⁹⁹

These infrastructure projects complement the Thai government’s plans for an extensive high-speed railway network criss-crossing the country, improving connectivity between **Bangkok and Nong Khai**, and eventually linking into an even wider trans-Asia high-speed railway envisioned to connect China to Singapore via Bangkok and Vientiane.
9. Drug distribution has reached major Thai tourist provinces such as **Phuket, Surat Thani, Pattaya City and Chon Buri**, while routes through the mountain range from **Chiang Mai to Lampang** are used by traffickers for methamphetamine.¹⁰⁰ The planned high-speed railway connecting Chiang Mai to the south of the country is likely to make narcotics trafficking even more efficient. Similarly, as Thailand is both a primary consumer of and regional transit hub for exotic pets, rhino horn and ivory, these overland improvements alongside plans for improving connectivity among Thai airports will likely benefit wildlife traffickers.
10. Myanmar’s **Shan State** is an epicentre of opium production and a key location for the manufacture and trafficking of methamphetamine. The **Mandalay–Lashio–Muse trade route** is commonly used for trafficking. The development of the Sino–



Cambodian and Chinese construction workers on-site in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. © Tang Chhin Sothy via Getty Images

Myanmar land and water transportation passages will likely provide greater connection between the **Yunnan province** in China to the **Ayeyarwady River** via **Bhamo**, facilitating the transport of products through to the coast. The **Muse–Htigyang–Mandalay expressway** will also pass through Lashio, providing more opportunities for overland trafficking. Any infrastructure improvement in Shan State would likely lead to easier movement of Chinese precursors into Shan and speedier trafficking of Shan-produced methamphetamine out of the state.¹⁰¹

Myanmar is also a prominent transit country for smuggling South East Asian wildlife into China.¹⁰² Mong La in Shan State is a particular hotspot for illicit trade in animal products and caters exclusively for the demand for the pangolin market in China. Rhino horn is also frequently transported through **Mong La**. The development of the **Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone** and the **Zhangfeng–Bhamo road** will likely facilitate illicit trade between Shan State and Yunnan. This also applies to human trafficking into China.¹⁰³

11. As in Myanmar, human trafficking to China for the purpose of forced marriage has been reported in **West Java** in Indonesia. The country is a key transit hub for migrants smuggled from East Asia. The port cities of **Tangerang** and **Pelabuhan Ratu** have been used for smuggling people via boat to Australia.¹⁰⁴

As smuggling from ports is a common method, the development of the **Kuala Tanjung Port** may provide another opportunity for smuggling. Flows may further be facilitated by improved road capacity to West Java as part of the **Cisumdawu Project** and through the **Bandung–Jakarta high-speed railway**, which will connect the capital, **Jakarta**, to **Bandung** in West Java, which is a key location for illicit wildlife trade. Notably, Indonesia is the most significant exporting country of wild-sourced species in the region.¹⁰⁵

An additional threat confirmed in 2020 was the supply of Afghan-produced methamphetamine via **Pakistan** into Indonesia by boat, from where goods were then moved on to **Australia** and **New Zealand**.¹⁰⁵



FIGURE 3 The railway lines of the Northern and Central corridors are planned to connect countries in East and central Africa to trading markets.

A tale of ports and railways: The Africa dimension

On the African continent, the combination of railway developments and port expansions is securing access to trading markets for landlocked countries and inland cities, many of which are also key production and trade sites for illicit commodities. Indeed, BRI projects appear to overlap with (and in some cases extend) existing trafficking routes in the eastern, southern and central regions.

Cornerstones of the plan are two main railway corridors, as shown on the map in Figure 3. The Northern Corridor is planned from Mombasa on the east coast, heading west through Uganda and the Great Lakes region to eventually reach the west coast of Africa, while the Central Corridor will run from the Tanzanian port Dar es Salaam inland to Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia and eastern DRC.

- Along the Northern Corridor, the Chinese government has to date completed the building of two major railways – the **Djibouti–Addis Ababa Railway** in 2018 and the first phase of the **Standard Gauge Railway (SGR)** in 2017. The SGR runs from the coastal port of Mombasa to the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, which may represent the beginning of a railway development drive in Africa initiated by China's credit and technology.

The railway from Addis Ababa to the **Port of Djibouti** may facilitate the transport of a range of illicit goods between Ethiopia and Djibouti. The latter's port is a known location for large seizures of narcotics, including cocaine.¹⁰⁷ The Doraleh Multipurpose Port in Djibouti City, and next to a Chinese military base, was previously operated by China Merchants, which signed a deal for an expansion of the port to the value of \$3 billion in October 2020.¹⁰⁸ The port has been at the centre of controversy, as the earlier operator, Dubai's DP World, had sued its competitor (China Merchants), accusing it of influencing the government of Djibouti to breach their concession agreement, drop DP World, and hand over the port to the Chinese. The China–Djibouti agreement also resulted in the launch of a free trade zone in 2018.¹⁰⁹

In addition, the border between Ethiopia and Djibouti is an important transit point for migrant smuggling. **Dewele**, which has a common rail and road border crossing, appears to be of particular importance.¹¹⁰

The planned expansion of the **Bole International Airport** in Addis Ababa is also a concern. Increased traffic will likely provide more opportunities for criminals to conceal their goods while passing through what is already an established illicit hub for heroin, pharmaceuticals and wildlife.¹¹¹ Bole is a notable transit point for heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine flowing into the European Union.¹¹²

The SGR improves transport links between Kenya's two largest cities, Nairobi and Mombasa, and locations frequently involved in illicit markets. The **Port of Mombasa** is a major node for heroin and cocaine imports, and also a major entry point for counterfeit and illegal medicines, usually arriving from China and India. Timber also travels on to international markets through the port.¹¹³ Of particular concern is that Kenya faces the tangible risk of losing control over the Port of Mombasa. The country is under growing pressure to keep up payments to the China Exim Bank, and the port is collateral in the \$2.3 billion loan for the Kenya Railways Corporation.¹¹⁴ China owns the bulk – 72% – of Kenya's external debt.¹¹⁵

Kenya recorded the most wildlife seizures out of any African country between 2016 and 2018.¹¹⁶ The **Jomo Kenyatta International Airport** in Nairobi is a known trafficking hub in the region; the Nairobi terminal of the SGR is located just 3 kilometres away.

The third phase of the SGR will connect through **Kisumu**, a port city on the shore of Lake Victoria in the Nyanza province, and a key area for illicit activity. The recently refurbished port enables transport of people and goods to neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC via Lake Victoria. The SGR is to be extended to **Malaba** on the Kenya–Uganda border. This is a transit point for heroin trafficked from Mombasa to key locations in Uganda, such as **Kampala**.¹¹⁷ Most of the timber

trafficked from **eastern DRC** is used in Uganda and Kenya and the railway extension will likely facilitate trafficking in both directions.

The key location for deforestation in the DRC is the **Ituri Forest area** to the west of Beni and north along the road from **Beni to Mambasa** (not to be confused with Mombasa, Kenya). Additional key logging areas include Luna, the road from Bukavu to Kisangani and the area south-west of Bukavu.¹¹⁸ The refurbishment of roads in **Bukavu, Beni and Luna** may make illegal logging more attractive owing to the improved transport opportunities. Bukavu, together with Goma and Butembo, is an important wholesale site for cannabis produced in North Kivu, which is then transported by road to larger towns for consumer markets and across the border into Rwanda and Uganda.¹¹⁹ Bukavu is also along known trafficking routes for gemstones destined for Rwanda.¹²⁰

The refurbishment of **Route Nationale 4**, from Beni to Niania in North Kivu, and **Route Nationale 5**, from Lubumbashi to Kasomeno in the Katanga province, may facilitate the movement of minerals (e.g. tourmaline), given that most of the DRC's mineral wealth is found in the provinces of **Katanga, West and East Kasai, Orientale, and North and South Kivu**.¹²¹

Wildlife transported from the DRC, Gabon and the Central African Republic often ends up in the Cameroonian port city of **Douala** in the Gulf of Guinea, which is a key location for the flow of illicit flora, fauna, diamonds and, increasingly, narcotics.¹²² South of Douala, **Edea** is another location for wildlife trafficking.¹²³ The new highway project from **Kribi**, which will improve access between Edea and cities with key trafficking hubs and the new port of Kribi, may facilitate the transport of illicit goods to other countries and regions. Kribi also provides an alternative to the port at Douala for traffickers to transport illicit products in and out of the country.

- The possible criminal exploitation of ports in Tanzania, from where the Central Corridor is planned to start, is also a concern. The **Port of Tanga** is home to at least one heroin kingpin, and close to landing sites for the dhow-based heroin trade.¹²⁴ The **Port of Dar es Salaam** is also used for smuggling drugs

into the country¹²⁵ and used to be a key exit point for the illegal export of ivory, second only to the Port of Mombasa in Kenya (where ivory activity has also declined).¹²⁶ A key ivory trafficking route ran from **Dodoma to Morogoro**, and then on to Dar es Salaam; it follows the same route as the first phase of the SGR. Although there have not been any ivory seizures at the Dar es Salaam port in recent years, its historic role in the ivory trade and high ongoing levels of corruption in Tanzania warrant continued monitoring.

Morogoro and Dodoma are also source locations for human trafficking victims, with girls trafficked from both locations to Dar es Salaam and to the island of **Zanzibar** for domestic servitude.¹²⁷ Since the 1980s, Zanzibar has also been a major landing site for both heroin and cocaine. China Harbour Engineering Company was awarded a contract to build a new port in Zanzibar, but the project has encountered hurdles and delays. The new port is expected to relieve congested cargo traffic.¹²⁸

The economic importance of the Tanzanian ports cannot be overstated. Tanga is the longest serving port in East Africa, located on the north coast, near the border with Kenya. A highway links **Tanga to the port in Dar es Salaam**, where the China Harbour Engineering Company was again awarded the contract for reconstruction and expansion of the port (financed by the World Bank) to turn it into a highly competitive terminal that can serve both Tanzania and the wider region. The project was officially launched in 2017, and was 80% complete by July 2020.¹²⁹ The port is key to Tanzania's economy, as it handles over 90% of its international trade. Cargo-handling capacity is expected to double as a result of the upgrade and owing to its connectivity with railways and roads, the port will also be able to handle cargo that is destined for Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and beyond.¹³⁰

The same company had taken over the \$120 million renovation of the **Beira fishing port** in Mozambique. The Chinese-financed project, completed in 2019, expanded the area of the port and tripled its storage capacity. The construction of the roads linking Beira with other parts of the country, especially the **Beira Corridor road (National Road Six, EN6)**, which is

aimed to serve neighbouring landlocked countries such as Zambia, may provide a convenient form of travel for traffickers. The port is already used to transport Zambian- and Zimbabwean-sourced forest timber to China.¹³¹ Mozambique is also a key location for the trafficking of wildlife. Both **Maputo Airport**, which is the key site, and **Beira Airport** reported multiple wildlife seizures between 2016 and 2018.¹³² Small amounts of ivory are shipped to Asia from Mozambican ports. Pre-2018, Pemba was the main exit point, while ivory also left from Nacala, Beira and Maputo. The trafficking dynamic changed due to a reduction in the elephant population in northern Mozambique combined with improved law enforcement targeting ivory traffickers in northern Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Although poaching is decreasing, Nacala (the deepest port in southern Africa),¹³³ Maputo and Beira have remained prominent export points and continue to present the same vulnerabilities, namely corruption.¹³⁴ Maputo is often mentioned as the port of origin on maritime routes for semi-precious and large-specimen stones.¹³⁵ The development of link roads around Maputo as part of the **Maputo–Katembe Suspension Bridge** project facilitates road transport around the capital and may also facilitate trafficking, including of heroin, for which Mozambique is a transit hub en route to the South African market.

The construction of roads linking **Beira with Machipanda** in the Manica province, where there is a known market for diamond trade (and seizures of elephant tusks have also been recorded), may facilitate the transport of smuggled diamonds from the Zimbabwean border to the airport and ports located in Beira.¹³⁶

The BRI and increased vulnerability of maritime shipping

The preceding analysis has highlighted the important role of ports not only for BRI projects in Asia and Africa but also for trafficking networks in these regions. Our survey of critical corridors, routes and sites points to the particular vulnerability of maritime shipping to criminal practices. The combination of changes introduced by BRI projects and the existing vulnerabilities within the maritime sector creates a new set of opportunities for organized-crime groups and local traffickers. These take multiple forms. It can be argued that the sheer volume of trade alone is likely to result in easier passage for illicit goods. In the maritime domain, larger volumes of goods make it hard to detect illicit shipments and the high costs associated with having containers sitting at ports become incentives for speeding up processes and avoiding thorough inspections. Bribing officials to 'look the other way' is already commonplace and it is unlikely that corrupt practices along the supply chain will disappear.

Port capacity and corruption

The increase in commercial activity, which will go hand in hand with increased port capacity afforded by BRI projects, will bring greater financial volumes. This will make ports more attractive for criminals at all levels and might intensify bribery, which already occurs throughout the maritime trade and includes actors from government, customs and law enforcement authorities, among others.

Increased trade volumes could generate more opportunities for traffickers.

Producing fraudulent bills of lading is a common operating method for traffickers. Often this involves the last-minute display of an altered or badly photocopied document to obscure the true origin, route, or destination of a shipment, usually under the pretext of some emergency. This falsified document will commonly be presented with other documents (e.g. phytosanitary certificates). The person attempting to commit fraud will present everything else in advance, as per regulations, but not the bill of lading, so that it appears as though everything is in order.¹³⁷

Misdeclaring and concealing contents are also popular tactics of criminal networks. Illegal products are concealed in specialized containers with hidden compartments or among bulk products that can effectively disguise the physical presence – and sometimes the smell – of illicit goods, as in the case of illegal wildlife products.¹³⁸

Most illicit caches are hidden among licit goods and are accompanied by what appears to be accurate documentation, which also points to lacking controls at the point of origin during packing and loading. As part of BRI-led modernization of the digital networks and systems powering operations in East African ports such as Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Djibouti, criminals could exploit improved technology capabilities by engaging unscrupulous port employees to bypass controls and render containers custom-free. Effectively, malicious personnel could obtain credentials from retired or former employees, access the computer network and free some containers from the system.¹³⁹

Larger port capacity also increases opportunities for criminal activities along the road and rail networks connecting ports. These might involve handling and transport companies facilitating the temporary ‘disappearance’ of containers so that they can be loaded with illicit goods before being locked back with counterfeit seals. According to a shipping specialist interviewed for this report, 3D printers can produce counterfeit seals in less than 10 minutes.

More goods, limited time

The nature of and costs associated with export–import flows are such that vessels are expected to load and offload their cargoes as quickly as possible and promptly return to sea. Ports similarly have to tranship all goods as rapidly as possible, or expedite the storage of shipments within port facilities. The freight can also be moved to a dry port or an inland port by road or rail. An empty space should be filled immediately for commercial purpose.

Vast quantities of general goods, light manufactured goods, machinery and electronics are imported from Asia to East African ports each year. The paramount commercial requirement of shipping is for no vessel to be empty at sea. This means that the delivery ships will return to Asian ports loaded with raw materials from Africa, among which illicit commodities can be concealed.

When these existing practices, time pressures and the associated financial imperatives are considered, it is not unwarranted to conclude that infrastructure development and increased trade volumes brought about by BRI projects could generate more opportunities for traffickers, and their actions going undetected.



Transportation by sea has increased owing to COVID-19 air restrictions. Above, a cargo ship docks at Qingdao, China.

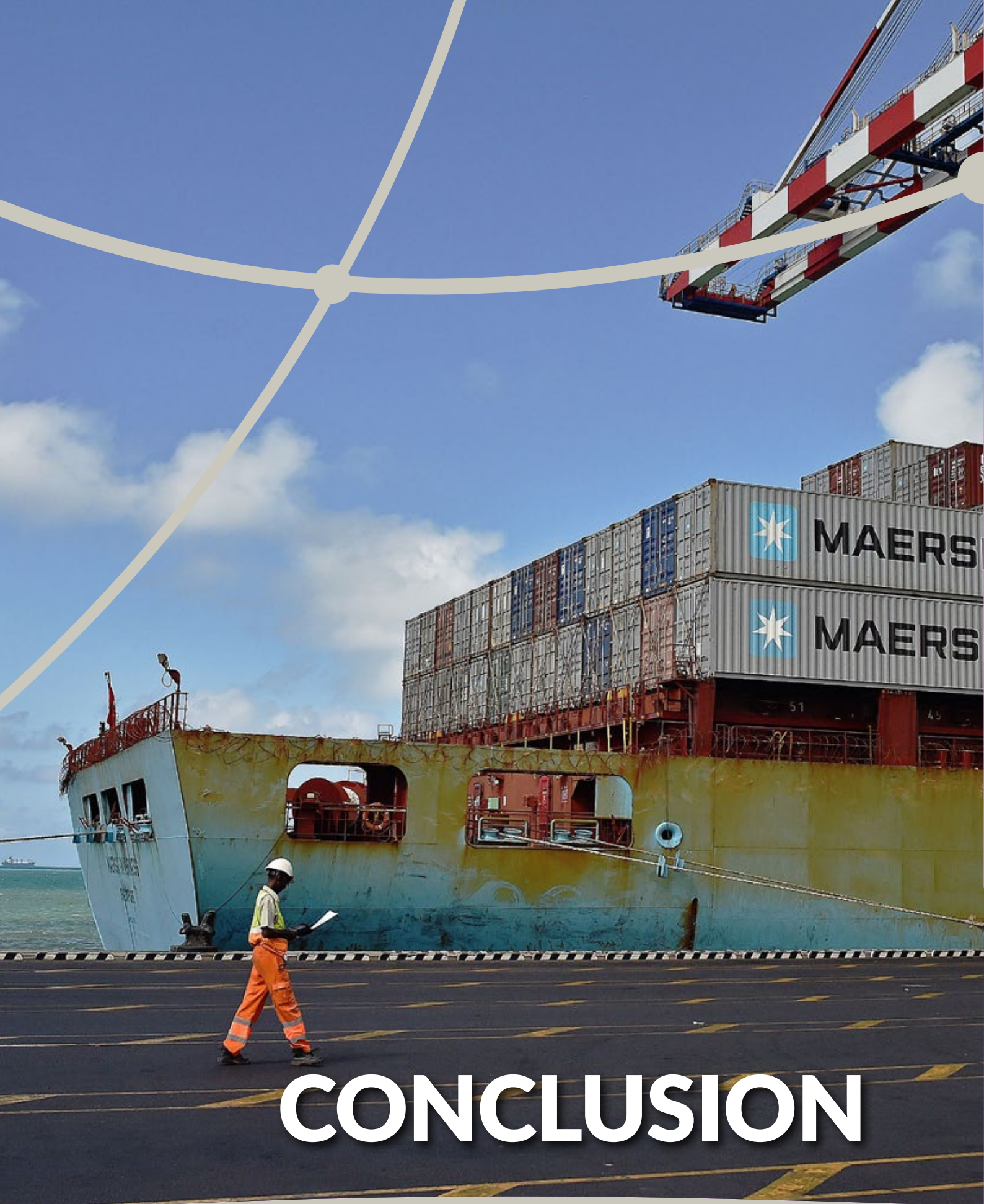
© Zhang Jingang/VCG via Getty Images

Piracy

The regions considered in this report have been known to be affected by maritime piracy aimed at stealing cargoes and equipment, the holding of ships in international waters and kidnapping crews for ransom. This applies particularly to the Gulf of Aden and the Somali coast in Africa and to the Malacca Strait in Asia. Although no incidents were registered in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia in 2019 and up to June 2020, nor any in the Strait of Malacca between 2016 and 2019, the threat has not disappeared. The dramatic decrease in attacks is largely due to very active patrols by navies and coast guards of relevant countries and increased security precautions adopted by shipping companies, rather than because of a diminished demand on the part of pirates, as suggested by the sudden rise of attacks in the Singapore Strait in late 2019 and the surge in incidents off Pointe-Noire in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, in early 2020.¹⁴⁰ With more vessels likely to cross the seas along BRI corridors, it is possible that pirates will see them as lucrative targets, prompting a resurgence of attacks.

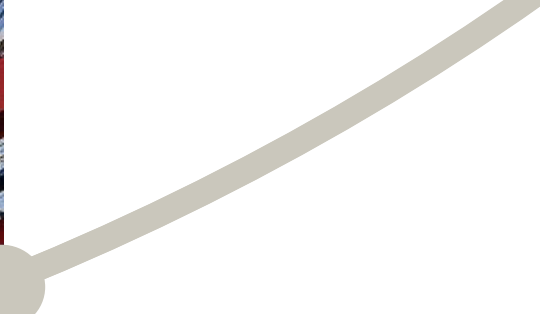
The impact of COVID-19

We observed that disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted maritime routes less than land and air transportation networks; in fact, most ports have remained fully operational. Indeed, the appeal of transportation via sea routes increased when countries shut down their air fleets and drastically reduced their terrestrial transport. Container and breakbulk shipping became efficient alternatives when other means were uneconomical. Lockdowns and other restrictive measures have, however, affected law enforcement and the extent of controls, which allowed for more trafficking to go undetected and exacerbated by corrupt practices already in play.



CONCLUSION

▲ Chinese port expansions and railway developments in Africa are opening access to trading markets in the continent. Above, a container ship docks at Doraleh harbour, Djibouti. © Carl de Souza via Getty Images



The BRI attracts considerable academic and policy attention, with the wealth of analysis from around the world being informative in compiling this report. Although the discussions regarding the legal, political and economic aspects of the initiative are important, so too are the repercussions it might hold for the regions involved.

Chinese analysts have contributed greatly to discussions of non-traditional security risks relating to how workers and investments could be impacted by regional conflict and security challenges such as terrorism, violent extremism and piracy, but not crime.¹⁴¹ Some commentators assert that extremist groups may oppose the BRI on an ideological basis, given that economic development often strengthens existing regimes whereas extremist groups generally aim to destabilize them. As such, Chinese sources focus on improvements in managing these risks, such as strengthening military capabilities, closer cooperation on regional counter-terrorism initiatives, and more effective strategic communications.¹⁴² The Chinese government has also been willing to recognize the security risks facing the initiative, with President Xi Jinping acknowledging that the BRI is active in areas affected by ‘conflict, turbulence, crisis and challenge’, and calling for efforts to reduce these concerns through dialogue and counter-terrorism cooperation.¹⁴³

Foreign observers often discuss economic and legal challenges to the BRI, such as credit risk, regulatory challenges, governance issues and corruption.¹⁴⁴ An example was the launch, in 2017, of the Belt and Road Economic Health Index and the China Connectivity Index, produced by Oxford Economics and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.¹⁴⁵ The aims of the indices are to periodically evaluate the economic and political risks to the initiative.

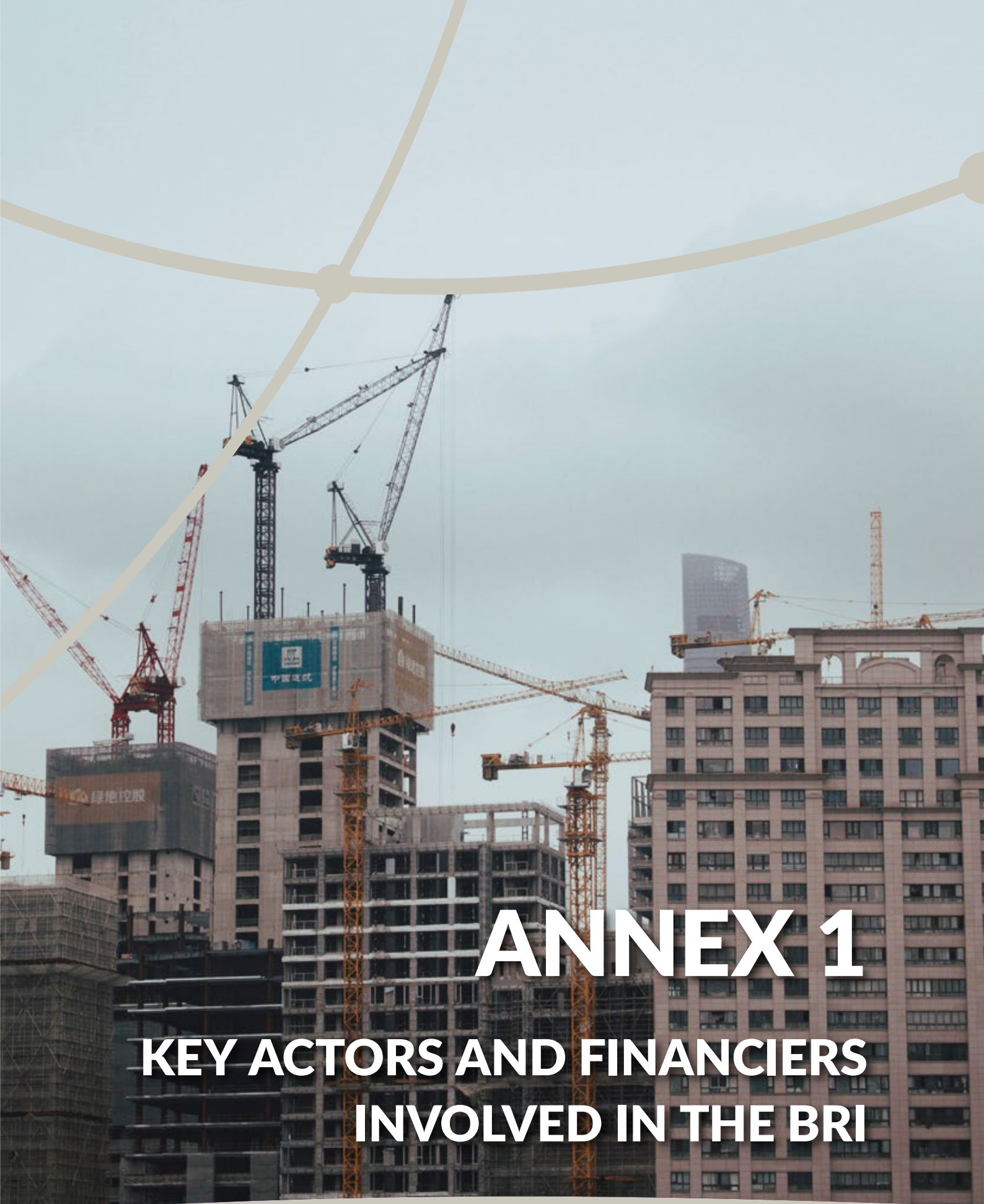
However, there has been little work on how regional integration may increase international security threats through facilitating transnational organized crime. The analysis presented in this report aims to be an initial effort towards filling that gap and providing the basis for future studies as BRI projects progress and more evidence of criminal responses becomes available. The substantial development of infrastructure and increasing trade will indeed boost economic development, but there is also a need to understand the potential negative impacts in South East Asia and East and central Africa: the combination of development on the one hand and criminals exploiting economic and trade opportunities on the other results in the emergence and expansion of illicit markets and economies, generates insecurity, weakens governance and negatively impacts human health and the environment. Taken collectively, these implications ultimately undermine one of the BRI’s own objectives, namely to encourage stability through economic development.

Criminals will see further opportunities in BRI infrastructure improvements.

Our research highlights the opportunities that increased connectivity provided by the BRI may afford organized crime networks at a time when illicit trade is already expanding dramatically worldwide, and criminal networks are seeking ever more favourable pathways for illicit trade. When BRI corridors, routes and trade hubs are studied in parallel with illicit trafficking routes and hotspots, it is impossible to miss the overlaps and convergences. Places such as China's Yunnan province and its capital city Kunming, the port and SEZ in Sihanoukville in Cambodia, and Kenya's maritime and railway hub in Mombasa are among the recurrent locations that are both BRI nodes and magnets for trafficking of various types of illicit commodity, as well as for financial crime and other criminal activities. This is not surprising: licit and illicit trade routes often coincide, and have done so even before the BRI. The risk now is that criminals will see further opportunities in BRI infrastructure improvements (including the establishment of SEZs) and the greater connectivity to reach new markets or more easily access existing ones in pursuit of higher revenues.

This challenge is compounded by a number of vulnerabilities, such as laxity, corrupt employees and officials, and obsolete bureaucracy, which are quite common in especially the maritime sphere in the regions covered in this report. Similarly, border security remains a key concern for countries along BRI routes given the high levels of corruption, porous borders and lack of adequate safeguards to address cross-border criminal activities. This ever-evolving picture calls for close monitoring.

It is not difficult to see why so many countries have already expressed interest or began the implementation of BRI projects. But given criminals' adaptability, the ideal environment created by SEZs and financial incentives, the further growth of illicit trade, alongside licit flows, is a largely foregone conclusion. As such, it becomes crucial to assess the potential crime impact of infrastructural projects and, essentially, try to 'crime-proof' development.



ANNEX 1

KEY ACTORS AND FINANCIERS INVOLVED IN THE BRI

▲ The BRI is a far-reaching project that involves investment from Chinese companies, multilateral banks and foreign governments. © Antonella Vilardo via Unsplash

Key actors

According to the Chinese government, at least 50 Chinese state-owned enterprises either invested or participated in 1 700 regional BRI projects during the first three years of the initiative. Some of the key actors include China Communications Construction, China State Construction Engineering, PowerChina, Sinomach China Railway Construction Corporation, China Railway Group, CNPC and State Grid.

Key financiers

Financiers of Chinese companies

- Chinese policy banks: The Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank
- Silk Road Fund: Established in 2014 with \$40 billion total initial capital.

Financiers of projects in BRI countries

- Asian Infrastructure Development Bank: Established in 2015 with \$100 billion in total initial capital.
- New Development Bank [formerly the BRICS Development Bank] established by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) in 2014, with \$50 billion in total initial capital.



The BRI will not be funded solely by China. It is estimated that by 2030, more than half of BRI project funding will come from private capital, multilateral banks and foreign governments.¹⁴⁶







ANNEX 2




VULNERABILITIES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

▲ A Chinese construction worker on-site in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. © Paula Bronstein via Getty Images





LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Cambodia	 <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Sihanoukville Autonomous Port (Cambodia's only deep-sea port) is vulnerable to the trafficking of environmental commodities and often involves Chinese and Vietnamese criminal networks. Significant seizures of mainly ivory but also of pangolin, rhino horn and timber have been recorded. ■ In July 2019, 83 containers were discovered with 1 592 tonnes of illegally shipped plastic waste.¹⁴⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The construction of a new highway (National Road 10) will connect the Cambodia–Thai border to Sihanoukville, potentially creating new opportunities and avenues for illicit activities in the coastal city. ■ The flourishing and poorly regulated casino industry in Sihanoukville is almost exclusively targeted at Chinese gamblers, who often become easy prey to fraud and scams. This lack of regulation is also reflected in the Sihanoukville SEZ, from where many foreign, but especially Chinese, companies operate. The US government has accused some of these entities of exploiting SEZs and falsifying the origin of their goods to evade duties.
Cambodia	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>The Koh Kong province on the border with Thailand has been the site of massive illegal clearing of mangrove forests.¹⁴⁸</p>	<p>The construction of a new highway, (National Road 10) will improve access to the province, which could facilitate further forest clearance (as well as human trafficking and methamphetamine smuggling, for which Koh Kong is a known hotspot).</p>
Cambodia–Vietnam	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>The Vietnamese border with Cambodia is a key trafficking hotspot for smuggling of people, drugs and other illicit materials, with a common crossing point from the Kandal province (Cambodia) to the An Giang province (Vietnam). Contraband goods are regularly being smuggled through the Ha Tien–Kien Giang border.¹⁴⁹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The improvements of transport infrastructure along the Southern Coastal Corridor, designed to improve trade between locations such as Ha Tien with Cambodia could facilitate further illicit trade. ■ The development of National Road 8, connecting the Kandal province to the Vietnamese border and generally improving access to the Cambodia–Vietnam border, could subsequently facilitate cross-border trafficking.





LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Cambodia–Vietnam	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Large-scale illegal logging has been identified in Cambodia's northern provinces of Ratanakiri and Monduliri, which are easily accessible to trucks moving timber across the border into Vietnam.¹⁵⁰</p>	<p>The development of National Road 8, connecting the Kandal province to the Vietnamese border and generally improving access to the Cambodia–Vietnam border, could subsequently facilitate cross-border flows.</p>
Cambodia	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>Authorities have seized large amounts of drugs in Phnom Penh and the provinces Kampong Speu, Kandal and Takéo provinces.¹⁵¹ In 2007, a methamphetamine laboratory, where 5.8 tonnes of precursor chemicals were found, was discovered in Kampong Speu.¹⁵²</p>	<p>The construction of National Road 41 will improve access to drug hotspots such as Kampong Speu.</p>
Cambodia–Thailand	 <p>People</p> <p>The border of Thailand and Cambodia has many known border crossings for human trafficking, including Koh Kong, Poipet and Malai.¹⁵³</p>	<p>The construction of National Road 10 will improve access to the Koh Kong province.</p>
Cambodia–Thailand	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>Methamphetamine (in either tablet or crystal form) originating from Myanmar are likely stored or repackaged in laboratories in Cambodia along the Thai border. The border region of Cambodia and Thailand is increasingly used as a staging point for trafficking, with the Koh Kong province in Cambodia being a frequently used hotspot.¹⁵⁴</p>	<p>Construction of National Road 10 passes through Koh Kong, and will connect the Cambodia–Thai border to the coast.</p>
Cambodia–Vietnam	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although a large proportion of the heroin found in Vietnam transits through Lao PDR instead of Cambodia, smuggling routes for opium and heroin are well established in southern Vietnam, along the Vietnam–Cambodia border. ■ The proximity of the Cambodian border to Ho Chi Minh City, from where mules transport heroin on flights out to Australia, appears to facilitate the use of the overland route between Cambodia and Vietnam for drug trafficking.¹⁵⁵ 	<p>A large stretch (96 km) of the Second Greater Mekong Subregion Southern Coastal Corridor Project runs along cross-border areas between Vietnam and Cambodia. Improved road infrastructure is likely to facilitate trafficking.</p>





LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Cambodia– Vietnam	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large proportion of methamphetamines in Vietnam comes via Cambodia. For example, a cache of 40 kilograms was seized in 2020 during a search of a container that had crossed the border from Cambodia.¹⁵⁶ 	
Indonesia	 <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indonesia has some of the region’s largest wildlife markets, such as the Pramuka market in Jakarta. It is the most significant exporting country for wild-sourced species in the region. Large seizures of tiger parts have been reported in the Jambi province in central Sumatra. Central Java was identified as an ivory trading hotspot, with high online trade activity and 30% of all traders doing business there.¹⁵⁷ 	<p>The Bandung–Jakarta high-speed railway project, now likely to start in 2021, will connect Jakarta to Bandung in West Java, which was also identified as a key location for illicit wildlife trade.</p>
Indonesia	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>The majority of deforestation in Indonesia takes place in Sumatra and Kalimantan (the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo).¹⁵⁸ Indonesian timber is often trafficked into Malaysia, either to be processed there or be moved on to China, the main recipient of this illegal timber.¹⁵⁹ Despite government bans, smuggling operations have been discovered from Sumatra island to the Malaysian port of Pasir Gudang.</p>	<p>Porous borders off the coast of Sumatra make this a preferred sea route for traffickers. The Kuala Tanjung Port project will improve access to many of the surrounding areas in North Sumatra.</p>
Indonesia	 <p>People</p> <p>Indonesia has been a key transit country for migrants smuggled from East Asia. The port cities of Tangerang and Pelabuhan Ratu in Java have been used for smuggling people via boat to Australia.¹⁶⁰ A trafficking ring in West Java was discovered in 2018, with 18 Indonesian women trafficked to China for marriage.¹⁶¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As smuggling from ports is a common method, development of the Kuala Tanjung Port may provide another opportunity for smuggling. Improved road capacity to West Java as part of the Cisumdawu Project may facilitate flows, as well as the Bandung–Jakarta high-speed railway, which will connect the capital, Jakarta, to West Java.




LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Indonesia	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indonesia's major cities – Jakarta, Denpasar, Batam, Medan and Makassar – experience the worst drug-related problems.¹⁶² In 2019, a cache of 35 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine was seized from a truck from Medan in North Sumatra. The truck was discovered in Cilegon, Banten en route to Jakarta.¹⁶³ In July 2020, police seized 200 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine that had been transported through Batam in the Riau Islands province and then the Bangka Belitung province, before arriving at the Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta.¹⁶⁴ Indonesian police discovered a Riau–Jakarta–Bandung drug trafficking ring, seizing 6.5 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine, 40 000 ecstasy pills and 20 000 yaba (madness drug) tablets smuggled from Thailand.¹⁶⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cileunyi–Sumedang–Dawuan toll road connects to the West Java capital of Bandung. The Kuala Tanjung Port project will improve access to many of the surrounding areas in North Sumatra, including Medan, which is less than 100 kilometres away. The Bandung–Jakarta high-speed railway will also facilitate travel between these two key hubs.
Lao PDR	 <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lao PDR is now a major global hub for trafficking high-value and highly threatened species throughout Asia, and has been identified as the fastest growing ivory market in the world. Some of the main physical markets for wildlife are located in Vientiane and Luang Namtha.¹⁶⁶ A major illicit wildlife market is found in Boten, in the Luang Namtha province on the Chinese border. The Boten SEZ, which was established before the BRI, has now been developed and is controlled by a private Chinese developer, namely the Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group.¹⁶⁷ 	<p>The high-speed railway from Kunming to Vientiane via Boten may provide opportunities to transport illicit wildlife both within Lao PDR and across the border into China.</p>
Lao PDR–China–Vietnam	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>In 2015, Lao PDR enacted a ban on the export of raw logs, followed in 2016 by a ban on the export of all logs and sawnwood, aiming to control the high deforestation rates. Despite the bans, trade to Vietnam and China still continued. Following the bans, nearly half of the logs and sawnwood that were imported to China were recorded in the Yunnan province, which borders Luang Namtha, Oudomxai and Phongsaly.</p>	<p>Great connectivity with the Yunnan province, China's entry point for many illicit commodities, and its capital city of Kunming is likely to facilitate timber flows.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Lao PDR–Cambodia	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>Drugs are regularly smuggled from Lao PDR into Cambodia. In 2018, 100 kilograms of methamphetamine that had been smuggled from Lao PDR was seized in the Stung Treng province.¹⁶⁸</p>	<p>Cambodia's National Road 214 and the Stung Treng–Mekong River Bridge (completed in 2015) encourage movement of goods through Cambodia's more remote border areas.¹⁶⁹ However, along with the economic development, these access routes can also be exploited to transport illicit commodities from Lao PDR.</p>
China – Lao PDR–Thailand	 <p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Major cross-border human trafficking routes from Lao PDR run from Vientiane across the border to Nong Khai in Thailand, and from Luang Namtha across the border to China. ■ Phongsaly is also a known human trafficking area, with China identified as a main destination country for the trafficking of people in the region.¹⁷⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Kunming–Vientiane high-speed railway will link Vientiane with Nong Khai across the border with Thailand. It will also cross from China's Yunnan province through Luang Namtha. ■ Development of the road between Phongsaly and Yunnan connects Phongsaly to China.
Malaysia	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Malaysia is a known transshipment country for African ivory and pangolin, with seizures recorded at Port Klang, Johor Port and Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Malaysia is often an intermediate stop before consignments reach their intended destination, e.g. Vietnam, Thailand, etc.¹⁷¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The planned East Coast Rail Link, due to be completed in 2026, will connect Port Klang to the north of the country bordering Thailand.¹⁷² ■ Improvements represented by the Gemas–Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project, due in 2022, will connect Johor Port with the interior and, eventually, be part of a continuous railway connection that runs all the way to Thailand.¹⁷³
Myanmar	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ About 90% of the opium produced in Myanmar is from the Shan state, 9% from the Kachin state, and a small amount from the Chin and Kayah states.¹⁷⁴ ■ Shan State is also a key location for the manufacture and trafficking of methamphetamine worldwide. The Mandalay–Lashio–Muse trade route is a commonly used as a trafficking route. 	<p>The development of the Sino-Myanmar land and water transportation passages will provide greater connection from the Yunnan province to the Ayeyarwady River via Bhamo, facilitating the transport of products through to the coast. The Muse–Htigyang–Mandalay expressway will also pass through Lashio, providing more opportunities for overland trafficking.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Myanmar–China	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Myanmar is a main transit country for smuggling wildlife from South East Asia into China. Mong La in Shan State is a particular hotspot for illicit trade in animal products, and caters exclusively for the demand for the pangolin market in China.¹⁷⁵ Rhino horn is also frequently transported through Mong La.</p>	<p>The development of the Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the Zhangfeng–Bhamo road will facilitate trade between Shan State and the Yunnan province in China.</p>
Myanmar–China	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of opium produced in Myanmar is trafficked across the border to Yunnan in China. ■ Methamphetamine trafficking routes pass through the border posts of Muse (Shan State) and Ruili (Yunnan), Myanmar’s biggest overland trade route. ■ In 2017, seizures along the Chinese border were found to be from Lao Kai (53%), Muse (33%) and Mong La (14%), all in Shan State.¹⁷⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Muse–Htigyang–Mandalay expressway aims to improve regional connectivity. The development of the Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the Zhangfeng–Bhamo road will facilitate trade between the Shan state and Yunnan in China. ■ Any infrastructural improvement in Shan will lead to easier movement of Chinese precursors into Shan and speedier trafficking of Shan-produced methamphetamine out of the state.¹⁷⁷
Myanmar–China/ Thailand/ Malaysia/ Bangladesh	 <p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trafficking occurs both within Myanmar and also across the borders with neighbouring countries, with reports showing Kachin women are being trafficked to China for forced marriage.¹⁷⁸ ■ Thailand is the second largest destination for trafficking in persons from Myanmar, after China. ■ Mandalay is a known hotspot for human trafficking, as is Mong La in the Shan state on the Chinese border. 	<p>The development of the Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the Zhangfeng–Bhamo Road will facilitate trade between Myanmar’s Kachin and Shan states and the Yunnan province in China. The Mandalay–Muse high-speed railway and the Muse–Htigyang–Mandalay expressway connect Mandalay to the Chinese border.</p>
Myanmar–India/ Bangladesh	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One of the main trafficking routes from Myanmar to India begins in Mandalay.¹⁷⁹ ■ The Bay of Bengal is frequently used for smuggling drugs from Myanmar to neighbouring areas such as Bangladesh, and for facilitating drug trade from India.¹⁸⁰ 	<p>Development of the Kyaukphyu Port and plans to extend the high-speed railway from Mandalay will improve access to this known transit point and the Bay of Bengal, from where goods can be trafficked onwards to other areas in the region.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Myanmar–Lao PDR	<p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opium is cultivated in 11 northern provinces of Lao PDR. The north is the main gateway for drugs flowing into and out of the country.¹⁸¹ Heroin from Myanmar is frequently trafficked into Lao PDR through Luang Namtha and Phongsaly.¹⁸² 	<p>The Phongsaly–Yunnan road connects Phongsaly to China, and the high-speed railway will connect Luang Namtha in the north of Lao PDR to Vientiane in the south.</p>
Myanmar–Lao PDR–Thailand	<p>Narcotics</p> <p>Opium from Myanmar is trafficked overland across the border into Lao PDR and Thailand. Thailand is one of the largest consumer markets for methamphetamine pills in the region. The majority of the pills are manufactured in Myanmar and moved into Thailand across its northern border.¹⁸³</p> 	<p>The high-speed railway from Bangkok is part of a wider programme that is designed to improve connectivity between Bangkok and Nong Khai, the Thai city nearest to the Lao border. The high-speed railway may further connect to Chiang Khong.</p>
Thailand	<p>Environmental</p> <p>Thailand is both a primary consumer and a regional transit hub for trafficked goods such as exotic pets, rhino horn and ivory. Although some animal products are smuggled across land borders, air couriers are increasingly used to traffic products through Suvarnabhumi Airport.¹⁸⁴</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Thai government has plans for an extensive high-speed railway network criss-crossing the country, thereby improving connectivity between Bangkok and Nong Khai, the Thai city nearest to the Lao border, and eventually linking into an even wider trans-Asia high-speed railway connecting China to Singapore, via Bangkok and the Lao capital Vientiane. Also part of the project, is a \$7 billion railway that will link Bangkok with the city's two international airports – Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi – and then connect onto the third airport, the U-Tapao International Airport in the eastern province of Rayong. (This is part of the government's Eastern Economic Corridor initiative.)
Thailand	<p>Narcotics</p> <p>Drug distribution has reached major tourist areas such as Phuket, Surat Thani, Pattaya City and Chon Buri. Routes through the mountain range from Chiang Mai to Lampang are used by traffickers for methamphetamine.¹⁸⁵</p> 	<p>The planned high-speed railway will extend to connect Chiang Mai to the south of the country. The railway linking the three airports will also connect some key consumer cities, such as Pattaya and Chon Buri.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Thailand–China	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>The R3A Highway, running from the Chiang Khong district in the Chiang Rai province in Thailand to Kunming in the Yunnan province via Lao PDR, facilitates heroin and methamphetamine trafficking networks.¹⁸⁶</p>	<p>The high-speed rail may further connect to Chiang Khong near the Chinese border.</p>
Thailand–Malaysia	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>The Hat Yai–Sadao motorway in Thailand’s far south is a known route for transnational drug trafficking across the border with Malaysia.¹⁸⁷</p>	<p>The planned high-speed railway extending to Hat Yai may provide another form of overland trafficking.</p>
Vietnam	 <p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Several key provinces in Vietnam are source locations for victims of trafficking to Europe. Overseas labourers, both legal and illegal, come from the provinces Quang Binh, Quang Ninh, Ha Tinh, Hai Phong and Nghe An, the latter being the primary source location. ■ Smugglers mostly reside in the north, in places such as Hai Phong City (its province has the largest seaport in North Vietnam) and the Yen Thanh district in Nghe An. Lo Port, located approximately 20 kilometres from Vinh, the capital city of Nghe An, is one of the main transfer points to Hanoi, from where people then depart.¹⁸⁸ 	<p>Improvements in transport infrastructure around Vinh City and the railway project from Hai Phong may facilitate human trafficking.</p>
Vietnam	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hanoi is a known drug area.¹⁸⁹ ■ Half a tonne of methamphetamine was seized in Ho Chi Minh City in March 2019, with another 1.1 tonnes seized in April.¹⁹⁰ ■ Nghe An, of which Vinh is the main city, has long been associated with drug (opium) production and trafficking (from Lao PDR) and, as such, is somewhat notorious in Vietnam. Some Nghe An inhabitants are known for their cross-border smuggling. Drugs (and any other commodity) smuggled from Lao PDR into Vietnam through the Nghe An border are destined for Vinh. This is because Vinh is both a port and a major transport hub on National Highway 1A, which runs the length of the country. The route begins at the Chinese border in the Lang Son province in the north and has been the principal tarmac connection to Ho Chi Minh City and then Ca Mau in the far south. It is the smuggling spine of the country.¹⁹¹ 	<p>Improvements in transport infrastructure between Vinh City and Ho Chi Minh City could facilitate these activities.</p>






LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Vietnam–China	<p>Environmental/Narcotics/People</p>  <p>The Hekou–Lao Cai border crossing between Vietnam and China is known for the trafficking of drugs, people, wildlife and weapons.¹⁹²</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The railway project from Hai Phong through Hanoi to Lao Cai connects to China, potentially facilitating further movement of goods across the country and into China. Notably, when completed it will link Kunming in China to Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam. ■ In addition, there is a major highway linkage from Hekou to Kunming. The area around the border may see even more traffic as people punt across the narrow river and pay a small transport tax to get themselves and their goods across informally.¹⁹³
Vietnam	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>Vietnam is an important country for the illicit wildlife trade in South East Asia. Trafficking commonly occurs in Hai Phong, as the province has both ports and an airport. There is a strong demand for illegal wildlife trade in Hanoi, Vietnam.¹⁹⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of the Cat Linh–Ha Dong transport infrastructure in Hanoi may attract new people, which may increase the demand for commonly traded illegal products by bringing in new consumers. ■ The railway project from Hai Phong through Hanoi to Lao Cai connects to China, potentially facilitating further movement of goods across the country and into China.
Vietnam–China	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>There are established smuggling routes for minerals and ores between Vietnam and China. In 2018, thousands of tonnes of ore and minerals were illegally smuggled to China through Lao Cai in the northwest of Vietnam each night.¹⁹⁵</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased mining activities related to the Iron Mine project in Lao Cai, and the resulting increase in local population and infrastructure, could incentivize more smuggling across the border with China. ■ The railway project between Hai Phong–Hanoi–Lao Cai connects the port city of Hai Phong to the border city of Lao Cai, and will connect on to the Yunnan province in China.














ANNEX 3







VULNERABILITIES IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA




▲ The Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway under construction. This infrastructure development may facilitate the trafficking of illicit products. © Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP via Getty Images





LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Cameroon	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>The Port of Douala is one of the main exit points out of central Africa for smuggling timber to the Asian and European markets.</p>	The multi-lane highway shortens the distance between Yaoundé and Douala.
Cameroon	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Cameroon is a known location for the smuggling of diamonds, with markets for these products in both Douala and Yaoundé. In 2015, 160 carats of undocumented diamonds, worth approximately \$28 000, were seized in Yaoundé.¹⁹⁶</p>	The new multi-lane highway between Yaoundé and Douala may facilitate the trade.
Cameroon	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Douala is a key location for the flow of illicit flora and fauna and has a central role in the transport of wildlife coming from the DRC, Gabon and the Central African Republic.¹⁹⁷ Ivory markets are found in Yaoundé and Douala. Edea has also been a location for wildlife trafficking.¹⁹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Edea is to be joined to the new highway project from Kribi. Improving access between Edea and cities with key trafficking hubs, and also with the new port at Kribi, may facilitate the transport of illicit goods between cities and to the new port, opening up illicit exports to other countries and regions. The newly developed port at Kribi also provides an alternative location to the port at Douala for traffickers to transport illicit products in and out of the country. ■ The multi-lane highway shortens the distance between Yaoundé and Douala, two key wildlife trafficking hubs.
Cameroon	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>Both Douala and Yaoundé are key hubs for the trafficking of narcotics, in part because of their international airports.¹⁹⁹</p>	The new multi-lane highway between Yaoundé and Douala may facilitate the drug trade.
Djibouti	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>The Port of Djibouti is a key location in the drug trade. Seizures of large quantities of cocaine in Djibouti, such as the 500 kilograms seized in 2017, indicate its importance as a drug trafficking transit location.²⁰⁰</p>	Although goods are transported mainly by road, the railway from Addis Ababa to the Port of Djibouti may facilitate the transport of a range of illicit goods between the Djibouti and Ethiopia.



LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
DRC	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>The Bikeko market in Kinshasa sells large amounts of ivory.²⁰¹</p>	<p>Transport infrastructure projects have included the refurbishment of roads in and around the capital Kinshasa.</p>
DRC	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>The key location for forest loss in the DRC has been the Ituri Forest area to the west of Beni, and north along the road from Beni to Mambasa. Additional key logging areas include Luna, along the road from Bukavu to Kisangani, and south-west of Bukavu.²⁰²</p>	<p>The refurbishment of roads in Bukavu, Beni and Luna may make illegal logging more attractive owing to the improved transport opportunities.</p>
DRC	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>Most of the DRC's mineral wealth is in the provinces of Katanga, West and East Kasai, Orientale, and North and South Kivu.²⁰³ North and South Kivu, as well as Katanga province, are key source locations for tourmaline.</p>	<p>The refurbishment of Route Nationale 4 from Beni to Niania in North Kivu, and Route Nationale 5 from Lubumbashi to Kasomeno in the Katanga province may facilitate the movement of goods.</p>
DRC–Rwanda/ Uganda	<p>Narcotics</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ North Kivu has a substantial cannabis industry, with crops taken to wholesaling sites in areas such as Goma, Butembo and Bukavu, from where the product is transported by road to larger towns.²⁰⁴ ■ Cannabis from the DRC is transported across the border to Rwanda and Uganda.²⁰⁵ 	<p>Improving roads in areas such as Bukavu and Beni in the North and South Kivu regions, close to the borders of Rwanda and Uganda, may facilitate the illicit trade in these products.</p>
DRC–Rwanda	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>The majority of gemstones are moved across the borders illegally, mostly to be sold in Rwanda.²⁰⁶ A known smuggling route for minerals such as cassiterite is between Bukavu in the DRC and Kamembe, Rwanda.²⁰⁷ Rough tourmaline is also moved across the border to Rwanda.</p>	<p>The refurbishment of roads between Bukavu, Uvira and Kamanyola, on the border with Rwanda, may facilitate this trade.</p>
DRC–Uganda	<p>People</p>  <p>There is evidence of human trafficking between the DRC and Uganda.</p>	<p>The refurbishment of Route Nationale 4 in the DRC near the border with Uganda may facilitate human smuggling across the borders.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
DRC–Uganda–Kenya	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Most of the timber trafficked from the DRC is used in Uganda and Kenya. A known trade route begins in eastern DRC and runs into Uganda through the Mpondwe border post, located less than 100 kilometres from Beni. It then goes to Kenya through the Busia border post, less than 50 kilometres from Malaba.²⁰⁸</p>	<p>Improving land transport around the Ugandan border in North Kivu may facilitate this transfer. With construction of the third phase of the Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) extending to Malaba, trafficking of illicit products may be facilitated.</p>
Ethiopia	 <p>Narcotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethiopia was a main country for heroin trafficking along the southern trafficking route during 2014–2018.²⁰⁹ ■ In 2019, six bags containing pharmaceuticals were seized at Cairo International Airport, after the traffickers had departed from the Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa.²¹⁰ 	<p>As Bole International Airport has been identified as a key transit point, the expansion of the airport will increase traffic and therefore likely provide more opportunities for traffickers to conceal their goods.</p>
Ethiopia	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Ethiopia is a key transit point for wildlife trafficking owing to its large international airport and strategic location. Bole International Airport is a major transit hub for illicit ivory and rhino horn.²¹¹</p>	<p>As Bole International Airport has been identified as a key transit point, the expansion of the airport will increase traffic and therefore likely provide more opportunities for traffickers to conceal their goods.</p>
Ethiopia–Djibouti	 <p>People</p> <p>The border between Ethiopia and Djibouti has been identified as a key transit point for migrant smuggling, particularly Dewele, which has a common rail and road border crossing.²¹²</p>	<p>The railway from Addis Ababa to the Port of Djibouti may facilitate the transport of a range of illicit goods between Ethiopia and Djibouti.</p>
Kenya	 <p>People</p> <p>Nairobi and Nakaru are transit points for human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In January 2020, 96 Ugandan women and girls were stopped at Nairobi’s airport en route to the United Arab Emirates, as part of an East African human trafficking ring headquartered in Kenya.²¹³</p>	<p>Nairobi and Nakaru are both stops on the standard gauge railway.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Kenya	<p>Narcotics</p>  <p>The Port of Mombasa is a major node for heroin and cocaine imports. The port is also a major entry point for counterfeit and illegal medicines, usually arriving from China and India.²¹⁴</p>	<p>The railway improves transport links between Kenya's two largest cities, Nairobi and Mombasa, which both frequently feature in illicit trade activities.</p>
Kenya	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>Timber also travels on to international markets through the Mombasa port.²¹⁵</p>	<p>The Mombasa–Nairobi SGR connects the port with Kenya's largest city.</p>
Kenya	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is a known trafficking hub in the region. Kenya had the most wildlife seizures out of any African country between 2016 and 2018, including ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scale and mammals.²¹⁶</p>	<p>The Nairobi terminal of the SGR is located just 3 kilometres from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The Mombasa–Nairobi SGR connects the port with Kenya's largest city.</p>
Kenya	<p>Environmental</p>  <p>Kisumu, a port city on the shore of Lake Victoria in the Nyanza province, is a key area for illicit activity. The recently refurbished Kisumu port enables transport of people and goods to neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC via Lake Victoria.</p>	<p>The third phase of the SGR will connect through Kisumu.</p>
Kenya–Tanzania	<p>Narcotics</p>  <p>The area along the border of Kenya and Tanzania, in particular between the Tsavo National Park and the coastline, is a known hub for smuggling heroin in both directions.²¹⁷</p>	<p>More than 120 kilometres of the SGR run through Tsavo National Park, with a stop nearby. This is close to the port at Tanga. The development of the port (leading to increased traffic) may facilitate the illicit drug trade both through the port and across the border at nearby border crossings.</p>
Kenya–Uganda	<p>Narcotics</p>  <p>Heroin trafficked from Mombasa to key locations in Uganda, such as Kampala, through the border town of Malaba.²¹⁸</p>	<p>The construction of the third phase of the Mombasa–Nairobi SGR extending to Malaba may facilitate the trafficking of illicit products.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Mozambique	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>Mozambique is a key conduit for heroin coming from other transit countries en route to South Africa, entering from the coast, as well as for cocaine from South America and methamphetamine from Afghanistan. Once it reaches land, heroin is transported by road, usually to either Nacala or Nampula, or hidden in containers and shipped from Mozambique's ports.²¹⁹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial harbours have been sites of dhow-based heroin trade, while an increasing volume of steel-hull container ships have been used for drug trafficking in large amounts (>1 tonne).²²⁰ The reconstruction of the Beira fishing port may provide a location for smuggling drugs into Mozambique. The Maputo–Katembe suspension bridge and link roads improve transport around Maputo.
Mozambique	 <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mozambique is a key location for the trafficking of wildlife products. Multiple wildlife seizures were reported from the airports in both Maputo and Beira between 2016 and 2018. In 2018, 4.2 kilograms of rhino horn was seized at Maputo International Airport.²²¹ Owing to the rapidly declining elephant population and increased law enforcement, ivory shipments to Asia have reduced considerably post-2018, but small quantities still depart from Beira and Nacala. For example, seven ivory tusks were seized in the Manica province in 2019, en route to Beira from where they were to be exported to Asia. Although poaching is decreasing, the same vulnerability, notably corruption, remains.²²² Some consignments may leave from other airports with connections to major hubs (e.g. Nampula and Pemba), which have flights to Johannesburg and Nairobi. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The construction of the road linking Beira with the Manica province may provide a convenient form of travel for traffickers. Development of the port at Beira may provide another trafficking route.
Mozambique	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Maritime routes are used to transport semi-precious and large-specimen stones, with the port at Maputo mentioned as a key shipping location.²²³</p>	<p>The development of link roads around Maputo as part of the Suspension Bridge project facilitate road transport around the capital.</p>

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Mozambique	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>Forest timber sourced from Zambia crosses the border into Mozambique and is then transported to Asia from Beira.²²⁴ The connection through Beira is one of Mozambique's biggest challenges with regard to the smuggling of environmental commodities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The construction of the roads linking Beira with other parts of the country may provide a convenient form of travel for traffickers. ■ Development of the port at Beira may provide another trafficking route. ■ The development of the Beira Corridor road (EN6) intends to serve neighbouring landlocked countries such as Zambia.
Mozambique–South Africa	 <p>Narcotics</p> <p>The majority of the heroin that transits through Mozambique is shipped via road across the southern border into South Africa. There have been several large seizures of drugs in South Africa, which have been transported from Mozambique. In 2017, 145 kilograms of heroin was found in a truck at the Golela border post in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. A similar amount was seized that same year from a truck at the Kosi Bay border post.²²⁵</p>	<p>Both border posts are on rural roads running from the south of Mozambique to South Africa. The Maputo–Katembe suspension bridge and link roads improve the connection between Mozambique and South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, reducing the time from Maputo and the border post of Kosi Bay from 6 hours to just 90 minutes. Given the previous seizures in these areas, the improved transport infrastructure may encourage trafficking as a result of the drastically reduced travel time.</p>
Mozambique–Zimbabwe	 <p>Environmental</p> <p>The majority of the illicit diamonds from Zimbabwe cross the border into Mozambique.²²⁶ Diamonds are known to be transported by vehicle across the Forbes–Machipanda border into Manica where there is a market for diamonds.</p>	<p>Beira with Machipanda in the Manica province may facilitate the transport of smuggled diamonds from the Zimbabwean border to the airport and ports located in Beira.</p>
Tanzania	 <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dar es Salaam Port used to be a key exit point for the illegal export of ivory, second only to the Port of Mombasa in Kenya. There were 11 reported seizures of ivory, totalling almost 20 tonnes, linked to the Port of Dar es Salaam between 2009 and 2015.²²⁷ A key ivory trafficking route ran from Dodoma to Morogoro and then on to Dar es Salaam. ■ Although there have not been any ivory seizures at the Dar es Salaam port in recent years, its historic role in the ivory trade and high ongoing levels of corruption in Tanzania warrant continued monitoring. ■ The Port of Zanzibar has historically provided traffickers access to international markets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The route from Dodoma to Morogoro and then to Dar es Salaam follows the same route as the first phase of the proposed SGR. ■ China Harbour Engineering Company was awarded a contract to build a new port in Zanzibar. The project has encountered hurdles and delays. Once completed, it will help with to relieve congestion of cargo traffic.²²⁸

LOCATIONS	COMMODITIES	VULNERABILITIES LINKED TO BRI PROJECTS
Tanzania	<p data-bbox="379 376 453 405">People</p>  <p data-bbox="379 416 954 546"><i>Morogoro and Dodoma are source locations for human trafficking victims, with girls trafficked from both Morogoro and Dodoma to Dar es Salaam and to the island of Zanzibar for domestic servitude.²²⁹</i></p>	<p data-bbox="975 416 1390 506"><i>The route from Dodoma to Morogoro and then to Dar es Salaam follows the same route as the first phase of the proposed SGR.</i></p>
Tanzania	<p data-bbox="379 663 480 692">Narcotics</p>  <ul data-bbox="379 703 954 936" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 703 954 792">■ <i>The Port of Tanga is home to at least one heroin kingpin, and close to landing sites for the dhow-based heroin trade.²³⁰</i> <li data-bbox="379 804 954 936">■ <i>The port at Dar es Salaam is used for smuggling drugs into the country.²³¹ Once on land the drugs move to urban centres where the main consumer markets are located, including Dar es Salaam.</i> 	<ul data-bbox="975 703 1390 898" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="975 703 1390 792">■ <i>Development of the port at Tanga could increase traffic, which may facilitate the illicit drug trade.</i> <li data-bbox="975 804 1390 898">■ <i>Port developments at Dar es Salaam may make it easier for illicit goods to be hidden among the licit.</i>

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise specified, currency is given in US dollars; Nadège Rolland, A concise guide to the Belt and Road Initiative, The National Bureau of Asian Research, 11 April 2019, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-guide-to-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>; Tom Phillips, The \$900bn question: what is the Belt and Road initiative?, *The Guardian*, 12 May 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/12/the-900bn-question-what-is-the-belt-and-road-initiative>.
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