



CHALMERS

The Belt and Road Initiative's Impact on Trade and Competition in Ports

Exploring the Effects of China's Ambitious trade and Infrastructure plan on Global Port Operations

Bachelor thesis for the International Logistics Program

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CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Göteborg, Sweden, 2023

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PREFACE

This study was conducted as a bachelor thesis of 15 credits during the spring of 2023. It was conducted at the department of Mechanics and Maritime Sciences at Chalmers University of Technology. The report was written by Eric Andreasson and Carl Ottosson.

We would like to thank Fredrik Olindersson who has been our supervisor and helped us throughout the whole project with great feedback, knowledge, and guidance. Furthermore, we would like to thank the representative from the Port of Gothenburg, for sharing their expertise and knowledge with us. We gained great insights and expertise in the effects of the BRI from a port perspective.

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SAMMANDRAG (in Swedish)

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) är ett globalt infrastrukturprojekt som skapades av kinesiska regeringen 2013. Initiativet fokuserar enbart på infrastruktur och sträcker sig över hela världen. En nation kan delta i initiativet om de behöver finansiella eller arbetskraft relaterade investeringar från Kina för utvecklingen av infrastruktur såsom hamnar, tågräls, vägar eller energiinfrastruktur. En av nackdelarna för ett land att gå med i initiativet är att man går i skuld till den kinesiska staten. Studiens syfte är att undersöka hur BRI kan komma att påverka den fria handeln och hur BRI kan komma att påverka konkurrensen bland hamnar. Studien indikerar att BRI kan inte självständigt bli klassat som ett frihandelsavtal. Men kan i stället bli använt som en möjliggörare och lägga förarbetet för att etablera ett frihandelsavtal och utökar värdet samt förbättrar användningen av redan existerande frihandelsavtal. Vidare så visar rapporten att det sker en ökning i konkurrens samt att hamnar som är med i BRI projektet kommer få en konkurrensfördel gentemot hamnar som inte gå med i projektet. Viktiga avgränsningar för studien är att den enbart fokuserar på hamnar och inga andra typer av infrastrukturprojekt, ytterligare avsmalning görs emot att utreda effekten för frihandel och konkurrens och gör ingen politisk analys.

Nyckelord: Kina, Infrastruktur, Ekonomi, Frihandel, konkurrens, Investering

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ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was initiated by the Chinese government in 2013. It is a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on infrastructure projects with a reach across the entire world. Nations are eligible to participate in the initiative if they require and express a desire to obtain financial and/or manpower assistance for the development of infrastructure projects including ports, railroads, roads and power plants. A setback for a nation joining the initiative is that they will be indebted to China. The purpose of this study is to examine how the Belt and Road Initiative can affect the availability of free trade for a port as well as the level of competition between ports. The findings of this report indicate that the BRI cannot be classified as a standalone free trade agreement (FTA). Rather, it serves as an enabler for, and lay the groundworks for the establishment of new free trade agreements as well as to increase the value of and make better use of already existing FTAs. Furthermore, this report concludes that there is an increase of competition following the BRI. Further studies shows that ports who have joined the BRI will have a competitive advantage. Some important limitations of this report are that it only focuses on seaports and does not examine other types of infrastructure. Additionally, it mainly focuses on free trade opportunities and competition between ports, rather than any political aspects of the BRI.

This report is conducted as a bachelor thesis for the International Logistics program at the Chalmers University of Technology.

Keywords: China, Infrastructure, Economy, Free trade, Competition, Foreign Direct Investments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aim of the study	3
1.3 Research questions	3
1.4 Delimitations	3
2. Theory	4
2.1 The Economical History of China.....	5
2.2 China and Foreign Direct Investments.....	5
2.3 Securing China’s Energy Supply	7
2.4 Politics of Ports	7
2.5 The Maritime Aspects of the BRI	8
2.6 Western Response and Similar Projects.....	9
3. Methodology	10
3.1 Strategic Literature Search	10
3.1.1 Planning the Strategic Literature Search.....	10
3.1.2 Executing the Strategic Literature Search.....	11
3.1.3 Craap-test	11
3.1.4 Grey Literature	11
3.2 Semi-structured Interviews	12
4. Results	13
4.1 Achieving free trade under the BRI	13
4.2 Competitiveness among ports under the BRI.....	14
5. Discussion	17
5.1 Discussion of Methodology	17
5.2 Discussion of Results	18
6. Conclusion.....	20
6.1 Recommendations for further research	20
References	22
Appendix 1	1

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Identified search terms 10

ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations – A geopolitical and economical organization for countries in Southeast Asia consisting of 10 countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam.
BRI	Belt & Road Initiative – Infrastructure and Investment project into foreign countries by the Chinese government.
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries – Geopolitical term for countries in the Baltics, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Europe.
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor – A 3000 km long infrastructure network project between China and Pakistan to facilitate trade and energy import.
EU	The European Union is a supranational economic and political union of nations within the European continent.
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment – Investments made from one country, into a business in another country, long term international investment.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product – The total value of goods and services produced within a country during a specific period, usually a year. It is used to measure a country’s economic output and growth.
Incorporated country	A country which has come into agreement with China to take in financial or/and labor aid with the BRI for the construction of new infrastructure.
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement - NAFTA is a trade agreement between Canada, the US, and Mexico that eliminated trade barriers between the three countries, promoting economic integration and growth.
SOE	State Owned Enterprise - A company owned and operated by the government.
SOMS	Strait of Malacca and Singapore - The Strait of Malacca, situated between the Malay Peninsula of Malaysia with Singapore on its southern edge, and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, is a narrow waterway that connects the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. It is a significant shipping route for global trade.

1. INTRODUCTION

International trade has a long-standing history, dating back thousands of years. Global trade would eventually lead to the era of the Silk Road - a network of trade routes that connected Asia, Europe, and Africa. The Silk Road enabled parts of the three different continents to grow and prosper, underscoring the vital role trade plays in economic development. At that time, trade goods were transported by carriages and animals, resulting in long and hard journeys. However, today, the majority of international trade is carried out by large ocean-going vessels, making travel between continents quicker and more efficient compared to the days of the Silk Road (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Secretariat (Geneva), 2018).

The increased availability of international trade following the development of port, cities, technology, and infrastructure has led to a globalized world where nations can export and import goods that are normally not found within their native regions or that are in high demand. This leads to economic prosperity through international mobility of resources and economic interdependence of other countries. Globalization is generally regarded as a good thing; however, it comes with some challenges as well. For instance, the already well developed and industrialized nations benefit far more from a globalized market than the underdeveloped parts of the world partly because their capability to either produce or purchase goods in or from low-cost countries (Globalization Partners, 2020). Additionally, conducting trade in a global market requires large amounts of monetary investments to get established as well as certain infrastructural pre-requisites, such as roads, energy supply, technological prerequisites, water, and sanitation.

During the past decades China has established a significant role in the global market and in recent years, China has been looking for new ways to increase their global trade presence. By investing in infrastructure and businesses in foreign nations, they aim to create new alternative trade routes via the mainland of China to Europe, Africa, and southern parts of Asia (Li & Schmerer, 2017). This new project of opening alternative trade routes is essentially a revitalization of the ancient Silk Road. It started in 2013 and is called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

1.1 Background

Historically people have lived scattered out and were mostly hunters and farmers with everyone having their own small community. Trade between communities was rare, and global trade was non-existent. However, with the construction of ships people started travelling and eventually trading by sea and this was when ports were created. With the new existence of ports to facilitate trade, which in turn created a boost in economics and a place for labor, many people started moving closer to find jobs get involved with trading. This led to massive cities and often capitals being along the water, which was a big step towards today's society.

Today there are lots of ports, with that comes different ownership structures which sometimes overlap each other and change. The most common structure models for today's ports are fully privatized port, industrial ports, landlord port authority and public service ports (Rolf Ihre, 2020). The different models indicate who owns the port which in these cases are a person, company, a company operating on state own land, or a state. With ports being by far the greatest way to trade, the governance and power of a harbor is important since this affects a great amount of people, therefore ports are a massive interest for political influence.

80% of the world's trade goods have sometime during its journey been transported at sea (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Secretariat (Geneva), 2018). This makes ports a very important part in a global market. The relevancy of a port is determined by factors such as monetary cost, time efficiency and level of infrastructure (Adolf Ng, 2006a). Many of the BRI incorporated countries are still suffering from underdevelopment in many areas of society, and thus sees the opportunity of joining the BRI as beneficial. It would give them both financial and labor assistance, to build and improve their ports infrastructure.

Ports are varying in functions. Some being import ports, export ports, industrial ports, commercial cargo ports, fishing ports, and cruise ports. The need for a port and the function varies between different locations. The function of the port may also change over time. If an underdeveloped port who has a large export function suddenly gets economical, infrastructure and operational support, the function of the port can switch and the port can become highly requested as a complete commercial port, which would lead to a boost in economic development (Wang & Liang, 2022).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a massive infrastructure and investment project launched by the Chinese government in 2013 (Huang, 2016; Ma, 2022a). It involves the development of trade and transportation networks by financing and building infrastructure along two major routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt, which runs on land from China through Central Asia and into Europe, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which connects China to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe via the oceans. The initiative aims to boost economic growth, increase trade and investment, and promote cultural exchange among the 150 developed and developing countries, that are participating in the initiative (Johnston, 2019a; Ma, 2022a). The BRI is involved in and is expected to continue to be involved with the construction of roads, bridges, ports, and other infrastructure projects, as well as the creation of special economic zones, financial institutions, and trade agreements. Despite some criticism and concerns about its impact on participating countries and the global economy, the BRI remains a major focus of the Chinese government and is seen as a key driver of economic development in the region.

According to Johnston (2019a), there is an additional reason for the BRI, namely, to convert China's savings into investments. This is done in order to create Chinese financial stability, both lowering national risks and decreasing national poverty. However, this comes with economic risks as many of these investments are made in developing countries, where among other things bribery is common. Furthermore, with added financial securities China also stands to increase trade and become increasingly more competitive among ports in the international market with cheaper labor, bigger infrastructure, faster information systems and with great focus on e-commerce and end-to-end logistics (Johnston, 2019a).

Huang (2016) summarizes the BRI project as derived from three factors. Firstly, China's economic growth is slowing down. The country's traditional development model, which relied heavily on international trade and investment with established economies, is losing momentum. To sustain robust economic growth, China needs to reconfigure its domestic and international economic strategies. Secondly, while China has historically taken a low-key approach to international affairs, as a major emerging power, it is increasingly being urged to take on greater responsibility in the global economic system. However, the current international economic framework no longer fits the reality of an increasingly important role played by emerging markets. Thirdly, the pre-existing economies and their systems are no longer compatible with a new world economy. However, overhauling international organizations and policies is a difficult task, and traditional policy doctrines have not been very successful in developing

regions, including the "Belt and Road" area. This means that the new take of an economic system, such as the BRI, could positively impact the included regions and thus also generate vital opportunities for the world economy.

Huang (2016) also highlights some potential risks with the project. To begin with, the BRI lacks a clear coordination mechanism and instead heavily relies on bilateral agreements. Maintaining standardized procedures, efficiency and safety across all countries involved in for example, a cross-border high-speed railroad may prove challenging. Without an effective coordination mechanism, it may be difficult to succeed in projects like this one. Furthermore, the BRI involves a vast array of political regimes and economic systems, including both socialistic and capitalistic economies, across the incorporated countries. As a cause of the diverse political values, it is unclear if politics can be at all excluded from the playing field of international economic cooperation, especially when people-to-people exchanges are accounted for. Additionally, there are some signs of tensions regarding China's export of excess production capacity. It may be argued that the initiative should absorb China's massive excess production capacity. However, doing so could prove to be counterproductive as this will lead to a decline in global prices of certain wares or goods. Lastly, the issue of financial sustainability of international projects may be challenging to achieve. According to Huang (2016), Chinese companies as well as the Chinese government have limited experience when it comes to manage international projects. There have been Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects in the past with questionable profitability. The government needs to make efforts to avoid the possibility of the BRI becoming an international version of the previous "Go West" campaign, which included large infrastructure projects in the far western regions of China that ultimately gave no meaningful financial returns on the investment.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this report is to investigate and discuss the different impacts and effects of the Chinese Belt & Road Initiative on ports. More specifically, the report will look at how the BRI can affect the level of free trade, both on regional and international level. The report will also examine how the BRI can affect the level of competition between ports within the initiative.

1.3 Research questions

1. How does the Belt and Road Initiative affect a port's ability to achieve free trade?
2. How does the Belt and Road Initiative affect the level of competition between ports?

1.4 Delimitations

This report discusses the BRI's effect on ports. The report will have its focus on global trade, on development and competition between ports, and on the limitations and opportunities for free trade under the BRI. As such, no individual infrastructure projects within or between nations will be closely investigated. Neither will the political incentives and motivations for joining the BRI be examined. The focus of the report will be exclusively on ports that are incorporated within the BRI, and so, any other ports or logistical facilities will not be explored. Since conducting an interview with someone from a foreign port is challenging, the Port of Gothenburg will provide some perspective and information to assist with this report. Although

the BRI is a global initiative, this report will not investigate its presence in all parts of the world. Instead, the geographical scope will be limited to Europe and the South Asian regions.

2. THEORY

This Chapter will discuss the theoretical background of the Belt and Road project including energy supply and foreign direct investments, further theory of the politics of ports, theory of the maritime aspects of the BRI and theory of other similar infrastructure projects as the BRI.

2.1 The Economical History of China

Since the late 1970s, China's growth in GDP has increased by an average of 9,8% per year for the past three and a half decades (Lin & Zhang, 2015). After 2013 the GDP has had a slightly more mellow increase of between 6-7% per year. Lin & Zhang (2015) describe the decrease of growth as not derived by overinvestments, financial repression, or the state-led growth model, which was introduced in the 70s and sparked China's economic boost, nor is it any of China's internal structural problems. Instead, Lin & Zhang (2015) derive the decrease in growth as mainly due to cyclical and external factors, more specifically the financial crisis of 2008 and the slow recovery of the world's top economies. This in turn led to a decrease of exports which resulted in Chinese export numbers went into a negative growth in 2015, whereas it earlier had had a growth rate in the vicinity of 25% per year (Huang, 2016). This decline in economic growth has spurred projects like the BRI and other to boost China's economy back up.

China is one of the world's largest and most populous economies (W. Liu & Dunford, 2016). The increase of Chinese economy has also led to an increased cost for labor. This means that fewer are willing to work for the same cost as before, as the cost for living has increased as well as educational levels has increased following a rise in economy. This sets out to be one of the main reasons for China to be investing in overseas logistics, so they can have a relocation of labor-intensive industries (Johnston, 2019). This leads to countries with lower levels of GDP per capita establishing more industries with high labor intensity, further ensuring China developing towards more sophisticated industries. China's infrastructure Initiative the BRI ensures that one's opportunities occur for investments towards countries with economical capabilities for lower cost of labor, that China gains financially as well as gaining soft power which justifies the investment and can be considered profit from the BRI.

China has under a long period of time been seen as a low-cost country for production and industry and many international firms have moved their production to China in a pursuit to lower their production costs. However, Huang (2016) argues that this may be changing since China's economic development is rising quickly, along with the cost of living there. Thus, the labor-intensive manufacturing industry that China has will need to relocate to other places with lower costs to stay competitive. This weaves neatly into the philosophy and ambition of the BRI, which essentially enables Chinese firms and investors to establish themselves abroad.

2.2 China and Foreign Direct Investments

To better understand the motives for launching the BRI it is necessary to investigate China's FDIs and policies, and results regarding these. Reports from Huang & Wang, (2011a) show that the amount of money being spent as FDI before 2004 was negligible. During the period of 2003 to 2016 however, these sums grew rapidly with an average increase just shy of 50% annually (S. Yu et al., 2019), which eventually put China in the number one spot of investors in developing countries (Huang & Wang, 2011). The timeframe in which China has accomplished

this is not just short, it is also occurring during the financial crisis of 2008, which halted the global economic growth for a short period of time. Although, the financial crisis had negative impact on the economy and FDIs for China, it was largely compensated for by the announcement of the BRI in 2013 which increased the FDI numbers significantly (S. Yu et al., 2019).

Researchers are divided when it comes to determining the main motivator for the FDI. Huang & Wang (2011) expresses that the main driver for FDI is not necessarily to find high profits, and that the traditional factors that influence these, such as market size, labor cost and legal framework to name a few, generally does not matter. Rather, they suggest that it is the high competitiveness in the international market and the potential for gained resources within the developing countries that especially attract Chinese FDI. Other researchers emphasize that Chinese firms in fact are motivated by the financial gains that can result from FDIs, such as greater market potential, lesser regulatory constraints, and the potential for greater trade openness (Cheung et al., 2012, 2014; S. Yu et al., 2019). The main objective of FDIs is not to seek exploitation and profits in overseas markets and industries as one could expect. Instead, the objective is to strengthen the sustainability and the competitiveness of the domestic markets and industries within China (Huang & Wang, 2011). The process of doing so includes investing in means to acquire and secure a supply of resources, improving or creating infrastructure to enable exports and imports as well as getting hold of the latest technologies to improve production methods which in turn will enable Chinese domestic industries to further prosper and develop.

Looking at the different actors and companies that the FDIs consists of it is evident that many state-owned enterprises (SOE) are investing into infrastructure in BRI countries (Du & Zhang, 2018). This comes as no surprise considering that the Chinese government can use its SOEs to achieve its governmental goals, BRI being one way to achieve some of these goals. The private sector is also present in the foreign investments; however, they do not have as much involvement in infrastructure as the SOEs have. Instead, the private sector provides a larger portion of the production and of national output and opportunities of employment. It is also worth mentioning that there may not have been as much of an interest from the private sector if it wasn't for the fact that the Chinese government is so involved and plays such a significant role in the project (Du & Zhang, 2018). This involvement gives the companies a sense of security from the Chinese government which may encourage their investments further.

The FDI companies receiving most investments are operational within the sectors of manufacturing, construction of infrastructure and trade and its related services (S. Yu et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is noted that since the implementation of the BRI in late 2013, the spread of investments has been more consolidated towards the construction of infrastructure to connect the incorporated country with China than it has to other sectors. In total, the initiation of BRI has resulted in a 45% increase of FDIs undertaken compared to prior years, and that the share of FDIs going to BRI incorporated countries has risen by 36%.

There is great importance for China to rebalance their economy by starting to increase consumption, innovation, and outbound investments to facilitate the economy. One factor for the rebalancing of the economy is for China to become more innovative and more of a service country. The implementation of this needs to be moving towards a less labor-intensive export-oriented industries (Johnston, 2019b). China has a working-age population of ages 15 to 59 meaning that rapid population ageing is ahead of the high per capita income. The BRI is meant to secure investments as well as create an opportunity for high labor-intensive businesses to move abroad and low labor-intensive to develop with the high per capita income.

2.3 Securing China's Energy Supply

All countries today are dependent upon each other for energy security/safety except for a few European countries that could potentially be energy independent although not with renewable resources (Findlay, 2010). A big part of a country's energy security relies on big diversity in the sources of their energy. If a country can diversify their sources of energy, the country could expect to create greater reliability and security of the energy supply. Energy securities are often seen as four dimensions namely energy supply, economic, technology and environmental security (Alkuwaiti, 2022). An important step toward energy safety is an increased supply and construction of pipelines.

Recently there has been a projected increased demand for energy worldwide although the current demand has not yet increased worldwide. There is currently regional increased demand for Asia and the middle east (Findlay, 2010). According to Alkuwaiti (2022) energy security is on the way to become one of central Asia and even globally, most important issue.

According to Xu et al, (2022) energy collaboration is the most important reason for the Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI region has historically been, and is currently, the world's greatest supplier of energy. Although with an increasing energy supply coming from the US, this has been under threat. China is despite this, unwilling to import from the US to maintain the supply of energy for the region. Another aspect of not starting to import energy from the US is to maintain China as a main provider of energy and have Chinese energy be an income as well as be a regional economic growth booster. With China now starting cooperation along the region and with the BRI incorporated countries they can jointly facilitate resource exploitation, exporting and liquidity to boost regional growth. China has extra interest in developing countries with possibility for energy export especially which are faced with economical constraints or technological constraints. (Xu et al., 2022). Economical and technologic constraints give a natural possibility for investments through development or construction of the energy supply chain. Furthermore Zhao (2021) claims that the BRI progress has this far led to increased trade, investment and cooperation between incorporated countries and China. Alongside this, China will also be able to increase their work opportunities, infrastructure, and global relationships (Zhao, 2021).

The BRI is improving connections between the Asian, European, and African continents and their adjacent seas, with collaboration and strengthening relationship being a great part of the BRI intentions (Xu et al., 2022). With priorities for China being secure on its supply of energy, as China is the largest oil importer, the largest energy producer, and the greatest consumer of energy. This will sustain as The BRI is financing infrastructure projects to ease the reliance upon the strait of Malacca. These projects are for example oil and gas pipelines, regional power grip upgrading/transformation and sea trade routes all to ensure energy security for China. This will in turn create reliance for big energy companies to be a key partner with the BRI. With Chinese demand continuously increasing and their energy supply mainly going through the same route their security is lacking, and development into new routes and pipelines is a clear strategy from China the latest years (Z. X. Zhang, 2011).

2.4 Politics of Ports

Ports are an important component for trade, inland logistics, investments, improvement of infrastructure and the economy for countries (Xie et al., 2021). With the overall goal of

strengthening, one's country, the BRI has found great potential in financing and constructing inland logistics facilities and harbors. With increased global trade comes a higher demand on vessel size and higher demand on the competitiveness of harbors (Adolf Ng, 2006b; Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, 2018).

Ports are under political influence, mostly from its own municipality, but to some degree also from international influences. Although the international influence has always been a varied there has been an increase as of late. Some examples of these influences can be terrorism, sabotage, and other threats that can cause a major impact in the security and safety of ports. Thus, there has been several increases to the political interest and safety laws for sea and port operations (Rolf Ihre, 2020). Recently there has been an increase in port safety laws, but since there is no overall rule book for the sea, the port is dependent upon the state to influence which safety and security it is bound to by law. With increased influence from the state, the political pressure is affecting ports and so also trade globally. However, as the BRI continues to expand, more ports also join the project. With China being the leader of the project, they gain some political influence in the incorporated states when financing a port (Kao, 2022). They also gain economical influence as they can allocate financial assets, provide corporate funding, and facilitate financial growth.

2.5 The Maritime Aspects of the BRI

The strait of Malacca is a very important trade route for China, the route is between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and is also known as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) (Yin & Lam, 2022). The strait is often considered among the most important maritime links and for China it could be the most important (Z. X. Zhang, 2011). China has a massive import throughout the strait with more than 76% of its oil import being brought from the strait. This means that the energy security is very dependent upon the reliability of the straight and if something disrupts the trade than China could expect a loss in economic development as well as in social stability for the upcoming future.

History can provide ample examples of infrastructure projects that have influenced and shaped the maritime trading world for the better. One of these is the Suez Canal, which shortened the voyage between Europe and Asia significantly. Another is the Panama Canal which enabled seafarers to avoid sailing around south America entirely. The two projects have brought continents closer and reduced travel time and costs, ultimately stimulating more trade between nations (Haralambides & Merk, 2020a). Infrastructure in the form of ports also has an impact on the availability of trade and the cost of trade. Haralambides & Merk (2020) reports that 40% of the cost for transportation can be derived from port infrastructure. Furthermore, studies demonstrate that if a nation with deficient infrastructure could improve it and be on the same level as those the upper quartile, they could potentially see a reduction in transport cost of 50%.

To be able to assess the impacts of BRI, four areas of maritime transportation will be defined according to Haralambides & Merk (2020). The first is the control of existing maritime trade routes, which involves securing trade volumes and important wares through the control of current trade routes, such as one of the previously mentioned canals, certain straits, or horns. The BRI is a way for China to increase control over these routes to secure that it is beneficial for their own interests. The second is the establishment of alternative trade routes. This could be seen as a parallel to the controlling of existing routes and serves as a purpose of China not being too reliant on the few already established trade routes. A prime example of a new trade

route being established within the BRI is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which connects the far western Chinese regions with Pakistan and subsequently the Arabian Ocean. The project effectively eliminates the need for transportation through the Malacca strait and potentially shortens the transportation distance by up to 80% (Lee et al., 2018a).

The second aspect can be viewed as somewhat intertwined with the third aspect, which is the possible shift of modality (Haralambides & Merk, 2020b). Looking back to the example of the CPEC, China aims to create an infrastructure based on land instead of water, which would include new roads, rails and even pipelines, to mention a few of the infrastructures that are planned (Lee et al., 2018b). This would effectively shift a part of the volumes transported by sea to instead be transported in the various land-based modes of transportation. The fourth area envelopes the generation of trade through infrastructure. Through the construction of bigger and more efficient vessels, shippers can benefit from economies of scale (Cullinane & Khanna, 2000). The same progression is seen within port operations where bigger and more efficient cranes are installed as well as a pursuit of automation to enable around-the-clock operations (Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, 2018). The developments made within the liner shipping industry decreases the cost of transportation which in turn reduces freight costs for customers, thus both enabling and promoting trade. Research indicates that an increase in connectivity between the BRI incorporated countries by 10% would decrease China's trade related costs by 3% (Haralambides & Merk, 2020b). This would in turn increase China's imports by 6% and its exports by 9%. Furthermore, it is suggested that the BRI has the potential to decrease the costs of global trade by up to 2.2%.

2.6 Western Response and Similar Projects

Europe has responded to the BRI in various ways, some joining the initiative and some opposing it (Turcsanyi & Kachlikova, 2020). Poland and Spain are two European countries joining the initiative as they see a great potential in added trade and opportunities for investments. The United States on the other hand is wary of the soft power and geopolitical threat that China is imposing (Blanchard & Flint, 2017).

The BRI has influenced the creation of similar projects such as the Build Back Better World (B3W) Initiative, which is a direct competitor for the BRI (Zhao, 2021). The B3W was created by the G7 countries with USA under leadership of the US president Joe Biden administration who is the main owner and creator of the project. The B3W was grown out of the possible threat of China gaining more influence and undermining the USA. The politics between the BRI and B3W thus US and China have been a main topic for former US president Donald Trump saying that the initiative disrupts trade worldwide and mentioning it as being insulting.

Recently even more projects have been made to stop the dependence on China, such as the "Supply chain Resilience initiative" that has been created by India, Australia, and Japan to reduce their economic dependence of China (Zhao, 2021). Another Initiative is the European version known as the Three Seas Initiative, consisting of 12 EU states, aimed at financially supporting underdeveloped regions as a countermeasure to not become dependent on China when developing infrastructure and global trade.

3. METHODOLOGY

This project was conducted through a literature study where data collection and document research were included. To perform the literature study a strategic literature search was performed. In addition to the literature study, a complementary semi structured interview was carried out. The aim of the interview was to get a deeper insight into what the effects of the BRI could be on a port. The interview was conducted with a key person within Swedish maritime and port operations. The focus of the interview was on gaining a more operative understanding of how the BRI could affect a port. This knowledge was then used to create an in-depth analysis of the Belt and Road initiatives effect on ports. The results from the literature study and interviews were then discussed in the context of the different research questions.

3.1 Strategic Literature Search

The strategic literature search was based on a method provided by Livoriel et al. (2017). The aim of the search was to gain relevant knowledge of the BRI and find information that could help answer the defined research questions. The systematic strategic literature review should, according to Livoriel et al. (2017), minimize biases through being transparent and reproducible. The strategic literature search included several of the different steps included in the authors’ search process for evidence synthesis.

Firstly, the search was planned by identifying search terms from the different research questions, assessing the need for grey literature, identifying which bibliographical sources are suitable for the report and setting up criteria that each source must meet. Secondly, the search was executed. In this step, several search strings were built, and different search strategies were applied to find as many relevant sources as possible. The different sources were then reviewed to make sure they were satisfactory with the criteria that were set up. Lastly, the results from the different sources were used to write the report.

3.1.1 Planning the Strategic Literature Search

From the different research questions and the main topic BRI, a list of search terms was identified. These terms are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Identified search terms.

RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	BRI general
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port(s) • Positive effects • Negative effects • Free Trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port(s) • Competitiveness • Competition • Development • Collaboration • Cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port(s) • Political influence • Port governance • Geopolitics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRI • Belt and road initiative • Belt and road • China • Silk road

The bibliographical sources that were deemed necessary and useful to answer the research questions were Scopus, Google Scholar and Google. Google was needed to find grey literature and Scopus and Google Scholar were used to find academical articles. Scopus provided a wide variety of articles from a scientific background.

3.1.2 Executing the Strategic Literature Search

From **Fel! Hittar inte referenskölla.** search strings were created. This was done in order to narrow the search and find exact results relating to the research questions. In the search strings Boolean operators such as AND, OR and a strict phrase search with the help of “”. The following search strings were used to find relevant sources:

- (“BRI” OR Belt and Road) AND (port* OR effect OR free trade)
- (“BRI” OR Belt and Road) AND (port* OR competitiveness OR competition)
- (“BRI” OR Belt and Road) AND (port* OR effect OR free trade)
- (“BRI” OR Belt and Road) AND (port* OR geopolitics OR influence OR politic* OR governance)

In addition to using search strings to find relevant sources, the results were sorted to show articles with the most citations at the top. Furthermore, the process of snowballing was also used to find literature relating to the BRI. Snowballing is the term used when finding references to cited articles within the original article (Wohlin, 2014).

3.1.3 Craap-test

The articles and reports used as source material in the first and second chapters of this report were evaluated according to the CRAAP-test. CRAAP stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose which are also the criteria by which the sources are evaluated and scored by. Our literature analysis consists of 34 individual sources which combined had an average CRAAP-score of 29,25 out of 33 points possible. For a source to be regarded as valid it must score at least 24 points out of 33 available. The median score was 29,25 with the highest and lowest receiving 33 and 24,5 respectively. The papers scoring in the lower end of the spectra were slightly older than the majority as well as only providing one or two relevant citations. Further, all sources were written by legitimate authors or organizations with the purpose of research contribution towards the subject. No notable grammatical or linguistic errors were discovered while processing the sources.

Besides the CRAAP-test, efforts were made to find sources written by authors with a wide variety of backgrounds. The importance of acknowledging the origins of an article is great, especially when dealing with a subject that has strong ties to a certain nation or ideology. It was important to find sources written by authors with not only a Chinese background in order to limit the biasness of this report. Out of the sources used, only seven originated from China. Others originated from other parts of the world, including the USA, UK and Netherlands. Some of the sources did not have any ties with a specific country or region.

3.1.4 Grey Literature

Grey literature is work produced by governments, academics, industries, and businesses on all levels, but unlike most papers, grey literature might not be widely distributed through traditional commercial publishing channels (Frater et al., 2007). For this report the need for grey literature was addressed as necessary. The reason for this was to be able to include studies not intended for the academic sphere. Grey literature can contain relevant information that isn't reported in journal articles due to limitations in word length, furthermore by also including grey literature

publication bias could be reduced as it is likely that mostly positive results are included in academic journals (Livoreil et al., 2017).

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Denscombe, (2009) defines a semi-structured interview as an approach in which the interviewer has a predetermined set of topics and questions that should be covered, while also allowing the interviewee to provide more detailed and developed answers by providing some flexibility in the questioning process. The focus of the interview is to let the interviewee develop their own opinion.

According to Lune & Berg, (2008) a semi-structured interview should begin with the researchers listing relevant areas of discussion regarding the general topic. For this report, the areas of interest were “free trade”, and “competition between ports”. Thereafter, Howard Lune & Bruce Berg, (2008) proposes questions to be formulated for each of the listed areas of interest. To get information on the area of free trade, the questions “Does the BRI affect free trade?” and “Do you see any limitations of free trade if Gothenburg were to incorporate the BRI?” were asked. Regarding the area of competitiveness, the questions “Is there a threat that other ports may outcompete the port of Gothenburg if they join the BRI?”, and vice versa, followed by “Would joining the BRI facilitate trade between China and Sweden?”, and lastly “Can you [Port of Gothenburg] notice a difference on global scale when a foreign port joins the BRI?”. The sequencing of the questions is, according to Howard Lune & Bruce Berg, (2008) not important, however they do recommend that the interview commence with some sort of non-threatening demographical question. In the interview performed for this study, it started with a question regarding the interview subject’s relation to the BRI. Additionally, a question regarding the interviewee’s general opinion regarding the Belt and Road Initiative was created. This question was aimed at exposing their view of the subject and by that critically analyze whether their opinion could have an influence on their answers to the remaining questions.

For the semi standardized interview one participant was recruited, participant Alpha. The interview was conducted in a closed room with only Alpha and the authors of this report present. This prevented Alpha from receiving any external influence regarding the questions that may have influenced their answers. Additionally, it was also easier to control and steer the interview into the wished topic. Alpha works at the Port of Gothenburg and has many years of experience of working with China-related commerce for the port of Gothenburg.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the result of the literature study with complementary interview. The chapter is divided into two areas, each focusing on one research question.

4.1 Achieving free trade under the BRI

During former president Trump's presidential campaign in 2016, the United States was retracting some of its policies regarding free trade due to their growing trade deficit with China (KISTAK, 2022). The US had gone from being one of the leading agents of free trade to now upholding trade embargoes against some of their traditional trade allies. As the US are stepping out of their shoes as the leader for global free trade, China has been quick to seize the opportunity to take its place with the help of its Belt and Road Initiative as they seek to strengthen their position on the global market.

As mentioned in chapter 2, one of the main objectives of the BRI is to aid foreign nations with the construction of various infrastructures by both providing financial support as well as labor support. The completion of the infrastructure projects in foreign nations will undoubtedly increase connectivity between the incorporated countries, decrease trade costs and shipment times as well as increase the trade volumes, which all in all will boost the economic growth both for China and for the incorporated nations, as proven by de Soyres et al. (2019), Dumor et al. (2021b), Herrero & Xu (2017), Ma (2022b), and L. Yu et al. (2020), but the BRI is not to be likened to a free trade agreement in the sense that it removes or lowers trade tariffs, quotas and other trade barriers between countries similarly to what the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) or the EU does (Blanchard & Flint, 2017). Instead, the BRI will improve the value of and make better use of the already established ASEAN free trade agreement as well as lay necessary groundworks for the establishment of new FTAs.

Furthermore, the complication that arises for a nation taking in large sums of financial aid and labor from China and the BRI can put a nation in dependency towards China as well as indebting themselves for a long foreseeable future (Hurley et al., 2019). It can be argued that by this premise alone, the BRI is not an enabler of free trade.

The findings from the interview with subject Alpha aligns with the perspectives of Blanchard & Flint (2017), de Soyres et al. (2019), Dumor et al. (2021b), Herrero & Xu (2017), Ma (2022b), and L. Yu et al. (2020), as they also note that the BRI serves as a means of complementing and developing current transportation opportunities globally. Alpha further explains that by investing in infrastructure in participating countries, the BRI opens more efficient trade routes by land and sea, which in turn drives down transportation costs and expands international trade opportunities. Consequently, the BRI acts as a facilitator of free trade rather than an independent agent of free trade.

During the interview, Alpha mentions the port of Piraeus in Athens, Greece, as a port that that has received investments from the Chinese. Alpha expresses that although the BRI fails to have an impact on trade in Sweden, they can clearly see an increase in trade volumes for Piraeus because of the incorporation within the BRI.

Throughout the interview, Alpha generally showed very little concern that the BRI could have a negative impact on Sweden and the Port of Gothenburg. Nor did they express any hopes or

interests in Sweden as a state, or for Swedish corporations to take any major part in BRI investments for Sweden to join the initiative.

4.2 Competitiveness among ports under the BRI

The competitiveness of the port is greatly affected by port development, the main cause of port development being so influential is increasing ship size as optimization and economies of scale benefit the ship owner greatly (Cullinane & Khanna, 2000; Van Hassel et al., 2016). Therefore, ship owners start ordering larger ships from the shipyards in order to create an economy of scale. The more goods a ship can carry the more profit they will earn since the cost divided by profits will decrease with larger and larger ships. This creates a demand for ports to constantly increase size and equipment for the ships to reach optimal utilization. This issues a problem for port and port development. Since the vessels grow larger and larger ports will have to develop in approximately the same rate. If a port is not developing at a sufficient rate to keep up with the vessel development, the port will eventually lose its traffic and its revenue. Thus, many ports require funding and investments to constantly follow the development of vessel size.

With increased global trade also comes an increase of competition among ports (Adolf Ng, 2006b; Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, 2018). The ports must therefore increase their overall attractiveness to compete and survive in a global market. The main components in determining a ports competitiveness are decided by the following factors with importance sorted from top to bottom, cost, time, geographical location and infrastructure. The increased competitiveness creates added need for investment and construction of ports.

As previously stated, the functions and structures of ports vary, as do investments. The BRI may increase the trade and attractiveness of a port in some cases simply by investing in the port and allowing for expansion and infrastructure purchase. However, the BRI is primarily an infrastructure project, with the port of Piraeus being a notable exception. Following a massive investment from the BRI, the port of Piraeus saw a flourishing of infrastructure and trade. In this case however, the investments went beyond the infrastructure and the project assumed governance of the port. During the interview with Alpha, who claims that because of the investment from the BRI into Piraeus, trade drastically increased through the port which, previously, did not experience trade statistics in the vicinity of what they had after the incorporation. Alpha also claims that the BRI effect is not guaranteed, and that the income for a port originates from a base volume that depends upon the need for trade and for industries near the harbor. Meaning that the need for a port is a derived demand for trade and trade does not automatically appear as soon as there is an investment into a port.

When Alpha was asked about the influence of the BRI on competition among regional ports, they mention that Sweden is not in the same type of financial hardship as some African and Asian countries, and that the financing model for infrastructure and ports are different. Seeking investments from the BRI is therefore not as relevant for Sweden as it can be for some African and Asian countries. Furthermore Choroś-Mrozowska (2019), claims that there is a more beneficial initiative for countries with low development and medium to low income. This is because transit cost would reduce on average about 1.2% as well as average shipping time would decrease of upwards to 4.4%. Additionally, Choroś-Mrozowska claims that in the perspective of a developing country, the BRI is a great opportunity as they are willing to make more volatile investments that other economies usually are not willing to do. On another note, Choroś-Mrozowska, claims that there could be less beneficial effects for a nation within the European Union to enter the BRI than a non-member state, due to the investments being located

outside of the Union borders. Studies also shows that port investments in Asia will need to amount to 5.7% GDP annually between 2016 until 2030 to maintain operation because of climate adjustments (Khor et al., 2021)

Moreover, Z. Liu et al, (2020) concludes that the BRI increases trade and decreases transit times making it even more favorable for China to develop trade with the BRI incorporated countries. This argument was also brought to light by Alpha who said that from the perspective of a competitive port, the BRI is more seen as a collaboration agreement between the incorporated port and China rather than a trade agreement. Although this could be seen from two angles, on one hand the incorporated country will be able to establish trades with China more easily and their competitive advantage will therefore increase. On the other hand, Alpha emphasizes that they do not see the initiative as a guarantee for increased trade for a port, but rather as an enabler for trade.

As a result of more investments into a port, they will become more competitive. Along with upgrades or installments of infrastructure in the port there will be a clear increase of the port's competitive strength (Meersman et al., 2010). Furthermore, studies conclude that BRI incorporated ports will have lower financing costs and easier financing from corporate investments into the port, thus making them easier to operate and gives a competitive advantage from other ports that are not joining the BRI (X. Zhang & Wang, 2023).

Liu et al (2020) shows that in the case for the BRI port in Russia there has been a clear increase in trade to and from China specifically. According to Hu et al, (2020) early BRI incorporated port cities have shown that there has been an economic development following the years after the BRI, where there has been an increase in specifically export and thus trade in the region. The increase in trade that results from the BRI is expected to be at an average of 7,2%, with increased exports by 28,1%, within the participating countries annually (de Soyres et al., 2020). These numbers are expected to increase even further in correlation to the BRI expanding and becoming integrated in developing countries. This shows that the BRI incorporated ports see a large increase in exports compared to imports however the amount of import is still significant.

Studies have shown that the BRI could lead to an increase in port capacity, which in turn would put pressure on price and service to customers (Efimova & Vroblevskaya, 2019; H. Liu et al., 2021). Additionally, it shows that new trade routes of the BRI could lead to increased competition among ports already residing along the current trade routes. Furthermore (Choroś-Mrozowska, 2019b; Flint & Zhu, 2019) suggests that the Belt and Road Initiative influences already existing ports globally and that regional cooperation and collaboration will be a counter effect to keep up volumes through the port. Flint & Zhu, (2019) also shows that cooperation and collaboration will increase since the implementation of the BRI and are an enabler for regional and global competition. The effect of collaboration and cooperation will increase demand for port services and increase port growth capabilities which will enhance their competitiveness. When asking Alpha about the influence of the BRI and whether close cooperation and collaboration between two or more ports that are not incorporated in the initiative can act as a competitor to the initiative, they answered that it is not a competitor and adding that the BRI could be similarly arranged as a trade agreement.

According to Flint & Zhu, (2019) the BRI is expected to foster increased competition as new ports and existing ports with substantial investments view for market share under the project.

Non-BRI ports will have to defend their market shares, as the popularity and volumes will favor the BRI-incorporated ports.

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter the method of strategic literature search and the results of this study will be discussed. Furthermore, discussion on aim of study, challenges, research questions and improvements will be included.

5.1 Discussion of Methodology

The strategic literature search was a suitable method of acquiring relevant literature for this report. By limiting the used search engines to Scopus and Google Scholar, literature that was both scientific and peer-reviewed was acquired. The additional implementation of grey literature was used to fill in small gaps when it came to pure statistical or data related inquiries. Further processing of the literature found that there was a wide variety in country of origin. This helped limit the biasness of receiving a view where the BRI is neither too positive nor too negative.

The application of search strings in combination with Boolean search terms was necessary to narrow the search result of literature and to only find the most relevant literature for any given area of subject. However, not that many search words were used. This was due to lack of creativity. If more search words would have been used it is possible that more literature could have been found, but the opposite could also have happened. Too many search words could have led to finding irrelevant research and thus making it harder to identify suitable sources.

By using the CRAAP-test evaluation method, the sources were quality tested against a pre-determined benchmark. This helped conclude which sources were strong enough to be used in the report and which sources that were not. Through the scoring, only one literature source performed poorly enough to not be considered for use. This is much likely due to the fact that the vast majority of literature was sourced through the predetermined search engines, Scopus and Google Scholar and therefore had a good credibility. Overall, evaluating the literature with the CRAAP-test gave a representative view of the quality of the sources.

Conducting an interview was a good addition and compliment to the literature research. Out of the three different interviewing models, structured, semi-structured and unstructured, choosing the semi-structured model of interviewing was the best option for the purposes of this report. It allowed for steering of the interview in a certain direction as well as asking follow-up questions regarding subjects of interest, giving the interview a more laid back and flexible design. The questions asked to the interviewee were adequate as they were not too narrow nor too broad and gave the interviewee the opportunity to give their view of the subject while still answering the question. However, with more knowledge, practice, and experience, the questions could have been refined to higher degree.

The number of interviews held for this report was sufficient to get the necessary answers. However, it can be hard to know if the answers from one interviewee are representative for the whole industry. Furthermore, the report may have benefitted even further from interviewing someone within the port operations of a country located closer to the BRI-region, such as South Asia or Africa. It is not unlikely that someone from those regions would have given a different answer to the interview questions than what the current interviewees did. Overall, the conducted interview helped fulfill the purpose of the report and served as a good addition to the conducted strategic literature search.

The most difficult part was preparing for the interview, and trying to construct as relevant, and yet open questions for the subjects as possible. With more experience and practice beforehand, the interview process could have been improved. The questions were asked in a sub-optimal manner and the interviewee spent too much time talking about things irrelevant to our subject such as. Besides that, a better job could have been done preparing the interviewee about the subject and being clearer on the relevant topics which could have reduced the time talking about irrelevant subjects. Improving these factors could have enabled an extraction of better or more relevant information from the interview subject.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The purpose of this report has been met, and both research questions have been adequately answered. A comparison between the results of the research questions is possible since they both deal with largely the same subject. However, arguments can be made that the biggest difference between the two is that the one about free trade is residing on a supranational level, whereas the question of competitiveness is closer to national or regional level. And so, all aspects of the results should not be compared.

From our literature study, we have not come across any research that delves as deeply into these two research questions in relation to the BRI as ours has, and so, a comparison between this study and others available has been difficult to conduct. However, some sources have briefly mentioned what has been established in this report, so the subject of free trade under the BRI is not unheard of. For example, the literature from Blanchard & Flint mentions that the BRI can lay the groundworks and act as an enabler for establishments of FTAs. A very similar story was told by the representative from the Port of Gothenburg. On the other hand, Hurley speaks critically of the Initiative and means that through the manner of which the BRI is implemented, there is no, or very little availability for free trade.

The findings within this report regarding free trade was relatively unexpected. Before diving into the subject of BRI, the expectation was that China is colonizing the world anew, and that all the western world should be cautious of what is happening. However, the experience is that for a country so far away from both China and the major trade routes as Sweden is, the BRI is almost insignificant and is in fact not at all something that the Port of Gothenburg is worried about. This view may of course change if the report would have taken a wider approach and involved some none-European countries, preferably along the BRI-trade regions and we urge the reader of this report to keep that in mind when using this study for other research purposes.

Throughout the conducted literature review, the experienced consensus from most of the literature was that the BRI is an infrastructure project designed for the sake of improving trade and connectivity and thus to bolster economic growth. Interview subject Alpha agrees with the literature when it comes to some parts of the world. However, they mean that in other areas, the interest from China is more to impose a geopolitical influence over the nation or area where they have an interest of control, rather than to help grow the economy and that the notion of infrastructure and financial aid is more of a cover to do so. Alpha further expresses that the two different perspectives does not necessarily need to be separated. A region that needs financial aid for construction of infrastructure may become an important node in the global trade, and so also becomes of great geopolitical interest for China to control.

The BRI is a Chinese infrastructure project that has global reach, however our results found that although the influence is globally, most notably its experienced regionally in Africa and

Asia as shown previously. However, we experienced that through the interview with Alpha that they experienced some lack of wariness from the public in general and that there were an overall lack of attention surrounding the BRI. Further our experience is that this will be an increasingly large topic and caution needs to be exercised. Although we realize that this could be further investigated given if we should have made a second interview surrounding a port more closely linked to the BRI.

As previously mentioned, there are many different causes for the initiative, and although they vary, the effect of the initiative is often found to be more regular with trade increase and especially export increase. The cause for the vast change in export is unknown but could be speculated to be a cause for Chinese derived demand meaning that, China through the BRI has a lack of supply for a goods or service and in order to facilitate that demand China invest in infrastructure which creates a possible economic benefit to facilitate their economy.

During our interview with Alpha, we found a curious result contradicting previously found studies about the global effects of the BRI and if cooperation and collaboration can reduce the effect of the BRI and therefore be seen as a competitor to the BRI. Although they considered it not to be a competitor it's still considered to be closely resemble to a collaboration agreement. Our understanding is however that both sides are correct, and that the BRI could be considered closely resembles a collaboration agreement it still also could be considered to be a competitor.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, the different impacts and effects of the Chinese Belt & Road Initiative on cooperating countries has been investigated and discussed using a strategic literature search which was complemented by an interview with a key person within a port organization. In the report the BRIs effect on the level of free trade was researched as well as how the BRI affected the level of competition between ports.

In general, the methodology for this report was sufficient to fulfill the aim, but there were some improvements that could be made to achieve a better result. It could have been better to conduct more interviews. By conducting more interviews, the results would be more reliable as different interviewees could contribute with different points of view of the subject. There may also have been aspects that were completely missed because of the low number of interviews. Furthermore, interviews conducted with persons working directly within the BRI or experts from regions closer to the origin of the BRI would probably give more accurate results. However, the foundation of the study was the strategic literature search which provided ample information about the scope, the details, and the nuances of the subject.

The results conclude that the BRI itself is not to be considered a free trade agreement in the sense that it lowers tariffs or quotas or removes other trade barriers. Instead, through the various infrastructure projects and development of trade capabilities, which will lower trade costs, increase efficiency and connectivity, and boost the nation's economic growth, it is concluded that the BRI can lay the important groundworks and foundations for the establishment of new free trade agreements and increase the value of currently existing free trade agreements.

The effect of the BRI on the level of competition is dependent on several factors, such as trade routes, infrastructure, and regions. The level of competition is not automatically increased because of the BRI. However, it is concluded that with BRI investments in ports in developing countries, the competition is increased. Competition can also occur when new trade routes are made to facilitate new ports from the BRI project or existing ports which have joined the BRI project. The BRI gives a competitive advantage because of the investments which can increase trade, decrease trade costs, and decrease transit times. Furthermore, BRI projects ensure volumes from China which may lead to a loss of market shares for the non-BRI ports as they are no longer as relevant as before.

6.1 Recommendations for further research

Due to the limits in time and scope of the project, a limitation was made to focus solely on the seaports of the BRI. To get a broader scope of the BRI and to answer the research questions more thoroughly it is of essence to investigate other parts of the logistical network than only ports, for example railway and road project. In addition, it would also be beneficial to investigate the geopolitical perspective of the BRI and evaluate the positive and negative effects of it, as this was something that there was not enough time for in this study.

In this study, only one interview was conducted, which influenced the reliability of the results as well as the extent of results. It is therefore recommended for future research to include more interviewees. Preferably the interviewees should have different backgrounds and have experience of the China and other BRI-regions. Additionally, this study is written from the perspective of Sweden and for further research it could be beneficial to examine the BRI in the perspective of a nation geographically closer to the project.

A further research area that is recommended, connecting to this report is investigating the sustainability of the BRI, from a social, economic, and ecologic perspective.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Vad är din generella åsikt om BRI?

Påverkar BRI fri handel?

Ser du några begränsningar i den fria handeln om Göteborg skulle implementera BRI?

Finns det ett hot att närliggande hamnar kan konkurrera ut Göteborgs hamn om de skulle ansluta sig till BRI? (och vice versa)

Skulle BRI underlätta handeln mellan Sverige och Kina?

Hur påverkas utvecklingen av svenska hamnar utav BRI?

Kan ni som hamn uppleva skillnad före och efter anslutningen till BRI?

Märker ni skillnad på global nivå när en utomstående hamn ansluter sig till BRI?

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