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Abstract

China's Belt and Road Initiative – Implications for Air Transport

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China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has drawn attention in the global community, sparking discussions about its geopolitical implications and potential impacts on global trade. China asserts that the BRI aims to expand its geopolitical influence by fostering stronger economic ties and enhancing infrastructure among participating countries. The initiative is framed as a means to promote regional stability and security by addressing economic disparities and fostering mutual reliance among nations. China aims to position itself as a key player in global economic development and cooperation, demonstrating its commitment to multilateralism and globalization. Regarding concerns about sovereignty raised by other nations, China emphasizes its pledge of non-interference in the internal affairs of participating countries, presenting the BRI as a mutually beneficial partnership founded on respect for each nation's sovereignty and autonomy. However, critics from Western countries express concerns about debt sustainability, arguing that the large-scale infrastructure projects financed by Chinese state-owned banks could lead participating nations into unsustainable debt levels. Instances such as Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port, where China assumed control due to repayment difficulties, highlight the risks associated with such debt burdens. Furthermore, questions about transparency and governance surround many BRI projects. Critics raise concerns about the lack of transparency in project contracts and financing terms, leading to suspicions about the true intentions behind these initiatives. There are also worries about corruption and the potential for BRI projects to exacerbate governance challenges in participating countries rather than address them. Organizations like Transparency International stress the importance of increased transparency and accountability in BRI endeavors to mitigate corruption risks. Undoubtedly, there is a necessity for the international aviation community to analyze the BRI's potential impact on air transport, particularly concerning the International

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Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This article explores specific aspects of the BRI that could affect air transport, with a particular focus on potential implications for ICAO.

Keywords: air cargo; air transport economics; airports; Belt and Road Initiative; China; dispute resolution; ICAO; sustainability