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# Constructing a green Belt and Road Initiative: a content analysis on President Xi Jinping's speeches

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**Abstract:** The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is undoubtedly the most high-profile global initiative launched by China today, aiming to promote connectivity and strengthen partnerships and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries along the routes. With the increasing international attention to environmental issues, China is also willing to take more responsibility within its capacity and has consciously promoted the BRI concept of green development in recent years. The debut of BRI was originated from a public speech by President Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in 2013, as the initiator of the Belt and Road Initiative, and his speech also played an important role in guiding the advancement of the BRI. This paper aims to explore and analyze the connotations, discourse changes, focus and potential interaction with the international agenda such as SDGs regarding BRI green development, through content analysis by using President Xi's public speeches during 2013-2021 as corpus. This paper finds that the concept of green development gradually occupies a more important weight in President Xi's speeches regarding the BRI. At the same time, the conceptual construction of green development has shifted from a more scattered and specific description to a position of deeper roots as one of the foundational guidance for the BRI as a whole. In his presentation, the topic of climate, industry and energy and infrastructure aspects have received higher attention while talking about BRI green development. In terms of regions, Central and West Asia, Central Europe, and Southeast Asia received relative more attention, showing a trend of from near to far and focusing on developing countries. Lastly, there is potential for synergy between BRI's green development and global agenda such as SDGs, however, social aspects are less prominent than economic or environmental aspects.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, Content Analysis, Discourse Change, Green Development, Sustainable Development

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**Summary:** In recent years, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has shifted towards emphasizing green development, aligning with global environmental concerns. This master thesis analyzes President Xi Jinping's speeches from 2013 to 2021 to understand this evolution. The study reveals a significant increase in green themes, signaling a strategic pivot to incorporate environmental sustainability as a core element of the BRI. It demonstrates a transition from an initial scattered approach to a more integrated and foundational focus on green development, particularly in climate, industry, energy, and infrastructure. The analysis indicates a growing influence in regions like Central and West Asia, Central Europe, and Southeast Asia, primarily targeting emerging and developing countries. The thesis also explores the BRI's potential alignment with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), although it notes a lesser emphasis on social aspects compared to economic and environmental ones. Overall, this study highlights China's growing role in global environmental governance and the intertwining of economic advancement and environmental sustainability in international cooperation, marking a new phase in the BRI's trajectory.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, Content Analysis, Discourse Change, Green Development, Sustainable Development

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# 1. Introduction

*'This initiative was based on my observation and reflection on the world situation.'*

Xi Jinping, May 2017, Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

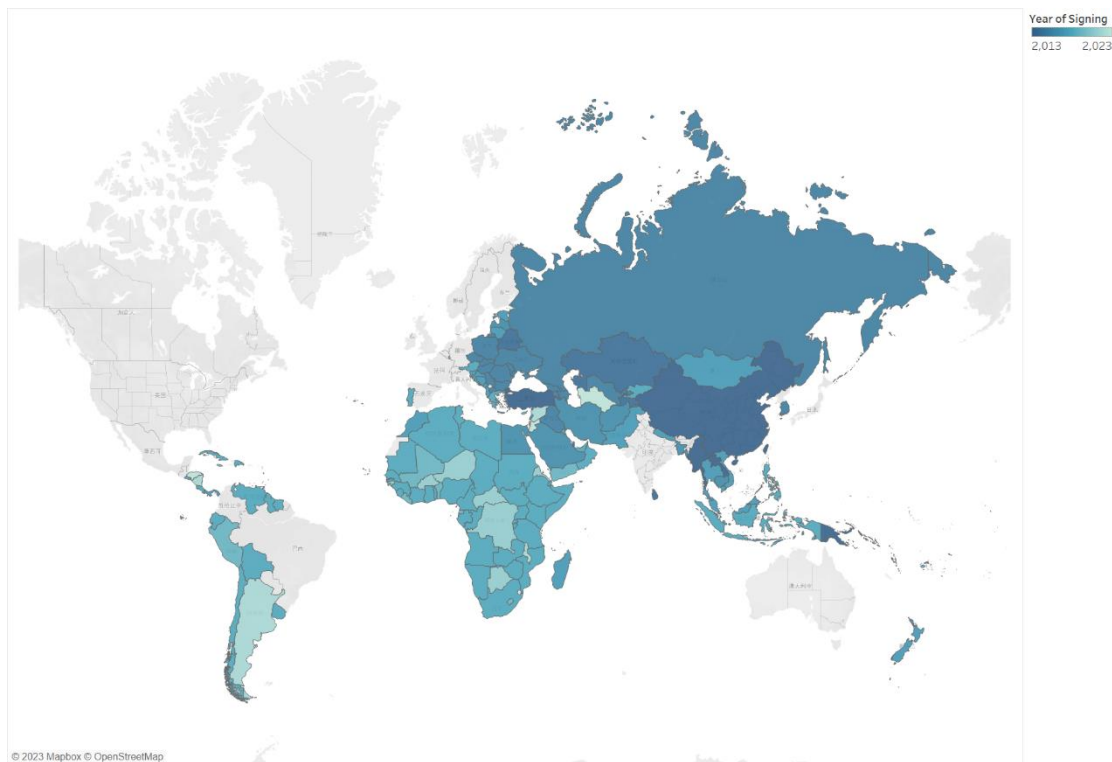
The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been in steady motion for 10 years ever since President Xi Jinping first proposed it in 2013. BRI marks a new stage in China's opening-up policy and outward investment under the 'Going global' advocacy. The ambitious initiative remains open and inclusive to all countries and organizations, and aims to strengthen the connection between the Eurasia continent and further reach out to countries in Africa and Latin America. By providing infrastructure-focused public goods for countries along the route, it is gradually becoming a global cooperation platform, enhancing a stronger geographical connection and economic cooperation relation.

China is of course not the only country participating in the international infrastructure development race. South Korea proposed the "Eurasia Initiative" by then President Park Geun-hye a month later in the same year in 2013, but with the impeachment of the president, the initiative faded after 2017. In addition, the EU side has also accelerated the approval of "A Globally Connected Europe" in 2021 to "advance its economic, foreign and development policy, as well as its security interests, and promoting European values".

Turning to the United States, which has viewed China as a strategic adversary lately, has proposed three plans in three years. In 2019, the Trump administration launched the Blue Dot Network (BDN) to strengthen U.S.-Japan-Australia economic cooperation through the Blue Dot Network to maintain its influence in the Asia-Pacific region (Kumar, 2020). In 2021, US President Biden and G7 partners announced the "Build Back Better for the World" (B3W) plan, marked clearly as a rival plan to BRI, offering an alternative option to low- and middle-income countries to finance their infrastructure needs (The White House, 2021). A year later, B3W was overshadowed by a much more constructive and approachable plan with a shorter span, the "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment" (PGII), (The White House, 2022), aiming to act as a strong competitor to the BRI. However, these initiatives did not reap a vast impact and almost disappeared after the heat period.

Among the various existing initiatives, the achievements reached by the Belt and Road Initiative could be considered relatively substantial. As of December 2023, a total of 152 countries and 32 international organizations have signed over 200 BRI cooperation agreements with China (Belt and Road Portal, 2023). Over 3,000 projects have been established in 9 years, with a total investment scale of nearly USD 1 trillion and a total project valuation of about USD 3.7 trillion. (China City News, 2022).

As the BRI has gained more international attention, more studies have attempted to further dissect the significance of developing the BRI and China's aims. Mainstream perspectives suggest that BRI is a strategy to address its domestic overcapacity by exporting surplus production capabilities and broadening international trade (Demiryol, 2019; Freeman, 2020; Ni, Z., Lu, X., & Xue, W., 2021). Additionally, in the long term, the BRI is seen as a mechanism to establish a more tightly-knit global network centered around China, aligning with its interests and potentially fostering a new international order (Nordin & Weissmann, 2018; Economy, 2022). Regarding China's intentions with the BRI, each country or region, based on its national interests, will have its own considerations and engagement strategies. However, it is almost undeniable that the BRI has become an unavoidable topic in interactions with China.



**Figure 1** Countries that have signed cooperation documents by the years (Italy withdrew in 2023). Data obtained from Belt and Road Portal (2023)[Disclaimer: The map may contain maps of disputed territories and is limited by cartographic tools, the accompanying map is for display purposes only and do not contain political positions]

In advancing the BRI, global environmental governance issues such as the climate crisis have raised broader international concerns. Due to the unprecedented scale and footprint of the BRI, concerns over environmental crisis and ecological risks under the impact of BRI have been in heated debate among scholars and local stakeholders. On the one hand, infrastructure development in the economies along the Belt and Road corridor can help reduce barriers to trade, and through BRI transport projects can expand trade, increase foreign investment and reduce poverty by reducing trade costs (World Bank, 2019b). On the other hand, large infrastructure projects as such could inevitably introduce environmental and ecological risks especially in countries with poor records of environmental governance (Tracy et al., 2017; Xue & Wang, 2018; Ng et al., 2020). The initiative will inevitably play a pivotal role in achieving the global goal of less than 2 degrees of warming due to the size of its ambitious program (World Bank, 2019a). Naturally, environmental topics has gained incremental attention among Chinese policymakers.

China has also begun to steer the Belt and Road construction towards a gradual transition to green development. President Xi had openly addressed that the BRI will be green in many public speeches. Especially since 2017, the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection (now known as Ministry of Ecology and Environment) published Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road, stated its position on a clear emphasis on green development at the official national level to address core global agendas such as climate change, biodiversity conservation. A clear narrative thread can be detected regarding 'green' in his speech had become more and more frequent and prominent, taking a more critical role for BRI overall development.

Moreover, specifically in response to the growing environmental concerns over coal power plants, at the General Debate of the 76th Session of The UN General Assembly in 2021, President Xi made a public pledge proclaiming that no new coal-fired power projects will be built overseas. As one of the largest overseas coal power financing countries (GCPFT, 2020), China's positive stance also reflects its determination to pursue a green transition.

From initiative to action, China is currently promoting the green development of BRI by issuing several guidance documents and setting up several institutions to support the implementation of green BRI from the governmental level. How will this green theme affect the implementation of BRI? This paper hopes to seek these answers from the public speeches conducted by President Xi on BRI over the years.

## 1.1. Literature review and research gaps

As one of China's most high-profile international initiatives since the period of reform and opening up, the scholarly landscape surrounding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reveals significant disparities in thematic concentration between English and Chinese literature bases. In the Chinese context, the predominant database, Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), boasts a substantial corpus of BRI-related literature, encompassing a broad spectrum of topics.

The literature on the Green Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers a multifaceted view of the environmental implications and strategies associated with this expansive infrastructure project. A notable aspect is the divergence in thematic focus between Chinese and international scholarly works. In Chinese literature, particularly within the widely used Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, the emphasis is predominantly on economic and political aspects, with less than 1% of the research addressing environmental and resource issues (CNKI, 2023). This contrasts sharply with English language literature, where there is a heightened focus on environmental concerns (Zhang & Chen, 2022), albeit with a smaller overall volume of research.

Discussion around the impact of BRI projects were particularly intense in the related areas such as Biological Conservation and Environmental Policy and Governance. The World Bank (2019) categorizes environmental risks associated with BRI into direct impacts, like habitat loss and water pollution, and indirect impacts resulting from land use changes. Similarly, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in its 2017 report highlights the potential threats BRI poses to biodiversity, noting the overlap of BRI routes with habitats of threatened species, underscoring the need for strategic environmental planning.

Furthermore, some literatures suggest a gap between China's domestic environmental policy advancements and their application in BRI projects abroad. Tracy et al. (2017) argues that despite China's shift towards a greener domestic economy, this shift has not significantly influenced the environmental practices in BRI projects. Coenen et al. (2021) and Teo et al. (2019) point out the lack of specific, enforceable guidelines for environmental assessment and management in BRI projects, highlighting a disconnect between policy and practice.

The evolution of the 'green development' concept within the BRI framework is another critical theme. Initially, green development was a secondary concern, but it has gradually gained prominence in discourse and policy. However, this concept is still in a state of development and adaptation, particularly in aligning with international environmental standards and practices (Ascensão et al., 2018).

The Green BRI literature underscores the environmental risks and challenges posed by the initiative and highlights the need for more stringent environmental planning and policy implementation. It also reflects the evolving nature of the 'green development' concept within the BRI framework, indicating a shift towards more sustainable infrastructure development but also pointing out the gaps and challenges in actualizing these goals.

The existing literature on the Belt and Road Initiative predominantly focuses on the environmental risks and policy approaches (Shahriar et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020; Huang & Li, 2020), yet there remains a significant research gap in understanding the evolution and conceptualization of 'green development' within the BRI, particularly from the perspective of Chinese leadership. This gap is

particularly pronounced in the discourse analysis of political speeches, a critical component in shaping and disseminating policy frameworks. Studies often analyze BRI's environmental policies and impacts without delving into how the concept of 'green development' is articulated and evolved in the speeches of key policymakers, notably President Xi Jinping.

Given the hierarchical nature of political decision-making in China and the central role of President Xi in the BRI, his speeches offer a unique insight into the official narrative and policy direction. As Kassarnig (2016) notes, political speeches are a crucial tool in shaping political ideology, making them an ideal subject for content analysis. This methodological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the language, themes, and evolution of concepts within these speeches, providing a deeper understanding of China's intentions and strategies regarding the green development of BRI.

Furthermore, the use of content analysis on speeches can bridge the gap between China's domestic environmental policy shifts and their international implications. While current literature highlights discrepancies between China's domestic green policies and their implementation in BRI projects (Tracy et al., 2017; Coenen et al., 2021), analyzing the content of Xi Jinping's speeches can provide insights into how China envisions aligning its BRI strategy with global environmental governance and sustainable development goals.

Therefore, this thesis aims to employ content analysis of Xi Jinping's speeches to unravel the nuances of the 'green development' narrative within the BRI framework. This approach will not only contribute to the academic understanding of China's policy direction but also offer a more nuanced perspective of how China seeks to position itself in the global environmental governance structure, particularly through the BRI.

Through conducting a content analysis on selected speeches regarding BRI, sorting out what are the key areas and regions he focuses on, and discussing how green development through promoting the BRI will be linked to the global agenda such as SDGs.

## 1.2. Aim of the study

This thesis aims to explore how the concept of 'green development' has been constructed in speech discourse and developed since its launch, using President Xi Jinping's public speeches as a thread, through a content analysis, by breaking down the speeches into paragraphs then coding them with different features, to analyze the changes in green development in his presentation and find out which aspects and regions are priorities for the green development of BRI. Further, through using SDGs as a reference structure, discusses how the BRI green development launched by China corresponds to the global agenda.

This paper hopes to use President Xi's official speeches as an entry point to present a systematic overview of the BRI green development, from a top-level design perspective, explore its introduction, construction, connotation and focus, to enhance the understanding of Chinese characteristics theories and facilitate wider exchanges and cooperation on topics of common interest in the future.

## 1.3. Research questions

The research questions that this thesis aims to investigate are designed as follows. The research questions are set at different levels corresponding to the structure of the thesis. A general question will be answered at the conclusion section based on the findings and analysis of the article. Four sub-questions of the main research question are divided into two parts, the first three sub-questions will be answered at the result section based on a direct analysis of the corpus and the last sub-question will be subsequently discussed in the discussion section in relation to the previous results.

**Research questions:** How has the concept of "green development" unfolded and evolved in President Xi Jinping's public speeches?

1. Why President Xi has chosen green development as the theme for the BRI? In what ways are the Belt and Road Initiative's "green development" constructed?
2. What are the key areas of focus with regards to green development?
3. Comparing the core of "green development" and "sustainable development", what made China choose "green" as the theme of the BRI?
4. How can this green transformation of the Belt and Road Initiative integrate into global agendas such as SDGs to potentially generate positive impact on a global scale?

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Overview: From Going Global to Belt and Road Initiative

"The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" is defined as the official translation of this initiative according to a joint statement from National Development and Reform Commission (2015). As the name suggested, the Belt and Road Initiative consists of two primary routes, the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'. These two components of the BRI were first addressed during President Xi Jinping's visit to Kazakhstan and later in Indonesia in 2013.

The term BRI discarded the unofficial term "One Belt One Road" that had been used commonly before, as well as standardized abbreviations, recommending terms such as 'the Belt and Road' or 'B&R' or 'BRI'. BRI today does not only refer to two paths, the reason other terms like "One Belt One Road" were being phasing out as it does not precisely convey the essence of the initiative. It also differentiates old silk roads. Instead of the old two one "belt" and one "road", BRI today acts as a more integrated and comprehensive platform for regional economic cooperation (Zhang, 2015).

Additional emphasis was placed on the word 'initiative', suggesting it should appear in singular form and avoid using other wording such as 'strategy', 'project', 'program' or 'agenda'. By normalizing the discourse, the Chinese government hopes to avoid the representation of the BRI as a unilateral dominant strategy in the discursive environment, while eliminating a part of the tribute system once included in the ancient Silk Road.

The initiative is a modern upgrade of the ancient trade route set off from China to the Mediterranean region that is traced as far back as 2000 years ago in the Western Han dynasty. This route later known as the 'Silk Road' as the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen first coined the term "Seidenstraße" in his book China in 1877. Moving beyond its historical role in the imperial tributary system (Li, 2020), the new concept of the BRI aims to rejuvenate these ancient pathways of connection, fostering more equal relationships between nations.

In 2013, President Xi first outlined his vision during his tour visiting Kazakhstan. Within two years in March 2015, With the release of the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative was officially launched with its preliminary structure, aiming to establish closer partnerships and strengthening connectivity for the Eurasian region as well as for maritime pathways, deepening comprehensive regional cooperation.

Since the 12th Five-Year Plan (State Council, 2011), emphasis has been placed on accelerating the

implementation of the ‘Going Global’ strategy, further improving the opening-up pattern on the one hand, and actively participating in global economic governance and regional cooperation on the other. And BRI is to a certain extent an upgraded version of Going Global, a new phase of China's development of foreign relations.

“Six Corridors, six pathways, multiple countries and multiple ports” is an often used abbreviation for highlighting the gist of the BRI. By opening up six economic corridors (with three blue economic passages), unblocking six networks of railways, highways, waterways, airways, pipelines and special integrated information network, relying on multiple core countries along the routes and building a number of important ports and node cities.

Extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits are the core principles of BRI. The initiative is open for cooperation that has no predetermined maps or strategies. While planning its own BRI framework and cooperation priorities, China is also actively coordinating policy docking with participating countries and seeking cooperation opportunities in the existing strategic frameworks of partner countries, including Russia's Eurasian Economic Union, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, Kazakhstan's "Bright Road" Initiative and so on.

The "Five Connectivities" represent key priorities outlined for the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) cooperation, including Policy Coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial Integration, and People-to-People Bond. These priorities serve as a detailed framework for enhancing and strengthening partnerships under the BRI, emphasizing its multifaceted approach to global cooperation.

The Chinese government has never defined a set scope of the BRI, and there has never been a clear list of projects involved in it. As unscrambled from Belt and Road Portal (2019), trade, investment and construction projects in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative are not the same as Belt and Road projects, and only projects that promote the Five Connectivities under the core principles could be considered as participation in the BRI.

**Table 1** Content of six Economic Corridors and three Blue Economic Passage

	<b>Envisioned Corridors/Passages</b>	<b>Main Participating Countries</b>
<b>Economic Corridor</b>	New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB)	China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Netherlands, etc.
	China- Mongolia-Russia Corridor (CMREC)	China, Mongolia, Russia
	China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor (CCWAEC)	China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.
	China-Pakistan Corridor (CPEC)	China, Pakistan
	Indochina Peninsula Corridor (IPC)	China, Vietnam, Singapore
	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor (BCIM-EC)	China, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar
<b>Blue Economic Passage</b>	China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage	Linking the IPC, running westward from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, and connecting the CPEC and BCIM-EC
	China-Oceania-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage	Travelling southward from the South China Sea into the Pacific Ocean
	China-Arctic Ocean-Europe Blue Economic Passage	Leading up to Europe via the Arctic Ocean

**Table 2** *List of five connectivities*

<b>Five Connectivities</b>	<b>Label</b>	<b>Cooperation Priorities</b>
Policy Coordination	Important guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Policy Communication and Matching</li> <li>· Strengthening Intergovernmental Cooperation</li> <li>· Provide policy support to facilitate the implementation of large-scale projects</li> </ul>
Facilities Connectivity	Priority area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Transport infrastructure construction</li> <li>· Connectivity of energy infrastructure</li> <li>· Cross-border optical cables and other communications trunk line networks</li> </ul>
Unimpeded Trade	Major task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Strengthening Customs Cooperation</li> <li>· Broaden trade areas to promote trade balance</li> <li>· Investment facilitation and expansion of investment areas</li> <li>· Cooperation in Emerging Industries</li> </ul>
Financial Integration	Important underpinning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Multilateral Financing Banks</li> <li>· Strengthening financial regulatory cooperation</li> </ul>
People-to people Bond	Public support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Promote educational exchanges</li> <li>· Strengthening tourism cooperation and expansion</li> <li>· Technology exchange and capacity building</li> <li>· Cooperation and exchange among civil society organizations</li> </ul>

Although there is no definitive set of criteria to determine which projects are included under the BRI, certain projects can be identified as flagship efforts that receive more focused resources and coordination from the government. Finding a comprehensive statistical list of BRI projects is challenging. The Belt and Road Portal and the "Going Global" public service platform offer some of the most extensive statistical data available. However, these sources primarily provide an overview of investment cooperation with countries along the BRI route, rather than clear standards for categorizing projects as part of the BRI. As a result, it is difficult to systematically present a current snapshot of the BRI's status.

**Table 3** *Partial list of representative flagship projects in different pathways*

<b>Pathways</b>	<b>Flagship projects</b>
Railways	China-Laos Railway, China-Thailand Railway, Hungarian-Serbian Railway, Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, Trans-Asian Railway East Line, Pakistan No. 1 Railway Main Line Upgrade, China-Ji-U Railway, China-Nepal Cross-border Railway, China-Europe Freight Train
Highways	China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan, China-Russia (Dalian-Novosibirsk), China-Vietnam International Road
Ports	Gwadar Port of Pakistan, Hambantota Port of Sri Lanka, Piraeus Port of Greece, Khalifa Port of the United Arab Emirates
Pipelines	China-Russia oil pipeline, China-Central Asia natural gas pipeline, China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline
Information	China-Myanmar, China-Pakistan, China-Kyrgyzstan and China-Russia cross-border fiber optic cable information channel

## 2.2. Outline a BRI Green development

The environmental-related debates around the BRI were primarily centered on facilities connectivity, as it includes large infrastructure plans on transportation, energy, and communication construction. Of all the ‘Five Connectivities’, this is the most material aspect that imposes direct ecological and environmental impact to the countries of the project.



**Figure 2** *Timeline of green actions regarding BRI*

The concept of “green development” was implicitly mentioned in the first official guidance document, Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (NDRC et al., 2015). However, in the subsequent official English version, the term was not directly translated from Chinese as “green”, instead it was translated as in ‘join hands to make the Silk Road an environment-friendly one’, under a conclusive part regarding industrial chains.

In this first official guidance document, it emphasized the BRI aims to realize the “all-dimensional, multitiered and composite connectivity networks” for countries along the routes, however, the concern for sustainability is only quickly scattered among few sub-categories in cooperation priorities. In Facility connectivity mentioned strengthening construction of green and low-carbon infrastructure and fully considering the impact of climate change; in Trade Connectivity, a short mention on actively promoting clean renewable energy such as hydropower and wind power, but in the context of increasing cooperation in the development of traditional energy sources such as coal, oil and gas; while in industry chain investment and trade emphasizes active social responsibility and strengthening cooperation in conservation, biodiversity, and addressing climate change. These standardized textual statements covered most of the environmental climate issues of concern at the time, but were not given a prominent place in the full length of the guidance, nor had an explicit attitude conveyed.

The concept of Green Belt and Road was first brought forth officially in May 2017 by four ministries, led by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (now the Ministry of Ecology and Environment) after the release of Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road. Cutting from the angle of resource conservation and energy friendliness, systematically integrated “green” into the basic framework of the BRI and further elaborated on



the basis of the "five connectivities". The Ministry of Environmental Protection soon released a more detailed cooperation plan within a month, highlighted 25 major projects, first concretized China's action on top of greening the BRI.

**Table 4** List of 25 key projects and their current status. (Green-Active in the past 1 year; Yellow-Active in the past 2 years; Grey-Few update within 3 years or publication under BRIGC; Blank-No official update found)

Category	No	Project	Status
Policy coordination	1	International High-level Dialogue on Ecological and Environmental Cooperation under the Framework of the Belt and Road	April 2019, the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF)
	2	International Union for Green Belt and Road Development	Established International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road (BRIGC) in April 2019
	3	Environmental Policy and Standard Coordination and Convergence	Blue Book on "Belt and Road" Environmental Policies, Regulations and Standards, 2021
	4	Nuclear and Radiation Safety Management Exchanges	
	5	China-ASEAN Partnership on Eco-friendly Cities	Established in 2018
	6	Exchange and Cooperation for Compliance with Environmental Conventions	
Facilities connectivity	7	Study on Green Interconnection	BRIGC Publication in 2019, 2020, 2022
	8	Industrial Park Sewage Treatment Demonstration	
	9	Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment in Key Areas under the Framework of the Belt and Road	BRIGC Publication in 2020
	10	Biodiversity Conservation Corridor Demonstration	BRIGC Publication in 2021
Unimpeded trade	11	Hazardous Waste Management and Import and Export Regulation Cooperation	
	12	Eco-Label Mutual Recognition	
	13	Green Supply Chain Management Pilot	BRIGC Publication in 2020
Financial integration	14	Study on Green Investment and Financing	Published Green Investment Principles in 2018; BRIGC Publication in 2022
	15	Study on Green Belt and Road Fund	Everbright "Belt & Road" Green Equity Investment Fund, 2020
People-to-people bonds	16	Green Silk Road Envoys Program	Upgraded on the basis of China-ASEAN Green Envoys program in 2016
	17	Lancang-Mekong River Environmental Cooperation Platform	Established in 2017
	18	China-Cambodia Environmental Cooperation Base	Signed cooperation agreement in 2018
	19	Exchange and Cooperation of Non-governmental Environmental Organizations	Base on works within BRIGC
Capacity building	20	Platform for Belt and Road Environmental Big Data Services	Active since 2016
	21	Eco-Environmental Monitoring and Early Warning System Development	
	22	Local Cooperation on Eco-Environmental Protection	
	23	Industrial and Technological Cooperation Platform for Environmental Protection	
	24	The Belt and Road Environmental Technology Exchange and Transfer Center (Shenzhen)	Established in 2018
	25	China-ASEAN Environmental Technology and Industrial Cooperation Demonstration Bases	Demonstration base launched in 2017, Guangdong-Guizhou Cooperation Special Pilot Zone

The formal establishment of International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road (BRIGC) in 2019 lays the foundation for the continuous promotion of green development. Operating under the supervision of Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the BRIGC works with 150 partners from 43 countries, including government departments, international organizations, think tanks, companies, becoming an important initiator and technical exchange support platform for greening BRI. As shown in Figure 3, BRIGC promotes and realizes several important projects and is the most active implementer of 25 major projects.

To date, green development has been emphasized on a more frequent basis in BRI related narrative that one can hardly neglect, stating “making green as the base color of jointly constructing the Belt and Road” by President Xi, it is vital to pinpoint what does China intend to do by that and why “green” in particular.

### 3. Theoretical framework and methods

#### 3.1. Theoretical framework

##### 3.1.1. Xi’s ideas on ecological civilization

While the concept of ecological civilization was not originally coined by President Xi Jinping, it has become a significant hallmark of his political tenure. Under his leadership, the notion has been prominently featured in official propaganda, evolving into a discourse theory with distinct personal characteristics.

This conceptual framework highlights a transformative approach to development that balances economic growth with environmental sustainability, serving as a crucial foundation for China's domestic development and reflecting the vision for the global future (Hansen, Li & Svarverud, 2018).

Since Xi stepped into the center of power politics, ecological and environmental protection has gained increasing prominence. Official narratives, such as those from the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee & Ministry of Environment and Ecology (2022), describe the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan" period as a time of significant improvement in ecological and environmental quality and development in China.

During this period, one of Xi's most distinctive theories reflecting his ideology is his theory on ecological civilization (Dossani, R., Bouey, J., & Zhu, K., 2020). Xi's Thought on Ecological Civilization encompasses his comprehensive view, scientific assertion, theoretical system, and discourse on building an ecological civilization. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the government, with Xi Jinping at its core, has emphasized ecological civilization, forming the Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. This has become a guiding theory for China's development path (Publicity Department, 2019) and has led to the incorporation of ecological civilization construction into the Constitution.

This concept of ecological civilization can be interpreted through five directions, three of which are frequently mentioned in Xi’s speeches and are highly relevant for the BRI's green development:

*Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets*, is the core ideology illustrates the relationship between economic development and ecological environmental protection, revealing that protecting the ecological environment is protecting productive forces and improving the ecological environment is developing productive forces. Transforming the value of ecological products contained in lucid waters and lush mountains.

*Ensuring harmony between human and nature*, elaborating the relationship between man and nature,

ecological environment is the foundation of human survival and development. Advocating we, as human beings, must respect nature, follow its ways, and protect it.

*Promoting the formation of a green development and lifestyle*, is the method of harmonious coexistence between human and nature, compared with the traditional industrialized development, forming the development method of adjusting the economic structure and energy structure and the green lifestyle with the participation of all people to solve the ecological and environmental problems.

The concept of ecological civilization, as vigorously promoted by Xi domestically, is pivotal in understanding the broader concept of green development that is being advanced internationally, including within the BRI framework. In the context of the BRI, ecological civilization serves as both a guiding principle and a strategic objective, reflecting China's commitment to embedding sustainable practices within its global infrastructure projects. By articulating a vision that prioritizes green development, biodiversity conservation, and low-carbon practices, President Xi's advocacy for ecological civilization is reshaping China's domestic and international policy landscape. It symbolizes a shift towards a development model that seeks to mitigate the environmental impacts of globalization and promote a more sustainable and harmonious interaction between humanity and nature.

The domestic promotion of ecological civilization lays the foundation for the international discourse on green development, illustrating China's commitment to integrating ecological principles into its global initiatives. This understanding of ecological civilization is essential for analyzing how the BRI's green development strategies are formulated and communicated in Xi's speeches. It bridges the gap between domestic environmental policies and international sustainable development goals, offering insights into China's approach to harmonizing economic growth with environmental sustainability on a global scale.

Understanding the theory of ecological civilization is of paramount importance to this thesis, as it provides a crucial insight into the ideological underpinnings driving China's advocacy for green development within the BRI. By incorporating this conceptual framework into the analysis, this research not only elucidates the philosophical foundations guiding China's endeavor towards sustainable practices under the BRI but also deepens our comprehension of the initiative's capacity to influence global sustainable development paradigms.

Through an examination of Xi 's discourses on ecological civilization, the thesis unveils the distinct concepts and values that form the backbone of his rhetoric on the BRI's green development ambitions. Such an exploration is instrumental in articulating a nuanced understanding of China's strategy to balance economic growth with ecological preservation, enriching the discourse on the nation's role in advancing the global agenda for sustainable development.

### 3.1.2. Three basic elements of a political speech

Seidel (1985) delineates three major elements of a political speech: the addressor (the individual or entity delivering the speech), the addressee (the target audience), and the content of the speech itself.

Within the context of this paper, President Xi Jinping is identified as the addressor. Although the extent of his direct involvement in the creation of the speeches and the content therein might not be explicitly clear, it is generally understood that speeches delivered by national leaders, especially on international platforms, undergo rigorous refinement. These speeches, often shaped by collaborative efforts involving relevant departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other central government sectors, are designed to articulate strategic national development directions. Once finalized, these speeches are believed to encapsulate the essence of the leader's message and, by extension, the stance of the nation within the Chinese political milieu (Wang, 2015).

This thesis places significant emphasis on analyzing these three elements—the speaker, the intended audience, and the speech itself. The objective is to delve into the underlying political motives encapsulated within the speeches, exploring the variation in the engagement with different audiences and the thematic focus of each address (Carreon & Svetanant, 2017). Through this analysis, the thesis aims to reveal the strategic considerations embedded within the rhetoric of the speeches, thereby offering insights into the broader implications of President Xi's discourse on the Belt and Road Initiative and its alignment with the principles of ecological civilization.

### 3.1.3. Assessing the green or sustainable development

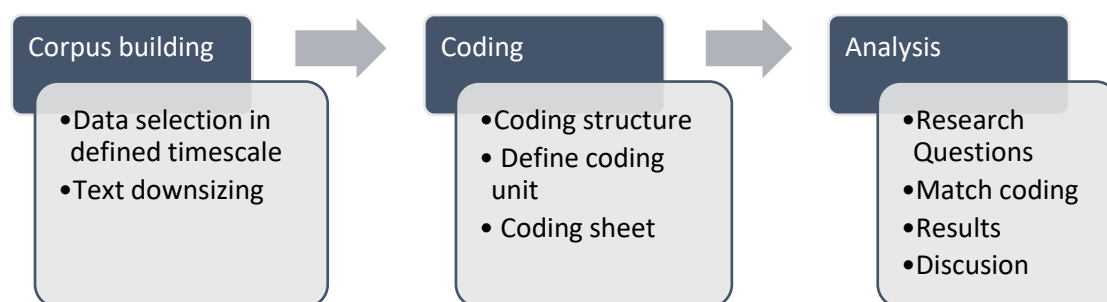
Both sustainable development and green development are buzzwords in the contemporary international community, and in terms of usage, the concept of SD is more commonly used and has become a central concept in development studies with the popularization of SDGs.

The goal of sustainable development is to achieve a balance between environmental, economic, and social sustainability, with intergenerational equity at its core (Mensah, 2019). While green development, according to Adams (2019), offers a clear coherent insight into the challenge of environmental sustainability, in this sense, sustainable development can be considered as an inclusive relationship with green development. This serves as a preliminary filtering guide to identify types of development in the later coding process.

## 3.2. Methods

This thesis employs content analysis as the primary method to investigate discourse change in the context of greening the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Content analysis, as defined by Berelson (1952), Stone (1966), and Weber (1990), is a quantitative research method designed to systematically and objectively categorize and quantify content in terms of predetermined categories. This methodological approach aligns with the empirical traditions of social sciences and aims to describe, explain, predict, and control issues or phenomena, focusing on message characteristics and emphasizing summary and generalization (Holsti, 1969).

The application of content analysis in this research involves tracking changes in the frequency and representation of specific themes and terms related to environmental aspects of the BRI. This approach allows for a longitudinal analysis of the discourse, capturing shifts over time (Bligh et al., 2004). By quantifying these changes, the research aims to uncover trends in the discourse surrounding BRI's green development, aligning closely with the research questions posed in this thesis.



*Figure 3 Processing line of the collected data*

While content analysis offers a robust framework for examining discourse change, it is important to acknowledge its inherent limitations. This approach may sometimes be constrained to a level of simple analysis, potentially overlooking deeper, nuanced interpretations. However, this limitation is not unique to content analysis and is often encountered in other research approaches like case studies and experimental designs. The focus of this thesis will be on leveraging the strengths of content analysis while being mindful of its limitations in the context of empirical research. These endogenous limitations, common to many research methods, will not be a primary focus of discussion in this paper.

In this thesis, DivoMiner is applied as an analytical tool during data coding and analysis process. DivoMiner is a one-stop online data mining and analysis platform that structures large amounts of text data through content coding and statistical analysis, completing the process of classifying text content, semantic analysis, coding for validity testing, etc. to assist researchers in quantitative content analysis. By applying DivoMiner, the full speech text information can be broken down into paragraphs and analyzed for information such as themes, objects and concerns in each paragraph to interpret the discourse change and policy development in the interplay between the broader global context, which can ultimately be used to explain the first three research questions.

This approach facilitates a detailed examination of themes, objects, and concerns within the discourse, providing insights into policy development and discourse shifts within the global context. This methodological framework, while acknowledging its inherent limitations, capitalizes on the strengths of content analysis to address the research questions of this thesis. Through this rigorous analytical process, the thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of how green themes are integrated and represented in the BRI discourse, reflecting the broader interplay between global environmental priorities and China's international development strategies.

### 3.3. Corpus building

The time frame for data collection was set at September 2013, when the BRI was first proposed, to December 2021, and the content selection criteria were complete speeches delivered in public on topics related to the guiding principles, goals and paths of the Belt and Road construction. A total of 60 speeches delivered by Xi Jinping at home and abroad on the "Belt and Road" topics were selected and extracted to form the corpus of this paper for further analysis.

The text data is derived from two sources. The first source comprises of 42 of the total selected speeches by Xi Jinping published by Foreign Language Press from 2013-2018 as part of the promotion of the Belt and Road construction. The second source is the Xi Jinping Important Speeches Database section of the official media website [people.cn](http://people.cn), selected to supplement the data on speeches for the period 2018-2021.

Few speeches in the database have been condensed and do not represent the full text, as they were abridged for consistency in press releases. For such cases, deeper searches for the complete speech in video or text form was conducted and replaced the incomplete texts, but there are still a few articles that are condensed versions of the original speeches.

The language of these speeches is conveyed in Chinese, with a small amount of content published in official translations. In order to unify the analysis process and results, only the Chinese versions of these speeches have been chosen in order to generate a unified research source for subsequent coding and analysis, and the results will be interpreted in English.

The formed corpus underwent two preliminary screening and unlinking process, the main steps of which included the removal of phrases that were not considered valuable for analysis, such as greetings, toasts and other similar discourse passages. The processed text was decomposed into 1243 paragraphs to be coded. After that, by further eliminating irrelevant and meaningless statements and

phrases (e.g., ladies and gentlemen), (...) selected 1188 paragraphs to be analyzed.

It remains to be noted that texts, after translation and reprocessing, usually do not fully reproduce the intent of the discourse user, especially in the case of political discourse, given that these texts are usually hybrid with layers of meanings (Abdel-Hadi, 2015). Therefore, although trying the maximum to be prudent in the process of analyzing the discourse text, we cannot completely avoid the misinterpretation arising from the translation and interpretation process.

### 3.4. Coding Framework

In this paper, six coding questions were designed based on the research questions:

**Table 5** *Coding sheets for content analysis*

<b>Coding question</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Basis of classification</b> (Theme including keywords such as listed below)
1.Keyword: Type of Development	Green Sustainable None	contain elaboration of “green” development contain elaboration of “sustainable” development none of above
2.Speech Target Regions	Central & West Asia Southeast Asia Middle East East Asia East Europe South Europe West & Central Europe Africa Central & South America Oceania Non-participating region	
3.Relation to Green development	Weak Neutral Strong Other	no mention of any measure facilitating green development potentially facilitating green development clear mention of green development measures unclear for further consideration
4. Aspects of Green Development	Infrastructure Energy Transportation Industry Trade Finance Technology Climate	infrastructure, low-carbon, roads, railway, ports, etc. energy, low-carbon, renewable, solar, hydro, nuclear, energy efficiency, security transportation, transportation measures, systems industry, new energy, industrial zone, low-carbon zone trade, product finance, investment technology, engineering, low-carbon technology, water efficient climate, low-carbon

<b>Coding question</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Basis of classification</b> (Theme including keywords such as listed below)
	Natural Resource & Biodiversity Other	natural resource unidentified
5. Function of speech (From 1-5 according to the practical meaning)	1. Greetings and speech of courtesy 2. Background statement 3. Appeal or Advocate 4. Proposal of cooperation 5. Future planning	general greeting or statement of politeness historical, cultural, political, international relations and other aspects of background elaboration call for recipients to act or join the initiative offer positive collaboration opportunities announcing future plans for China or partner countries (high degree of confirmation)
6. Focused Topics in relations to SDGs	1.no poverty 2.zero hunger 3.good health and well-being 4.quality education 5.gender equality 6.clean water and sanitation 7.affordable and clean energy 8.decent work and economic growth 9.industry, innovation and infrastructure 10.reduce inequality 11.sustainable cities and communities 12.responsible consumption and production 13.climate action 14.life below water 15.life on land 16.peace, justice and strong institutions	local development, social security agriculture, food, fishery, food security, trade public health, pollution control education, exchange woman, gender pollution control, water ecosystem energy security, renewable energy, clean energy, solar, hydropower industrial development, employment, sustainable tourism, service infrastructure, industrial growth, technology innovation economic growth, official development assistance, financial service, equality city infrastructure, green public space, sustainable city, financial aid resource efficiency, ESG climate Resilience, green fund, sustainable financing ocean pollution, fishery, aquaculture conservation, resource management, biodiversity national security, terrorism, development cooperation

First coding question aims to locate when mention of either “green” or “sustainable” development, conclude and elaborate on the aspects focused to facilitate that type of development. It also explores the understanding and application of "green development" by discourse users through time clue.

Second coding question focuses on one of the basic elements of a political speech, the addressee or recipients of speech. In this thesis, the addressees are divided into broad regions and non-BRI cooperating countries. The speeches occurred many times on large international occasions such as the United Nations, in which all regions were chosen. The division of non-BRI cooperating countries

is mainly based on whether or not they have signed a memorandum of cooperation, and the main non-cooperating countries include the North America, India, the vast majority of Western Europe, and the Nordic countries. It is anticipated that the division of this attribute, combined with the later code, will explore whether there are different cooperation regulations in different regions

Coding questions 3 and 4 are embedded with logical condition. Only “strong” relation was selected would lead to question 4. This is designed to explore what aspects is particularly valued to achieve “green development”. The options are set with reference to the cooperation tasks in key areas of green development released in 2022.

Question 5 puts emphasis on the other basic elements of political speech which is the speech content itself. By analyzing the structure of speech, and combining with other attributes, further speculation on China's willingness to act and its direction of action. Here, the narrative indicating that China advocates something would be classified as Appeal or Advocate, the narrative proposing potential cooperation with the other side would be classified as Proposal of cooperation, and the narrative clearly stating the Chinese government's own future plans would be classified as Future planning. The author believes that Xi's statement indicates to some extent the government's determination to act.

Coding question 6 is rather an independent question that aims to explore the relevance of the presentation topics to the SDGs, the extent to which the future BRI is aligned with Agenda 2030 has been further analyzed. Among them, Goal 17 will be excluded as an aspect in codebook, as the overall framework design of BRI is highly compatible with Goal 17, which also promotes cooperation among partner countries in the areas of finance, technology, trade, and capacity building et cetera.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Construction of green BRI: connotations and changes**

Paragraphs of discussion that strongly related to green development account for more than 12% of his overall discourse structure, mentioned 38 times in his speeches. And in his speech in Uzbekistan in 2016 (Speech No. 26), he proposed for the first time to "join hands to create a green belt and road" and to increase ecological protection efforts.

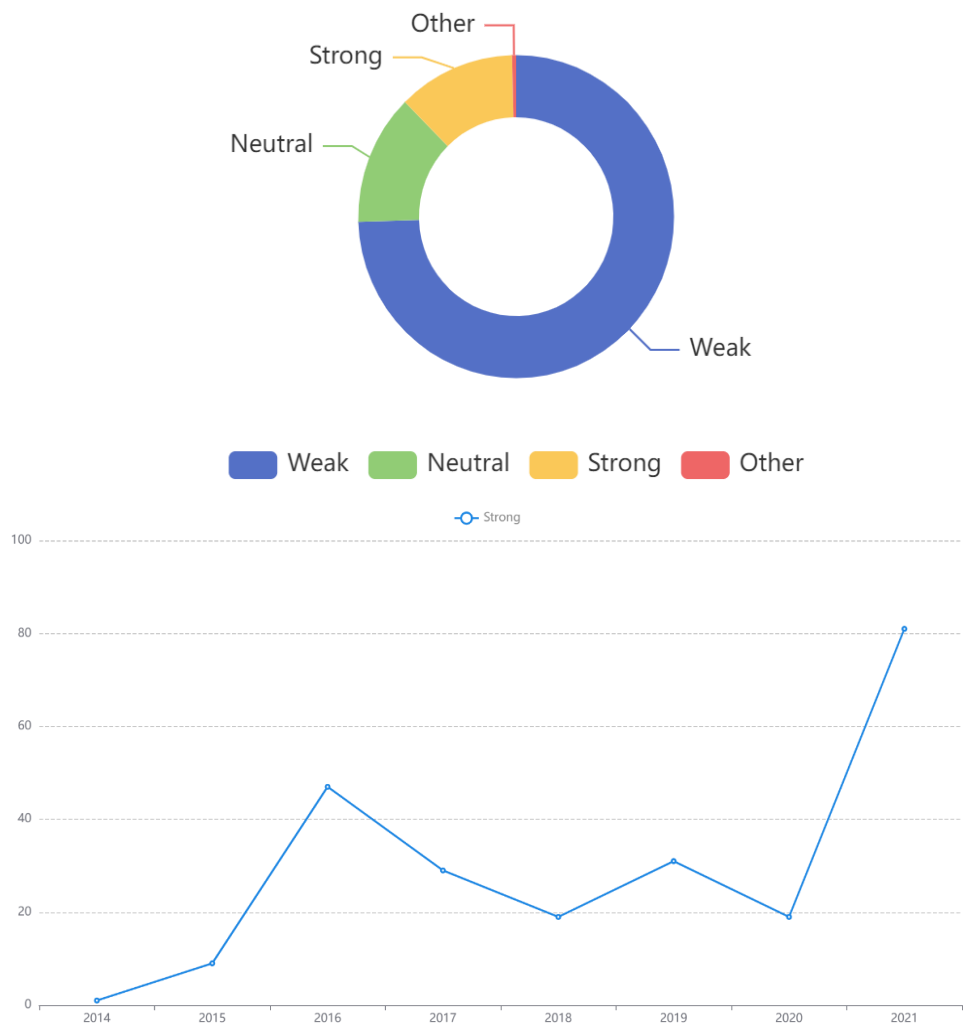
Later in 2017, the official Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road was released, which identified a green label for BRI for the first time. Therefore, the theme of green development can be analyzed from two perspectives, how the terms was constructed before 2017, and how it was elaborated and promoted afterwards.

Before this dividing date, the concept of green development was discussed 16 times. Green development was first mentioned in President Xi Jinping's speech at the Boao Forum for Asia in 2015, and in the discursive environment at the time, green development was used as a summary word for resource-efficient and environment-friendly production, while also extending the emphasis on optimizing the energy structure. In this speech, enterprises are the target and responsible party of green development, discussions were centered on the business environment.

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**Figure 4** The distribution and trend of topic strongly related to green development

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In October 2015, President Xi first proposed the new development concept of “innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing” in the 18th Plenary Session of the Communist Party of China (Speech No.19), this set a fundamental guide for future BRI green development. In this speech, it is clearly shown the government’s position for future development strategy with green development as one of the highlights. It explained that with the harmony between man and nature as the fundamental, and the ecological environmental protection is emphasized as a necessary condition for new stage of development, which requires two key elements: resource efficient and environment

friendly, thus promoting ecological security.

**Table 6** *Statistics on paragraphs referring to sustainable development and its implication*

Quotes	Year
... <b>resource-saving</b> and <b>environment-friendly</b> ...optimize <b>energy</b> structure and implement energy saving...	2015
...green <b>cycle low-carbon</b> development...	2015
...never sacrifice the ecological environment and long-term interests...	2015
...the issue of harmonious coexistence between human and nature....	2015
...promote a large increase in the value of <b>natural capital</b> , so that a good <b>ecological environment</b> becomes the growth point of people's lives...	2015
...protecting the environment is to protect productivity, improving the environment is to develop productivity...	2016
...proactively respond to <b>climate change</b> and overcapacity...	2016
...implementing green, low-carbon, recycling, sustainable <b>production and lifestyle</b> , and strengthen <b>ecological and environmental protection</b> cooperation...	2017
...significantly reduce the intensity of <b>energy and resource consumption</b> , and significantly strengthen <b>ecological and environmental governance</b> ...	2017
...accelerating the construction of an ecological system that respects nature and green development...	2018
...responding to <b>climate change, marine cooperation, desertification control, wildlife protection</b> , etc. To strengthen environmental policy exchange dialogue and joint research on environmental issues...	2019
...to cooperate through <b>clean energy, environmental protection</b> , etc.... to become a common way of production, consumption and life adopted by all countries...	2019
...adhere to green, inclusive and sustainable development...	2020
...lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets...	2021
...strengthen cooperation in <b>green infrastructure, green energy, green finance</b> ...	2021

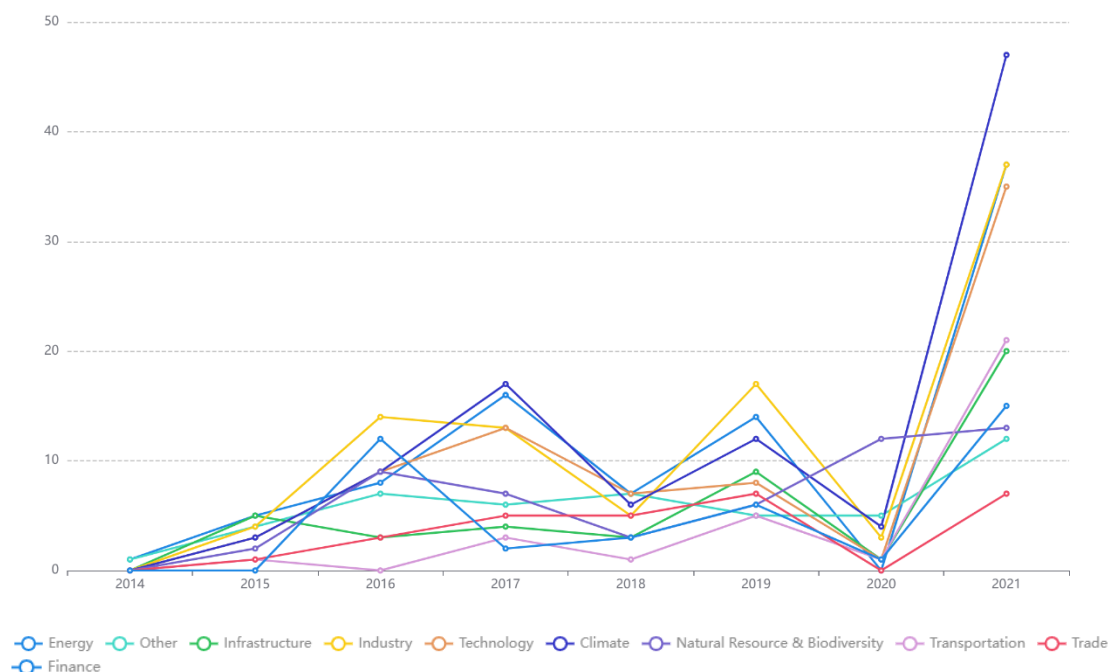
During the period 2015-2016, the meaning of green development was in an exploring stage and varied according to the context of the discourse. By positioning "green development" as a keyword, the topics discussed in the passages were more likely to revolve around ecological environment only. During this period, green development was more from a domestic perspective, with some obvious utilitarian implications, believing that by promoting green development, the protection of natural capital was a new growth point for development and a stage to present a better image of the country.

After 2017, the concept of "green development" in his speech has a clearer setting. With the ecological environment as the center, by taking responsibility for both production and consumption and ecological conservation, achieving a benign development within the scope of natural ecology. The resource efficiency, energy transition, and low-carbon innovation listed in the presentation are all means to achieve this goal, which has become an almost all-encompassing concept. Then in 2019, a new concept was brought forward addressing "green as the base color of BRI". This makes "green development" separated itself from one of the new development concepts, instead becoming an important keynote itself in the development of BRI. The concept of green development is used in a later stage to highlight the inclusiveness, building its ability to host divergent topics.

To sum up, the delivery of green development gradually occupies a fundamental position in President Xi's speech, from simply listing some measures to promote green development to making green

development an inclusive meta concept entrench itself in BRI construction. The notion of green development transformed from constantly in need of emphasizing to a consensus. One of the important features of green development is to take the ecological environment as the bottom line and generate more economic development points in the future, while economic development is still the most fundamental purpose.

## 4.2. Realizing the BRI Green Development



**Figure 5** Among the topics strongly related to green development, the trends of concerned topics

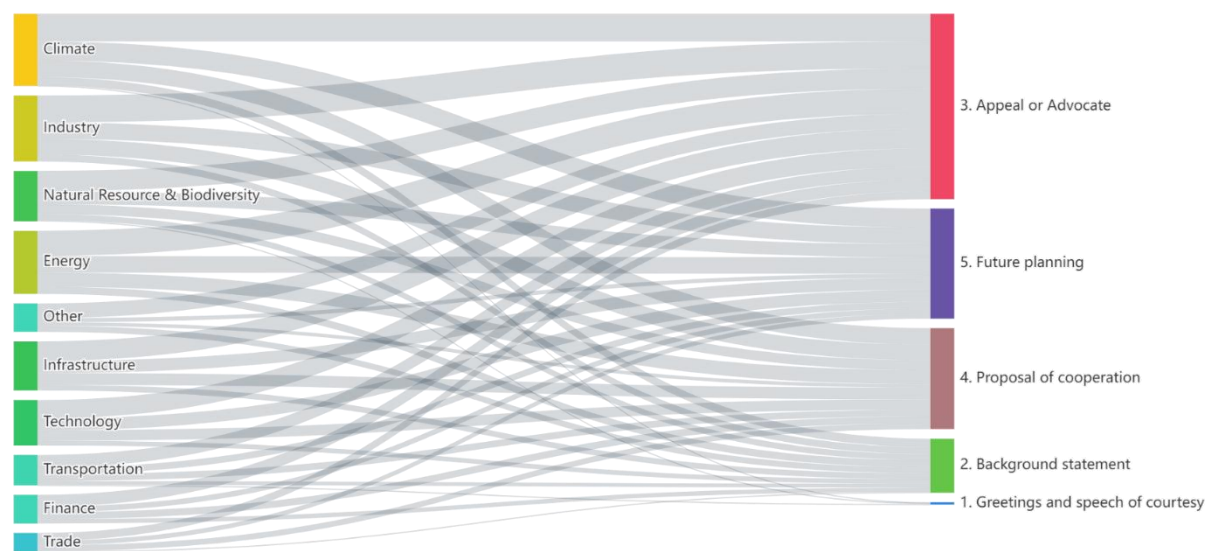
Through coding process and each speech paragraph with different tags, after merging and analyzing the processed data, the following trends of BRI in green development can be obtained. The overall trend of different aspects of green development is mostly in a stable growing trend (the number of data related to green development is significantly reduced in 2020 due to only three public speeches were delivered related to BRI during the epidemic situation). There are two small peaks in 2017 and 2019, and the attention to various aspects of green development also fills up to a steep peak in 2021 as the epidemic gradually returns to stability.

From figure 5, it is visible that a few aspects are continuously receiving high level of attention in President Xi's public speeches, some of the more prominent categories are green development in climate, industry and energy and infrastructure. This comes as a surprise that infrastructure is often seen as the core of the BRI, yet it has not received a high level of attention in securing green infrastructure.

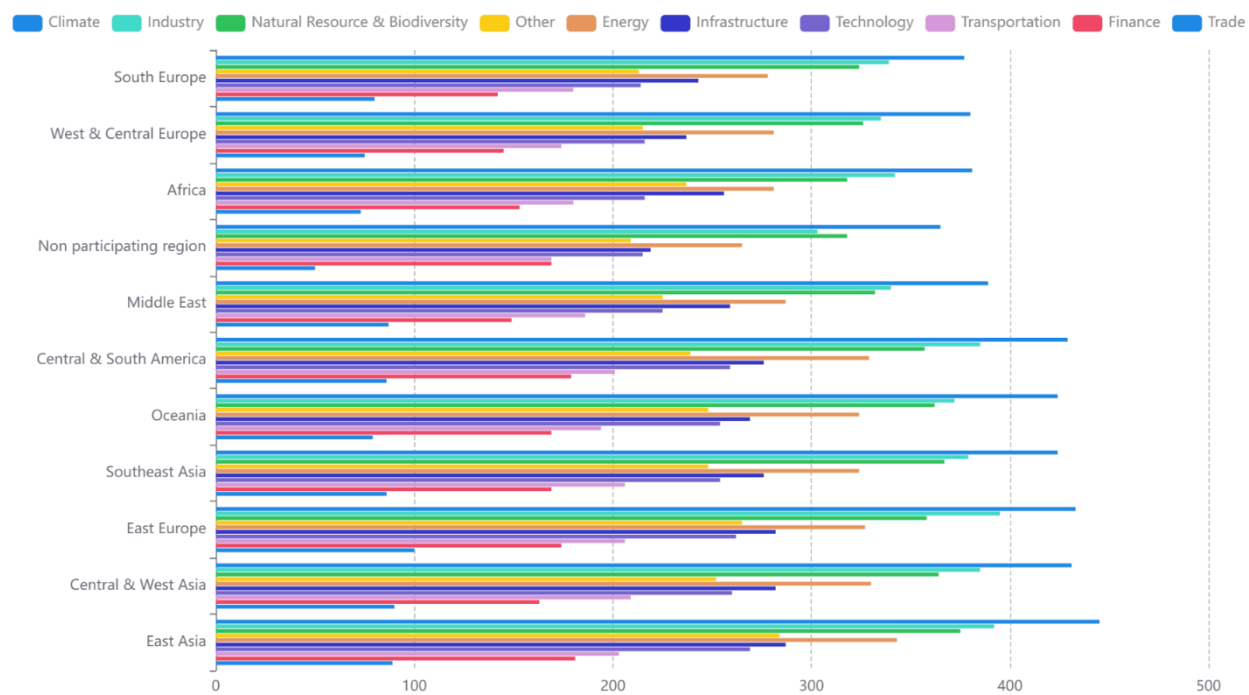
The coding also shows visually that Xi's speech was dominated by call-to-action statements, but then followed by the announcement of China's clear plans regarding the green BRI topic for the future. By cross-analyzing this with coding questions 4 and 5, it demonstrates which areas China paid more attention and plan more actions respectively.

Combining the two Figures above, the discussion on climate occupies the first place in all three levels of discourse, whether it is advocate, proposals for cooperation or clear future plan. This is a clear

indication of China's interest in climate issues and the future focus of promoting BRI's green development. In fact, it also has a high compatibility with several topics that are ranked after it with higher concern, such as industry, energy, infrastructure and technology, to reach the goal of carbon reduction by promoting low-carbon industries, renewable energy and low-carbon technologies, thus enhancing the ability of BRI co-construction countries to deal with climate change.



**Figure 6** The interaction of focused aspects of green development and function of the speech



**Figure 7** The interaction with focused region and focused aspects of green development

By cross-analyzing coding questions 2 and 4, we show how green development areas are concerned in different regions compared to each other. Since many of the speeches were conducted in multilateral platforms such as UN, APEC, and G20, the overall data in this section was high at the

time of coding, resulting in data that did not demonstrate significant differences. However, some characteristics can still be detected from the graph.

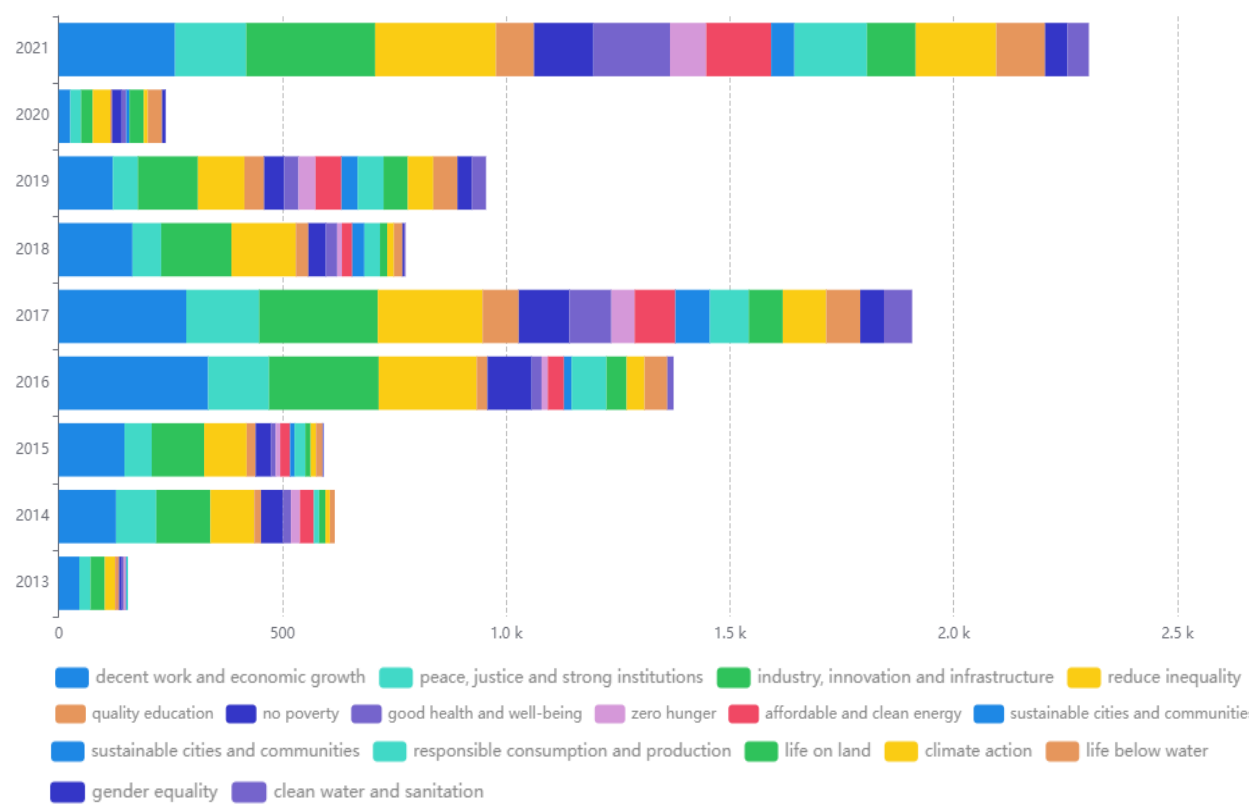
In addition to East Asia region due to speeches in the region are mostly domestic, Central and West Asia, Central Europe, and Southeast Asia are also compared to the top three green development partners. These three regions also correspond to the three important partners of BRI, Central and West Asian countries, Russia and ASEAN. It also reflects two characteristics of BRI's green development, from near to far and emphasis on cooperation with developing countries.

### 4.3. Fitting into the SDGs

In President Xi’s public speeches, he has, on the one hand, increased the weight in the narrative of green BRI year by year, and with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development resolution in the 70th UN General Assembly, more positive responses to SDGs-related content have been issued in his speeches since 2016.

By coding the speech paragraph corpus with different SDGs as coding tags and incorporating time into the content analysis framework, the number of mentions in Xi's discourse for SDGs can be visualized as the figure 7 shows, which also reveals the degree of his attention to each goal.

In 2016, China officially released China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which organically combines the sustainable development agenda with China's medium- and long-term development plan. Corresponding to Xi's speech content, the number of responses to SDG in 2016-2017 also significantly increase compared to previous years.



**Figure 8** Topic in concern with SDGs

In 2018-2019, there is a clear return to a moderated state in the content of the speeches. In these two

years, the speeches were delivered only in France once in March 19, and the rest of the speeches were delivered in different developing countries, with most of the speeches focusing on calls for pragmatic economic cooperation among partner developing countries, and the overall references to the promotion of the SDGs dropped significantly, although they are still on a steady upward trend. In 2020, due to the sudden outbreak of the epidemic, the number of Xi's public speeches decreased to only one time, so the content of SDG-related speeches also plummeted. In 2021, as the epidemic eases and stabilizes, the number of references to SDG content also increases dramatically again.

In terms of content structure, Goal 8 Economic Growth, Goal 9 Infrastructure and Industrial Innovation, and Goal 10 Reduce inequality are the top three goals that gained the most attention in the corpus of his speeches, occupying prominent head positions in almost every year. These three goals are also highly consistent with the goals of constructing BRI. In addition, Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions often occupies a more important place as well, and speeches containing these elements are mostly calls for countries to increase their efforts for regional security. This is because many BRI participants are also dealing with instability or regional disputes, and to call for stable development in a context of peace, which is the basis for building stability in the BRI.

Support for these four Goals accounts for about half of the content related to SDGs, reflecting China currently has a higher matching degree of attention to these aspects of SDGs. As BRI pays more attention to green development, some Goals that are more related to ecology and environment such as 7 and 12-15 are also increasing the proportion of attention after 2017. However, given the inevitable impact of large-scale infrastructure on local ecology, this part is also required to turn the appeal into practical more actions.

On the whole, another...? that needs to be noticed is that in President Xi's speech included relatively little attention to socially relevant issues such as Goal 7 Gender equality and 11 sustainable city and community. From this aspect, it is clear that the current stage of BRI construction is still in a material development phase, and it is necessary to increase the attention to social issues as BRI advances, which is also conducive to promoting the fifth priority of BRI, people to people connection.

## 5. Discussion

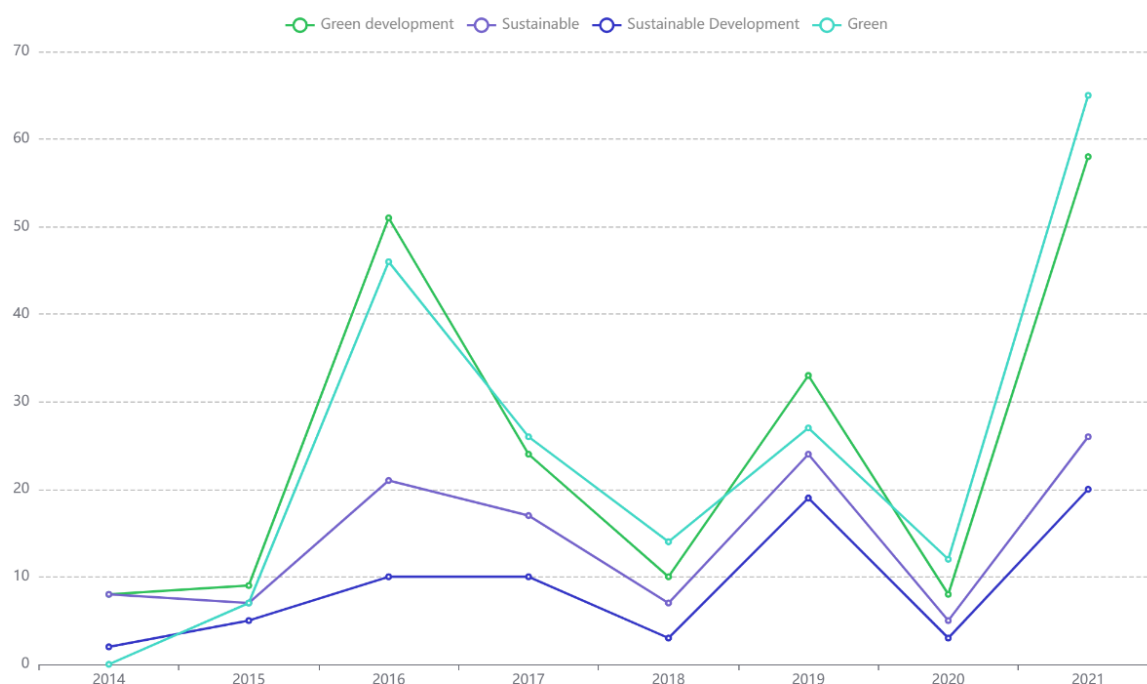
### 5.1. Green development versus sustainable development

By analyzing the frequency and context of key terms "green" and "sustainable" in President Xi's speeches, we observe a clear preference for emphasizing "green development." This is evident not only in the frequency of these terms but also in their nuanced usage. The concept of sustainability, while a global buzzword, takes on a specific connotation within the BRI context under Xi's leadership. The pattern of "green development" usage in Xi's discourse, as discussed in section 4.1, shows a complex interplay with sustainable development, intertwining with themes of economic development, regional security, and environmental protection.

In the current international landscape, the choice of "green" as a theme for the BRI is a strategic pivot point in what is deemed a "once-in-a-century change (Ruan, 2019)" This shift is not only morally commendable but also holds untapped economic potential. For China, a nation whose global image often sparks diverse opinions, adopting a green development strategy serves as a conduit to enhanced international recognition and acceptance. The consistent articulation of "green, low-carbon, sustainable" in President Xi's speeches embodies a strategic development trajectory—where 'green' lays the ideological groundwork, 'low-carbon' represents the means, culminating in the broader goal of sustainable societal progress.

This strategic choice reflects President Xi's values, shaped by national conditions and personal experiences, where "green" is intimately linked with ecological well-being, symbolizing life and

nature's base color. Green development, as articulated by Xi, is seen as the fundamental answer to the environmental issues posed by modernization and industrialization.



**Figure 9** The overall trend of Green and Sustainable development mentioned in speeches

**Table 7** Statistics on paragraphs referring to sustainable development and its implication

Main idea of paragraph	Frequency	Description
Economic Development	31	... creating a strong, sustainable growth pattern... ...long-term, stable, sustainable and risk-controlled financial protection system
Agenda for Sustainable Development	25	...aim to implement the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and jointly promote the well-being of all mankind... ...promote coordinated development of economy, society and environment... ...build a community with a shared future for mankind...
Regional Security	19	...sustainable Development for sustainable security... ...sustainable, which means that development and security go hand in hand to achieve lasting security....
Environment and Development	18	...adhere to green low-carbon cycle development, and effectively feel the ecological benefits brought by economic development... ...hold the sustainable development strategy and promote green low-carbon cycle development...
Infrastructure	7	...accelerate the process of industrialization and agricultural modernization to achieve autonomous and sustainable development... ...build the Belt and Road infrastructure projects to high

standards, benefit people's livelihoods and sustainable...

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Additionally, while the BRI emphasizes the five connectivities, the increasing focus on green aspects suggests that the material basis of BRI's development, predominantly infrastructure, remains a primary concern. This orientation signals a prioritization of economic growth while concurrently addressing environmental protection. In this context, green development within the BRI signifies an effort to balance development aspirations with ecological considerations, recognizing that environmental impact is an inevitable byproduct of development, but efforts must be made to minimize this impact.

Moreover, the choice of green development reflects China's understanding of its role as the largest developing country. In the absence of adequate infrastructure, sound economic development is unattainable, necessitating a cautious approach towards ecological impacts of traditional development models. China's approach, indicative of a broader trend among BRI participating countries, demonstrates a clear sense of national autonomy in development planning. It does not merely follow international trends but adapts them according to its unique context, aligning the development goals and priorities of most BRI countries with an integrated approach to economic development and ecological protection.

In further elaboration on the prioritization of green development within the BRI, it is paramount to acknowledge the immediate focus on addressing environmental challenges. The discourse surrounding the BRI, particularly through President Xi Jinping's articulations, makes it evident that there is a conscious effort to mitigate the ecological footprint of infrastructure projects. This approach not only aligns with global sustainability goals but also reflects a nuanced understanding of the interplay between development and environmental stewardship.

The strategic selection of green development as a thematic pillar underscores a commitment to minimizing the adverse effects of infrastructure development on regional ecosystems. Through President Xi's speeches, a clear narrative emerges, emphasizing the reduction of environmental impacts as a core consideration in the planning and execution of BRI projects. This narrative shift indicates a profound reevaluation of development practices, where ecological considerations are integrated into the very fabric of project design and implementation.

By focusing on green development, China positions itself as a proactive agent in the global effort to foster sustainable growth. This commitment is manifested in the explicit emphasis on reducing the ecological impacts of infrastructure initiatives, signaling a departure from traditional development models towards more sustainable and ecologically sensitive approaches. This reorientation not only addresses immediate environmental concerns but also sets a precedent for future international development projects, highlighting the feasibility of harmonizing economic ambitions with ecological well-being.

In essence, the emphasis on green development within the BRI is not merely a strategic choice but a reflection of a broader vision that seeks to redefine the parameters of global development. By prioritizing the resolution of environmental issues and underscoring the importance of minimizing infrastructure's regional impacts, China advocates for a development paradigm that is both sustainable and sensitive to the ecological realities of our time. This approach marks a significant step forward in the collective journey towards a more sustainable and environmentally responsible global future.



## 5.2. What is next for greening BRI: opportunities and risks

The 20th National Congress of the CPC in October 2022 marked a pivotal moment for the BRI, with President Xi Jinping's re-election reaffirming the initiative's current trajectory. This has implications not just for China, but for countries worldwide involved in the BRI. The emphasis on green development, a theme increasingly central in President Xi's foreign policy speeches, signifies a strategic shift. The BRI, as China's leading international cooperation project, not only showcases its multi-sectoral construction capabilities but also paves the way for expanding future partnerships. Green development within the BRI is seen as a critical lever in the current global context, offering economic potential and moral high ground, thereby enhancing China's international acceptance, especially in light of the contrast and debates surrounding its global image.

The theme of green has gradually developed to a central stage, and it has also become an important feature bound to BRI in President Xi's speeches. In practice, more and more regulations and policies have been introduced to promote green-related cooperation under the BRI framework from the official level, and green development has penetrated in a top-down approach from verbal commitment to the actions of all participants, especially among central government-owned enterprises as the main force as they constituted the majority of projects within the BRI. However, these actions are far from enough given the huge volume of BRI, and there is still much room for realizing the green development of BRI.

The green development of BRI could be achieved from many aspects. Enterprises are the market carriers and implementation subjects in BRI construction, and the state still needs to build a more transparent and effective monitoring mechanism to regulate and promote enterprises to implement green development and actively participate in the green transformation. The host countries along the BRI are important stakeholders that require more level of involvement, and the joint construction of green development needs to be promoted from two levels: one is to strictly comply with the ecological and environmental protection laws, regulations and standards of the host countries, and the other is to actively acknowledge the main responsibility of the participating enterprises, so as to carry out construction and environmental protection work with higher standards, especially in the host countries where the relevant regulations are not sound and the environmental management experience and execution are relatively insufficient, therefor forming a mutual stimulus on green development for both sides.

Xi's re-election will undoubtedly lay a more sustained and stable foundation for the advancement and development of his BRI, and is likely to extend the hugely popular "ecological civilization" construction domestically to the construction of BRIs externally in the future, so that green development becomes a mission for all stakeholders. In near future, potential shifts in China's power dynamics are unlikely to significantly affect the BRI. Referring to the history of China's successive leadership changes, a strongly iconic initiative like the BRI may not be quickly replaced or fade out, but may undergo a shift, for example, from "Going Global" to "One Belt, One Road". As a result, there is likely to be a newer, upgraded version of this global initiative, which will also represent a new opportunity for China to engage in the green transition.

With that being said, a critical area of focus for the BRI is the construction of robust institutional frameworks for green governance. Currently, China's approach to green governance within the BRI often remains at a high-level, principled stage, focusing more on general guidelines or specific industries rather than developing detailed, comprehensive green policies. This lack of nuanced green systems places China in a less dominant position in terms of international influence and discourse, especially in global forums where environmental governance and policy are key topics of discussion.

Despite the overall trajectory of the BRI, it faces uncertainties from the current international situation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic's impact and regional security challenges like the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These events necessitate a more resilient and coordinated development path for the BRI, considering the potential for regional conflicts and societal instability in partner countries.

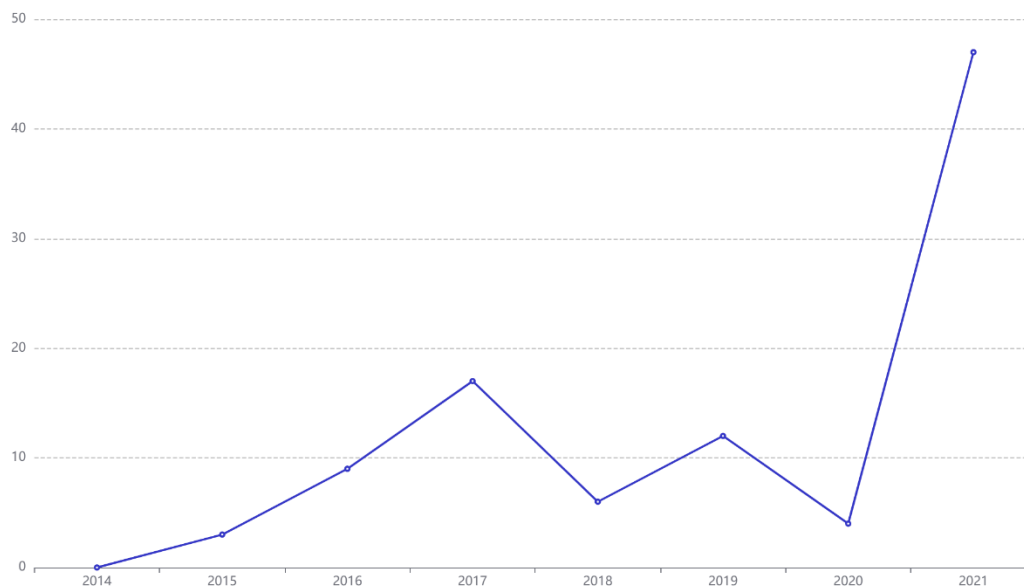
Not only that, many countries along the BRI are in a state of tension where regional conflicts can erupt at any time or instability within the country, such as Sri Lanka, where the recent bankruptcy occurred, is an important node of the Maritime Silk Road, these could potentially undermine the construction of BRI. With the multiple effects of the pandemic and the regional conflict, it is clear that similar events will not be a single instance. How to promote BRI stably in the context of uncertain regional security and prepare a timely stop-loss plan are also some of the key factors to consider in the future BRI to promote green development.

Lastly, with growing tension between China and the US in recent years, the US-centric Western powers or NATO countries see China as their strategical adversary or "systemic security challenge" (NATO, 2022). Putting other countries in a difficult situation in dealing with both countries, often under external pressure to make an either/or choice. This also makes the BRI more scrutinized as if it were under a magnifying glass, and any action would be easily over-interpreted by the powers that has a greater say. China's BRI is unable to reverse its image in front of these countries, and it is obvious that these countries are currently not the core of the BRI construction. How to maintain stable and smooth cooperation with already established participating countries under the pressure of multiple parties is also a practical problem that China needs to address.

In conclusion, the BRI, under the leadership of President Xi, stands as a testament to China's burgeoning role in global infrastructure and development, with an increasing emphasis on green and sustainable practices. As the initiative continues to evolve, it faces a complex interplay of challenges ranging from the need for more refined green governance systems to navigating geopolitical tensions, especially in the context of China's relations with Western powers. Despite these obstacles, the BRI's trajectory remains promising, representing a unique convergence of China's domestic priorities with its international aspirations. The initiative's success in integrating green development will not only bolster China's image on the global stage but also set a precedent for future international cooperation projects. Thus, the BRI's journey, marked by its ambitious scope and the challenges it must overcome, mirrors the broader narrative of China's rise as a key player in shaping the future of global development and environmental stewardship.

### 5.3. Latching on to the global agenda

From the analysis of 4.2, it is discovered that climate issues became the most green-related topic in President Xi's speech. With the official announcement of China's carbon neutral plan in 2020, there has been a significant increase in the number of action plans regarding low carbon technologies, energy transition, and carbon recycling in the BRI construction. This makes BRI one of the most important platforms for China's potential active participation in international cooperation on climate change.



**Figure 10** *The trend of potential facilitation points to SDGs in speeches*

In the previous section 4.3, the content of President Xi's speech on BRI was analyzed to summarize the changes in China's facilitation for achieving Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of content and areas of concern. On the whole, China holds an increasing positive attitude towards the implementation of the BRI as an opportunity to promote a platform for participating countries to work together.

In his speech, almost half of the content was devoted to promoting economic development and infrastructure construction, which is similar to the reason why he eventually chose green development as an important feature of the BRI, reflecting China's own distinctive judgment on the choice of development path. From the perspective of the world's largest developing country, it will follow its own development rhythm and align with the international mainstream, but will also have its own focus areas and priority directions according to its own situation. At present, for China and BRI's main partners, industrialization and modernization are the basis for the economic development of each country, while the concept of green needs to be included to optimize the economic and energy structure, to maximize the economic benefits and to minimize the ecological losses.

The results of 4.3 also show that in President Xi's speech China's focus and priority areas for the SDGs, while socially relevant issues such as Goal 7 Gender equality and 11 sustainable city and community received little attention in comparison. This also reflects the directions for action by China and state-owned enterprises, for which they are critical to the initiative and are mainly responsible for specific BRI projects. From the moment, the impact on social-related issues in the host country is still relatively empty at this stage of BRI construction.

To address above issue, the third sector, mainly social organizations, has the potential to be an important force in filling this gap. Mobilizing local civil society organizations or communities in the host country as important stakeholders to actively participate in the project construction, along with international organizations to provide technical support, and also to promote Chinese NGOs to go out, providing feedback on the top-down BRI projects through civil power, and jointly build a green and inclusive BRI, which is also conducive to promoting the fifth Priority of BRI, the people-to-people connection.

## 6. Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative is a global initiative proposed by China according to its own development status, hoping that through this initiative, more countries along the route can reach close cooperation and form a mutually beneficial and win-win situation. However, while the BRI aspires to be inclusive and open, its fundamental structure is undeniably rooted in a China-centric framework, reflecting China's own priorities and pace. This orientation has led to some misalignment in the international community's understanding of the BRI. To truly achieve green development, there is a critical need for deeper inter-regional communication and mutual understanding. Enhancing these aspects can bridge gaps in perception and foster a more collaborative approach towards sustainable development within the BRI framework.

With the international emphasis on addressing environmental issues and China's deeper understanding of its own environmental problems, the government under the leadership of President Xi Jinping has made ecological civilization an important aspect of China's new development phase, and has also led the BRI to begin a green transformation in its international cooperation.

China, like many other economies, there is a trade-off between national strategic planning and fulfilling international expectations. The choice of green development as the theme for BRI reflects China's view of development as the largest developing country and its thinking about BRI, namely the organic balance between economic development and ecological protection. In this line of thinking, sustainable development requires adaptation to natural constraints, whereas green development requires humans to take the initiative to grasp nature's drivers, viewing humans and nature as an inseparable system.

China is adhering to economic development for the current development stage and believes in developing countries' right to equitable development. While the BRI construction still at this stage focuses on transportation-based infrastructure. This will generate environmental impacts in the short term, but in China's justification, by bringing green development thinking to the new construction phase and incorporating green policies as priority, it could avoid repeating the previous course of uncontrolled and reckless industrialization and urbanization.

In Xi Jinping's speeches for the BRI from 2013-2022, the topic of green development is grabbing center stage in his speeches, with a conscious desire to establish green development as a development path with Chinese characteristics. The concept of green development has changed from a more scattered elaboration to a position of deeper roots, becoming one of the fundamental guides of BRI as a whole.

In his speech, the topics related to green development, climate, industry and energy and infrastructure received more attention, which indicates China will take these areas as priorities in the future for green transition. In terms of regions, Central and West Asia, Central Europe, and Southeast Asia were the regions that received more attention than others, showing a focus on emerging developing countries from near to far. This also reflects the current state of China's geopolitical relations, that BRI is serving as a filter to update the current international relations through the communication of cooperation intentions, giving China a reference to outline its development strategy.

The green development of BRI has the potential to synergize with the global agenda as SDGs in terms of economic and environmental aspects. However, currently BRI is still in the stage of physical development with infrastructure connectivity as a precondition, and social-related issues such as gender equality or community are relatively neglected. This requires further mobilization of third sector participation to fill this gap.

There is still some uncertainty about the future of the Green Belt and Road. On the one hand, the potential power shifts in the future may determine to some extent how the BRI will continue to advance, although in this regard the trend towards a green transformation of the BRI is not expected

to regress, regardless of the outcome. The other side comes from abroad, where the stability of the social and political levels within the countries along the route will also determine whether the BRI project can be carried out smoothly in the host countries.

In *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality* (2013, p.225), Angus Deaton pinpointed that after World War II, the rich countries tried to improve the living conditions of poorer countries in the form of foreign direct aid have had the opposite effect in reality due to the various motivational, political factors and unintended effects mixed in it, the exact opposite effect. This phenomenon is often a debatable issue that many scholars and politicians are reflecting on. Perhaps, BRI could be China's solution to break in the deadlock, through China's technological advantages in clean energy such as wind power and solar power will bring new development opportunities to BRI countries, further contributing the global goal to achieve sustainable development.

## 7. Limitations

Lack of objective reliability checking for coding is the main limitation of this thesis. Reliability is a test of coding consistency, classification accuracy, and methodological stability of the coding materials. If objectivity in content analysis is to be guaranteed, the measurements and procedures must have confidence that the same raw material can be measured multiple times and similar conclusions can be obtained. Generally, the level of confidence can be obtained by having multiple coders working together to check the coding results of a sample section, thus obtaining more objective results. In this paper, only one author did all the coding, and although some passages were sampled for validation, which leading the results could not avoid subjectivity.

Secondly, after the coding process, it is found that the design of the coding questions could further refine to get more specific results. Especially on the focused region's part, where the results did not fully reflect the interests to specific countries that a paragraph might show. The coding question originally focused on the occasion of the speech to determine its focused audience. Due to many of the speech were delivered at multilateral platforms such as UN or G20, the coverage of the focused region might be larger than the intended addressee. Therefore, a refined design of coding structure is needed in the future to offer a clearer result.

Thirdly, while reviewing the complete data and results, the data from 2020 always seems as an outlier due to fewer speeches were delivered during that time due to the pandemic situation, which led the distribution of the results seem even. Further, this could be reprocessed by means of averaging the coding results according to the number of speeches to get a more detailed result.

In addition, since this paper focuses on a relatively active topic, new events are constantly updated during the writing process, and it may not be fully guaranteed that the content will be taken into account.

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## 10. Appendices

### 10.1. List of selected speech

No	Title	Date	Location
1	Jointly building the "Silk Road Economic Belt"	2013/09/07	Kazakhstan
2	Carrying Forward the Shanghai Spirit to Promote joint Development	2013/09/13	Kyrgyzstan
3	Jointly Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road	2013/10/03	Indonesia
4	Civilizations have become richer and more colorful with exchanges and mutual learning	2014/03/27	UNESCO
5	Building a bridge of friendship and cooperation across the Eurasian continent	2014/04/01	Belgium
6	New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation	2014/05/21	China
7	Carrying forward the spirit of the Silk Road and deepening Sino-Arab cooperation	2014/06/05	China
8	Propelled by the two “wings” of the “Belt” and the “Road”, its economy will take off together with those of South Asian countries	2014/09/18	India
9	Accelerating the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road	2014/11/04	China
10	Connections lead development, partners focus on cooperation	2014/11/08	China
11	Shaping the Future Through Asia-Pacific Partnership	2014/11/11	China
12	Accelerating the implementation of the free trade zone strategy and building a new system of open economy	2014/12/05	China

13	Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia	2015/03/28	China
14	China's economic development offers new opportunities for cooperation for countries and companies around the world	2015/03/29	China
15	Only with win-win cooperation can we enlarge the pie of common interests and realize common prosperity	2015/04/21	Pakistan
16	Belt and Road Initiative is open and inclusive	2015/09/22	US
17	Reinventing the Silk Road for joint development	2015/10/15	China
18	Belt and Road Initiative is a sunny avenue for everyone to move forward hand in hand	2015/10/21	UK
19	The construction of Belt and Road Initiative is a major strategic measure to expand opening up and the top-level design of economic diplomacy	2015/10/29	China
20	Jointly open a new era of win-win cooperation and common development between China and Africa	2015/12/04	South Africa
21	Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace	2015/12/16	China
22	Keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	2016/01/16	China
23	Proactively respond to the trend of economic globalisation and develop and strengthen ourselves	2016/01/18	China
24	Promote the construction of "Belt and Road" and strive to expand new space for reform and development	2016/04/29	China
25	"Belt and Road Initiative" is a common cause for all countries along the routes	2016/06/20	Poland
26	Jointly promote the construction of China's-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor	2016/06/22	Uzbekistan

27	Let the "Belt and Road" construction benefit the people of all countries along the routes	2016/08/17	China
28	A new starting point for China's development and a new blueprint for global growth	2016/09/03	China
29	Towards an Innovative, Invigorated, Interconnected and Inclusive World Economy	2016/09/04	China
30	Enhance our country's ability to participate in global governance	2016/09/27	China
31	Making the process of economic globalisation more dynamic, inclusive and sustainable	2016/11/19	Peru
32	Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth	2017/01/17	Switzerland
33	Jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind	2017/01/18	UN
34	Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	2017/05/14	China
35	Following a Path of Peaceful Development and Working to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind	2017/10/18	China
36	Seizing the Opportunity of a Global Economy in Transition and Accelerating Development of the Asia-Pacific	2017/11/10	Vietnam
37	Jointly Building the Belt and Road Initiative and a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind	2017/12/01	China
38	Forge a path of cooperation across the Pacific	2018/01/22	Chile
39	Strengthen the docking of strategies and actions, and work together to promote the construction of the "Belt and Road"	2018/07/10	China
40	Keeping Abreast of the Trend of the Times to Achieve Common Development	2018/07/25	South Africa
41	Work Together for Common Development and a Shared	2018/09/03	China

	Future		
42	Jointly Charting a Course Toward a Brighter Future	2018/11/17	Papua New Guinea
43	Contribute wisdom and strength to building a better home on earth	2019/03/26	France
44	Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	2019/04/27	China
45	Adhere to sustainable development for a prosperous and beautiful world	2019/06/07	Russia
46	Together for a New Chapter in BRICS Cooperation	2019/11/14	Brazil
47	Statement at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity	2020/09/30	UN
48	Carrying Forward the Shanghai Spirit and Deepening Solidarity and Collaboration for a Stronger Community with a Shared Future	2020/11/10	China
49	Working Together for an Asia-Pacific Community with A Shared Future	2020/11/20	China
50	Keeping up the Momentum and Working Together for A New Chapter	2021/02/09	China
51	Pulling Together Through Adversity and Toward a Shared Future for All	2021/04/20	China
52	For Man and Nature: Building a Community of Life Together	2021/04/22	China
53	Join Hands to Overcome Current Difficulties, Plan for Future Development and Write a New Chapter for Far East Cooperation	2021/09/03	China
54	Advance BRICS Cooperation to Meet Common Challenges Together	2021/09/09	China
55	Staying True to Our Founding Mission and Forging Ahead on a New Journey of SCO Cooperation	2021/09/17	China

56	Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties, To Build a Better World	2021/09/21	China
57	Staying Connected with the World and Abreast with the Times And Making Big Strides on the Path of Sustainable Development	2021/10/14	China
58	Acting in solidarity for a shared future	2021/10/30	China
59	Pursuing Sustainable Development in a Concerted Effort To Build an Asia-Pacific Community with a Shared Future	2021/11/11	China
60	Unswervingly promote the high-quality development of the "Belt and Road"	2021/11/19	China



## 10.2. Published official documents regarding BRI

Objectives	Year of Release	Document Title	Issuing Department(s)	Highlights
<b>BRI Specific</b>	2015	Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road	National Development and Reform Commission Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Commerce	▫ First official guidance document ▫ Clarify principles, framework ideas and cooperation priorities
	2017	Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road	Ministry of Environmental Protection Ministry of Foreign Affairs National Development and Reform Commission Ministry of Commerce	▫ First official guidance on promoting BRI Green Development  ▫ Refine the cooperation priorities ▫ Determine the framework of "six corridors and six channels serving multiple countries and ports"
	2017.1	Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China's Contribution	Department of Regional Opening-up (the Leading Group for the Promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative)	▫ In key chapters proposed to strengthen ecological and environmental cooperation, the construction of the Green Silk Road
	2017.1	Belt and Road Financing Guiding Principle	Ministry of Finance of PRC	▫ Approved and signed jointly with the Ministries of Finance of 26 countries
	2017.1	The Belt and Road Ecological and Environmental Cooperation Plan	Ministry of Environmental Protection	▫ Proposed 25 major projects regarding ecological environmental protection
	2017.1	Vision And Actions On Agriculture Cooperation In Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt And 21st Century Maritime Silk Road	Ministry of Agriculture National Development and Reform Commission Ministry of Commerce Ministry of Foreign Affairs	▫ Highlight on Food security and cooperation on Agriculture

	2017.1	Vision and Actions on Energy Cooperation in Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road	National Development and Reform Commission National Energy Administration	▫ Interpretation of the energy situation initiative and elaboration of strengthening energy cooperation in 7 areas
	2017.1	Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative	National Development and Reform Commission State Oceanic Administration	▫ Proposed 3 Blue economic Passages
	2018.1	Green Investment Principles	Green Finance Committee of the China Society for Finance and Banking (China Green Finance Committee) The City of London	▫ Principle was voluntarily participated and signed by 39 financial institution
	2019	The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects	Department of Regional Opening-up (the Leading Group for the Promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative)	▫ Conclusion of BRI 5 years development
	2022	Guidance on The Promotion of Jointly Building Belt And Road Initiative Green Development	National Development and Reform Commission Foreign ministry Ministry of Ecology and Environment Business services department	▫ First Guidance and specification of BRI green development
	2022	Opinions on the joint promotion of 'Belt and Road Initiative' green development	National Development and Reform Commission	▫ Coordinate and promote cooperation in key areas of green development
<b>BRI Related</b>	2013	Guidelines on Environmental Protection for Overseas Investment and Cooperation	Ministry of Environmental Protection Ministry of Commerce	▫ Regulate Put forward normative suggestions for enterprises
	2016.1	Guidelines for Establishing the Green Financial System	The People's Bank of China The Ministry of Finance National Development and Reform Commission The Ministry of Environment Protection China Banking Regulatory Commission China Securities Regulatory Commission China Insurance Regulatory Commission	▫ Explaining the significance of green finance ▫ Proposing various green initiatives

2016.1	China's National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	State Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Promoting a close dovetailing between the construction of the Belt and Road and the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in countries along the route</li> </ul>
2016.1	Guidance on strengthening international cooperation to improve the status of China's industrial global value chain	Ministry of Commerce Ministry of Science and Technology Ministry of Industry and Information Technology Bureau of Statistics Administration of Customs, People's Bank of China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Emphasis on the Belt and Road construction to carry out international policy exchanges in the field of global value chains, participate in the exploration of global value chain cooperation rules and improve the status of national participation</li> </ul>
2017.1	Regulations on Outbound Investment and Business Activities of Private Enterprises	National Development and Reform Commission Ministry of Commerce People's Bank of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Social responsibility and environmental protection are emphasized in two chapters</li> </ul>
2020	Guidelines on Promoting Investment and Financing for addressing Climate Change	Ministry of Ecology and Environment National Development and Reform Commission People's Bank of China China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission China Securities Regulatory Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Propose to actively integrate climate investment and finance into the "Belt and Road" construction</li> <li>▫ Actively participate in the formulation and revision of international standards for climate investment and finance</li> </ul>

2021.1	Green Development Guidelines for Overseas Investment and Cooperation	Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) of China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for enterprises to raise awareness of environmental protection in foreign investment and cooperation, actively fulfill their social responsibility for environmental protection, understand and comply with the host country's environmental protection policies and regulations</li> <li>▪ Study and learn from international environmental protection principles, standards and practices, and converge with international standards</li> <li>▪ Clarify that the ecological environment includes pollution prevention and control, climate change response, ecosystem and biodiversity protection</li> <li>▪ Make norms for key industries and propose to give priority to renewable energy projects in the energy sector</li> <li>▪ Encourage the adoption of more stringent ecological and environmental standards</li> </ul>
2022	Guidelines on Ecological and Environmental Protection for Foreign Investment and Cooperation Construction Projects	Ministry of Ecology and Environment Ministry of Commerce	

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