

The Belt and Road Initiative's impact on Poland in the period 2015-2022. International business implications

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Abstract: The biggest Chinese investment initiative is named Belt and Road (BRI), which was launched by President Xi Jinping in September 2013 and involved directly more than 70 countries worldwide with a total investment above 1 Tn USD. This impacts business management not only in Poland but also in other countries involved in this initiative. The main objective of this article is to show the direct impact of BRI on Poland and to see its international implications. The paper discussed the impact of BRI on business management in Poland in 2015-2022 as the main "land bridge" between the European Union and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). It discussed also the potential business threats and concerns regarding sovereignty and increasing indebtedness of the businesses. That is why international implications are important. The research methodology is based on the empirical research study based on the existing literature and existing research results using also the Mendeley.com platform.

Keywords: Global Business Management, BRI Index, Chinese Communist Party cell (CCP), COVID-19, BRI SC risk, The Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC), Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

JEL Classification codes: M00, M10, M19, M20

INTRODUCTION

In 2013 The Chinese government decided upon a new initiative which was enshrined into the Chinese constitution and was supposed to make the world better developed in an economic sense and also helped to promote socio-economic cooperation among the countries. This initiative was named The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Belt symbolises the investments made along the land road and the Road was representing the maritime route into Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. The entire concept was involving then both land and sea trade transportation roads. It helped China impact different economies through the power of international organizations such as The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In the analysed period, China invested 1 Tn USD in more than 70 countries including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Czech Republic, and The Baltic States countries. According to some studies Poland, Austria and The Czech Republic are perceived by China as the „gateway“ countries for BRI to EU (Cameron et al, 2021). That is why the entire initiative has strong international implications (the famous phrase „made in China“ seemed to be the most known phrase in the world). According to some authors, there is no clear answer to the question regarding how Poland perceives the BRI and what the state government plans to achieve by participating in the project. Part of the Polish political scene regards BRI as a threat, and the other part as an opportunity (Pendrakowska, 2018; Tomaszewska and Pohl, 2019).

Other authors raised the concern that in the case of Poland, there was no clarity on the specification of which projects were directly related to this initiative (Choroś-Mrozowska, 2019). The main focus of this article is the impact of the Chinese investment (BRI) strategy on Poland with the international business implications in the period of 2015-2022. This period covers the moment when Poland accessed this initiative by signing The Memorandum of Understanding in November 2015 between Polish President Andrzej Duda and Chinese President Xi Jinping. During this period also main investment projects were planned. COVID-19 which erupted at the end of 2019 and the intensified war in Ukraine (it was started in 2014) made Poland head into a new geopolitical situation with BRI and impacted the implementation of the infrastructure projects.

The BRI was not the first such concept that focuses on the initiatives of economic dominance in the world. There are examples of Russian Initiatives from Mikhail Gorbachev's "Common European Home" in the 1980s with its new vision proposed by Boris Yeltsin of "Greater Europe from Vladivostok to Lisbon" in 1997. As China is Russia's key partner, such an initiative makes BRI more interesting (Menkiszak, 2013). The war in Ukraine complicated Russia's plans to be the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) leader, so China can benefit from this situation by taking over the leadership in this region using its soft power strategy.

Chinese strategy has a long tradition and it comes from ancient times war tactics *Sun Tzu* (Cleary, 2005). China built its economic strength based on the opportunities created by other countries. China has different economic and political tools for approaching developed and less developed countries. One such tool is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cell inside the structure of each of the private Chinese companies. If any company from other parts of the world interacts with a Chinese private company the potential risk of business data access by the Chinese Communist Party is quite possible (Livingstone, 2020). This is another aspect which has international implications for business management.

Along with the BRI, The Chinese Communist Party with the gained insight into business information was exploring potential investment opportunities worldwide trying to acquire strategic assets and business worldwide. If the purchase was not possible for some reason at least the controlling stake was demanded. From 2015 to 2022, China was able to acquire a 24%-100% stake in big companies in the sectors like agriculture (Syngenta in Switzerland), technology (Omnivision Technologies in the USA), energy (Edra in Malaysia), transport (CIT Group in The USA) and mining (Glencore in Peru, SQM in Chile). The mergers and acquisitions especially in the mining sector are related to the needs for the lithium, and copper required for the production of batteries for electric vehicles. The Chinese aggressive approach to acquisitions of businesses globally conflicted also with some political tensions regarding „Chinese influence' in countries like Australia (Chubb, 2022). The investment agreements under The BRI were signed by the government of China country by country mainly about infrastructure including the development of the seaports. Quite often such investments were named the investment corridors such as Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM), China-Mongolia-Russia Investment Corridor, China-Pakistan economic corridor, or New Eurasia Land Bridge connecting Western Europe with Kazakhstan through Russia, Belarus and Poland. The war in Ukraine complicated some of the investment plans but it does not mean that China has stepped out from them. Another interesting characteristic of BRI is that in developing countries corruption is high, so it is much easier for Chinese companies to make business deals in such countries. It is worth noting that in Asia corruption is not treated as something negative, it is part of the social culture. Corruption becomes part of the fixed costs when it has a governance structure based on relationships in Asia or Africa (Talvitie, 2017). Another important aspect of BRI is that China gains military and geostrategic advantages, especially from seaport investments by the involvement of China's People's Liberation Army (Russel and Berger, 2020).

China is also interested to have good economic relations, especially with developed EU countries to have a counterpart to the US global position. For many years economic cooperation between US and China was blooming. The bilateral relationship between China and The US was known even as „Chimerica“ (Hung, 2022). The US agreed with China that the majority of production would be made in China and then imported to the US as the final products. The history of the economy showed that it was not lasting for long as it was a decoupling of this relationship which led to the trade war (Choudhury, 2021). China wanted to have a relationship with a leading country in the EU to have a better influence on the other EU countries including Poland. In 2020 Germany tried to force the Comprehensive Agreement of Investment (CAI) between the EU and China, which was asymmetric and not beneficial to the other EU member states. It rather protected German companies' expansion on the Chinese market and gave managerial benefits to the Chinese companies investing in EU countries. Poland was one of the EU member states which were against such an agreement. It is worth mentioning that the current situation with the war in Ukraine is influencing Chinese investment in Europe, especially in Poland which is a main partner for Ukraine in this war.

After this introduction, a literature review and a case study of Poland are needed to better understand the business management of Poland under that signed the BRI agreement for the investment. The main research question is: *how did The BRI impact business management in Poland in the period 2015-2022?* This research focused on the most important aspects of this topic to answer this question.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The situation of global business management under BRI was analyzed in the literature from different perspectives. The business management of companies in Europe during the COVID-19 period was very demanding putting many SMEs on the edge of bankruptcy mainly due to the severe lockdowns, GVCs disruption and the demand decrease (Dygas, 2022). In contrast, China managed to increase its global economy share between the two pandemics SARS-1 and COVID-19 from 8% in 2003 to 20% in 2020 (Devonshire-Ellis, 2020). Although the literature is abundant in this area the question of how the BRI impacted business management in Poland in 2015-2022 is rather limited and can be treated still as the knowledge gap. Most of the studies are related to the Polish-Chinese relationship in the context of BRI (Kostecka-Tomaszewska and Czerewacz-Filipowicz, 2019; Górski, 2018; Lubina, 2017). There is a lack of deep studies which are assessing the positive consequences of Poland's development under the BRI. The fact is that China approaches each region differently, but one thing was common to use all the gates and opportunities to build China's economic power and international competitive advantage. Concerning Poland, some authors put in doubt that business with China was beneficial for Polish companies and made Poland a real European hub supporting the transportation of goods on the route between China and the EU (Jakubowski et al, 2020). Other authors raised the concern and even threats related to BRI in Poland (Bartosiewicz and Szterlik, 2019; Grzywacz, 2020; Holslag, 2017, Tomaszewska, 2019; Pacek, 2022).

According to some authors China has been its own biggest firewall in the diffusion of BRI into Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary (Krpec and Wise, 2022). The geographic location of Poland was interesting for BRI thus China wanted to build a network of transport that connected China with the EU (called the New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor) approved by the National Development and Reform Commission (2015). Poland's hope related to the involvement in BRI was to allow the Polish companies to expand in China (*Go China* program in 2018), and reduce the negative trade balance but in fact, it was only a hope. The main role of Poland in BRI in 2015-2022 was reduced to the transit of Chinese goods (Bachulska, 2017). The transit countries in the opinion of some authors treated BRI as neo-colonialism (Diener, 2015; Summers, 2016). In that sense, the case that Poland will be the

transportation hub for European-Asian cargo depends much on the further geopolitical situation development between Russia, Belarus, and Baltic countries and also on a coalition of China and Russia. As the war in Ukraine continues it makes BRI more difficult to implement and Poland becomes directly less involved in this initiative. On the other side, there is a study showing that in these countries where BRI was in progress the involvement of Chinese companies supported by the Chinese government increased (Liu et al, 2017).

The involvement of the countries under BRI is different and depends on the level of infrastructure development, and the existence of the seaports. That is why the BRI involvement has also international business implications. There is even a BRI Index which creates a ranking of involved countries in six categories: economic potential, demographic advantage, infrastructure development, institutional effectiveness, market accessibility and resilience to natural disasters (Knight Frank and Holt, 2018). A few positions described openly the threat of BRI on international business management and the natural environment changed by the Chinese infrastructure investments. For example, according to the report of the World Wide Fund for Nature in Myanmar half of the population was put at risk as those people are dependent on natural capital such as forests, rivers, land and biodiversity. This also creates a potential risk of floods, landslides and water pollution. Myanmar is involved in two investment corridors in BRI namely: Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar (BCIM) and the China-IndoChina Peninsula corridor (Han, 2018). Some authors made the effort to analyze the supply chain (SC) risk related to BRI and build the model based on the knowledge from the relevant 178 articles. The model showed that BRI SCs faced a combination of risks triggered by operational processes and informational and environmental (PIE) deficiencies. The model should help the managers in making strategic decisions managing the business related to BRI investment (Ram and Zhang, 2020). An interesting analysis was presented by the authors focusing on the effect of BRI on Malaysian stock-listed construction companies using a panel data regression model. The study results confirmed that Chinese equity ownership in the construction sector impacts the business management of stock-listed companies in Malaysia. The authors tried to prove that the impact of the BRI is rather positive on the development of the construction business in Malaysia, but they do not explore the business consequences of Chinese ownership of the Malaysian capital in those companies. They try to explain the business benefits received by the Chinese owners from the Malaysian construction sector using the concept of *guanxi* (building closer interpersonal ties and networking) which is rather not convincing (Peck-Ling et al, 2022).

Nowadays businesses stream to be sustainable according to Agenda 2030, so sustainability is also used by BRI as propaganda for reaching that goal. According to some authors, BRI can help reach sustainable development only by linking BRI with digital infrastructures and corporate data management systems, with distributed benefits of efforts to local business participants (Seele and Helbing, 2020). Some recent research evaluation of the fulfilment of the sustainable goals from Agenda 2030 showed that reaching full sustainability by the countries such as China, India, Germany, and Japan and business is rather a myth so BRI will not change it (Dygas et al, 2021).

The BRI is also treated by some authors as an effort from the Chinese government to create global connectivity, diplomacy and business management world (Syed and Yung-Hsiang, 2020). In the fact, the vision of how the BRI may become beneficial to local businesses in keeping their business sovereignty is not clear. The interesting fact is that BRI managed to engage many international organizations, more than 20 United Nations agencies, and funds, and in this sense, the Chinese government received a mandate as the funder of the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC) to assist the countries in reaching sustainable development which China itself still did not reach out (The BRI, 2020). The important characteristic of the Chinese BRI in general is the asymmetry of the investments. Access to the Chinese market for companies from other countries is strictly

regulated and controlled by the Chinese government. That is why some of the authors described the BRI as a risk or a threat to international business (Hemmings, 2020). The aspect of the BRI's influence on international business management especially on the MNCs was confirmed by many authors (Li et al, 2022; Visvizi et al, 2020; Buckley, 2020). It was also confirmed that BRI influenced international law and governance (Nurgozhayeva, 2020). The CEE region is still very interesting for Chinese BRI because the CEE region is the gate to the western EU countries. In the literature, there are case studies of Chinese companies such as CEFC China Energy which acted as the agent and tried to influence the energy business along with the BRI investment in the Czech Republic in 2015-2018 (Garlick, 2019), Hungary and Slovakia (Matura, 2018) or in Poland (Pendrakowska, 2018; Choroś-Mrozowska, 2018; Bartosiewicz and Szterlik, 2018). Most of the authors who focus on BRI in Poland did not raise the issue directly of the country's indebtedness, sovereignty, or threat of the Chinese soft power to the Polish companies and business management. It was also concluded by the FBI's report stating that the threat comes from the programs and policies pursued by an authoritarian government employing tactics that seek to influence lawmakers and public opinion to achieve policies that are more favourable to China (Wry, 2020). This is an important knowledge finding which needs to be researched more deeply.

2 THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology is based on empirical research of existing literature using the *Mendeley.com* tool and accessible data for The Belt and Road Initiative's impact on Polish business management in the period 2015-2022. The main research question was about the direct impact of BRI on Poland in the period 2015-2022. The author also reviewed existing publicly accessible Polish government documents related to BRI's influence on business development in Poland from 2015 to 2022. Besides that also the research made by the Breugel research team regarding the perceptiveness of BRI was used as the starting point. The other research results were used in the case of Poland related to the railway transport system and commodity export structure with the reference to BRI. Additionally the supportive two questions: "*How do you perceive the Chinese investment in your country in 2015-2022?*," and "*How do you perceive Chinese investment in Poland from 2015 to 2022?*," were placed by the author on the LinkedIn platform with direct access to 3364 business professionals from all over the world. The answers from these pools can be treated informatively by it brings the signal of how the business people perceive the Chinese investments. Such results can not be generalised of course.

There is not enough data for this period but the research is based upon reports published by private businesses and governmental authorities institutions. That there are different estimations of the BRI global impact on business management in 2015-2022. The observations of business management changes are quite interesting for the conclusions and interpretations of the presented data. This is also valid for the identification of research gaps and possibilities for future research.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The deep analysis regarding the direct influence on Poland in the period 2015-2022 is very limited so far, but there are analyses of the BRI perceptiveness which can contribute to that. One of them is the research made by the Breugel research team in 2018 which showed that besides the Asian region, the countries from other regions involved in BRI perceived the Chinese initiative as moderately positive (Herrero and Xu, 2019). In February 2023 there was a closed-door event organised by the Bruegel Research Team regarding BRI transformation

and its impact on Europe. The main conclusion was that image of China and the BRI project's perceptiveness deteriorated due to the increased indebtedness of the countries involved in this initiative. The authors shared the latest findings from their research, showing that the BRI has transformed itself from an economic to a much broader strategy with a political security-oriented focus in anti-Western tone (Bruegel, 2023; Herrero, 2023). Concerning the aspects of the Polish railway transportation system with reference to BRI the authors of the research concluded that the BRI project was more suitable for China and the EU as a whole than for Poland in terms of commodity structure of bilateral trade and railway system (Szypulewska-Porczyńska, 2020). The underdevelopment of the Polish railway system concerning the BRI project was also concluded in other research (Hanusik and Woźnica, 2021). The author of this article decided also to ask its LinkedIn network of 3364 direct business professionals connections "How do you perceive the Chinese investment in your country in 2015-2022" and "How do you perceive Chinese investment in Poland from 2015 to 2022?,". Although the results can only have a limited value as they can not be generalised, it was interesting to see the subjective answers results and compare them with the findings in the literature. There is the main conclusion from both pools that the majority of the respondents (69%) mainly from Europe perceived Chinese investments as a threat to their businesses. It is in line with Bruegel's latest findings regarding the latest views on the BRI project. The important fact is that once the infrastructure is built it stayed there in the country and if the government of the country is not able to pay back the Chinese loans the country's debt is growing and China has the right to take over the assets. The discussion can refer to the important question regarding the necessity of Chinese investment. Is it needed for the countries' growth and development? On one side foreign direct investment in general (FDI) was proved to be the wheel for economic development (Biswas and Dygas, 2022).

On the other hand, the way China is implementing its BRI is quite questionable concerning the future state of the sovereignty of the involved countries. The links of Chinese companies to the government are an issue that host countries should realize. The countries like USA, Canada, India and Japan made clear conditions and borders leading even to the exclusion of Chinese companies from investment. It is mainly to the fact that there are reasonable fears of the host countries' governments regarding the possibility of spying and using technology for getting illegally sensitive data. Some countries are tempted by the Chinese BRI to have their economy move forward and develop paying the price of indebtedness or bankruptcy like in Sri Lanka's case where corruption and bad managed government governance caused a problem for the whole country and were fostered or taken advantage of by China. Sri Lanka's Hambantota port was very important in the strategy of the BRI same as Djibouti not only from the business but also military perspective.

China invested 1 bn USD in Hambantota which can be considered an example of the Chinese debt trap experienced by Sri Lanka's government defaulted on foreign debt payments (Frayer, 2022). Besides that China is the global producer of different goods which makes the companies in the world dependent on production in many sectors. It was very well seen during COVID-19 when the EU needed the air transports of masks and medical supplies from China. It showed a deep weakness of the EU organizations responsible for protecting EU business, crisis management and global production policy. The companies which had financial problems during COVID-19 were targeted by Chinese investors who used soft power to manage and influence potential future investments and businesses, especially in the CEE region and also in Greece, and Georgia (Brattberg et al, 2021). China wanted to guarantee its economic position in Europe by signing the CAI agreement, but due to the lack of the consent of all EU member states (e.g. Poland), the agreement was put on hold (McElvee, 2023). Other statements raised in the introduction part of this article were indicating that China wanted to increase not only its presence in Europe but also to have an influence on big business especially in industry and infrastructure. Poland in that case is still important for China as the potential transit country

with access to the sea and the gate to the Western EU countries. The fact that Germany and France wanted to have a direct economic and political relationship with China complicated the situation and put Poland’s role in the BRI aside. China declared its readiness for the stabilization process in Europe by proposing a “12-point-peace plan” of ending the war in Ukraine but not resigning from the investment opportunities in Europe (a potential investment of China in Hamburg and Gdansk sea ports was questionable) (VSQUARE, 2022). In this sense, the Polish case study is interesting from the perspective of the real impact of BRI on the business management and it has the international implications.

3.1. BRI - Poland case study

Poland has a long tradition of investment relationships with China (more than 70 years) (Burdelski, 2011). Poland cooperates with China in the format designed for the CEE - China cooperation is known today as the “16+1 platform” founded in Budapest in 2012 before the BRI was announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013. The main goal of this platform was to promote the BRI, but it became a gateway to Europe (VSQUARE, 2018). Poland is also high in the BRI Index countries’ ranking placing the 17th position out of 67 countries. Estonia had only a higher position than Poland (the 7th). This can be perceived as a way to become dependent on China which is not good for Poland’s sovereignty. The Polish government approved The Polish Act of 24 July 2015 „on the Control of Certain Investments” which aimed at screening investments in sectors of strategic importance for the economy, in particular for energy security, as well as the defence industry. Despite this act, there are still ways where the Chinese companies were somehow allowed to invest in Polish infrastructure and industry creating a direct threat to the local business management, especially to SME companies. It can be seen in the trade data. Poland had the highest trade deficit with China of 22,4 bn USD in 2020 (Paszak, 2021). In this way, Chinese companies impact Poland’s business management as each is linked to the Chinese government. Table 1 below shows the influence of chosen Chinese companies in Poland in the period 2015-2022.

Tab 1. Chinese companies’ influence on business management in Poland in 2015-2022

Investor	Sector	Potential impact on business management	Comments
China Security&Fire	Security	Very high	National security at risk (Konsalnet was bought by 110m EUR)
Haier, Midea, Hisense	AGD, HVAC, electronic	High	plans to take over 35 existing AGD factories
Huawei, ZTE	Telecommunication	Very high	providing 5G infrastructure. Huawei was banned by Donald Trump in the USA
Hutchinson Ports (China Communications Construction Company (CCCC))	Maritime Industry and Infrastructure	Very high	Infrastructure construction in the seaport Gdynia
GLP, CGL	Logistics real estate	Very high	70% of the share in logistics real estate in Poland

The Belt and Road Initiative Organization, China Railway, ABII	Infrastructure and Transport	Very high	Project CPK – 8 bn EUR – live in 2028
Ningbo Tuopu Group, Geely	Automotive - electrical batteries and spare parts for electric vehicles, Izero EMP vehicles	High	The first plant of this company in Europe, The contract signed with ElectroMobility Poland (EMP)
Sinohydro	Infrastructure and Industry	Very high	Lublin-Chełm power transmission line, Wrocław's channel waterway system
Zhonglu Fruit Juice Co., Ltd	Food industry	High	The acquisition of Appol opened the way to the European market of fruit concentrates
AliExpress	Logistics	Very high	The regional logistic hub in Poland
Stecol	Infrastructure and Industry	Very high	Łódź bypass (S14), a section of A2 highway (Mińsk Mazowiecki-Siedlce), Rail Baltica (Czyżew-Białystok),
Nuctech	Electronics	Very High	Scanners placed on the Polish rail borders crossing, in the airports and seaports
Yifan Pharmaceuticals	Pharmaceuticals	High	Acquisition of the insulin producer Bioton
Sunningwell	Infrastructure and Industry	Very high	Acquisition of ISD Huta Częstochowa
Zhejiang XCC Group	Infrastructure and Industry (metal)	Very high	Acquisition of FŁT Group and trademarks from Boryszew Group
Tencent	Gaming Industry	High	Acquisition of Bloober Team, Cenega, Muve, QLOC

Source: author's compilation of the publicly accessed information about Chinese investment in Poland in 2015-2022

The optimal strategy is to keep in the loop a couple of the Asian players such as India and Japan and not just focus on China (the old proverb assigned to Miguel Cervantes is commonly used in business: *do not put all eggs in one basket*). In Poland, there were 3737 registered Chinese companies as of 10.01.2023 and 70% of them started their operations in Poland during 2015-2022. Besides that 80% of all Chinese companies are located in the Mazovia region (COIG, 2023). The most dangerous for the sovereignty of Polish business is the Chinese investment in the maritime industry and infrastructure because according to the Chinese Law Transportation Act 2017, the Chinese affiliate companies need to cooperate with the Chinese

army (Groeneveld and Pankowska, 2022). As can be seen from Table 1 companies in Poland are already dependent in many sectors on Chinese investments, especially in infrastructure and industry and the next step from electronic equipment and telecommunication infrastructure. The Chinese companies in Poland impact the value chains and the local business network. This creates a big challenge for Polish companies to protect their sensitive data and compete with Chinese products and services. Some of the Polish companies started to cooperate with Chinese partners but in the long run, they risk being taken over by the aggressive Chinese capital. On the other side, Polish companies are interested in the Chinese market but only 1% of Polish export of their goods goes to China (VSQUERE, 2018). It shows how difficult the process of investment in China could be for Polish companies and management of the business is strictly regulated by the Chinese government. Companies which want to enter the Chinese market have to transfer their know-how and technology. Additionally, a "Zero COVID" policy of the Chinese government made the operations activities for all foreign companies in China much more troublesome. Business management with China is very specific because Polish companies can do business in China only when they understand and accept *guanxi*, which means Chinese business network and relations as the fundament of business management. There are examples of Polish companies that managed to establish a business in China with the support of PAIH (The Polish Agency for Trade and Investment), but these companies are rather small and medium (e.g., Bella Farmacja or Miraculum) and they are not operating in strategic sectors in China using quite often e-commerce cross-borders platforms which some of them are controlled by the Chinese government. PAIH also placed a guide for Polish companies which want to enter the Chinese market on "The business in China. How to avoid the problems" (Pyffel, 2013). The Polish companies need to be also very vigilant in case of cyberattacks and data leaking of technology and patents which happens from China as well. This is also a potential threat impacting the business management of Polish companies. Another aspect that Polish companies need to face up is the high competitiveness of Chinese companies in Poland due to the subsidies received by Chinese companies from the Chinese government (Sarek, 2018).

A good example is how dominant the IT Chinese business is in Poland. Most mobile operators offer smartphones produced by Chinese companies which were not even known a couple of years ago. A similar situation is in the market chains like *Media Expert* dealing with the sales of domestic-use products such as lavatories, TVs, freezers etc. The majority of these products originate from China. Customers have a limited choice of production origin when buying technical equipment such as computers, smartphones, printers, TVs flat screens, etc. Another area is the textile business in Poland where Chinese exporters invested in the lots in the commercial galleries across Poland and move their textile goods from open-air bazaars to luxury commercial malls in major cities in Poland. These are tangible examples of how Chinese businesses can grow if there is a slot for them to step in. China is also active in international organizations such as WHO, IMF and others which also impacts business management on a global scale. Chinese banks (e.g., Bank of China, China Construction Bank, Haitong Group) are involved in BRI and managed to establish their branches in many countries worldwide to support a financing BRI globally.

3.2. The BRI's influence on the business through the international organizations

There are more than 25 United Nations agencies involved in the BRI including The World Bank Group, International Monetary Fund (IMF), The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others (UNEP, 2018). Besides these UN agencies, there are also Chinese banks involved as the main source of BRI's financing. The Chinese government through its involvement in international organizations in BRI managed to promote Chinese technology standards in international business (Paulson Institute, 2015). The mergers and acquisitions made in 2015-2022 helped China globally to access the latest technology projects and also the competitors' tender offers. It was possible mainly because as Chinese companies overtook foreign

companies quite often the management board was not changed but it was influenced by the Chinese owners. Another good example of BRI's influence on international organizations is China-IMF Capacity Development Center opened in 2018 to provide developing countries with macroeconomic training as well as training on sovereign debt management, to help countries with assessing their sustainable external debt financing capacity. Good examples are Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos. These countries went into a debt trap and the most extreme was Laos which borrowed from China a loan for a railway project equal to almost half of its annual GDP. The active involvement of China in the international trade blocks was also a good way for BRI implementation but BRI is not a trading bloc itself. It was even proved by *the Poisson model of bilateral trade* formulated by Santos Silva and Tenreyro (Silva and Tenreyro, 2006) that China became the main beneficiary of BRI by linking the trade blocks such as NAFTA, UE, and ASEAN+1 along the BRI (OECD, 2018). That is very smart for China to influence the business globally through different sides and levels along the BRI. In this sense, the BRI becomes the platform for promoting international trade with the application of its technology for better control of the trading partners. As the example can be RCEP Agreement in the Indo-Pacific region where China is using the quick response codes (QRs) technology for trading goods among the RCEP's members. It will boost the RCEP economy dominance where the main beneficiary is China (Lim, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the above data and the material presented the main conclusion is that China had a significant and rather negative influence on Polish business management sovereignty in 2015-2022. The BRI is sponsored by the Chinese government, so politics was highly involved in all investment projects. The main problem is still the lack of one common viewpoint on BRI project goals to be achieved by the decision and policymakers in the Polish government. The magnitude of the Chinese investments in critical infrastructure in Poland during the analysed period should be of big concern today. The author of the article accessed public data and information and the conclusions should give a trigger for the Polish government policymakers to revise the strategy of cooperation with China, especially in protecting Polish companies from Chinese investors who are the agents of CCP which is a threat to the global business. BRI projects can be considered as a potential debt trap which can lead to a problem for the involved countries in getting to insolvency or losing their sovereignty. The big issue is still corruption which China can take advantage of to benefit from that in the longer term. Polish business management is based heavily today on technology which is produced in China and additionally, through the practice of mergers and acquisitions (M&A), the Chinese government can much easier set up the strategy for its Chinese companies in Poland. The influence of that fact was presented in the case of Poland where the scanners produced in China were used for cross-border control and the transit of traded goods. It is needed to add that there is a business asymmetry which means that if a foreign company wants to start a business in China it needs to make a joint venture (JV) with a Chinese one and transfer its know-how and technology. Additionally, each Chinese company which operates abroad must have in its structure CCP members which can result also in a threat to foreign partners. Besides that, another important characteristic of BRI investment projects is the trade-off between time quality and cost. The actual costs on average are 30% higher than the business estimates which might influence the investment decisions of the governments to go for BRI (OECD, 2018). Another important conclusion is that China stepped into and keep trying to influence international organizations, especially UN agencies especially IMF launched in 2018 China-IMF Capacity Development Centre to help countries with assessing their sustainable external debt financing capacity in BRI. In this sense, the business becomes more influenced by politics and Chinese technology which can spy on the contract terms, solutions, and patents, having access to sensitive data of the companies not only in Poland. The conclusion has also

a military aspect. All of the infrastructure along BRI especially seaports, airports, and railways connecting different countries may be used also in a military sense by China.

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