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China's Dual Circulation Policy: Navigating Domestic Reform and Global Integration

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to academia by providing an in-depth analysis of China's "Dual Circulation" policy from various perspectives. Through qualitative research, this study aims to illustrate how China is achieving its objectives under the dual circulation policy by reforming the domestic market in tandem with external market cooperation, particularly with neighboring economies. By thoroughly examining existing literature, this article also aims to elucidate the rationale behind the dual circulation policy and its role in bolstering China's status as an independent, developed, and consumer-driven market both domestically and globally. Additionally, the DC policy is an integrated framework for China's development. Furthermore, this paper will explore the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) within the context of China's Dual Circulation policy and propose strategies for Pakistan to capitalize on this opportunity and attract more foreign investments.

Introduction

The last four decades of China's opening-up and deft economic development do not reveal that China only focuses on consistent economic growth; however, it is also considered to provide a promising atmosphere to regional and global economies. China has been developing its industries through technological transformation, drawing from developed economies, and bolstering its product supply. China has consistently met global demand by aligning with its comparative advantage and the global market environment. Opening its domestic niche market to a larger scale has been a transformative move. In response to financial crises, international market crashes, trade disputes, and the COVID-19 pandemic, China has adjusted its policies to reduce dependence on international circulation, which had previously led to a decline in economic development. While international circulation had facilitated substantial foreign direct investment, international trade, and cross-border transactions, China's exceptional growth was also driven by domestic circulation, characterized by significant savings, substantial private sector investment, extensive infrastructure development, a skilled workforce, and a development-friendly political system.

The Chinese government introduced the dual circulation policy in 2020, is a strategic economic initiative designed to bolster China's global economic standing while fostering domestic economic growth. President Xi Jinping has succinctly outlined the concept as having two dimensions: internal circulation and external circulation, as well as the management of sources for demand, both internal and external. President Xi has underscored the significance of harnessing domestic resources to drive technological innovation and achieve self-sufficiency in critical sectors for China. Embedded within China's long-term economic plan, the dual circulation strategy was officially incorporated into the 14th Five-Year Plan during the second meeting session on March 4, 2021, solidifying its pivotal role in China's economic blueprint. This policy relies on internal and external circulation, with internal circulation focusing on boosting domestic consumption and production through investment in infrastructure and innovation. In contrast, external circulation opens up the market to foreign investments and trade relations. The objective is to create a more sustainable Chinese economy less reliant on external sources. The Chinese leadership is planning to set up a “dual circulation” policy to enhance China’s development by protecting the domestic market from the global supply bottleneck that China faced during the epidemic, and the USA trade war, especially in the technology sector (García-Herrero, 2021). The Chinese government has implemented this policy to strengthen the Chinese economy against external shocks and to leverage the domestic market in order to achieve

global leadership in contemporary technologies (Grieger, 2020). According to (Prasad, 2009), the dual circulation framework represents a strategic balance between internal and external economic processes, allowing China to adapt to both threats and opportunities on a global scale. If the international community shows little interest in engaging with China, the country will shift its focus to internal resources to sustain its progress. Sheng also emphasizes the significance of the United States and China as global powers and the necessity for them to collaborate under the dual circulation policy to accomplish common objectives. He further suggests that only time will reveal which nation can better adapt to changing circumstances. The "dual circulation" policy aims to bolster China's domestic economy and reduce its reliance on the global market. In addition, while previous efforts focused on decreasing China's dependence on exports, the dual-circulation strategy seeks to lessen its reliance on imports and challenge the dominance of the United States. This approach highlights the central importance of domestic economic circulation, with international economic circulation supporting and enhancing domestic development. While the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) remains a key part of China's international development and cooperation strategy, the implementation of the Dual Circulation Development Paradigm represents a strategic response to evolving challenges and the current economic environment in China (Huang, 2016; Yifu & Wang, 2022).

China Dual Circulation Policy and the World

After the announcement of China's dual circulation policy, there was a lively debate among global economists and academic experts. Some expressed concerns about the potential decoupling from the world that could result from this strategy, while others lauded and carefully analyzed China's long-term 2025 "Made in China" policy. They also highlighted China's gradual journey toward economic success since its opening up, emphasizing China's win-win policy.

President Xi also emphasized the importance of promoting a large-scale and seamless domestic economic circulation to attract global resources, meet domestic needs, advance industrial and technological development, and cultivate new advantages in global economic cooperation and competition. He summarized the strategy as a combination of the 'external circulation' of global demand with the 'internal circulation' of domestic demand. Additionally, China's five-year Dual Circulation plan indicates a potential increase in competition with the United States for dominance in future technologies.

Through this strategy, China suggests that we are entering a period where international connections and relations will be more focused on enhancing global power rather than collaboration for economic efficiency.

The dual circulation policy has sparked significant interest among economists and researchers. Some countries perceive it as a potential threat to their economies, expressing concerns about diminished global trade opportunities and increased protectionism (García-Herrero, 2021). Critics contend that the policy could further solidify China's dominance in specific industries, potentially creating imbalances and barriers to fair competition. Professor Lawrence J. Lau, a respected figure in the field, also argues that complete isolation and total self-sufficiency for China through this policy are impractical and unwise. He believes that distancing from international cooperation and trade would likely lead to limited access to essential resources, technology, and markets, resulting in a significant decline in China's real standard of living. However, Professor Lawrence also anticipates that China will be able to effectively navigate the dual circulation policy over time through a combination of structural reforms, technological advancements, and strategic investments.

Countries have varied responses to China's dual circulation policy. While some view it as a means to enhance economic cooperation and trade opportunities with China, others are cautious. Those interested in expanding their market access to China's growing domestic consumption see the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships. For instance, countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are keen on strengthening economic ties with China. The global response to China's dual circulation policy is multifaceted, contingent upon the perspectives and interests of different countries and regions. The long-term implications of this policy on global trade dynamics continue to evolve and warrant further observation.

China Dual Circulation Policy Outcomes

The core projected outcome of this strategy lies in prioritizing domestic production, innovation, and self-sufficiency (Collins, 2021). It seeks to transform China into an advanced manufacturing hub, establish China-centric global production networks that multinational corporations depend on, develop an international financial network based on the Yuan, and potentially evolve China into a military-technological powerhouse. Similarly, (Yifu & Wang, 2022), documented that the objective of the paradigm is to enable a substantial advancement in industrial upgrading, leading to an enhanced

domestic circulation of superior quality and an elevated level of international circulation.

Before implementing China's dual circulation policy, the country's economic development model was primarily focused on export-led growth and attracting foreign direct investment. China relied heavily on exports to drive its economic growth, which led to a strong manufacturing sector and trade surplus with other countries. However, the global economic slowdown and trade tensions with the United States highlighted the vulnerability of this export-oriented model. China realized the need to rebalance its economy and reduce its reliance on external demand. In response, China introduced the dual circulation policy in 2020. This policy aims to shift the focus towards domestic consumption and innovation as the main drivers of economic growth while maintaining a certain level of openness to the global market. The dual circulation policy represents a strategic shift in China's economic development model, aiming for balanced and sustainable growth with a greater focus on domestic demand, innovation, and self-reliance.

At present, it remains premature to conclusively evaluate whether China has attained all the objectives of its dual circulation policy. The policy was announced in 2020, and its implementation is an ongoing process, not an overnight change. However, some notable developments and progress have been made in certain areas. Efforts to boost domestic consumption include income tax cuts, incentives for household spending, and support for e-commerce platforms. Domestic supply chains have been strengthened by promoting domestic manufacturing and reducing dependence on foreign imports, especially in the technology and automotive sectors. China's focus on technological innovation has led to significant advancements in areas like AI, 5G, 6G (According to Liu Liehong, the chairman of China Unicom, the company plans to finish technical research and explore early application scenarios for 6G technology by 2025.), electric vehicles, and renewable energy (Yuan, Zhao, Zong, & Parolari, 2020).

This text does not provide specific trading fact figures for China after the dual circulation policy. It gives deep insight by exploring pertinent literature that China has been actively pursuing trade diversification strategies, such as expanding trade ties with other Asian economies, strengthening economic partnerships through initiatives like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and exploring new markets in Africa and Latin America. However, the full impact of the policy will take time to materialize and depend on sustained efforts, external factors, and ongoing adjustments. Comprehensive assessment requires longer-term monitoring and analysis.

Dual Circulation Policy and BRI

The BRI, initially launched in 2013, is an ambitious development strategy focused on connectivity and cooperation among various countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The initiative promotes infrastructure development, trade, and cultural exchanges, among other areas of cooperation. China has tapped into its abundant domestic resources to fuel the pursuit of its international objectives under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By leveraging its vast reserves of capital, manpower, technology, and raw materials, China has supported the extensive infrastructure development, connectivity projects, and investments across participating countries. This strategic utilization of domestic resources has facilitated China's ability to drive economic growth, enhance regional connectivity, and strengthen its geopolitical influence through the BRI (Jamali, Westcott, & Verma, 2024). The Belt and Road Initiative is a strategic endeavor to foster cooperation among countries along the route and achieve shared development and prosperity. It encompasses a comprehensive and adaptable strategy, demonstrating its wide-ranging capacity for strategic planning and successful execution (Liang & Zhang, 2019). In line with this, The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also documented that the BRI has significantly impacted the global landscape of trade, investment, and finance, creating notable changes and opportunities in these domains.

The dual circulation strategy is a part of China's overall plan for self-sustainability in resources, technology, and demand. It aims to leverage the vast domestic market of China and third-world economic markets as facilitated by the Belt and Road Initiative. The "dual circulation" policy is anticipated to boost external demand, particularly in the event of Western restraint. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is expected to gain greater significance as it plays a crucial role in expanding external demand and facilitating the establishment of open markets in emerging nations (García-Herrero, 2021). Moreover, the implementation of China's "Dual Circulation Strategy" will likely have consequences for the direction of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects (Tan, 2022). Further, the BRI mainly focused on shifting infrastructure to three vital areas-digital technology, public health, and environment-friendly energy development. Similarly, the United Nations (UN) also emphasized China's improvement in ecological equipment and reported that the top five exporters of green goods collectively contributed to more than half of global green goods exports. China ranked as the leading exporter, with a market share of 23% percent, followed by Germany at 14%, the United States at 8%, Japan at 6%, and Italy at 4% (UN, 2022). The dual circulation strategy aims to support China's domestic demand and upgrade the supply chain through inward

foreign direct investment (FDI) and technology improvements. It seeks to strengthen China's ecosystem and export markets by diversifying imports from developed to emerging economies. Belt and Road Initiative investments and the development of China's digital commercial capabilities facilitate the strategy. In October 2023, “One Belt One Road” BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) China’s Foreign Policy strategic project completed 10 years, and Chinese President Xi initiated a new chapter of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's significant global infrastructure and development project, aimed at boosting the country's economic integration and global influence. More than 150 countries gathered in Beijing to sign BRI agreements with China, and Chinese investors already invested around one trillion US Dollars in the last 10 years. China launched this project for mutual prosperity as China said, “China can only do well when the world is doing well. When China does well, the world gets even better” (Ali, 2020).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy project aimed at strengthening China's global connectivity. It combines new and existing projects, covers an expansive geographic scope, and includes efforts to improve physical and societal infrastructure alongside fostering meaningful connections from people to people (Shahriar & Luong, 2023). As of October 2023, the plan spans 151 countries with a combined gross domestic product of \$41 trillion and impacts approximately 5.1 billion individuals. So, China is enhancing trading partners and investments around the globe; recent figures are below (Zeng, 2019).

The Belt and Road Initiative



151 partner countries

5.1
billion

Combined population of all countries involved in BRI

\$41
trillion

Combined GDP of all countries involved in BRI

\$2.8
trillion

Trade between China and BRI countries in 2021

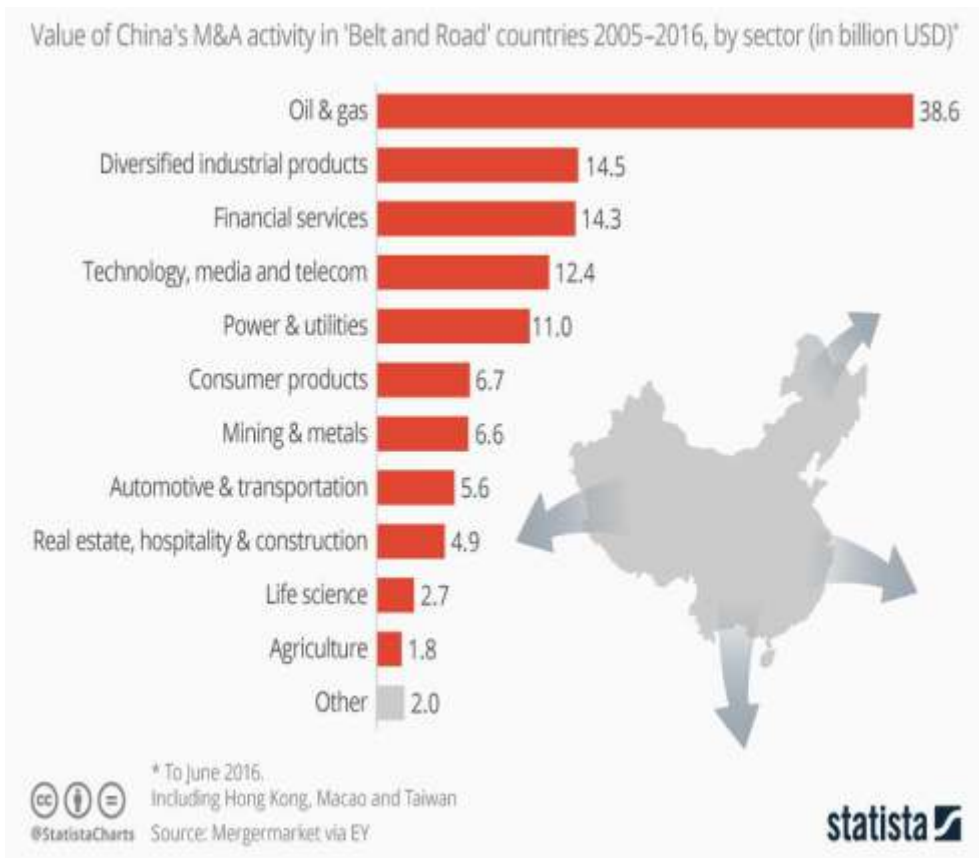
\$1
trillion

Total value of investments and construction projects in BRI countries

Based on data available in October 2023.

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China is actively pursuing collaborating with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partner countries in the aerospace and aviation sectors. Through the BRI, China aims to enhance cooperation and exchanges in these industries, fostering the development of global aerospace and aviation capabilities (Chan & Song, 2020). China seeks partnerships to jointly develop cutting-edge technologies in aerospace and improve aircraft production and air traffic management. This mutually beneficial cooperation offers advanced technologies and expertise to participating countries while boosting economic development and promoting innovation. China's focus on aerospace and aviation aligns with its broader goals of connectivity and economic integration among BRI partner countries, working together to overcome challenges and promote sustainable development. The following chart also illustrates the sector-wise value chain of China's M&A (mergers and acquisitions) activity in countries involved in the 'Belt and Road' initiative from 2005 to 2016.



Furthermore, according to a recent white paper issued by China's State Council Information Office, China has signed bilateral air transport agreements with 104 Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partner countries (Costa, 2020). Additionally, the country has established direct flights with 57 partner countries to facilitate seamless cross-border transport. These agreements and direct flight connections are aimed at enhancing connectivity and promoting easier travel between China and its BRI partners, further contributing to the overall objectives of the initiative.

The 2023 Seminar for Agricultural and Rural Development Officials from Developing Countries has assembled officials from developing nations enthusiastic about applying the knowledge gained during the seminar to promote agricultural development in their regions (Petry, 2023). Pakistani representatives have also recognized the significant progress in their hometowns due to the positive influence of the Belt and Road Initiative. BRI aims to bring prosperity and modernization everywhere through Chinese neighborhood diplomacy. Lately, Yaseen Anwar, former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, stated that China's financial sector is transforming towards

fin-tech, green finance, and sustainability (Lai, Lin, & Sidaway, 2020). Anwar also commended the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), highlighting its significance in providing financial access for emerging economies and the global south.

Dual Circulation Policy and CPEC

The CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) is a significant infrastructure and development initiative designed to establish a connection between China's western region, specifically through the city of Kashgar, and the Gwadar Port in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan. This project is an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and is anticipated to have a transformative impact on Pakistan's infrastructure and economy. Notably, CPEC is viewed as a means for China to expand its economic influence in the region and enhance regional connectivity, thereby strengthening both domestic and international circulation. Given Pakistan's strategic partnership with "China's One Belt and One Road" and its involvement in the CPEC, the country stands to benefit from numerous opportunities to attract Chinese investment in digital technology and green energy (Mahmood, 2023). Chinese think tank experts have emphasized that China's approach to gaining power is both direct and sustainable. They have encouraged Pakistan to pursue a similar path, with a focus on reducing poverty, advancing state modernization, and uplifting its people. They have also pointed out that while the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has primarily concentrated on connectivity, the future lies in IT and artificial intelligence (AI). They have highlighted that the US has imposed sanctions on China due to its progress in semiconductors, but the Chinese think tank has expressed confidence in Chinese companies' ability to produce semiconductors through persistent efforts. Additionally, they have stated that the updated version of CPEC will include IT development and advanced technological collaboration. They have emphasized that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has linked 150 countries based on China's principles of friendly relations, mutual benefits, inclusiveness, and neighborhood diplomacy. Furthermore, they have stressed the importance of modernization within this framework.

Dual Circulation Policy and Pakistan

The dual circulation policy aims to strengthen domestic consumption in China, which can create opportunities for Pakistani exports, which is vital for the Pakistani economy in the current situation. As China focuses on expanding its consumer market, there can be an increased demand for Pakistani goods and services, boosting Pakistan's export oriented. Further, this policy includes substantial investments in infrastructure projects through initiatives like the

BRI and the CPEC. These projects can help Pakistan address its infrastructure deficit, improve connectivity, and enhance trade links with China and other regions. This, in turn, can attract foreign investment and promote economic growth. The investments under the dual circulation policy can generate employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce. Infrastructure projects like the CPEC can create jobs in construction and related industries such as logistics, manufacturing, and services, which can contribute to overall economic development in Pakistan. It also underlines innovation-led growth and lures opportunities for Pakistan to collaborate more with Chinese companies and institutions in research and development, technology transfer, and knowledge sharing. Such collaborations can enhance Pakistan's technological capabilities and improve its economic competitiveness.

It is important to note that the benefits of China's dual circulation policy for Pakistan depend on several factors, such as effective implementation, policy coordination, addressing potential challenges, and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits. However, the potential for mutual economic cooperation and prosperity between China and Pakistan under this policy framework is significant.

It is important to note that Pakistan should realize these benefits need effective implementation, eradication of barriers such as security concerns, ensuring transparency, and equitable distribution of the benefits among different regions and communities within Pakistan; these are vital to eliminating to attract foreign investors. CPEC has the potential. However, it also requires prideful passion for country economy to impact Pakistan's economy significantly. However, it also requires a prideful passion for the country's economic growth, careful planning, coordination, and long-term sustainable development strategies.

Conclusion

The dual circulation policy in China is a part of President Xi Jinping's vision for economic and social development. It is seen as a way for Xi to leave his imprint on China's policy discourse and shape the direction of the country's growth for the next three decades. The policy highlights the importance of domestic consumption and innovation-driven growth alongside increased integration with the global economy. Xi Jinping aims to ensure China's long-term economic stability and reduce its dependence on external factors by emphasizing the need for a robust domestic market and self-reliance. This policy is significant in reflecting President Xi's leadership aspirations and

desire to shape China's development trajectory in line with that of former Chinese leaders.

In conclusion, China's dual circulation policy and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) relationship are closely intertwined. The dual circulation strategy emphasizes enhancing domestic consumption and innovation-driven growth while maintaining integration with the global economy. This aligns with the objectives of the BRI, which seeks to promote economic connectivity and infrastructure development across partner countries. The dual circulation policy aims to boost domestic demand and reduce China's dependence on external factors, which aligns with the BRI's goal of creating more balanced and sustainable trade relationships. Through the BRI, China has signed bilateral air transport agreements and established direct flights with partner countries to facilitate cross-border transport and enhance connectivity. Both initiatives reflect China's aspirations for long-term economic stability and growth, positioning China as a global player in shaping the discourse on economic development. The dual circulation policy and the BRI further showcase China's determination to establish strong economic and trade ties with partner countries, contributing to the overall objective of building a community of shared future for mankind and global prosperity.

In conclusion, China's dual circulation policy, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are interconnected in their goals and objectives. The dual circulation policy bolsters domestic consumption and innovation-led growth while maintaining integration with the global economy. This aligns with the CPEC, a major component of the BRI, which aims to enhance connectivity, infrastructure development, and economic cooperation between China and Pakistan.

The CPEC, as a flagship project of the BRI, plays a crucial role in fostering economic integration and development in the region. It includes infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, ports, and energy projects, which are vital for promoting trade, investment, and regional connectivity. The dual circulation policy, combined with the CPEC, facilitates economic linkages between China and Pakistan, promoting trade, investment, and exchanging ideas. It provides opportunities for both countries to strengthen their bilateral relationship and achieve shared prosperity. The BRI serves as a platform for China to expand its influence and shape the discourse on global economic development. It fosters a community of shared futures by promoting connectivity, trade, and collaboration among participating countries.

As part of the BRI, the dual circulation policy and the CPEC contribute to this objective by enhancing regional economic integration, creating jobs, and

improving living standards. These initiatives underscore China's commitment to long-term economic stability, sustainable development, and engagement with its regional and global partners. They present opportunities for mutual benefits and contribute to the socio-economic progress of China, Pakistan, and other participating countries in the BRI.

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