

## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to provide an in-depth analysis on the projected nature of China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative through Chinese engagement in Eastern Europe, with a particular focus on Serbia. The current geopolitical situation provides a unique opportunity for the use of the Heartland Theory, first presented by Halford John Mackinder in 1904, which outlines and justifies state expansion across Eurasia.

The main objectives of this thesis are to discuss possible outcomes for Serbia following increased Chinese investment and to provide a recommendation for a European response. Being an adjacent nation of the Heartland, a potential future member of the European Union, and currently balanced between Europe's and China's pull, Serbia has become a unique and important state to consider when assessing China's intentions in Europe. China's continued economic and political rise in recent years has allowed them to become influential in nations previously untethered to China, and has ominously begun to follow the footsteps that Mackinder had predicted a century prior. Although the theory suggests a nation's intent to rule the world, which one could argue China is pursuing, the aim of this thesis is in fact to uncover and illustrate the effects that China's potential advance to world domination will have on Serbia's aspirations to join the European Union (EU).

Through this analysis, Chinese intentions in Serbia are more clearly realized and additional context is provided to the global debate about China's role in Serbia and neighbouring nations. In concluding, a justification for a unified response by Europe to counter Chinese global aspirations is provided in an effort to limit the consequences and effects of Chinese investment.