Recently, China announced its Digital Silk Road as a component of its Belt and Road Initiative. The Digital Silk Road plans to span across many countries and uses Chinese investment to positively affect the countries it invests in while expanding China’s economic influence. The purpose of the Digital Silk Road is to develop digital infrastructure in countries that currently lack it by using Chinese companies and technology. Some countries which have already agreed to be part of the Digital Silk Road include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Thailand, Laos, Serbia, and the United Arab Emirates, and more countries will likely join as China continues to promote this initiative.

Chinese involvement in the development of digital infrastructure poses risks both to the security of the nation’s digital data as well as threatens the freedom of speech through potential establishment of Chinese digital censorship mechanisms. As the Digital Silk Road spreads, it will also affect the global cybersecurity environment. Therefore, it is important to anticipate which countries will be most likely to join the Digital Silk Road in order to understand the risks of the initiative and act preemptively to counter Chinese influence.

This analysis will attempt to understand the likelihood of countries accepting greater Chinese investment in digital infrastructure, surveillance and censorship technology, and the Chinese concept of “cyber sovereignty.” The countries which decide to join the Digital Silk Road are also those which will be adopting the greatest risks of Chinese interference.

In order to assess the likelihood of countries accepting investment as part of the Digital Silk Road, this map looks at internet penetration rates, internet freedom, perceptions of public sector corruption, Chinese global investment, and country GDP.

**Research Questions:**
- Which countries are at highest risk to adopt all of the aspects of the Digital Silk Road?
- Which countries are most likely to accept investment from the Digital Silk Road?
- Which countries are most likely to adopt Chinese surveillance and censorship technology?

The final map highlights which countries are most likely to adopt all aspects of the Digital Silk Road and therefore are most likely to face security risks from Chinese access to their information, as well as align themselves with Chinese cyber sovereignty. The countries most at risk are also ranked in the table to the right. The countries that have the highest risk are concentrated throughout Southeast Asia, through the Middle East, East Africa, and Eastern Europe, as well as some areas in South America. These are the countries that China has been focusing on so the map aligns with previous expectations.

Some limitation of this analysis are that many datasets only looked at a limited number of countries so unfortunately many countries were left out of this analysis. Additionally, aspects like corruption are hard to quantify and may be subjective. Countries that join the Digital Silk Road are not the only ones affected by their involvement — it will likely impact the security of the countries that interact with them and the more countries who adopt Chinese surveillance and censorship technology, the greater impact this will have on privacy and freedom of speech around the world. As many of the countries at highest risk have already joined the Digital Silk Road, this analysis provides a list of countries that should be watched as China seeks to increase its access to the internet worldwide.