



## China's Business and Politics in the Middle East: Energy Security Approach

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine Chinese business and politics in the Middle East in order to investigate the following: What are China's goals and interests in the Middle East? Does China have no other concerns outside pursuing economic interests in the region? The United States have criticized China's Middle East policy, arguing that China is simply pursuing energy interests there and acting egotistically to boost its own economic interests as huge "free rider." Is China acting as a "free rider" in the Middle East? This study used a qualitative data collection method based on secondary data sources. The result and discussion showed that China is making efforts to protect its energy supply in in order to secure rapid growth and a peaceful Middle East. China's key interests in the Middle East include energy security, geostrategic objectives, external connections to internal stability, and strengthened great power status. Beijing wants to control access to energy and other resources, counterbalance American influence without openly opposing it, discourage material and public support for China's Uighur minority, and win formal and informal recognition from countries in the Middle East that it is a major power. Middle Eastern countries make up five of the top ten oil suppliers to China as of Auguts 2018, and Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Oman, and Kuwait account for the following percentages of China's imports: 10.7% of the world GDP, 10.5% of Iraq's, 7.8% of Iran, 7.4 of Oman, and 5.8% of Kuwait.

**Keywords:** *China's Middle East; China's Business; China's Politics; Energy Security*

### **Introduction**

The rise of China as a global superpower predicts that it would dominate superpower status in the twenty-first century by maintaining leverage over global politics, economics, and military affairs (Moniruzzaman, 2013). China did shift between 2015 and 2017. The country became more aggressive both at home and abroad under President Xi Jinping. Xi openly and unabashedly stated China's determination to restore its historical legacy as a world leader and a key player in regional affairs (Hass, 2021). Many international relations researchers "think that a developing China, especially one that is autocratic, will wish to rewrite the norms of the current international order, not accommodate itself," according to the China expert Tom Christensen (2015).

Concerns about escalating geostrategic rivalry between the United States and China were fueled by Xi's reference to China's global ambitions, which included an unclear but clear military component.

Under President Xi, China has become more forceful, which is a change from former years. China has previously stood out for its self-awareness and prudence. China appeared to have embraced the value of keeping its ascent quiet, maybe more so than any other growing power in the last several centuries (Hass, 2021). However, some argue that China's rise poses a threat to American hegemony and a challenge to it, and that China will eventually surpass the USA militarily and strategically (Moniruzzaman, 2013). Both China and the countries of the Middle East have significant economic potential, which might be considered as complementary. Middle Eastern countries have recently expressed an interest in China's development trajectory and experience. They recognize China's potential to play a larger role in economic governance in Middle Eastern countries, given the region's complex and dynamic regional structure. (ZOU & AHMED, 2016).

Understanding China's interactions with the variety of countries that make up the modern Middle East has become more crucial as the People's Republic of China emerges as a power with global power and influence, according to Gordon Houlden and Nouredin M. Zaamout (2019) in "A new great power engages with the Middle East: China's Middle East balancing approach." Andrew Scobell and Alireza Nader (2017) begin their paper, "China in the Middle East: The wary dragon," with an appraisal of China's presence in the region by briefly mentioning the Belt Road Initiative (BRI). A thorough examination of how China develops its relationships with the region's nations. Examining China's Middle East objectives and plans. Examining the interplay between politics, the economy, and security with a particular focus on China's ties to Saudi Arabia and Iran. It then analyzes the US-China rivalry in the Middle East to see if there are any prospects for future cooperation or if the antagonism is simply getting more intense. This report explains that China's key draws in the region are its economic interests, efforts to balance its domestic, international, and security policies, and particularly its growing reliance on energy resources. Beijing's Middle East strategy was incorporated into a vast and extremely ambitious attempt to develop the BRI linking China to the Middle East and beyond with President Xi Jinping's official introduction of it in September 2013 (Scobell & Nader, 2017).

This study analysis China's business and politics in the Middle East in order to explore the following question: What Interests and Objectives of China in the Middle East? Does China only seeking economic interests from the region and caring about nothing else? In recent years, Western nations, particularly the United States, have relentlessly criticized China's Middle East policy, claiming that China is simply pursuing energy interests there and acting egotistically to further its own economic interests as a major "free rider." Is China in the Middle East a "free rider"? Simply blaming the United States for causing the upheaval in the region is insufficient; we also need a stronger, more active response that includes taking concrete steps (ZOU & AHMED, 2016). This study used a qualitative data collection method based on secondary data sources. Researchers argues that China's key interests in the Middle East include energy security, strategic and economic goals, links to related to political stability, and improved great power status. Beijing seeks to control over access to energy and other resources, to neutralize American influence without publicly contesting it, to prevent information and support from the public for China's Uighur minority, and achieve formal and informal recognition from countries in the Middle East that it is a major power.

### **China's Interests in the Middle East**

Alterman, J. B. (2009) in "China's Soft Power in the Middle East" In C. McGiffert (Ed.), *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) explained China's interest in the Middle East is shaped by its energy needs. The intention of China's engagement in the Middle East, according to M. S. Olimat (2010) in "The Political Economy of the Sino-Middle Eastern Relations," is energy security rather than damaging American interests there. The GCC states require a stable energy market for their economic development because energy is their main industry, and the rapid economic development in China has raised the need for energy. Energy cooperation becomes the focal point of bilateral economic

cooperation, as evidenced through trade, investments, and infrastructure construction (CHEN, 2011). In "Rise of China and Its Implications for the Muslim World," Moniruzzaman, M. (2013), made reference to how economically dominant China will cause a shift in the political power structure from the West to the East, bringing about a change in culture. China will be heavily dependent on the petroleum resources of the world's oil-rich nations to maintain its economic, military, and technological development. Second, in order to preserve its strategic and military dominance in the region, China will employ the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a tool. Energy, trade, military sales, culture, and political relationships with significant Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Algeria, and the United Arab Emirates are underlined. China's bilateral relations with each of these countries are founded on a fundamental factor that determines the country's interest in the region (Olimat, 2013).

Wei, M. (2017) noted that infrastructure is not only a priority of the BRI but also a key element of the productivity collaboration between China and the Middle East in "China-Middle East Cooperation in the Field of Infrastructure under the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative." In the early years following China's reforms and opening up to the outside world, as well as when China was integrated into the global economy and engaged in international collaboration, the Middle East was one of the regions that had been cooperating with China. China has a strong basis and expertise working with the Middle East on infrastructure projects. The economics of China's dependence on the GCC are examined in "China-Gulf Economic Relationship under the Belt and Road Initiative" by Qian, X., and Fulton, J. (2017). An examination of the characteristics of the political-economic interaction is done first, with a focus on trade, investment, infrastructure development, and energy. The process of formalizing these connections through the ongoing China-GCC Free Trade Agreement negotiations is then covered. It then looks at how GCC participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative can strengthen this economic partnership. The success of the BRI depends on collaboration with the GCC countries to supply China's energy demands and safeguard the Arabian Peninsula's sea routes, which are essential for international trade. The GCC governments are revising their strategic vision in response to the 2011 Arab Uprisings, which is changing the region's conventional security architecture. China has been mentioned as a potential partner by the Gulf states, who are adamant about expanding their strategic alliances. But if Beijing's involvement in the Middle East grows, so will its control over regional politics (Abdul Ghaffar, 2018).

In "China and the Middle East: A Global Strategy Where the Middle East has a Significant but Limited Place," Niblock (2020) noted that there has been a great deal of speculation, in particular, about whether China is attempting to displace the United States as a major provider of security for some Middle Eastern states and regimes. Whether the United States will scale back its involvement in the region and whether Middle Eastern states will look for a different guarantor are two important factors that will undoubtedly affect this. However, it also heavily hinges on China's willingness and ability to take on such a role. Such an evaluation needs to start with a knowledge of the dynamics of China's global strategy and how the Middle East links to the framework around which the strategy is formed. Although China's relationship with Middle Eastern nations is important, it is not as important as the interests that the Chinese government considers to be most important.

According to Cipto (2022) in "China's diplomacy in the Islamic world," the desire to develop connections with developing countries has made contacts with the Muslim world unavoidable because many of them have oil and gas deposits. The Islamic world benefits from China's large demand for natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Relations with Islamic countries increased significantly amid Western distrust of Muslim countries. It is appropriate to investigate China's diplomacy in the Islamic world given that, on the one hand, Western countries use an ideological approach in their diplomacy with the Islamic world, whereas China is a moderate and pragmatic participant in dealing with the Islamic world. Because of the contrasting approaches taken by the West and China in dealing with the Islamic world, diplomacy applied in the Islamic world makes a significant contribution to current and future international relations. China's diplomatic contacts with the Islamic world in the Middle East and North Africa began in Egypt in 1956, and other Islamic countries in the region followed suit, according to

Erzsébet N. Rózsa in "China's Interests in the Middle East and North Africa," a book by Bambang Cipto. In keeping with the establishment of its "Turn East" policy in the Middle East and North Africa, China is pushing west through the BRI. The BRI initiative also highlights Muslim-majority nations in Central Asia that were free of Russian hegemony during the Cold War. In contrast, Muslim nations in South and Southeast Asia require investment at a time when the West has just recently recovered from the global recession of 2008. This most recent book by Bambang Cipto, which was released in 2022, investigates how China's diplomacy has affected the Islamic world as a whole (Cipto, 2022).

### **Theoretical Approach to Energy Security**

Two competing theoretical frameworks in the field that are relevant to China's Middle Eastern energy policy are realism and liberal institutional approaches. Realists believe China will take all necessary steps to ensure its access to Middle Eastern energy resources. The other nations in the system, notably the waning hegemon, may start to view China as a rising security threat as a result of China's attempts to utilize its growing influence to change the laws and institutions of the international system in order to better serve its interests. They predicted that these changes would result in conflict, mistrust, and tension, which are typical effects of a power transition (Ikenberry, 2008). The assumption in the realist perspective that China will conduct a confrontational foreign policy toward rivals in the Middle East rather than cooperate within extant institutional frameworks to ensure its energy security is possibly the most disturbing aspect of the theory (Alterman & Garver, 2008). But a careful examination of China's energy policies in the Middle East would show otherwise. China is using the pre-existing, "Western" institutions to meet its energy needs. Another component of a realism approach is the implicit expectation that there will be some coercion in contacts between China and the Middle East. If one were to examine the relationships between the two, they would find that countries that produce oil are much more inclined than China itself to participate in the region's oil markets (Olimat, 2010).

China is aware of the worries that Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, and other states have regarding security difficulties in the Middle East. Therefore, based on the tenets that govern its foreign policy, which include territorial integrity, sovereignty, peaceful coexistence, a harmonious foreign policy, and a peaceful rise, China supports a regional security arrangement that would ensure the security and territorial integrity of all regional actors (Olimat, 2010). China's involvement in the Middle East's economic governance has improved the region's economic climate and trade terms, boosted those nations' potential for sustainable development, and replied to Western accusations accusing China of being a free rider with workable solutions. China's involvement in the economic governance of the Middle East contrasts with the Western countries and highlights its distinctive traits in terms of governance aims, capabilities, pathways, regimes, contents, and governance styles. China's participation in Middle Eastern economic governance has increased thanks to the "Belt and Road" Initiative. The degree and outcome of China's involvement in Middle Eastern economic governance are influenced by a variety of factors (ZOU & AHMED, 2016).

President Xi Jinping noted in a speech on January 21, 2016, delivered at the Arab League headquarters, that "unrest in the Middle East roots in the development, and the eventual resolution also depends on growth." The foundation of Middle Eastern economic governance is the promotion of regional governance reform through collaboration between internal and external parties, the resolution of issues arising from the transformation and growth of the region's economy, and the nudge of regional economies toward the path of sound and sustainable development. Even if the interests of all parties inside and outside the Middle East are aligned with peace, stability, progress, and prosperity there, the region frequently struggles to fulfill its governance goals. Therefore, global cooperative governance is essential. Stability, peace, growth, and prosperity would occur naturally in this region if the United Nations and relevant nations created the right conditions to resolve conflicts and difficulties in the Middle Eastern countries. China has increasingly increased its involvement in economic administration in the Middle East

as a result of large-scale energy imports, diverse economic contacts, the combination of power ambitions, and the current diplomatic transformation (ZOU & AHMED, 2016).

According to liberal theories of international relations, increased interdependence should push Chinese leaders to abandon military instruments of statecraft in favor of diplomacy, markets, and membership in international organizations. The realist viewpoint would emphasize how China's expanding energy dependence creates vulnerability. Realism predicts a desire to build military assets capable of defending important marine channels of communication, particularly the Malacca Strait, through which 80 percent of the country's oil imports pass. Another piece of evidence supporting the realism approach is a shown propensity to interfere militarily in oil-producing countries. Beijing is reportedly using political, diplomatic, and economic influence to secure long-term energy supplies from a variety of sources, according to evidence from Chinese actions around the world (Ziegler, 2006). The Middle East continues to be the primary source for China's international energy cooperation and development when compared to Central Asia, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and West Africa (Pan, 2008).

## ***Result and Discussions***

### **China's Political Economy and Development**

China is making efforts to secure its energy supply in order to ensure the quick growth of its economy and to secure a calm Middle East. Due to their long-standing cultural links, the Arabs and the Chinese have always had strong cultural relations, but both sides continue to work to deepen these ties through a range of initiatives, such as student exchange programs and exhibitions. The two sides have strong communication and are establishing typical state-to-state interactions. The era of Chinese neutrality in the Middle East is over given the intense global competition for Middle Eastern oil. In order to ensure its own energy security, China will take a more active role in the region. China's lack of a political orientation is its main advantage in the Middle East region. She is encouraged to take up her role in world affairs and do her best to foster a new, more humane kind of globalization (Daher, 2009).

The Middle East has always had a volatile condition, and the conflicts there have been quite complicated. In the Middle East, the major oil firms and the superpowers of the world fought for profit. Due to the expanding globalization, the competition became more intense (Xuewen QIAN, 2010). Oil from the Middle East is a key strategic resource for large nations' economic growth and national power. Therefore, the United States, the European Union, Russia, and Japan made every effort to pursue their own strategic interests in Middle Eastern energy, and as a result, the Middle East has been deeply impacted by their political, economic, and military actions. The four nations worked to keep others from interfering with their own orbit because they were concerned about China and other nations' energy cooperation in their orbit. The United States' measures were particularly notable in this regard. China's energy cooperation with Middle Eastern oil-producing nations has traditionally been seen by the United States as a challenge to its global and energy policies (Xuewen QIAN, 2010). Therefore, the United States has long viewed China's energy cooperation in the Middle East region with a policy of containment and exclusion. Furthermore, Western nations—including Japan, which has a Western orientation—sought and exploited their own advantages in accordance with their strategies. They erected barriers to China's collaboration with the Middle East on energy. China suffered more as a result of the United States' increased influence over Middle Eastern energy following the Iraq war. It aided the US in limiting China's usual Middle Eastern energy cooperation (Xuewen QIAN, 2010)

In "The Political Economy of Sino-Middle Eastern Relations," Muhamad S. Olimat (2010) argues that the aim of China's engagement in the Middle East is energy security rather than damaging US interests in the region. Contrary to realist expectations, China is exploiting existing Western institutions to achieve its regional ambitions, a development that Middle Eastern states applaud and support. Significant

scholarly interest has been raised by how quickly China is becoming involved in the Middle East. The realist and liberal institutional schools of thought are vying for dominance in theorizing about China's regional activities. Clearly stating that China does not appear to have a well-orchestrated realism approach to its energy security in the Middle East is crucial at the opening of this discussion of China's policy in the region. China, on the other hand, appears to be utilizing the presently existing "Western" system and institutions to address its energy needs. China doesn't intend to jeopardize American interests in the area; instead, it wants access to a reliable energy source to support its economic growth (Olimat, 2010).

There are various eras in the development of Chinese-Middle Eastern relations. Relations during the time before World War II were mostly centered around important trading routes like the Silk Road, which linked Chinese and Middle Eastern civilizations. However, the rise of Islam and its hegemony in the Middle East and the Far East signaled a significant change in Chinese-Islamic ties. Muslims rose to prominence in China as a result of Islam's favorable reception there. Up to the Islamic Empire's demise starting in the fourteenth century, there was continuing cultural and theological exchange between the two civilizations. China experienced an era of isolationism concurrently. In addition, Western imperialism came to dominate both China and the Islamic world, a scenario that persisted until World War II (Olimat, 2010). However, it is incorrect to believe that China's involvement in the Middle East was limited to the years following World War II. There was a lot of interest in local developments throughout Mao's lengthy march, particularly since the conflict was still raging nearby. Mao was fully aware of the role that rivalry among the old colonial powers played in the outbreak of World Wars I and II and how their demise had paved the way for the rise of the USSR and other new world powers. In regard to the enormous geographic areas located between the US and the USSR, including the Middle East, Mao felt that post-war rivalry and international relations would center on this "intermediate zone" (Olimat, 2010; Shichor, 1979).

In the post war period, China developed an ambitious foreign policy toward the region with a wide range of objectives that include diplomatic recognition, support of its position on the Taiwan issue, and trade. "Trade relations-always regarded by China as an avenue to better mutual understanding that might lead to normal relations" (Olimat, 2010; Shichor, 1979). China made anti-imperialism a tenet of its foreign policy toward the Middle East at that time, in keeping with its efforts to expand its influence worldwide. It also demonstrated a great deal of enthusiasm for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. When Israel recognized the PRC in 1948, it was the first state in the region to do so. Later states in the region to recognize it included Egypt, Syria, Iraq, South Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, and other nations beginning in the mid-1950s (Olimat, 2010; Shichor, 1979)

China supported direct negotiations leading to a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli issue without the involvement of superpowers (Olimat, 2010; Shichor, 1979). China considers the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflicts to be a serious diversion from the struggle between colonialism and conquered nations worldwide (Olimat, 2010). China has pleaded with the international community to cooperate in order to help the Middle Eastern region's economic governance. China has repeatedly urged the international community to work together to foster development and provide practical assistance, actively supporting the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other international organizations in the region's economic development to play a larger role. Faced with difficult economic development tasks and an unfavorable development environment in the Middle East (Bianchi, 2013).

China's involvement in international affairs is mostly intended to maintain a constant supply of oil to support its expanding economy. For example, China pursues energy security, and its foreign policy is designed to use its contacts with other countries to support its economic development. As a requirement for China's sustained economic development and modernisation, energy security is "defined as ensuring and safeguarding oil imports from other countries" (Yetiv & Lu, 2007). The political economy interaction between producer and consumer governments, where multinational firms frequently serve as

intermediaries, is referred to as resource diplomacy. The attempts of producers to manipulate consumers from a position of resource strength explain the dynamics within the interaction. Resource security consists of three parts: ensuring a steady supply of energy and resources; maintaining resource supplies at reasonable costs; and having the ability to move resources to designated areas, which need not be in the home country, for processing or consumption (Sultan, 2016).

### **China in the Middle East: Business and Political Interests**

China and the Middle East's relations began a new chapter after the conclusion of the Cold War in 1989, in part due to China's rising status in the world stage. Due in large part to rising oil costs, China's oil import growth rate was 30 percent slower in 2005, and as a result, China's overall reliance on imported oil was significantly reduced. Over 45% of China's total oil imports come from the Middle East at the moment. It is anticipated that by 2015, this region will supply 70% of China's oil imports (Daher, 2009). From a geopolitical perspective, Islamic countries are China's key westward and southerly communication conduits; good relations with them are vital to the BRI's success. Islam, as the primary religious belief and cultural bearer of Muslim people, has a significant impact on the politics, economy, and diplomacy of Islamic countries. As a result, China's understanding and respect for Islam is a precondition and an important foundation for amicable engagement with Islamic countries (Li, 2018). Efforts to promote prosperity and stability in the region, cooperative pursuit of the BRI cooperation, and fostering regional partnerships with powerful global countries are all strategic goals (Wu, 2021).

The Middle East and China have continuously extended their bilateral interactions and diverse linkages in the modern era. China has become more involved in Middle Eastern countries' economic problems. Expectations and demands for China to play a bigger role in Middle East politics are growing both at home and abroad; China will inevitably take an active role in the region's economic governance (ZOU & AHMED, 2016). Since the start of the twenty-first century, China has made a significant contribution to economic governance in the Middle East. A significant marker for this new period was the founding of the China-Arab State Cooperation Forum in 2004. China has considerably increased its involvement in attempts to improve global economic governance after the global financial crisis of 2008, particularly since the "Belt and Road" plan was proposed. Its involvement in Middle Eastern economic governance has also advanced to a new level. China is currently playing a significant role in the Middle East's economic administration; the practice's connotations are getting richer and more significant every day (ZOU & AHMED, 2016). China has been a popular "site" in the sphere of global infrastructure construction since the reform and opening up. Chinese companies have amassed a wealth of technological and engineering expertise, giving them a significant competitive advantage in the global infrastructure development market. At the moment, Chinese firms have developed a distinguished reputation in the sphere of worldwide engineering contracting, particularly in transportation infrastructure and housing construction, and the brand "Built by China" has essentially been formed (WEI, 2017).



Figure 1. The Belt and Road Initiative includes 1/3 of world trade and GDP and over 60% of the world's population.

Source: (Worldbank, 2018)

China has significant energy interests in the Middle East (Ponížilová, 2019). The majority of its imported crude oil comes from the area. Five of the top ten oil suppliers to China as of August 2018 are Middle Eastern nations, and their percentages of China's imports are as follows: Saudi Arabia accounts for 10.7% of global GDP, Iraq 10.5%, Iran 7.8%, Oman 7.4%, and Kuwait 5.8%. China also purchases LNG from Qatar. A 25-year agreement for the purchase of 3 million tons of LNG from Qatar was signed in April 2008 by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), respectively. A new agreement to import 3.4 million tons of LNG yearly for 22 years was struck by CNPC and Qatar in September 2018. China also wants to expand its partnerships with Middle Eastern nations in the fields of nuclear, solar, and other renewable energies (Wu, 2021). China's participation in the Middle East is heavily influenced by business interests, as the region has grown to be a significant market for Chinese goods and a highly profitable one for construction contracts. In the Arab world, China recently signed construction contracts for USD 3.28 billion, more than eight times the sum signed in 2004. China is also Turkey's main supplier of imported goods and Iran's largest business partner (Wu, 2021). China's commercial interests in the Middle East are expanding swiftly, and the various levels of economic engagement between the two nations are getting closer. China's regional and global interests must be actively protected in the Middle East's economic governance, especially economically and partially strategically (ZOU & AHMED, 2016).

China has political interests in advancing the "one China concept" on the Taiwan issue, which has been an important component of any bilateral partnerships it has established with nearby nations. In a similar vein, Arab nations supported China on the South China Sea issue during the CASCFC Ministerial Meeting in Doha in 2016. In response, China has stated its stance on important regional issues clearly in its capacity as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. It supports "the formation of a State of Palestine enjoying full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 boundaries and with East Jerusalem as its capital" in order to resolve the Palestinian conflict through the creation of two separate states. The broad outlines of President Xi's nation's Syria policy are as follows: "The current situation in Syria is unsustainable. Conflicts have no winners, and the victims are the local populace. Now more than ever, a



ceasefire must be achieved in order to address the hotspots. A fundamental resolution can only be reached through political debate. Humanitarian aid, however, tolerates no delays (Wu, 2021). China continues to support Lebanese unity and sovereignty, the departure of Israeli soldiers from occupied territory in Lebanon and Syria, diplomatic links between Lebanon and Syria, and the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Arab world as a whole. China maintains close ties with the formal Palestinian Authority, providing material and financial assistance to the Palestinians. She also works with Hamas, which took over the administration of the Palestinian Governing Authority in March 2006 but is now cut off from the Palestinian authority in the West Bank in Gaza (Daher, 2009).

### **China's Major Interests in the Middle East**

Energy security, geostrategic goals, external connections to internal stability, and improved great power status are among China's main interests in the Middle East. Beijing's goals are to secure access to energy and other resources, balance U.S. influence without publicly opposing it, quell public and material support for China's Uighur minority, and obtain both official and tacit acknowledgement from Middle Eastern nations that China is a big power (Scobell & Nader, 2017). China's influence in the Middle East has been the subject of heated debate in the international media and academia in recent years. Expectations for China to play a larger role are understandable, given that China has become the world's second largest economy and is heavily involved with the Middle East for energy, economic, and social security. The United States and the West in general prefer to perceive China's Middle East policy through the lens of regional security strategy and engagement, which places a strong focus on military action, whereas regional governments assess China's position primarily through their own expectations. This distinction explains, at least in part, the misconceptions and biases about China's participation in the Middle East (Jin, 2017).

The Middle East's energy governance comes first. Since the Middle East plays such a crucial role in the world's energy production, one of the region's most important economic governance sectors is energy. Oil plays a significant role in the economies of the Middle Eastern nations, and there is a positive association between them (Salman & Geeraerts, 2015). China's participation in the region, security concerns have emerged. China has been strengthening security cooperation with Middle Eastern countries in order to secure its foreign interests and combat terrorism. In 2017, China opened a logistics base in Djibouti. It also participates in anti-piracy activities in the Indian Ocean and dispatches peacekeeping soldiers under the auspices of the United Nations. For the first time in Middle Eastern history, China dispatched an engineering battalion to South Lebanon on a peacekeeping mission (Wu, 2021).

China has made a commitment to creating a platform for collaboration in order to support Middle Eastern countries' economic co-development and to offer guidelines and mechanisms for the stability and growth of the region's economy. In addition to signing a long-term trade and "Investment Promotion Agreement" with the vast majority of Middle Eastern nations, which established consultative mechanisms like the economic and technological cooperation and trade committee, China and eleven Middle Eastern nations have established various forms of strategic cooperative relations. China is actively fostering cooperative connections with OPEC, the GCC, the Arab League, and other regional organizations in addition to its dedication to improving ties with Middle Eastern nations (Dorraj & English, 2012). China must actively watch the Middle East's energy development and supply security since it is in the country's best interests and is also compatible with the international community's focus on energy security. China will collaborate with regional countries in international energy governance to strengthen its position and advance a common dialogue in the global energy market; it will actively participate in international cooperation within the framework of multilateral energy governance; and it will establish (ZOU & AHMED, 2016).

Beijing's economic diplomacy, according to Mordechai Chaziza (2019), has a more adaptable and practical interpretive strategy despite adhering to the non-interventionist principle. Chinese economic

diplomacy in the Middle East employs economic incentives to advance its clearly defined foreign policy goals in the region's flashpoints as well as diplomatic resources to intervene as necessary to protect its investments and assets. Since the turn of the century, Chinese foreign investment in the Middle East (West Asia) has expanded rapidly, particularly in projects involving energy, natural resource development, and dual-use infrastructure. As a result, ten countries from the region have joined (Egypt, Israel, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates), and some nations are considering cooperating with China in its efforts to bring about peace because of the promise of infrastructure and development (Chaziza, 2019). One of China's most important historic principles for its foreign and security policies in the Middle East is non-intervention. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has historically based its policy toward the area, as well as its policy toward all other parts of the world, on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries (Shichor, 2013).

The "non-interference" policy of China is not a recent development. It has its roots in premodern Chinese history, when the Empire was cut off from the rest of the world, as well as in the Mao era, when the Chinese lacked the means to intervene even though they had the desire to do so. China has the ability to participate more but does not yet have the desire to do so post-Mao and post-Cold War. Nevertheless, Beijing has been pushed to make concessions due to economic success and rising political significance. Fundamentally, China's first choice continues to be "non-interference" and dispute resolution between the parties. The Chinese prefer an intervention by a local or specialized organization, but if that fails. If yet another attempt fails, Beijing may reluctantly turn to the United Nations Security Council as a last resort. Intervention from without is the worst choice. China's Middle East policy is evidently aware of all these possibilities (Shichor, 2013).

Beijing has steadily established a cautious and practical case-by-case strategy that emphasizes how conditional its attitude and policies on non-intervention, territorial integrity, and sovereignty are. There has always been some wiggle room in how Beijing really conducts its foreign and security policy when it comes to non-intervention, despite the notion of non-interference being a major rhetorical instrument and a vital guiding principle in China's diplomatic efforts (Zheng, 2016). In short, the nonintervention concept is not static but rather in change among the Chinese international studies community. Divergent assessments of two interrelated issues are the primary source of disagreements between various analysts. The first is whether China should continue to maintain a low profile in world events, and the second concerns China's overall ties with the Western-led international community. Thus, the non-interference issue reflects divergent strategic priorities and ideological stances that shape contemporary Chinese thought (Zheng, 2016). Beijing also aims to contribute more positively to the resolution of regional conflicts (such as the civil war in Syria and the Iranian nuclear dilemma) by enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other major nations and regional organizations (Chaziza, 2018).

China's recent changes to its foreign policy have undoubtedly been influenced by the scholarly discussion of the non-interference concept. China's "non-interference" conundrum serves as the backdrop for both the discussion and the change in policy. Over the past few decades, China's rapid domestic change and ascent to prominence have posed unprecedented problems for its foreign policy. Beijing must concurrently address several obstacles, varying expectations, and competing needs when drafting its non-intervention policy. The complicated issues Beijing has throughout the non-interference discussion have been underlined by many arguments, which also represent how Chinese officials are approaching the non-interference issue (Zheng, 2016). China specifically avoids interfering with the internal affairs of other sovereign states unless doing so would endanger or jeopardize its own national or economic interests (such as the security of its growing overseas interests, Chinese citizens, or its energy supply (Chaziza & Goldman, 2016). One of the main pillars of China's foreign policy objectives and activities has evolved as mediation diplomacy, with Beijing purposefully establishing itself as a peacemaker in the disputes and crises in the Middle East (e.g., Syria, Yemen, Iran, Qatar, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process).

Chinese leaders and diplomats have been mentioned in several of these diplomatic proposals to act as mediators (Sun & Zoubir, 2018).

## Conclusion

China has significant energy interests in the Middle East. China's engagement in the Middle East is strongly influenced by business interests, as the region has grown to be a significant market for Chinese goods and a highly profitable one for construction contracts. Security of energy is a priority for China, and the government's foreign relations are intended to help it grow economically. Energy security "is defined as guaranteeing and protecting oil imports from other countries as a necessity for China's continuing economic expansion and modernization." Resource diplomacy refers to the relationship of producer and consumer governments in the political economy, where multinational corporations frequently operate as mediators. The dynamics of the interaction are best understood in terms of producers' attempts to control consumers from a position of resource dominance. Three components make up resource security: assuring a consistent flow of energy and resources; keeping resource supplies at affordable prices; and having the means to transport resources to designated places, which need not be within one's own country, for processing or consumption.

The scholarly debate surrounding the non-interference idea surely had an impact on China's recent reforms to its foreign policy. The debate and the shift in policy are set against the backdrop of China's "non-interference" problem. China's fast domestic upheaval and rise to prominence over the past three decades have presented unheard-of difficulties for its foreign policy. Beijing has consciously positioned itself as a mediator in the conflicts and crises in the Middle East, which has become one of the primary foundations of China's foreign policy goals and initiatives (e.g., Syria, Yemen, Iran, Qatar, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process). In some of these diplomatic proposals to serve as mediators, Chinese officials and diplomats have been highlighted.

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