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**CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE
MIDDLE EAST, THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI
ARABIA AS A MODEL 2013 – 2022**

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Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Adil USTURALI

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The thesis titled CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST, THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AS A MODEL 2013 – 2022 prepared by Ameer Abdulelah ALSHUKRI and submitted on 22/01/2024 has been **accepted unanimously** for the degree of Master of Politics and International Relations

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I hereby declare that all information/data presented in this graduation project has been obtained in full accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare all unoriginal materials and conclusions have been cited in the text and all references mentioned in the Reference List have been cited in the text, and vice versa as required by the abovementioned rules and conduct.

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Signature



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DEDICATION

To my dearest family,

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ABSTRACT

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST, THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AS A MODEL 2013 – 2022

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The strategic importance of the Middle East and its abundance of resources attracted major powers, especially China and the United States. With two-thirds of the world's crude oil reserves located there, energy security is crucial. China, which is historically connected to the region through the Silk Road, has recently increased its involvement, primarily to secure oil and gas supplies for its economy.

Contrary to historical trends, China has maintained a low profile in the Middle East, prioritizing trade and cultural exchanges over physical presence or spheres of influence. Since its founding in 1949, China has focused on building diplomatic legitimacy and aligning with liberation movements to challenge foreign hegemony.

By recognizing that economic expansion and foreign interests are critical to national security, China recognizes the importance of energy security in ensuring the continued flow of its economy amid rapid growth. This shift signals a more comprehensive and proactive Chinese engagement in the Middle East, moving away from historical isolation toward a greater international presence. This research explores China's evolving foreign policy in the Middle East, with a case study on Sino-Saudi relations from 2013 to 2022, highlighting the changing dynamics and future prospects.

Keywords: China, Saudi Arabia, Middle East, Foreign Policy, Bilateral Relations, Economy, Cooperation .

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

PRC	:	People's Republic of China
US	:	United States
IR	:	International Relations
BRI	:	Belt and Road Initiative
KSA	:	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
CA	:	Central Asia
ME	:	Middle East
CCP	:	Chinese Communist Party
UN	:	United Nations
PRC	:	People's Republic of China
WTO	:	World Trade Organization
IAEA	:	International Atomic Energy Agency
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
NAM	:	Non-Aligned Movement
SCO	:	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
APEC	:	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
PLA	:	People's Liberation Army
OPCW	:	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
ASEAN	:	Association of South Asian Nations

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to many strategic factors, the Middle East is one of the most sensitive regions in the globe. What increases its importance and sensitivity is that it contains intertwined or conflicting interests of major and superpowers, including China and America. The region has become the focus of attention and the main focus of these powers' activity. It is home to around two-thirds of the world's crude oil reserves, as well as other resources. China and the Arab countries have had close connections since ancient times. The old Silk Road connected China with the Middle East countries more than two thousand years ago. China's desire to play a larger role in the Middle East, to secure its economy's oil and gas demands, and to satisfy other economic requirements, has been more apparent in recent years. China achieves its strategic aims through a variety of methods, such as financial, economic and diplomatic initiatives. Despite centuries of historical ties, the Middle East area "was never the focus of attention in Chinese strategy as it is today, just as the countries of the region, for their part, did not view China as a reliable international player." As the Chinese participation remained restricted and marginal, confined to commerce and cultural contacts, and Beijing, unlike other world powers, did not seek an actual presence or to develop spheres of influence in the region. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China's interest in the area remained centered on establishing its legitimacy and widening the circle of diplomatic recognition in a region where Taiwan was most globally recognized. That is why, in its early stages, Chinese diplomacy focused on trying to enter the region through the gate of supporting national liberation movements and preventing the region from falling under comprehensive domination by external powers. Chinese behavior remained based on the foundations of the late leader Xuan Lai's five principles of peaceful coexistence. The concept of Chinese national security did not rise to the level of protecting interests, and it has been governed for several decades, with a firm conviction limited to protecting borders, or what is known as the "China Wall" theory, which is a euphemism for seclusion within borders, and distancing itself from any vital role outside these walls. However, with recent developments, it appears that China has begun to broaden its vision of the concept of national security, taking into account the rapid growth of its economy, the expansion of Chinese interests abroad, and the emergence of energy security, as one of the most important pillars

of national security, which ensures the continuation of the Chinese economy in circulation, and it appears that China's interest in the Middle East region will be expanded.

1.1 HYPOTHETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.2 DISSERTATION SUBJECT

Over the past ten years, China has moved strongly towards the Middle East region, due to its distinguished geographical location and its energy resources. China has enjoyed large investments in the Middle East at the level of the energy sector and other sectors. The study focuses on analyzing Chinese foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a model to find out the goals and motives of China in establishing strategic partnerships with the countries of the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. In order to deepen the understanding and analysis of Chinese foreign policy and answer the research questions, liberal theory will be used. The reason for choosing this theory is the diversity of assumptions it enjoys and its ability to explain the behavior of states in the existing international system.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main feature of the Middle East region is its vital cross-border importance, which is due to various variables, most notably its huge oil reserves, and its control over important global transportation routes. The partnership between China and the Middle East is important in the economic development of the region, in addition to the economic benefits that this partnership brings to China, as well as knowing the purpose of the Chinese presence in the region and its effects on the region.

1.4 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The common interests between China and the Middle East can be divided into: ensuring the existence of a source for exporting oil to China, the existence of a safe transportation route for the arrival of Chinese products to the Middle East region, and the establishment of new transportation routes. Through which it is possible to shorten the time and cost of shipping their products to Europe via the Middle East and increase the volume of Chinese investments in the region.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are China's main motives in its Middle East foreign policy, impacting economic cooperation and energy security? How does this policy direction manifest through trade, partnerships, and alliances?
- ii. What are China's objectives in directing its foreign policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

1.6 THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 The Concept of Foreign Policy

Ernest Petrič defined “foreign policy as an activity of the state that achieves its goals and interests in the international arena”. (Petrič, 2013) There is no definition that gives a comprehensive concept of foreign policy. Scholars differed on that. Hermann defined "the discrete purposeful action that results from the decision of the political level of an individual or a group of individuals" (SEN, 2010). Padelford and Lincoln define “A state's foreign policy is the totality of its dealings with the external environment. Foreign policy is the overall outcome of the process by which a state translates its broadly perceived goals and interests into specific courses of action in order to achieve its goals and preserve its interests” (Kissinger, 1966). From the point of view of Hume Gibson, "Foreign policy is an overall, well-run plan based on knowledge and experience for conducting government's business with the rest of the world, it aims to promote and protect the interests of nations, this requires a clear understanding of what those interests are and how far we hope to go with the means at our disposal. Anything less than this It is not suitable for being a foreign policy” (Alieu S, 2018).

From my point of view, foreign policy is a set of activities carried out by states directed outside the political borders, and these activities are tightly prepared to achieve their desired goals through managing and using their capabilities to achieve their national interest that benefits on the external or internal level of the state. In order to demonstrate how China pursues its national interests and objectives in the Middle East through the implementation of foreign policy, I will draw on specific case studies, official policy documents, diplomatic engagements, economic cooperation, security alliances, media strategies, and geopolitical factors.

1.6.2 The Theoretical Framework

Liberals agree with the realists in the anarchy of the international system, "the absence of a hierarchy of the international system," but they differ with the realists in that the struggle for power is the essence of international relations, as mentioned by Hans Morgenthau in his book "Politics Among Nations": (Foreign policy, like any other politics, is a struggle for power) On the contrary, liberals emphasize that states are interconnected, and what happens in one state can directly affect other countries. Liberals also assume that interdependence and harmony of interests can reduce the outbreak of wars and conflicts. The decline in the importance of military force because military force is expensive and its results are not guaranteed, but this does not mean ignoring military force completely, because they see that it is not an absolute necessity to ensure the survival and existence of the state, just as liberals believe that the use of military force can harm its interests and the interests of its competitors, which means that countries prefer the use of peaceful means and minimize the use of military force (McMillan, 1997).

Andrew Moravcsik in his memo "The Liberal Approach to Theorizing International Relations" argues that the national interest is the main driver of state behavior. According to Andrew Moravcsik's memorandum, states usually do what's in their own best interest. This position is in line with the realist view of international relations, which places a premium on the role that state interests and power dynamics play in determining the actions of individual states. He moves away from the moral values favored by utopianism of the liberal kind, such as spreading democracy and human rights, which are favored by left-wing (liberal) parties in the United States. He emphasizes the role of nations' diverse social interests and values and their importance in world policy (Zellmer, 2016).

States are able to mitigate the negative effects of anarchy through cooperation and interdependence among themselves, what differs in liberal theory from realism is that cooperation can be an effective tool and an alternative to the use of military force, (Arkin, 2022) so interdependence is an essential element of the theory Liberalism, as countries and their wealth are linked to each other, and what happens in one country can directly affect other countries. The difference between realism and liberalism lies in their perspectives. Realism offers a more objective view of the world, emphasizing international politics and a fiercely competitive and contentious nature. On the other hand, liberalism presents an

optimistic picture of the international order, visualizing what the world is supposed to be. Further, liberalism promotes cooperation, while realism contends that governments aggressively pursue their national interests and prioritize security in the global community. Mutual dependence, cooperation and harmony of interests constitute a safety valve against the outbreak of wars and conflicts (Seth, 2001). Chinese foreign policy in the Middle East can be better understood through the lens of liberalism than realism. Liberalism recognizes that states have several interests, beyond just power and security, including economic, cultural, and ideological ones. When considering China's approach to the Middle East, a solely realist viewpoint risks ignoring the significance of economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and soft power diplomacy. Liberal thought offers a more nuanced and realistic prism through which to examine China's foreign policy in the Middle East because it recognizes the complexity of state interests. I prioritize liberalism over realism because its core principle is leveling the playing field, focusing on opportunities rather than achievements. This involves reducing external barriers imposed on minorities. Another essential doctrine of liberalism is collective responsibility, which is fundamental to the functioning of nations.

Liberalism assumes that the decision-maker is rational and that states have diverse goals and interests, as military security or strengthening their military strength is not the only issue that states seek to achieve, in the sense that states deal with many issues, including economic, religious, ideological, and cultural issues, this means that states pursue diverse interests and goal (Moravcsik, 1992).

if we take the perspective of military power that realists take as a basic argument in explaining Chinese foreign policy, then it has the largest army in the world with 2.3 million soldiers, considering that China's population is about 1.3 billion people. Thus, the difference seems clear if we compare the population working in the army between China and the United States of America, which has a number of soldiers of 1.4 million compared to its population of 330 million people (Lockie, 2016). also, Chinese military expenditures relative to the gross domestic product do not exceed 2%, which is much lower than the United States 4.4%, Russia 4.4%, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 8.9%, the United Kingdom 2.5%, India 2.5%, and France 2.3%. Chinese military spending is \$89 billion, while the USA spending exceeds \$739.3 billion. From a realist perspective, the Chinese military force cannot be compared to

the USA in terms of armament, spending, and presence. The realist perspective gives a very simplified interpretation of reality (Hudda, 2015).

China has risen and its economy has grown in the shadow of the existing international system, and the continuation of this growth and its economic stability can only be achieved under the shadow of mutual cooperation and freedom of trade in a relatively stable world far from conflicts and wars. Here we must point out that 50% of Chinese production is exported outside China. Any vibration in the international system or conflict between the great powers directly affects the internal Chinese economy and also leads to an increase in commodity prices as a result of the vacuum that will be left by the interruption of Chinese products from the world (merchandise trad , 2022). In addition to the catastrophic effects that will be caused by the conflict between the major powers as a result of the interconnectedness and interconnectedness of the global economy, in the event of a clash or conflict, it could threaten their local and global economy. As I mentioned previously, the decision maker is rational, so profit and loss will dictate the decision maker to make the decision that brings the greatest possible benefit.

Additionally, China actively engages as a member in various regional and international organizations, institutions, and frameworks. Xi Jinping accurately underscores China's proactive involvement and contributions to the G20, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the United Nations Security Council, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the BRICS mechanism (comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). He emphasizes the importance of "seeking common ground on issues of mutual interest in pursuit of mutually beneficial progress." This stance not only challenges the Realist interpretation of China's rise but also strongly aligns with the Liberalist perspective. By participating in these organizations, China promotes cooperation, ensuring that all involved parties share in the benefits, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict among them. (Hudda, 2015)

Liberal perspectives on China's evolving foreign policy, amidst its ascent on the global stage, perceive its actions as not solely motivated by power dynamics and the imperative of survival in a anarchy international arena. Rather, scholars such as Copeland (2003), Ikenberry (2008), and Mastanduno (2014) argue that China's behavior is also significantly influenced by its economic interests. According to this line of thought, China's economic

imperatives drive it to actively participate in trade and cooperation with other nations. This involvement fosters interdependence, which, in turn, acts as a deterrent against conflict by raising the potential costs associated with adversarial actions. Consequently, these scholars contend that China's economic interests propel it toward greater engagement with and integration into the established international order led by the United States. (Olczak, 2022)

The liberal and realist theories enable us to understand the relationship between countries, as the liberal theory is best able to explain cooperative relations, and the realist theory enables us to explain the conflictual aspect. Economic interest and mutual dependence require international parties to cooperate due to the intertwining of their economies in terms of investment and trade exchange. The largest trading partners are the United States and China. they are also the two largest partners of the Middle Eastern countries, and their negative and positive relationship affects the future of the international system. As their relations improve, a sound environment for growth and development becomes available, prompting countries worldwide to maintain trade relations between them because of their positive results on the global economy. A conflict relationship with a zero-sum game could lead to disastrous consequences for the economies of the two countries and the world (Merchandise trade, 2022).

To summarize, this thesis utilizes liberal perspectives as a theoretical framework to understand Chinese foreign policy in the Middle East. It highlights the diverse range of state interests that go beyond conventional security considerations. This methodology offers a thorough and subtle comprehension of the factors that influence China's involvement in the region between 2013 and 2022.

1.7 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the analytical descriptive approach which adopting liberal theory to answer the research questions and the ability to analyze studies related to this topic in order to understand the benefits and the various variables that will be caused by the Chinese relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Lillian Craig Harris, in his book "China Considers the Middle East", dealt with the historical and modern relations between China and the Middle East. He referred to the historical relations between them in a sufficient way. According to what he mentioned, the historical

relations between the two sides reach 2,000 years. He mentioned that the Middle East has historical importance represented in the geographical location of the region, where it represents the region is the crossing or barrier between China and Europe, and throughout the ages, the two sides exchanged commercial benefits through the ancient Silk Road. He also indicated that the Mongol occupation of Middle Eastern countries led to the incursion of Europeans into the region. This, in turn, resulted in the deterioration of relations between them. He added that trade relations between China and the region reached their lowest level after the cessation of the Silk Road. However, religious ties (Islam) played a crucial role in the continuation of the relationship with the Middle East, preventing a complete ending between them. Then he moves in writing to the stage of establishing the People's Republic of China in 1949, where he argues that China's external relationship With the Soviet Union and the United States, prompted China to move towards the Middle East. He also argues that the Bandung Conference was the starting opportunity to restore relations with the Middle East, despite the failure of the Chinese leadership to present itself as a revolutionary country to the countries of the region, but it succeeded in obtaining some political gains. Both liberal and realist theories are compatible with Moravcsik's contention that China's external contacts with the Soviet Union and the United States affected its approach towards the Middle East. One possible realist explanation for this change is China's geopolitical considerations and the aim to balance against the superpowers. Liberals, on the other hand, might view the action as an attempt to advance a range of goals, from economic to diplomatic. Moravcsik's liberal framework would highlight the fact that governments like China may have reasons other than traditional realism at the heart of their foreign policy decisions. A thorough examination may incorporate aspects of both of these theories, and the decision between them may hinge on the specific environment and motivations for China's engagement in the Middle East.

In the 1980s, the importance of the Middle East emerged as an important pillar of China's economic modernization, and he adds that the post-Cold War phase arose new concerns for China represented by the increasing instability in the Middle East, which began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and that instability in the region poses a threat to the interests of Economic China, so China has adopted a different foreign policy in the region, based on strengthening relations with the countries of the region. This was embodied through the sale

of Chinese arms to the countries of the region and the establishment of relations with Israel (Harris, 1993).

Mohamed Mousa Mohamed Ali Binhuwaidin (2001) presented in his study entitled "China's foreign policy towards the gulf and Arabian Peninsula region, 1949-1999" He traced Chinese foreign policy towards the Arab Gulf countries and the Arabian Peninsula since the founding of the People's Republic of China from 1949 until the end of the last century. He provided a detailed description of Chinese foreign policy towards the countries of the region by focusing on the factors that shaped China's foreign policy. The researcher used the arguments and assumptions of the new realistic theory in his study. He concluded that two main factors formed the Chinese foreign policy towards the region during the Cold War and after the Cold War. He took the influence of external factors represented by China's relationship with both the Soviet Union and the United States as a basic argument in the formation of Chinese foreign policy towards the region during the Cold War period, and the second factor after the Cold War represented in China's economic motives aimed at strengthening the relationship with producing countries Oil in order to sustain its economic growth, especially after China became a net importer of oil after 1993 (Binhuwaidin, 2001).

The inclusion of a complete literature evaluation is crucial for providing a solid foundation for the research on China's foreign policy in the Middle East. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics inherent in this interaction, it is imperative to engage with a diverse range of scholarly literature. The theoretical framework encompasses realist and liberal perspectives, both of which play a crucial role in understanding the underlying motivations driving China's actions in the region. Realism places emphasis on security concerns and the strategic equilibrium between superpowers, while liberalism expands the scope to embrace a wide range of interests, including economic and diplomatic aspects. It is crucial to possess a comprehensive understanding of Chinese foreign policy on a broad scale. This piece of literature explores the historical development of China's foreign policy, outlines its fundamental goals, and clarifies its techniques, providing a solid foundation for contextual analysis. It is imperative to comprehend Middle East foreign policy within a broader framework. The literature pertaining to this particular field of study elucidates the intricacies of regional dynamics, conflicts, and the many roles assumed by foreign actors. Moreover, the literature on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

plays a crucial role in understanding China's overarching strategy and its significant influence on its involvement in the Middle East. The examination of specific case studies that delve into China's interactions with different Middle Eastern nations offers a comprehensive understanding of the distinct dynamics characterizing each bilateral relationship. The argument presented highlights the enduring importance of historical linkages between China and the Middle East on contemporary foreign policy decisions. The inclusion of theoretical and extensive literature is crucial for the efficacy of this study, as it provides valuable perspectives on the intricate dynamics between regional and global elements that form the foundation of China's foreign policy in the Middle East

Norafidah Binti Ismail (2011) provides background on Chinese relations with Saudi Arabia 1949-2010. The researcher explained the type of relationship between China and Saudi Arabia since the recognition of the People's Republic of China until 1989, defining during that period the form and type of bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and the Middle East on the other. The researcher gave more importance to Chinese relations with Saudi Arabia after 1990. The researcher showed that the structural and ideological obstacles were the basis for establishing strategic relations between the two countries. Nevertheless, the two countries established an informal line of communication between the Saudi leadership and Islamic figures in China. The common interests between China and Saudi Arabia during that period were anti-communist sentiments. The researcher showed the development of diplomatic relations between the two countries after 1990, as economic interests were among the priorities of that relationship. where the researcher showed the volume of trade exchange between the two countries and the volume of Chinese investments in Saudi Arabia (ISMAL, 2011).

Andrew Scobell, Alireza Nader (2016) their book "China in the Middle East: The Wary Dragon", discuss China's economic and security roles in the Middle East. His studies focus on China's relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia. He tries to answer in his study about Chinese goals and activities in the Middle East, where he argues that the marginal importance of the Middle East in the world has come to represent the dimension of China's national security and the repercussions of that relationship on the interests of the United States in the region. The study concluded that China's economic motives in the region aim to balance China's domestic, foreign and security policy, as the mutual dependence between

countries and China's need for energy sources (oil) pushes it towards developing relations with the countries of western China (Central Asia) and beyond. The researcher argues the need for Chinese security participation, but he also mentions China's fears of getting involved in the tensions and disputes in the Middle East that destroy China's reputation in the international community and affect its relationship with the countries of the region and the world, in addition to the economic and social effects that security participation has on the Chinese people. He adds that China deals with caution in its relationship with the countries of the Middle East, especially in balancing its relationship with Tehran and Riyadh. In a study, he concludes that the economic, security and diplomatic relations between China and Saudi Arabia do not pose a threat to the interests of the United States, but he believes that security cooperation between China and Iran is more dangerous and problematic. He concluded that the Chinese-Iranian naval exercises in the Persian Gulf do not indicate the existence of a security alliance between the two parties. He also believes that the United States should support other international efforts (China) to participate in the Middle East to support the stability of the region (Scobell, A. & Nader, A. 2016).

Sarah J. Almutairi (2018) presented a PhD thesis entitled "The Responses of the Arab Gulf Countries to the Rise of the Chinese Dragon" about China's goals in the Arabian Gulf region and the extent to which the Persian Gulf region can be used as a region that competes militarily with the United States, where the researcher believes that China's motives in the Persian Gulf are economic motives, the aim of which is energy sources, and in addition to that Chinese investments in the Arabian Gulf region, the bulk of them are related to investment in the energy sector, such as the establishment of oil refineries and oil storage facilities in China, aimed at increasing oil trade between the two countries, and adding to that that the Arabian Gulf is not an important part of the initiative The belt and the maritime road, and that the conferences and dialogues that China holds with the countries of the region do not go beyond being dialogues that do not play any role in strengthening bilateral relations between them, thus stressing that oil is the main engine that formed the relationship between them. The researcher discussed several aspects, including military, security, and others related to religion and ideological difference. The researcher explained that China prefers to establish strategic relations with Iran because Iran is located on the Chinese Belt and Road line, in addition to the fact that the political system in Iran is Shiite in nature and does not support radical Islamic thought, which China considers A threat to its territorial integrity

because the Muslims in China are a Sunni majority, it is likely that the Arab Gulf countries will support Islamic groups inside China to destabilize China's internal security. The researcher also added the importance of China to the countries of the region from an economic point of view. The researcher dealt with the views of the two sides, the Chinese and the Gulf, and clarified in her studies several considerations, including that it is not in the interest of the Arab Gulf countries to establish security partnerships with China as a result of the American military superiority. In addition to the Chinese support for Iran in the Security Council with regard to the Iranian nuclear file, and support for Syria by voting “no” to the intervention of an international coalition to overthrow the Syrian regime. The aforementioned prompts Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to exercise caution in giving China full confidence. Therefore, the GCC countries seek to establish balanced relations between the United States and China. I see that the researcher gave a pessimistic vision in explaining Chinese foreign policy towards the region, in addition to taking in multiple aspects and parties, which prompted her not to focus more on explaining foreign policy in a clear and specific manner (Almutairi, 2018).

Degang Sun, a professor of political science, published an article entitled China's partnership diplomacy in the Middle East. The professor divided the countries of the Middle East in terms of their importance and the role they play in the region in relation to China, in terms of geographical location, and their economic importance. The researcher considered that Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are pivotal countries because of their economic and political stability and military capabilities capable of preserving Chinese interests in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. He also sees Turkey as Node States, important countries for China's interests in the Middle East and abroad, due to its geographical location that made it a gateway for Chinese access to Europe. The stability of the Middle East region reflects positively on the interests of China and thus negates the need to use military force to protect its interests in the Middle East. The professor recommended the need for China to participate in a new policy aimed at focusing on political entanglement in order to reach a peace initiative in the region as part of the economic partnership, because seeking economic benefit on its own does not represent the best option for the Chinese partnership in the long term in the region (Sun, 2020).

1.9 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

China's interaction with the Middle East can be traced back to ancient times through the historic Silk Road trade routes. These networks facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and culture between China and the Middle East, fostering economic and diplomatic ties. During the Cold War, China's foreign policy in the Middle East was primarily influenced by its rivalry with the Soviet Union. The countries of the Middle East were divided in their recognition of the People's Republic of China according to their political orientations and interests at the internal and external levels at the time. China sought to establish diplomatic relations with countries in the region, including Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. It supported anti-colonial movements and promoted non-alignment while advocating for the rights of Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It can be said that relations between China and the Middle East were shaped by two factors: China's internal security concerns related to Middle Eastern countries' recognition of the People's Republic of China as China's legitimate representative, and political differences during the Cold War. (Pan, 1997) (Al-Sudairi, 2015) Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, China reassessed its foreign policy strategy in the Middle East. It sought to strengthen economic ties and expand its influence in the region. The 1990s marked a significant shift as China pursued energy security and economic cooperation. It deepened engagement with major Middle Eastern oil producers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, ensuring a stable energy supply for its rapidly growing economy. In the nineties of the last century, China's policy focused mainly on the economy and ways of cooperation and integration with the countries of the Middle East, specifically the Arab Gulf, in order to make the economic advancement project a success Chinese. Sino-Saudi economic relations ensured that China continued recognition of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the People's Republic of China, in addition to opening new horizons for the Chinese economy through agreements concluded by China with Saudi Arabia in various economic fields, which led to the emergence of an increase in Chinese trade to Saudi Arabia by 643 percent. Between 1990 and 2000, compared to 6,721 percent of Saudi oil exports to China during the same period (Cooley, 1972) (ISMAIL, 2011).

2. CHAPTER II

2.1 CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST

Throughout history, China has been an important country in the international system, thanks to its great potential, large area, huge resources, and huge population. But its significance for international politics has grown exponentially since the market reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping set China on a course of action that could rapidly transform its hidden potential into an actual power. This process is important not only because it promises the internal transformation of one of the world's oldest civilizations, but also because if concluded successfully, it could lead to a radical transfer of power within the international system, and it pursues from its founding to this day a peaceful and independent foreign policy, for historical reasons linked to the Chinese view of international relations, and the primary objectives of this policy are to protect China's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, it has remained it adopts the principle of independence and determines its position and policy in all international affairs based on the basic interests of the Chinese people, and is not subject to any external pressure.

2.2 THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

China pursues a foreign policy aimed at protecting its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, providing good international conditions for reform and openness, as well as protecting world peace and advancing common growth.

Its main contents include:

- i. Adopting an independent foreign policy and taking the initiative to build international cooperation.
- ii. Not taking sides with any major country or group of countries.
- iii. Not to join military alliances, and not to participate in any arms race.
- iv. Not adopting any military expansion (RAUBE, 2015).
- v. Opposing the tendency of hegemony in international relations and working to protect world peace, calling for equality between states, whether big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, and the need for a peaceful solution to resolve disputes and conflicts between states through negotiation, instead of resorting to threat and force.

- vi. Advancing the establishment of a new, just and reasonable international political and economic order based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and other recognized principles of international relations.
- vii. Willingness to establish and develop a relationship of friendship and cooperation with all countries on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity (Zhao, 2016) (Thakur & Thayer., 2019).
- viii. Applying the policy of comprehensive openness to the outside world, and preparing to conduct trade exchange, economic and technical cooperation, and scientific and cultural exchange, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit with different countries and regions in the world to advance common prosperity.
- ix. Actively participate in multilateral diplomatic activities, and act as a firm force to safeguard world peace and regional stability (Kane, 2001)(Zhang, 2023).
- x. China is a founding member of the United Nations and one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. In June 1945, the Chinese delegation, which included representatives from the Chinese Communist Party, signed the United Nations Charter for the period from 1949 (the founding date of the People's Republic of China) until 1971. People's China from representing China in the United Nations, where Taiwan occupied China's seat until October 25, 1971 when the General Assembly of the United Nations at its 26th session issued Resolution No. 2758, which stipulates the return of all legitimate people to the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and the recognition of its government representative as the only legitimate representative for China.
- xi. China is a participating member in many international organizations and forums, the most important of which are: WTO since 2001 - Association of South Asian Nations 3 ASEAN - National Atomic Energy Agency IAEA - International Monetary Fund IMF - Non-Aligned Movement NAM - Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons OPCW - Shanghai Cooperation Organization -SCO - APEC - APEC - Asian Development Bank ADB - African Development Bank - ASEAN Regional Forum Food and Agriculture Organization - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Frick, 2021).

2.3 THE DETERMINANTS AFFECTING CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

What is meant by the determinants of foreign policy are environmental factors that affect foreign policy in one way or another. Any change in these factors may lead to a shift in the course of foreign policy. Researchers differ in their classification of foreign policy variables. And here are those who classify it into objective and psychological variables, while we find others, who classify it into internal and external determinants. In general, there are determinants or factors affecting China's external orientations, after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist camp.

2.3.1 The Geostrategic Determinant

The geographical factor plays an important role in determining the general directions of the foreign policy of any country, which was confirmed by the studies of (Mackinder & Crone, 2023). Therefore, it is useful to highlight the most important features of the Chinese geographical area.

The People's Republic of China is located in the eastern part of the continent of Asia, on the western coast of the Pacific Ocean, and sits on an area estimated at 9,600,000 sq. km, and is the third largest country in the world in area after Russia and Canada, and is characterized by a location of strategic importance in the East Asian region, as it borders 14 countries, including: Russia, Pakistan, India, Vietnam and North Korea. This area has allowed China to possess a large strategic depth, as the distance from south to north is estimated at about 5500 km and from east to west at about 5200 km. This depth is very important in consolidating the weight of the state. The defensive strategy, in terms of widening the field for military retreat, reorganizing ranks and luring enemy forces, as well as the ability to respond privately in the event of a nuclear attack, and on the other hand, enables it to disperse its industrial centers in distant areas, which makes it difficult to hit them all at one time. All these factors give Chinese foreign decision makers the strength and confidence to maneuver in front of other countries (Embassy of PRC in India , 2010).

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It also contains many international ports that provide it with great facilitation and support in the field of its foreign trade, and among the most important and largest of these ports is the port of Shanghai. On the other hand, China's proximity to third world countries affected its foreign policy towards these countries, and it focused in its foreign policy on What is known as the "South-South Cooperation" launched by the United Nations to cooperate with countries located in the south of the world for development, knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in specific areas such as agricultural development, human rights, urbanization, health and climate change (United Nations, 2019).

Despite the advantages provided by the area of the People's Republic of China, it does not have another aspect represented by the diversity of nationalities within it, which is what repeatedly exposes it to separatist movements that demand self-rule to preserve their identity and privacy, which the Chinese government rejects and emphasizes on the unity and integrity of its lands.

Xinjiang Province:

Here, I refer to the region of "Xinjiang" as a result of the religious and ethnic interdependence with the countries of the Middle East, as the majority of the region's population are Muslims of Turkish origin, and the reason for my focus on this group is as a result of its attachment to the title of the dissertation. The geopolitical significance of Xinjiang Province is why it is relevant to your discussion of China's foreign policy toward the Middle East. There are numerous Central Asian nations that border the autonomous province of Xinjiang in western China. These countries include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This proximity

makes Xinjiang an important gateway for China's economic and strategic interests in the broader Eurasian region, including the Middle East. Regional stability, energy security, and economic cooperation are all major factors in China's foreign policy in the Middle East. Because of its position and significance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xinjiang serves as a vital conduit for goods and resources moving between China and the Middle East. China's foreign policy goals in the Middle East and abroad can be better understood by examining the country's policies and actions in Xinjiang.

The Xinjiang region is located in northwest China, and it is inhabited by 10 million Uyghurs, who are the indigenous people of the region, and most of the region's population is Muslims, and the Xinjiang region was formerly called the East Turkistan region, and the region's residents often demand secession under allegations of discrimination and oppression against them, and in 1990 AD the forces demanded The Turkistan movement to secede from the Beijing government, and in 2009, the demands were renewed and it was one of the most intense protest movements in the region. In light of the growing wave of war on terrorism globally, the Chinese government has tightened its grip on this region, deployed more security forces in the region, and imposed restrictions on the practice of religious rituals for Muslims in this region, such as banning fasting in the month of Ramadan for both civil servants, teachers, and students (Regencia, 2021). The current President of China, Xi Jinping, is diligently working to strengthen China's economy and enhance its security through ambitious policies and ideological reforms. He is earnestly shaping his legacy as a leader to transform China into a global superpower. To achieve this, he has implemented strict laws and policies, including exerting military pressure on Taiwan and India and imposing strict rules on religious groups within China to maintain security internally and externally. At the core of Xi's policymaking is his promise of a "Chinese Dream," which aims to create opportunities for upward mobility and a higher quality of life for the people of China. However, it is noteworthy that the "Chinese Dream" has been criticized for justifying political dictatorship and imposing various limitations on civil rights, particularly in certain regions (Foundation, 2021).

2.3.2 Human Determinant

The strength of the human factor is important in determining the foreign policy directions of any international organization. Because the population component is the basis of national

strength, and the importance of the population appears from a military point of view in the event that the state maintains huge conventional forces, because conventional warfare still plays an important role in the international community despite the continuous technological development, in addition to a group of other factors that control the strength and stability of politics. External factors, including ethnic and religious homogeneity, the percentage and degree of education in society, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the available labor force.

Thanks to its population, China occupies the first ranks in terms of the inflow of capital and foreign direct investment, and the Chinese industry has the ability to compete internationally, thanks to the decline in labor wages. Chinese workers are willing to work for less than \$ 300 a month, and they have obtained an education equivalent to or perhaps better than the American manufacturing worker, who is more disciplined and enthusiastic (Huld, 2023).

China serves two main strategies to improve its human factor:

The first strategy: represented by its commitment to radical reform of the educational system.

The second strategy: it is represented by the relentless pursuit of bringing back the scientists and engineers who left the country, with the aim of enhancing job and educational opportunities in the country, and this retrieval process is seen as a way to bring in creative competencies at a time that is taking place in the process of changing the organizational culture within Chinese research institutions, and because of that there is available A strong mixture of knowledge obtained abroad, which is at home, and from another angle, the huge number of people in China affects the consumption of natural resources, especially energy, and the Chinese expatriates play an important role in achieving the goals of Chinese foreign policy, especially in Southeast Asia, China is betting on this community to achieve its interests and strengthen its foreign relations (Pang & Plucker, 2012).

The Chinese human element is associated with cultural and societal determinants, that is, the elements related to the cultural, civilizational, and historical aspect of ethnic composition, and the degree of social cohesion. Chinese society consists of 56 different nationalities, the largest of which is the "Han" nationality which represents the majority of the population, while the remaining 7% is divided into different ethnic groups, such as the "Tibetans",

"Manchus" and "Uighurs", in addition to the "Zong" group. And this is what made China characterized by regional conflicts and cultural contradictions (LIHUA, 2013).

However, these conflicts and contradictions did not appear with the intensity recorded in countries such as India, the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, and the reason for this is due to the historical cohesion that characterizes the Chinese society, which is proud of its identity and nationalism, despite the emergence of separatist demands in limited regions "Tibet" and the "Xinjiang region" with The Muslim majority located in the west of the country, and to mention the religious factor, the majority of the Chinese profess Confucianism, with the presence of Muslim, Christian and Hindu minorities.

Also, the most important feature that distinguishes the civilizational balance of Chinese society is that connection with the philosophy and culture of Confucianism, which calls for the necessity of ethics in political practices, and calls for its generalization as the essence that determines the relations between the common people and increases the individual's connection to the clan as a system of lower rule and the ruler, as a system of upper rule, The focus on moral consideration in the philosophy of Confucianism, and I believe that Confucian culture is the greatness of the pacifism of Chinese foreign policy, which is based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence (mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-direct aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence), which are principles consistent in form and content with the principles of the United Nations (Scroope & Evason, 2017).

2.3.3 The Economic Determinant

The concept of power changed radically following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. During this period, the rules of the international game prevailed, represented in the strategic balance and the ability of countries to deter and the arms race. However, after this collapse, the state's strength began to be associated mainly with economic strength and the ability to adapt to modern technological developments.

Economic strength has become a central factor in achieving national welfare and improving the quality of life of citizens. Economic powers enable countries to provide the necessary social services and infrastructure for citizens, which enhances the country's stability and

prosperity. In general, it can be said that the concept of power today depends mainly on economic power and the ability to adapt to technological developments, and this constitutes an important shift in the international scene after the end of the Cold War (Knorr, 2016).

The evolution of the Chinese economy occurred in two distinct phases. The first phase, prior to the comprehensive economic reform, commenced with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During this period, China initially embraced the Stalinist model, then shifted to the central planning system, followed by the adoption of the five-year plan approach. The emphasis was placed on the development of heavy industries, characterized by mass mobilization and intensive utilization of the workforce. Over time, China transitioned towards prioritizing productive efficiency and self-reliance, while maintaining centralized management of economic sectors. This phase witnessed reasonable growth rates, although they were overshadowed by the significant growth achieved following the comprehensive economic reforms led by Deng Xiaoping (Li H. Y., 2002).

Between 1972 and 1992, China's growth rate varied between 1% and 13%, experiencing a peak of 14.2% in 2007. By 2014, China's GDP had reached approximately \$10.33 trillion, representing about 32.12% of the global gross product volume. The World Bank reported a GDP of \$16.33 trillion for China in 2022. Notably, China transformed into one of the world's most attractive markets for foreign investment during the period from 1993 to 1996, attracting 12.5% of global foreign investment flows (Hu & Khan, 1997).

The impact of these economic reforms was transformative, shifting Chinese policy focus inwards while also acknowledging the importance of economic security in the context of national security. The legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party derived from China's economic successes achieved under its leadership. However, despite these successes, China faced several challenges, including regional development imbalances, particularly between eastern and western regions, as well as energy scarcity due to the increasing demand alongside rapid economic expansion. China became a significant global energy consumer, especially concerning oil and natural gas. The country's foreign policy, notably post-1993, reflected its prioritization of relationships with energy-producing nations due to a shift from oil-exporting to oil-importing status (Yang & Zhao, 2018).

While China boasts abundant water resources with more than 1,500 rivers within its borders, it is ranked as a world leader in water energy resources in addition to wind energy, of which

China produced 406 billion kilowatts in 2019. The mineral sector has also contributed significantly to China's economic development, as the country has a large share of globally known minerals. It is remarkable that China is distinguished for being the first global producer and consumer of coal, as its consumption of coal reached 4.02 billion metric tons in 2019 (China power, 2022).

2.3.4 The Political Determinant

The foreign policy orientations of a state are significantly influenced by the nature of its political system. Understanding a state's external behavior necessitates an exploration of the outcomes stemming from its prevailing political system and institutions, along with the depth of its political heritage.

China's political institutions exhibit a profound and interconnected rapport between the populace and the governing regime. This symbiotic relationship bolsters internal stability, consequently resonating in the steadfastness and coherence of Chinese foreign policy pursuits. Inherent in the Chinese ethos is a loyalty to the governing political system. Throughout history, this allegiance has been evident, with the Chinese populace demonstrating unwavering and voluntary fealty to their rulers for millennia, notably to the emperor.

The political framework of the People's Republic of China aligns with a socialist republic guided by a single party. The nation's constitution designates leadership to the Communist Party, and governance is conducted through this party, the central people's government, and its corresponding regional and local entities, operating within the dual leadership system (Zhang, 2023).

The eighteenth congress of the Chinese Communist Party in November 2012 marked a pivotal juncture for contemplating the party's trajectory, its interplay with the state, and its evolution in response to global dynamics. This included addressing issues related to elite renewal, tackling bureaucratic challenges, and charting China's forthcoming economic and political paths. Numerous indicators underscore the robust aspiration among Chinese leadership to enact political reforms, addressing Western criticisms concerning curbing dissenting voices and the Communist Party's comprehensive dominance over state institutions (Peters, 2019).

2.3.5 The Psychological Environment and the Chinese Decision-Making Process

Studying the psychological environment is a crucial factor in shaping China's foreign policy. This is because the phenomenon of leadership provides a clear image of the decisions made by policymakers. The various Chinese leaders who have successively come to power and peacefully transferred it have contributed to the development of decision-making methods and mechanisms in China. Chinese philosophy and mindset are unique, evident in instances such as Mao Zedong leaving many matters to the Chinese leader "Lai Xuan," Deng Xiaoping stepping back from significant roles but acting as a spiritual guide for new leaders, and Jiang Zemin's shift to overseeing the Central Military Commission, allowing new leaders to take on China's leadership and management roles in the 21st century (Chapman, 2002).

The evolution of decision-making institutions in China has shifted with changing leadership. During Mao's era, many foreign policy decisions were made in a familial manner. Despite this, the foreign policy decision-making process has become more institutionalized and decentralized, relying less on the individual attributes of leaders. Among the changes in China is the increased prominence of government bodies tasked with key policy issues, known as small leadership groups, as well as the establishment of new leadership groups for national security in the late 2000s.

China has diversified its sources of political analysis, whether from within or outside the government. For instance, the new department for advanced policy planning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a prominent role in shaping political thought sources. Additionally, the government has started appointing experts from various fields as advisors for technical issues such as non-proliferation of prohibited weapons and missile defense. Chinese political scholars and analysts actively engage in internal study groups, report writing, and international engagement to inform Chinese leaders about prevailing international trends and present them with political options (Jakobson & Manuel, 2016).

Regarding the execution of China's highly sophisticated diplomacy, policymakers employ a skillful and astute approach. The results achieved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the past two decades, in line with the reform period, have demonstrated the finesse and acumen of China's diplomatic style. Chinese diplomats have spent substantial time studying the outside world, learning multiple foreign languages, and obtaining academic degrees from universities in Europe and the United States. The recruitment of individuals with

intermediate qualifications transferred from other countries has been promoted to enhance expertise across various fields.

2.3.6 Military Determinant

The Chinese military establishment ranks among the world's largest, boasting numerical superiority with approximately 2 million soldiers. It is also noteworthy for its armament, encompassing both strategic and conventional weaponry, as well as its technical and technological prowess. China's adoption of nuclear capabilities reflects its sense of national pride and the legacy of the Middle Kingdom. Through the possession of nuclear weapons, China seeks, as articulated by Pierre Perniesh, to redress perceived historical injustices suffered during encounters with Western powers and to challenge the dual hegemony of the superpowers of the time.

China's nuclear strategy is fundamentally defensive in nature. The Chinese commitment is not to employ nuclear weapons in any armed conflict unless the opposing party resorts to nuclear weapons or directly threatens its paramount national interests, such as Taiwan. This stance is exemplified by a statement from a Chinese general in 2002, indicating China's readiness to use nuclear weapons in the event of an American nuclear attack during the Taiwan dispute. China also possesses advanced and precision-guided delivery systems, particularly intercontinental ballistic missiles like the DF-4, boasting a range of 7,000 km, and the DF-5 missile, capable of carrying multiple nuclear warheads. These mobile missiles can be repositioned to target countries such as Japan, Russia, and India. Additionally, China possesses medium-range missiles like the Dongfeng 15 and 21, alongside strategic bombers and nuclear missile-carrying submarines (XIA, 2016).

Despite the Chinese military capabilities mentioned above, it does not rise to the level of being a major military power, as is the case with the United States or the former Soviet Union, nor does it represent a danger or threat to the Middle East for a number of considerations, including military and technical considerations related to the capabilities of the Chinese army in naval operations. And land and air towards the Middle East. China does not have the bases that the United States possesses that would enable it to establish military operations and maintain its momentum in the Middle East (Zoubir, 2023).

2.4 OBJECTIVES AND MECHANISMS OF FOREIGN POLICY

2.4.1 Objectives

China pursues an independent and fairly balanced foreign policy that is consistent with the principle of peace and independence. It determines its position and policies in all international affairs based on the basic interests of the Chinese people and the peoples of the world, distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong, and is not subject to any external pressure (Nathan, 1994). Within the framework of the policy of openness and reform pursued by the Chinese leadership, China is working to intensify its international participation in governmental and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of breaking out of its previous isolation. The foreign policy of the Republic of China takes the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as foundations for achieving the goals of this diplomacy.

The history of Chinese diplomacy can be distinguished into different stages in terms of the goal, the goal, the motive, and the means, but the purely economic dimension overshadows the goals of the Chinese diplomatic machine in the current period (April & Shelton, 2015).

2.4.1.1 Find new markets

Marx contends that production and consumption are intricately linked, forming a symbiotic relationship. According to him, production is essential for consumption, just as consumption is crucial for production, as the absence of consumption renders production purposeless. Through consumption, a producer truly embodies their role. It's imperative to analyze the market before initiating the production process since it is the market's size and demands that dictate specific product quantities. This assertion is substantiated by the historical period Europe experienced from 1880s to 1980s, commonly referred to as the Great Economic Crisis. During this period, Europe witnessed a notable decline in prices, living standards, and interest rates, accompanied by an upsurge in the manufacturing sector's output and a surge in unemployment. This was primarily due to Europe's transition into the industrial era, intensifying competition for markets and resulting in the creating more markets through the colonies it controlled (Sofroniou, 2015).

On this basis, the creation of new markets is considered one of the main objectives in Chinese foreign policy in view of the huge Chinese production.

In this context, the Chinese companies resorted to the African consumer, whose income is limited and the quality of life that has not yet reached luxury, and the marketing of products that are compatible with the purchasing power of the African person, as Sino-African trade relations witnessed a great development, as African exports to China increased five times between the periods 1995 to 2015, more than ten times since the beginning of the twenty-first century, after China seized half of the African markets since 2000. It became the second trading partner for the continent in 2009 after the United States of America and before France. The volume of trade exchange between Africa and China increased from \$765 million in 1978 to \$170 billion in 2017 (Regissahui, 2019).

2.4.1.2 Ensuring the flow of oil and diversifying its import sources

China's relentless economic growth, characterized by an outstanding average annual growth rate of approximately 10%, has resulted in a surging demand for oil. This has led China to heavily rely on imported oil, mainly because its domestic oil production and reserves only cover a fraction of its oil consumption. Consequently, securing access to African oil has emerged as a top priority in Chinese foreign policy. This strategic interest dates back to the early 1990s when China initiated efforts to diversify its sources of oil supply, aiming to reduce its overwhelming dependence on oil from the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf. China refers to this strategy as risk Reducing.

Much like Western powers, particularly the United States, China is actively exploring new nations and regions to secure its energy requirements. Consequently, it has diligently marshaled its diplomatic, political, and economic resources with the aim of gaining control over new oil resources in Africa.

Regarding African oil exports to China, in 2011, China imported a significant \$275.6 billion worth of oil, with the largest portion originating from the Middle East (39%) and Africa (18%). Over the past decade, China has been diversifying its sources of oil away from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, favoring Africa and Latin America instead. As a result, China's oil imports from Africa demonstrated remarkable growth, with a compound annual growth rate of 34% between 2001 and 2011. By 2007, Africa's share of China's oil imports had reached 25%. Notably, Angola, Sudan, Congo, Libya, Algeria, and Nigeria collectively

contribute to nearly 90% of China's oil imports from Africa. In recent years, Chad and South Africa have also witnessed significant increases in oil exports to China.

It's worth highlighting that Chinese company SOES accounted for over 90% of African oil imports between 2000 and 2010. Oil has now become an increasingly vital and strategic element in China's international relations. Its prominence in the energy sector reflects the substantial and growing demand for oil within China, necessitating an increasingly active strategic diplomacy aimed at ensuring a secure energy supply in the future (Jones, Gamache, & Hammer, 2013).

2.4.2 Mechanisms

Chinese diplomacy uses a set of mechanisms to achieve its set goals, and among these mechanisms are:

2.4.2.1 Soft power

In recent times, China has skillfully capitalized on the shortcomings of American administrations, beginning with the sluggish response to the Asian financial crisis during the Clinton era and extending to the Bush Jr. administration's myopic approach in countering terrorism following the events of September 11, 2001. In contrast, China has pursued a strategy of political soft power, prioritizing persuasion over coercion while maximizing its capacity to entice others through various means.

Starting from 1997, China initiated the application of soft power, introducing what became known as a "win-win strategy" in its foreign policy. It declared its intent to engage with Southeast Asian countries and took concrete steps by establishing friendship agreements with East Asian nations. China also committed itself to seeking flexible solutions in the South China Sea region.

Moreover, China has been continuously investing efforts in promoting its language and culture. This includes overseeing the implementation of Chinese language programs in leading universities across a vast geographical span, stretching from Kenya to Australia. In Cambodia, the Chinese Ministry of Education went a step further by funding the placement of Chinese language teachers in primary and secondary schools, as well as accommodating

a significantly larger number of foreign students in Chinese universities, in 2018, there were more than 5.6 million international students, more than double the number in 2005.

This multifaceted approach by China has proven to be remarkably successful, as demonstrated by the surge in Beijing's popularity among many nations, dispelling the apprehensions that existed until recently (Maksimova, 2021).

2.4.2.2 Strengthening its relationship with countries by taking the initiative

This approach involves taking the lead in nurturing connections with countries worldwide. Central to this strategy are substantial cross-border initiatives and projects. Foremost among these initiatives is the Silk Road, also known as the One Belt One Road initiative. This ambitious endeavor seeks to create an extensive network of overland and maritime trade routes connecting China with regions in the Middle East and Europe. Additionally, there's the Pearl-Qatar project, designed to establish a chain of seaports along the Indian Ocean, securing crucial sea routes typically used by commercial vessels bound for China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced the New Silk Road initiative, commonly referred to as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in 2013. To promote this vision, a global event, the Belt and Road Forum, was convened in Beijing on May 14 and 15, 2017, drawing participation from numerous world leaders. This initiative has become a driving force in both domestic Chinese politics and its diplomatic outreach. It is poised to be a key determinant of China's global orientations, including its engagement with the Middle East region. The BRI seeks to rejuvenate and expand upon the ancient Silk Road by constructing road and rail networks, laying down pipelines for oil and gas, establishing electrical power grids, and strengthening communication networks (Cai, 2017).

2.4.2.3 Providing loans and assistance

Foreign aid, encompassing both financial and developmental assistance, constitutes a pivotal tool in bolstering and expanding China's presence across various regions globally. A study conducted by the Aid Data Research Center in October 2017 included an analysis of this aid, incorporating a specialized equation devised by the center to gauge its outcomes. The study revealed that between 2000 and 2014, the Chinese government allocated over \$351 billion in official financing to 141 countries and territories spanning Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin

America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe. Notably, Africa stands out as a prominent recipient of this aid.

China's aid encompasses various forms, including conditional assistance, grants, loans, and innovative mechanisms such as government guarantees for investments in various sectors. China perceives the aid provided, particularly to Africa, as a means to attain economic benefits, a perspective embedded in its official policy towards these nations. China actively seeks to engage African, Asian, and Latin American governments by extending loans and providing aid, employing a clever approach to ensure the full utilization of these funds. This involves placing these funds in secure accounts in Beijing, followed by the compilation of a list of requisite infrastructure projects. Once Chinese companies secure contracts for these projects, the funds are then transferred to their accounts. This approach yields three fundamental advantages:

- i. Ensuring the completion of these projects.
- ii. Preventing misappropriation of funds.
- iii. Cultivating a favorable reputation among the people and officials of recipient countries.

In this context, China has allocated \$81 billion in aid to finance projects in African nations. China has played a significant role in extending railways in countries like Angola and Zambia and constructing dams in Mozambique and Sudan. It has even competed with Japanese investments in some Southeast Asian nations, such as the Philippines, where Beijing committed to a substantial \$500 million railway project. Furthermore, China has exerted efforts to enhance its influence in Southeast Asia, with its support to the Philippines surpassing four times the volume of U.S. aid in 2003. Similarly, Chinese aid to Laos has tripled that of the United States in the same year. While Chinese aid to Indonesia was on par with U.S. aid, it surpassed it in terms of diversity and scope (Blank, 2021).

2.4.2.4 Creation of investment funds

Economic globalization intensifies the level of economic interdependence among nations, simultaneously exacerbating global imbalances. A globalized economy necessitates globalized cooperation as a means to address worldwide development disparities effectively

and mitigate economic and financial risks. This collaborative approach enables countries worldwide to harness the opportunities presented by globalization for mutual development. In alignment with this principle, China actively engages in strategic dialogues with regional blocs and influential investment funds. For instance, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 2001 by six nations—China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. This multilateral association aims to enhance security, maintain stability across vast regions spanning Europe and Asia, and pool resources to address emerging challenges and threats. It also fosters trade, cultural exchange, and humanitarian cooperation. The SCO has demonstrated its capacity to construct a modern economic and security framework and has expanded its membership to include India and Pakistan. Consequently, the organization encompasses four nuclear-armed countries and represents half of the world's population.

Furthermore, Iran, Mongolia, and Afghanistan have joined the SCO as observer members, while strategic partners in the dialogue include Turkey, Belarus, and Sri Lanka.

The BRICS group was founded in June 2009 and includes Russia, China, Brazil, India and South Africa, and it includes more than 40% of the world's population. The objectives are centered on the economic development of the economies of emerging countries, and the BRICS members intend to strengthen and build global partnerships for long-term development and sustainability (Kolachi & Shah, 2013).

2.4.3 Non-interference in Internal Affairs

China consistently opposes aggressive wars, hegemony, and power politics. Conversely, China is willing to establish and nurture friendly and cooperative relations with all countries, guided by the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Liu, 2014).

China identifies what it terms as strategic opportunities, signifying an international environment and a historical process conducive to world peace and common development as a strategic precondition. It regards the fulfillment of commitments, peace, and good neighborliness as fundamental pillars of Chinese culture, exemplified by the saying of Confucius: "Do not impose on others what you do not want to be imposed on yourself" (Beijing Review, 1997).

The Chinese government is firmly dedicated to an independent and peaceful foreign policy that advocates equality and coexistence among nations, regardless of their size, wealth, or strength. It emphasizes the need to enhance communication and cooperation between countries in economic, scientific, and cultural fields for the purpose of achieving shared development and prosperity. China also emphasizes the importance of strengthening multilateralism and democracy in international relations, upholding the rule of international law, and working toward the establishment of a just and rational international community (Keith, 2017).

This entails conducting necessary and logical reforms within the United Nations while taking into account the legitimate demands and considerations of developing countries. China further advocates a new development concept centered on equality and mutual benefit, promoting openness over isolation and encouraging fair competition rather than selfishness at the expense of others' interests. China also calls for peaceful resolution of economic and trade disputes through dialogue and opposes unilateral sanctions or the adoption of retaliatory measures, whether appropriate or inappropriate (Reilly, 2012).

China adheres to a policy of non-interference in internal affairs, exemplified by its relationship with Iran during the outbreak of the Iranian revolution. China maintained its support for the Shah at that time and, following the success of the revolution, actively worked to establish positive relations with the new Iranian regime. Furthermore, China maintains a stance of neutrality in its relationships with conflicting countries in the Middle East, which is evident in its positions on issues such as the Syrian crisis, the Palestine question, and the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This will become clear in the next chapter in China's relations with countries in the Middle East.

In this regard, China distances itself from being a party to regional disputes or disputes. For example, it is keen to avoid taking sides in the Iranian-Saudi confrontation; the first visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Middle East included the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran, during which he raised the level of Chinese relations with the two countries to become a “comprehensive strategic partnership.” The same is true with regard to the way China deals with Arab disputes, as China prefers to deal with The League of Arab States as its main recourse for dialogue.

In contrast to the United States, which urges political regimes in the Middle East to embrace democracy and ease restrictions on their populations, China pursues a policy of economic cooperation and development. The U.S. perspective argues that democracy and political freedom are key factors in the stability of countries and the international system. China, on the other hand, believes that supporting countries through economic development leads to internal and regional prosperity and stability. China's vision aligns with the aspirations of many countries in the region, which view China as possessing the expertise and distinguished experience needed for economic revitalization (Ottaway & Carothers, 2004).

China's approach to its relations with Middle Eastern countries is characterized by a focus on bilateral interactions. China maintains comprehensive strategic relations with nations such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. It also forms strategic cooperation with Turkey, establishes a comprehensive partnership with Israel, and fosters strategic relations with countries like Qatar, Jordan, Iraq, Oman, and Kuwait.

From the above, it becomes evident that China's strategy is centered on building individual relationships rather than having a broad regional strategic vision. China seeks to develop strategic partnerships while minimizing security commitments and political positions, all in the interest of safeguarding its regional interests. This approach prioritizes nurturing strong bilateral ties with various nations, driven by specific goals rather than responding to threats. China's agreements with different parties are founded on common interests and aim to manage potential areas of rivalry (Degang, 2021).

Furthermore, China's strategy in the Middle East is not a singular regional strategy. Instead, it represents a diverse portfolio of investments that serve to advance China's national ambitions and influence economic relations with each individual country in the region (Alterman, 2019).

2.5 CHINESE - MIDDLE EASTERN RELATIONS

2.5.1 Sino-Egypt Relations

The two countries established their diplomatic relations in 1956, so that Egypt would be the first Arab and African country to establish relations with the People's Republic of China. The Egyptian recognition in the People's Republic of China had a prominent international impact on the international and Arab arenas at the time. The relations between the two

countries witnessed continuous development in all fields since the beginning of the diplomatic relations between the two countries, where the lack of conflict in the strategic visions between the two countries played a major role in the continuation and development of relations (elshinawy, 2022).

The exchange of visits between the Chinese President and the Egyptian President resulted in the signing of strategic partnerships between the two countries. This partnership led to a significant improvement in relations, by increasing Chinese investments with the participation of its companies in establishing and developing Egyptian infrastructure projects. The mutual visits between the two countries were accompanied by large economic projects, including the solar energy program, the establishment of the new administrative capital, industrial cities, and electric power generation stations, in addition to increasing the volume of trade exchange between the two countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping also provided financial and political support to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, in addition to the signing of 21 technical and economic deals between the two countries (Abdelaty, 2016).

As for merchandise trade, Egypt's exports to China amounted to \$488 million in 2013-2014, and China ranked tenth among the most important markets that receive Egyptian exports. Egypt's exports to China are concentrated in building materials, chemicals, fertilizers and leather. On the other hand, Egypt's imports from China during the same period amounted to \$4,986 million, and China is the third largest supplier of goods to Egypt. In May 2017, China ranked 21st in the list of foreign countries investing in Egypt, with total investments amounting to about \$600 million in about 1,320 projects. The volume of direct Chinese investments in Egypt increased by \$74.9 million in the period from January to September 2019, an increase of 66% compared to the same period in 2018, in various fields, including the manufacture of home appliances, the production of motorcycles, and the agricultural economy. In 2020, China's investments in Egypt exceeded \$7.7 billion, and according to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, new Chinese direct investments in Egypt during the period from January to September of the aforementioned year amounted to \$89.33 million, an increase of 19.3% the same period in 2019.

The volume of trade exchange between Egypt and China during the first 11 months of 2021 amounted to about 12 billion and 863 million dollars, and Egyptian exports to the Chinese

market during the same period amounted to about 638 million dollars, compared to. To \$373 million during the same period in 2020, an increase of 71%. The data included the most important Egyptian commodities exported to China, agricultural crops, leather products and shoes. The value of Egyptian imports from China amounted to 12 billion and 225 million dollars during the first eleven months of 2021, compared to about 11 billion and 965 million dollars during the same period in 2020. The volume of Chinese investments and the growing trade exchange between China and Egypt, in addition to the exchange of high-level visits, reflect the strength of their bilateral relationship (Al-Anani, 2023) (archyde, 2022).

2.5.2 Sino-Turkish Relations

Turkish-Chinese relations have suffered from instability since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1971. During the 1970s, there was no improvement in their relations (Gürer, 2022) . After the military coup in Turkey in 1980, President Kenan Evren made official visits to China and Shanghai in 1982 to strengthen relations with non-Western countries and break the isolation that Turkey suffered after the coup, the primary purpose of the visit was to enhance economic relations. Sino-Turkish relations acquired a new form after the Cold War, focusing on strengthening economic and trade ties between the two countries. Throughout the 1990s, the two sides exchanged official visits through senior officials. Following the end of the Cold War, relations between Turkey and China gained new importance, After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping led China's economy on the path of the free market, making China more important to Turkey in terms of trade and investment. In the first decade of the 21st century, their economic relations grew so dramatically that China became Turkey's third largest trading partner (Fidan, 2013).

Despite some crises that impeded the balance of these relations (such as the issue of Uighur refugees), Turkey's relations with China have continued to grow after years of rapprochement and strategic cooperation. China approaches Turkey cautiously due to considerations related to Turkey's strategic location and its relations with the West. As a member of NATO, Turkey often faces pressure from its Western allies regarding its foreign relations with non-Western countries, including its cooperation with China. Turkey strives to establish a balance in its foreign relations by preserving security partnerships while also engaging in economic partnerships parallel to the European Union (Temiz, 2022).

Ankara's signing of the Belt and Road Agreement in 2015 reflected the economic relations between the two countries, making Turkey the largest recipient of Chinese investments among the 23 countries participating in the initiative. China has 1148 registered companies in Turkey with a total investment of over one billion dollars. Chinese investments in Turkey span various sectors, including transportation, communications, and energy. Bilateral trade increased to \$27.76 billion in 2016 and reached \$32 billion in 2021. The value of Chinese foreign direct investment in Turkey amounted to \$642.3 million in 2016. Additionally, the Chinese smartphone giant ZTE purchased 48.8% of the Turkish company Telekom in December 2016, and the state-owned Ziraat Bank in Turkey signed a credit agreement worth \$600 million with a Chinese development bank. Turkey's GDP increased by 7.6 percent, surpassing expectations of a 7.5 percent growth, and China became Turkey's second largest trading partner in 2021 (Avdaliani, 2023).

2.5.3 Sino-Iranian Relations

Iran recognized the People's Republic of China in 1967, and supported it to restore its membership in the Security Council in 1971 in place of the national China led by Chiang Kai-shek. After the Islamic Revolution that broke out in 1979 in Iran, the bilateral relations between the two countries became closer. Since then, Iran has entered into a state of hostility with the United States and its allies in the region. Beijing recognized the Islamic revolutionary of Iran, and joined Tehran's list of arms suppliers during the Iran-Iraq war, at a very complicated time for Iran after the decision to ban arms exports to Iran against the backdrop of the 1979 hostage crisis (Çelik, 2022).

Iran and China share opposition to US hegemony over their areas of influence, in addition to Iranian nuclear ambitions and China's economic and trade goals all play an important role in shaping their relationship, and what increased the importance of this relationship is the Western economic pressures on Iran, which pushes the latter to establish deep partnerships with China. Despite the US sanctions on Iran, which in turn affected the volume of trade exchange between the two countries, the political relations between Beijing and Tehran are largely stable. China continues to have good economic relations with Iran, despite the US sanctions imposed on Iran, but Beijing is trying to balance its relationship with the United States and Iran, between China's applications of sanctions on Iran on the one hand and Iran's assistance in circumventing economic sanctions on the other hand (Yacoubian, 2023).

Iran's exports to China amounted to 27.5 billion dollars, and the volume of imports amounted to 24.3 billion dollars during 2014. Oil constitutes the largest proportion of Iranian exports to China, while Chinese exports diversified in several fields, including industrial and agricultural machinery and consumer tools. (Scott, 2016) Trade exchange between the two countries decreased in 2016 from 51 billion to 31 billion dollars as a result of the sharp drop in oil prices (Yacoubian, 2023).

Iranian exports to China increased by 25% compared to 2016. China also signed a contract to finance a railway from Mashhad to Tehran worth \$1.5 billion in 2017. (tribune, 2018) The volume of trade exchange between them decreased from 2018 to 2020 due to the drop in the oil price and the effects of the Corona epidemic, in addition to the US sanctions on Iran. Trade between Iran and China increased by 7% in 2022 compared to 2021. Iranian exports to China varied, including refined copper, iron ore, ethylene polymers and aluminum raw (Devonshire, 2023).

Iran is moving firmly towards China in maximizing its relationship with China on the political and economic levels. This culminated in the agreement that Tehran signed with Beijing in 2021, which will last for 25 years. The agreement includes economic, political, and security fields, and investments in infrastructure, in addition to promoting trade between the two countries. The basis for this agreement was the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Iran in 2016, and the agreement of 2021 is nothing but an extension of the visit of the Chinese President to Iran. (Yacoubian, 2023) (Staff, 2021).

2.5.4 Sino-Syrian Relations

Syria recognized the People's Republic of China in 1956. Beijing adopted a policy hostile to Western policy in the Middle East. Beijing's hostile position towards Israel and Turkey, an "ally of the United States," led to the development of relations between the two countries at that time. Sino-Syrian relations deteriorated after the Syrian Baath Party's coup against the regime in 1963 as a result of the policy that the Baath Party followed in getting closer to the Soviet Union. Relations between the two countries did not develop significantly since their inception until 2000. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad approached China, and that rapprochement increased by the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the visit of President Bashar al-Assad in 2004 to China, which resulted in the establishment of the

Chinese-Syrian Business Council and the agreement on economic, commercial, and cultural cooperation between the two countries (Akil,s.&Shaar,k., 2021).

In contrast to Western countries, China played a neutral role at the beginning of the Syrian crisis. China supported Syria politically during the crisis and called for the need for a political solution through the peaceful transfer of power away from external interference in the crisis. China's use of the veto in the Security Council indicates China's support for Syria the bulk of the Chinese-Syrian relations is limited to political support and humanitarian aid. In 2017, China provided \$2 billion in investment in an industrial complex, in addition to Huawei's desire to redevelop the communications network in Syria (Cafiero, 2020).

because China does not have the desire to interfere in internal affairs, in addition to its weak military role in the region, it is betting on humanitarian support until the regime takes control of the Syrian lands, as China did not direct its investments to Syria until after the regime forces were able to control Aleppo and the industrial and investment areas in the country. The instability in Syria has an impact on China's seriousness in directing its foreign investments towards Syria. The control of Iran and Russia over various areas in Syria and Western sanctions on Syria all play a role in the extent of China's ability to direct its investment and economic tools towards Syria (coar, 2022).

2.5.5 Sino-Jordanian Relations

Jordan recognized in 1977 that the People's Republic of China is the representative of China and that Taiwan is part of Chinese territory. Jordanian-Chinese relations improved after the inauguration of Abdullah II as King of Jordan. The two countries exchanged high-level visits after King Abdullah II visited China in 1999 (Marks, 2022).

Jordan's exports to China increased after 2013 the exports included textiles and raw commodities of phosphate and potash, as the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2014 reached \$3.6 billion. During the visit of the King of Jordan to China in 2015, he signed contracts with China worth \$7 billion. The agreement included an electric power plant operating on oil shale at a value of \$1.7 billion, in addition to an electric power station operating on renewable energy at a value of up to one billion dollars. The agreement also included the construction of a railway network worth \$2.8 billion. (Obeidat, 2015)In 2017, Jordan's exports to China were estimated at \$164 million, and Jordan's imports from

China amounted to about \$2.772 billion. In 2018, trade relations between the two countries were estimated at about \$3 billion, and the number of Chinese tourists to Jordan increased by 20% during the same year. (Tran, 2020) The percentage of direct Chinese investments in Jordan has also increased compared to the past 10 years, as it reached in 2018 to about \$85.62 million, and the stockpile is about \$312 million. In addition to economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries, China has provided various aids to Jordan, including grants, soft loans, development of human resources and infrastructure projects, in addition to providing assistance to refugees hosted by Jordan. China also supported Jordan to overcome the Corona pandemic by providing Chinese supplies and medical equipment that help fight the virus (Chuandong, 2021).

2.5.6 Sino-Iraq Relations

Relations between Iraq and the People's Republic of China began after the military coup of General Abdul Karim Qassem on July 14, 1958, which overthrew the monarchy loyal to Western policy. The coup had the greatest impact on the development of the relationship between the two countries at that time for a number of reasons, including. The opposition of the new republican regime to Western politics, the end of the Baghdad Pact, and Qasim's aspirations to support the Arab and Kurdish nationalist movements, these reasons prompted China to develop its relationship with Baghdad at that time (Gul, 2023).

In 2013, China was the largest investment partner in Iraq, thus taking over the share of the United States, which was the largest investor in Iraq. China is expanding its investments in the south of the country that ISIS did not reach, and China has also bought shares of American and Western companies in the oil sectors. China did not have military activity in Iraq during the period of fighting ISIS, similar to the countries of the region and the Western countries that fought ISIS, China contented itself with its statements supporting the Iraqi position in its fight against ISIS (Calabrese, 2019).

Relations between Iraq and China grew after the Iraqi forces, with the support of the international coalition, regained control over the areas occupied by ISIS, as the Iraqi government searched for an economic partner capable of rebuilding the liberated areas and developing infrastructure in various sectors. The two sides discussed establishing a long-

term relationship, which was demonstrated by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi during his visit to China in 2015, and Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's visit to China in 2019, but as a result of the Chinese debt reputation, which is known as the "Chinese debt trap" or "debt diplomacy." The term "Chinese debt trap" refers to a situation in which a borrowing country finds itself saddled with unsustainable levels of debt owed to China, leading to economic and political vulnerabilities.

This concept has gained prominence in discussions about China's investments in overseas infrastructure, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative), and the lack of trust between the political class and the people, a strong opposition emerged in Iraqi circles towards the completion of the agreement. Despite China's success in developing various sectors in the countries of the region, Iraq's political and security situation prevented Iraq from joining in benefiting from China's development capabilities and investments in non-oil sectors. However, the aforementioned did not prevent the development of trade relations between the two countries, as China's imports increased Oil from Iraq to \$49 billion in 2022 (Çalışkan, 2023).

2.5.7 Chinese-UAE Relations

Diplomatic relations between the UAE and China began in 1984. Since the opening of embassies between the two countries, the relationship has continued well and developed continuously. The two countries signed a full partnership after the Chinese president's visit to the UAE in 2018. The economic and trade relations between China and the UAE include various aspects, as the trade volume reached \$50 billion in 2019. (Interesse, China-United Arab Emirates (UAE): Bilateral Trade and Investment Outlook, 2022).

The UAE ranked first in Chinese investments at the level of Arab countries, if the total Chinese investments exceeded \$9.3 billion at the end of 2020. The UAE also aspires to increase the flow of Chinese investment, especially in sectors of the artificial intelligence, infrastructure and clean energy. In 2021, the UAE ranked as the largest non-oil trading partner with China, as the volume of non-oil trade reached \$42.5 billion. The UAE also follows a policy of reduced tariffs towards Chinese goods. (Nashar, 2023) The UAE is a major station for Chinese exports in the region, as the UAE receives more than 60% of Chinese exports, through Jebel Ali Port and the Khalifa Port Container Terminal. More than

6,000 Chinese companies operate in the UAE in various fields. The aforementioned indicates the significant development of relations and that the Belt and Road Initiative has a significant impact on improving trade and economic relations between the two countries (global times, 2022).

2.5.8 Sino-Kuwaiti Relations

Kuwait officially recognized the People's Republic of China in 1971 as the representative of the Chinese nation. Since the recognition, relations between the two countries have progressed. China has supported Kuwait's sovereignty during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwaiti lands in 1991, the neutral Chinese positions and the unity of the Chinese-Kuwaiti vision towards terrorism and the Belt and Road initiative, in addition to Kuwait's economic vision for the year 2035, were reflected in the deepening of the relationship between them (Giorgio, 2018).

Kuwait seeks to develop its economy that depends mainly on oil exports, and it has set a vision of 2035 to develop its economy by relying on non-oil industries and intra-trade. Kuwait is working with the help of Chinese companies to establish the Silk City, which includes entertainment and economic facilities, in addition to the establishment of the five islands, in addition to the role of Chinese companies operating in the oil sector. The volume of trade exchange between China and Kuwait reached \$14.3 billion in 2020 (khedr, 2021).

2.5.9 Sino-Qatari Relations

Diplomatic relations between Qatar and China began in 1988. Since the establishment of relations, the two countries have signed several investment and trade agreements in the field of oil and gas. Bilateral relations have witnessed great development in recent years in terms of trade and investment. The volume of trade between the two countries increased from \$50 million in 1988 to \$10.6 billion in 2017. In 2018, the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached \$11.5 billion. The volume of Chinese investments in Qatar between 2013 and 2018 amounted to \$6.3 billion. More than 14 companies wholly owned by China and 181 Qatari-Chinese joint ventures operate in various sectors in Qatar, including the development of strategic projects and infrastructure for Qatar, including ports and stadiums hosted the World Cup (Mordechai, 2020).

2.5.10 Chinese-Yemeni Relations

The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1956, thus Yemen recognized the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China as the country's representative. China played an active role in Yemen, as China had a role in oil exploration and production, and the two countries agreed in 2013 to expand a container port at an estimated cost of \$508 million. (Tekingunduz, 2020) The war had a significant impact on the development of trade and investment relations between the two countries. China supported the Yemeni position and tried to enter as a mediator in resolving the crisis through its ambassador in Yemen after the failure of the United Nations. However, the Houthi group refused to communicate under the pretext that the United Nations reserved Saudi Arabia. The war had a significant impact on the development of trade and investment relations between the two countries. China supported the Yemeni position and tried to enter as a mediator in resolving the crisis through its ambassador in Yemen after the failure of the United Nations, but the Houthi group refused to communicate under the pretext that the United Nations reserved Saudi Arabia. China also provided a relief grant to Yemen worth \$22.5 million in 2017 (Chang, 2018).

2.5.11 Sino-Bahraini Relations

The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1989, preceded by many visits to Bahraini leaders in the seventies of the last century in order to discuss commercial fields. Bahrain sees China as a partner capable of achieving its goals in the 2030 development plan, which is also consistent with China's vision of the Belt and Road project. Trade and investment relations between the two countries developed after King Hamad's visit to China in 2013. The volume of Chinese investments in Bahrain between the years 2013-2019 amounted to 1.4 billion dollars, as the investments included various sectors, and the number of Chinese companies operating in Bahrain reached 134 companies. The volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2019 reached \$1.6 billion, an increase of \$300 million compared to 2018. In addition to the above, Bahrain is focusing on developing its seaports, highways and train lines linking it with Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Chaziza, 2020).

2.5.12 Sino-Omani Relations

Diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Oman began in 1978. Oman became the first Arab country to export oil in 1983. The field of energy remained the main focus in relations between the two countries, as China is the largest importer of Omani oil in the world.(Rakhmat, 2014)China seeks to develop its relationship with Oman in non-oil fields. In 2016, the Asian Investment Bank approved a loan of \$265 million to develop Oman's maritime infrastructure, in addition to \$36 million to construct a railway for the first time in the country. In 2017, China invested \$239 million in the national fiber optic network. In 2019, the Chinese Government Grid Corporation acquired a 49% stake in the Oman Electricity Transmission Company, and China invested \$60 million in 2020 to produce electricity based on solar energy China is also investing in the DUQM industrial city, so the proportion of Chinese investments in it is likely to reach 8.5 billion euros. Oman has an economic vision of 2040 through which it aspires to increase the attraction of foreign investments in its non-oil sector, it is likely that China will have a share in the implementation of the Oman Vision 2040 (Smith, 2020).

2.5.13 Sino-Lebanese Relations

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1971, and despite the signing of trade agreements between the two countries in the years preceding the establishment of diplomatic relations, Lebanon delayed recognizing of the People's Republic of China as a result of internal and external influences on the Lebanese decision-maker at the time. Relations between the two countries developed in 2014 and cooperation increased during the same year, as China became Lebanon's largest trading partner. Lebanon has a strategic location overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, which is of importance to the Belt and Road Initiative. The Lebanese leaders also affirmed their desire to strengthen bilateral relations by increasing Chinese investments in the renewable energy sector and infrastructure, in addition to their demand for financial aid and loans after the economic collapse that the country was exposed to. Hassan Nasrallah aspires to develop relations with China more than other political parties in Lebanon, for reasons related to China's relations with Iran on the one hand, and the Lebanese Hezbollah not being classified as a terrorist organization by China (Zreik, 2021).

2.5.14 Sino-Israeli-Palestinian relations

The People's Republic of China has been an unwavering supporter of Palestinian rights since its inception, a stance that has significantly influenced Chinese relations with numerous countries in the Arab world. Following the replacement of Taiwan in the Security Council in 1971, China has consistently contributed its supportive vote to the Palestinian cause. Remarkably, this political support has not hindered the establishment of robust economic relations with Israel. In 2013, an infrastructure development agreement was signed, followed by a comprehensive innovative partnership agreement in 2017. Despite this expansive partnership, China constituted only 8% of the total foreign investment in Israel. Israel reciprocated by exporting semiconductors valued at \$2.6 billion to China in 2018. Chinese aid to the Palestinians amounted to \$3.3 million in 2020 and \$2 million in 2021, with additional funding allocated to small-scale projects focusing on water desalination and solar energy in Gaza (Eran & Lavi, 2023).

Although Israel extended the initiative to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950, diplomatic relations were not established until 1992. During the 1980s, under the leadership of Chinese President Deng Xiaoping, Chinese-Israeli relations underwent a transformative phase, marked by deepened economic and technological cooperation, culminating in China's recognition of Israel in 1992. China carefully navigated the delicate political landscape of the Middle East, creating a new trajectory for its relationship with Israel. This shift marked a departure from the support for Palestinian liberation movements in the 1960s, focusing instead on economic and technological collaboration. The latter half of the 1990s witnessed significant development in Chinese-Israeli relations across diplomatic, economic, and commercial domains (ELİGÜR, 2022).

A pivotal point in strengthening Chinese-Israeli relations is Israel's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative since 2015. Despite objections from the United States, Israel became a founding member of this initiative, leveraging its strategic geographical location. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Beijing in 2013 resulted in pivotal agreements, fostering increased Chinese investments in Israel and heightened bilateral cooperation in scientific and technological fields. The two nations signed numerous bilateral agreements across trade and infrastructure, amounting to a total value of up to \$25 billion. This has led to diversification in infrastructure projects within Israel, including tunnels, railways, and the

construction of seaports. Chinese investments in Israel span various sectors, including energy, infrastructure, trade and investment, nuclear energy, satellites, and renewable energy sources. China maintains one step from the parties to the conflict in the Middle East between Iran and Israel. While Beijing increased its investments and trade relations with Israel and the countries of the region, it did not use its military capabilities or support one of the parties to the conflict in the region, while it was content to use its vote in support of Palestinian rights in the Security Council (ELİGÜR, 2022).



3. CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA

3.1 THE EMERGENCE OF SINO-SAUDI RELATIONS

The ideological difference between communist China and the Islamic character of the regime in Saudi Arabia (communism's rejection of Islamic ideas), and the membership of the Republic of China in the United Nations Council had a great impact on the development of relations between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The policy of the Soviet Union during the fifties of the last century caused a shake in the confidence of the leaders of the People's Republic of China, which prompted China to change its direction towards the Arab and Islamic world and the developing countries, as it took Western anti-imperialism as a common ground to develop its relationship with the countries of the Middle East. Despite the informal attempts at rapprochement during the Cold War period initiated by both sides through trade, support for Muslims in China, and receiving Chinese pilgrims, it did not significantly affect the Saudi position regarding recognition of the People's Republic of China. Thus, it can be said that the global political situation and ideological differences had a great impact on the development of relations between the two countries at that time.

The importance of the People's Republic of China to Saudi Arabia increased after China became a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The first official contact between the two countries began in 1981 between the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, Zhao Ziyang, and Crown Prince Fahd I during the North-South Conference held in Mexico. In the mid-1980s, the People's Republic of China agreed to supply Saudi Arabia with missiles in a secret deal that was made through the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan. It can be said that the completion of this deal had an impact on Saudi Arabia rearranging its accounts regarding its relationship with China at the time (Wang T. Y., 1993).

In 1990, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognized the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of China. Thus, official relations between the two countries began after years of secret relationship and exchange of visits between the two countries. One of the main factors that contributed to the strengthening of Sino-Saudi relations was China's

increasing demand for energy, as the largest country in the world in terms of population and a fast-growing economy, it required China to access vast energy resources to fuel industrialization and the success of its plans for sustainable economic growth. Saudi Arabia, one of the world's largest oil producers, has large reserves and has emerged as a key resource for China's growing energy needs.

The establishment of formal relations between China and Saudi Arabia in the 1990s laid the foundation for deeper engagement in subsequent years. The cooperation established during this period served as a springboard for further cooperation in areas such as infrastructure development, investment, and military relations in the following decades. Today, China and Saudi Arabia continue to build on the solid foundation of their relationship that was forged in the 1990s, reflecting the evolving dynamics of international politics and the common interests that bind them (Al-Tamimi, 2013).

3.2 THE GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARAB:

In comparison to other parts of the world, the Arabian Gulf region is of particular importance, and this importance stems from two aspects: the first is the importance of the distinguished geographical location, as it represents the area of convergence of transport routes between the three continents, the meeting point of different trade routes, and the second is represented in being a source of raw materials, especially oil. Where it has the second place globally in terms of oil reserves, that is, the strategic commodity on which the growth of the global economy depends.



Figure 3.1: Saudi Arabia.

3.2.1 Saudi Arabia's Geographical Location

Saudi Arabia is the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula, located in the southwestern corner of Asia. The map of Saudi Arabia is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, and is bordered on the west by the Red Sea, on the south by Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman, on the east by the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the Persian Gulf, and on the north by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. It is easy to reach the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz, and the Bab al-Mandab Strait is the outlet for both the Suez Canal and East Africa.

The coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea extends about 1,760 kilometers (1,100 miles) while the coast of the Persian Gulf is about 560 kilometers (350 miles) (Ochsenwald, 2023).

3.2.2 The Economic Importance of the KSA

In addition to its important geographical location, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys a strategic geographical and spatial strength that made it a focal point for the competition of global powers, through its possession of economic potentials and capabilities that have great influence and effectiveness in international political interactions.

It possesses huge stocks of energy sources, as oil has a significant impact not only on the foreign policy of a kingdom, but also on patterns of regional relations and alliances, and on the degree of concentration of these countries' weight globally. In addition to the increase in the relative weight of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in the interactions of international politics, in light of the high ratio of Saudi oil production to global production, and the high percentage of proven oil reserves. To the total global oil reserves, which strengthened Saudi Arabia's position and importance among the major industrial countries, and became one of the centers of competition for global powers, and in this context economic resources, especially oil and gas, represent one of the elements of the strength and position of this country, as Saudi Arabia occupies the second place in the world Of the oil reserves amounting to 297.6 billion barrels, according to 2019 statistics, whose contribution constitutes about (17%) of the total global reserves, as well as a large proportion of the total global production of crude oil, as well as a large proportion of the total global production of crude oil, the third in the world after the United States and Russia (Fattouh, 2021).

The importance of Saudi oil does not stem from the huge quantities of factors and large reserves, but also from other factors related to the specificity of this oil and its advantages that made it superior to all other types of oil in the world, Perhaps the most prominent of these characteristics are the following:

- i. Abundant production of one well compared to what it is in other regions of the world.
- ii. Its proximity to consumption areas in Western Europe and Japan, as it is located near sea ports, which facilitates the process of transportation and storage.
- iii. Its quality is good as the percentage of sulfur is less than the density of sulfur in it.
- iv. The ease of finding oil wells, as they are located in areas close to the ground, which leads to a low cost of extracting them (Shammas, 2000).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also possesses huge amounts of gas reserves, which ranked eighth in the world of proven natural gas reserves. Despite the large reserves, Saudi Arabia uses natural gas to meet its local needs, if it uses more than 58% to produce electricity. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has set promising goals in its Vision 2030 and has worked to allocate part of Ramco oil stations for the development of natural gas extraction sites. It is expected, according to the plan set by the company, that Saudi Arabia will reach the production of (23) billion cubic feet of natural gas during one day in the year before the advent of the year.

By 2030, this plan could place Saudi Arabia among the top three global gas producers. (NAKHLE, 2021)The importance of oil in general is not only due to its availability in huge reserves in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf Cooperation Council, but also because of the failure of the many attempts that industrialized countries aspire to dispense with fossil energy and provide alternative energy, for many reasons, the most important of which is the high prices of these alternatives and their inability to cover all The uses provided by oil, as well as the negative effects that may be generated from nuclear energy in the event of any defect in the nuclear power-generating reactors.

Thus, the strategic importance of the countries of the Arab Gulf region in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, made it one of the important axes for the superpowers to move to ensure the continuation of the flow of huge oil reserves that abound in the region, which is what those powers, especially China, translated through their policies Aiming to ensure access to

energy sources, primarily oil, to maintain the level of development and economic growth (Gross, 2020).

3.3 THE CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The study of the foreign policy of any state, especially the major ones, requires a distinction between the permanent goals that it seeks to achieve, which stems from the political philosophy on which the political system is based and the vital interests that center around the benefits, interests, and gains that benefit the state and its people, which include economic aspects. Cultural and military.

The importance of economic factors in relations at the international level and its relationship to the security and unity of states is increasing, making the principle that peace and development one of the most important goals of Chinese foreign policy. China's endeavor to maintain high growth rates, and to prevent its economic deterioration by acquiring real power potential, prompted it to be present in important regions such as the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia, as a result of its possession of natural wealth and great economic potential. The contents and bases of Chinese policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can be determined through several axes:

3.3.1 Ensure Oil Flow

The rapid economic development and growth witnessed by China in recent years prompted the search for sources and supplies of petroleum and raw materials, as the high growth rates in China, which exceeded 9%, prompted China to strive towards securing its energy needs, oil and gas, to achieve energy security, especially if we learned that the Chinese demand for energy is increasing, as China has transformed since 1993 from a self-sufficient country in oil to an importing country, and since 2004 it has become the second largest consumer of oil in the world after the United States of America, which means that ensuring the continuation of the flow of energy sources will be. They are rulers in determining China's foreign policy towards oil-producing countries, led by Saudi Arabia (Zweig & Jianhai, 2005).

Despite the uncertainty about the future of global demand for oil, experts agree that dependence on oil will continue to increase around the year 2030. (Millard-Ball & Brandt, 2013) While global consumption of oil reached about 85.9 million barrels per day in 2008, it

is expected that the volume of consumption will rise to more than 106.6 million barrels per day in 2030. (Lawler, 2021) In this context, China's proven oil reserves amounted to about 300 million barrels, and it also enjoys large commercial reserves, as the total commercial and strategic reserves reached 1.2 billion barrels in 2020, while its imports of crude oil reached in 2017. About 10.3 million barrels per day. While China's reserves of natural gas, in 2021, amounted to about 235 trillion cubic meters (EIA, 2022).

Accordingly, the Chinese vision for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was embodied, by employing the economic dimension in China's policy towards Saudi Arabia, through China's adoption of a new approach based on diplomacy in the service of the economy, instead of the previous approach that was centered on the economy in the service of diplomacy, in a way that achieves the common interest Between the two countries.

The value of oil exports from Saudi Arabia to China amounted to about \$64.97 billion in 2022, compared to about \$20 billion in 2016. (Trading Economics, 2023) there is no doubt that China's dependence on Saudi Arabia or in general on oil-exporting countries in the Middle East can be interpreted in two ways: the first stems from the fact that Saudi Arabia and its regional surroundings constitute a major source of oil in the global market, and the second way is diversifying its oil import sources. Without relying on Russia, Central Asia and Africa only, which pushes it towards the Middle East.

The economic factor has become one of the factors influencing the Chinese approach towards the Kingdom, based on the fact that Saudi Arabia is one of the most important countries in the world in production, reserves, and marketing in a global system in which oil is no longer a commercial commodity that generates great returns from its investment only, but has become a major strategic issue closely related to the pace of international development and stability.

What reinforced this importance is the huge size of the Chinese economy, as it is the second most powerful economy in the world, after the United States of America, as the volume of gross domestic product reached about \$17 trillion in 2022, and according to the report issued by the World Bank, it is expected that the growth of domestic product will reach The Chinese total in 2030 is about 5.0 annually. (World bank, 2022) the Chinese concept of energy security is based on the need to secure China's energy needs, by moving on the internal and external tracks to diversify supplies and achieve the security and stability of those supplies.

At the domestic level, China began to focus on building a strategic reserve of oil, which amounted to about 500 million barrels, making it the second largest country with a strategic reserve of oil after the United States of America, which has an estimated strategic reserve of about 700 million barrels. On the external level, China has begun to move on more than one path to diversify its energy needs, relying on more than one region such as the Middle East and Central Asian countries. Hence, China's continued dependence on external energy supplies, for the continuity of its economic growth process, which is the dependence that It is expected to grow in the foreseeable future, making energy security the primary driver of China's policy towards the region of the Middle East in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular (Greenwald, 2022) (Li, Khan, & Yao , 2022).

3.3.2 Trade and Investment

The economic aspect of Beijing's foreign policies towards the GCC countries was not confined to obtaining access to energy resources, since trade interchange between China and Saudi Arabia was one of the most important pillars of the two sides' relationship system. As the volume of trade between China and Saudi Arabia in 2010 amounted to about 42.4 billion dollars, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came at the forefront of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in terms of the value of trade exchange, exports and imports with China, which reached about 76 billion dollars in 2019, so that it became China is Saudi Arabia's first trading partner, and Saudi Arabia has become China's first trading partner in West Asia and the Middle East region. The value of Saudi imports from China in 2021 amounted to about 29 billion dollars, compared to the value of Saudi exports to China, which amounted to about 48.7billion dollars, in which oil accounted for 80% of the total Saudi exports to China, which indicates that oil prices it is the main factor in changing the value of trade flow. As for the volume of merchandise trade, the main products exported by China to Saudi Arabia are broadcasting equipment \$2.07 billion, cars \$1.68 billion, and light fixtures \$1.1 billion. Over the past 26 years, China's exports to Saudi Arabia have increased at an annual rate of (14.3%), from 904 million dollars in 1995 to 29 billion dollars in 2021 (OEC , 2022)(Interesse, 2022).

Saudi Arabia has gained great importance in the investment plans of Asian companies, led by Chinese companies, especially in infrastructure projects and the export of consumer goods, as Chinese foreign policy has adopted a mechanism for building advanced relations

with consumer markets, by consolidating partnerships, and searching for new markets for Chinese goods and commodities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the world's major economies, with a GDP of approximately \$834 billion in 2021, while Saudi Arabia is the largest economy in the Gulf area and the Middle East, and a member of G20 (Chaziza M. , 2020).

Accordingly, the volume of Chinese investments in Saudi Arabia amounted to about 5.5 billion dollars in 2022. Thus, Saudi Arabia is the largest recipient of Chinese investments in the Belt and Road Initiative, as investments were concentrated in the oil and gas sector, infrastructure, finance, construction, communications, trade and others. (Wang C. N., 2022) China and the GCC countries also signed a memorandum of strategic understanding in 2010, which includes many areas of cooperation, including the establishment of a free trade zone between the two sides. In 2012, the United Arab Emirates hosted the Forum for Sustainable Development between the GCC countries and China.

During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January 2016, agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed, including the agreement to construct a nuclear reactor for the production of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, over the next twenty years, at a cost of more than \$80 billion, in order to meet the increasing growth in the demand for electricity production is at an annual rate of about (8%), which is an important matter, whether for Saudi Arabia or for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in general (Strobel & Gordon, 2020).

3.3.2.1 Saudi Vision 2030

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to reduce its dependence on oil as a result of the instability of global oil prices, which led to the depletion of its cash reserves, estimated at \$150 billion. In 2016, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched Vision 2030, which aims to revitalize the economy in the areas of different and reduce unemployment rates in Saudi Arabia by supporting the private sector and reducing dependence on the public sector (Khashan, 2017).

The most important goals of Vision 2030 are:

Energy and Industry: The energy and industry domain take a prominent position within the framework of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative. The plan places significant emphasis on

the diversification of the energy portfolio, advocating for the expansion of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power. This objective is comprehensively detailed in authoritative references, including the "Saudi Vision 2030" dossier issued by the Council of Economic and Development Affairs. Additionally, the strategic blueprint underscores the fostering of value-added industries, with a particular spotlight on the petrochemical sector, as a means to bolster economic adaptability and mitigate reliance on crude oil exports.

Healthcare and Life Sciences: The healthcare and life sciences sector is progressively gaining prominence within the overarching framework of human capital development and economic diversification. The strategy outlined in the "Healthcare Transformation Strategy" centers on elevating healthcare services, infusing investments into medical research endeavors, and cultivating the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries.

Digital Transformation and Technology: The digital transformation and technology sector aptly mirrors Saudi Arabia's unwavering dedication to innovation and advancement. As articulated within the "Digital Transformation Strategy," the Kingdom strives to champion the integration of digital processes across various sectors while harnessing the strides in technological advancements to foster economic expansion (Vision 2030, 2022).

Vision 2030 is in harmony with China's aspirations regarding the BRI on the one hand, and its desire to increase its investment share in the Saudi market on the other hand, because China has great capabilities capable of achieving the aspirations and development goals of Saudi Arabia.

3.3.3 Belt and Road Initiative

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has acquired great importance in the Chinese political perception, due to its geostrategic importance, overlooking the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. It is thus located on the sea that connects the East and West through the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea with the Mediterranean, which enjoys great importance in global trade and its views on The Arabian Gulf, which is considered the Middle East's maritime gateway and the main outlet for the region's oil exports (Ochsenwald, 2023).

In addition to the aforementioned, the economic capabilities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the stability of its internal political system, in addition to its political influence on its neighboring countries, especially since the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have

homogeneous and politically convergent systems of government, ranging from the monarchy or the princely system, which concentrates the rule in the family One, and the rule is hereditary, which facilitates the process of consultation and agreement among them regarding various countries and regional and international issues (Tok, 2021).

The factors and trends governing China's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia stem from the need to strengthen political relations with the Kingdom, in order to achieve a set of goals. It is represented by meeting China's growing needs for energy supplies and benefiting from the returns of economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the areas of infrastructure, manufacturing, transfer of productive technology, energy, agriculture, and precision technology, in addition to opportunities for financial and investment cooperation between the two sides, which confirms the continued priority of the economy in foreign policy. China towards the Middle East region in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular. What contributes to the issue of Chinese rapprochement with Saudi Arabia is that China did not have any colonial ambitions in the Kingdom, and there was no direct or indirect disagreement between the two sides on common issues, especially its rejection of Iran's possession of nuclear weapons, which is consistent with the goals of the Gulf Cooperation Council states. , with a Chinese policy based on non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and a balanced economic openness policy (Yilmaz, 2015).

Here, we must point out China's desire for the success of the Belt and Road initiative in the Arab Gulf region, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through cooperation between international and local powers. The region, far from the competition and conflict that exposes China to economic damage as a result of involving itself in military operations or its support for a party in an armed conflict, which is contrary to the objectives of China in which it seeks to continue its economic growth (Lopez, 2020).

In this context, Saudi Arabia has gained a prominent position in the Chinese Belt and Road strategy, given that energy and investment constitute the cornerstone of this strategy, relying on the investment and infrastructure wings, as Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at the opening of the Sixth Arab-Chinese Cooperation Forum In June 2014 on: China and the Arab countries have enjoyed understanding and friendship since the ancient Silk Road, and they are natural partners in jointly building and embodying the One Belt - One Road strategy (China embassy, 2014).

In the framework of promoting this initiative, the Chinese government published a report in March 2015, under the title "Vision and Measures on Building the Economic Belt of the Common Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road for the Twenty-First Century". And how the road will connect China with Europe across the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, which means that the Middle East region will serve as a hub for the two roads, which leads to more added economic benefits. (ministry of foreign affairs of the PRC, 2015).



4. DISCUSSION RELATED TO CHINESE MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Liberal analysis of China's Middle East policy reveals a complex and dynamic relationship between China's foreign policy approach and the fundamental ideas of liberal international relations theory. Fundamentally, liberalism asserts that shared norms, interdependence in economic and cooperation between nations can result in a more secure and peaceful global order. This theoretical framework helps to explain the complex aspects of China's diplomatic strategy in relation to its interactions with the Middle East. In fact, China's attitude toward liberalism is vividly exemplified through its economic and forward-looking tendencies, manifested in the adoption of liberal positions in trade and the transformation of its foreign policies to ensure cross-border security and economic pursuits. Nevertheless, China's embrace of liberalism is a futuristic necessity despite its historical position, socialism. In the realm of liberalism, China pragmatically opts for positions that are applicable to the modern international system. Moreover, some speculations, on the other hand, discuss China's potential radical approach to liberalism or deliberate denial of it. Nevertheless, China's role in the World Trade Organization and its compromises in the past could be viewed as initial inclinations toward liberalism (Putten, 2015).

The Chinese economy increased at a 9% yearly rate. China has to find new places to secure energy imports and sell manufactured goods in order to keep its factories running and its expansion going. Since the Middle East is one of the major suppliers of hydrocarbons, it became a popular destination for Chinese exporters seeking to secure energy imports. Therefore, a great deal of Chinese businesspeople, private actors, and even the Chinese government itself began investing in the Middle East when the CPC adopted the strategy of "going out" in 2001. As a result, the economy and diplomatic connections noticed an era of change (Bijan, 2005).

Middle Eastern nations are finding China-led multilateral projects to be growing popular platforms. There is an increasing understanding that their political and financial diversification tactics depend on them becoming members of institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Similar to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), support for China's new international initiatives is almost universal.

This popular regional support not only creates a framework for mutually beneficial cooperation, but it also clearly highlights China's expanding influence in the Middle East. It also demonstrates the willingness of the states in the region to uphold Beijing's fundamental interests in other institutions, like the UN and the G20, and the growing consensus among them regarding their inclinations toward a multipolar world order (Arkin, 2022).

This liberal model focuses on Chinese Middle East policy. Its emphasis the relationship between financial, political, and cultural aspects of Chinese engagement with the Middle East in a wide liberal concept of interconnected world.



5. CONCLUSION

China's growing interest in the Middle East is one of the most remarkable changes in international relations in recent years. China has emerged as the Middle East's key trading partner and investor. Given China's position as the world's largest oil importer, energy cooperation between China and the Middle East is critical. The Middle East also contains some of the world's largest oil reserves. China has become more involved in Middle East security concerns, assisting governments and groups that share its goals.

China has an interest in the Middle East for several reasons, including:

China depends on imported oil to cover its energy needs. China has been working hard to obtain access to the Middle East's massive oil reserves through long-term contracts and investments.

China's economy is rapidly increasing, and it is now the world's second largest. China is investing heavily in infrastructure and other projects in the Middle East as the region grows in importance as a market for Chinese goods and services.

The Middle East is strategically important due to its location at the crossroads of three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe). China's goal is to challenge the US hegemony in the region while also increasing its own sphere of influence.

China's growing presence in the Middle East has both advantages and disadvantages. China's investments and trade have boosted the Middle Eastern economy. China's role as a regional mediator and an advocate for peace and stability have both been favorable. On the other hand, China's support for authoritarian governments has raised concerns about the country's human rights record and regional aspirations.

Saudi Arabia is one of China's most important Arab relations. Saudi Arabia wields considerable regional power as the world's largest oil exporter. China and Saudi Arabia have a strong economic and security partnership. China and Saudi Arabia are both significant investors in each other's economy. China and Saudi Arabia are also collaborating on a variety of security issues, including counterterrorism and maritime security.

China and Saudi Arabia have a win-win relationship. Both countries benefit from their mutual reliance on each other's oil and gas assets. The connection is critical to the region's peace and safety. However, the alliance has been chastised for its lack of transparency as well as its support for authoritarian governments.

5.1 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

In the upcoming years, China's influence in the Middle East will surely grow much more. As a developing superpower, China is devouring more and more natural resources. Given the Middle East's strategic importance and vast resources, China is expected to continue investing there and expand its influence.

The USA and other states with benefits in the Middle East should consider the ramifications of China's rising influence there. The United States has long had regional sway, but rising Chinese influence is beginning to pose a threat. As Chinese influence grows in the Middle East, the USA and other major powers will have to modify their policies accordingly.

The connection between China and Saudi Arabia will undoubtedly remain crucial in the region. Oil exports and regional influence make Saudi Arabia an important country. Both in terms of investment and oil purchases, Saudi Arabia relies heavily on China. Both countries benefit from the other's strong economy and stable government. Critics have pointed to the lack of transparency in the Sino-Saudi partnership and the two countries' support for authoritarian rulers as reasons to doubt its value to regional security and stability.

The Chinese and Saudi relationship needs careful management. The United States, together with other world powers, should cooperate with China and KSA to ensure peace and safety in region. The US should be mindful of the Chinese and Saudi working together to harm American interests in the region.

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