

UDC 327

## **Iraqi crisis: China's position during Iraq war (2003) and Beijing's growing role in Middle East and Persian Gulf after the war against Iraq**

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### **Abstract**

The author talks about the possibility of the development of China's role in the Middle East in general, and in the Gulf region in particular, especially after the change of many conditions in the region as a result of the 2003 Iraq war. He explains the possible forms of cooperation between China and Arab countries, and also he argues that the People's Republic of China may have a more important role in various regional issues, especially when China looking for closer cooperation with the Russian Federation. All of these important questions, and all of these events, has given the People's Republic of China a great opportunity to be a strong presence in the Gulf region, and that all of these conditions can be a gift unexpected by the United States of America to China, so the People's Republic of China should take advantage of the existing conditions in the Gulf region after Iraq war, would be better to Beijing to cooperate with Moscow, because if China has made in collaboration with Russia, only then the People's Republic of China can play a major role in the Gulf region and in the Middle East with the help of Russia.

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### **Keywords**

Iraq, China, Iran, Russia, USA, multipolarity, cooperation, United Nation, Middle East, Gulf War.

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## Introduction

The decline in USA standing in the Middle East following the Iraq War created opportunities for other extra regional actors to expand their influence in regional affairs, notably (China and Russia). Although the source of this decline cannot be reduced to a single event, the Iraq conflict contributed to doubts that the United States of America is no longer the guarantor of regional security it once was, to say nothing of its effect on perceptions of USA moral authority. This effect can be observed in Arab public opinion, in which USA favorability ratings sharply declined in the years following 2003. Although views of the United States of America have somewhat improved after the election of President Barak Obama, polls in key countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, show continued negative views of Washington and its policies in the region [Abu Taleb, 2009].

However, of even greater concern to USA strategic planners, America's declining authority is also reflected in the hedging strategies regional actors are using to diversify their security alliances. A combination of lowered confidence in the USA capacity to ensure regional security and a desire by some to return the region to a system of (multipolarity) have expanded opportunities for Peoples republic of China and Russian Federation to enhance their positions in regional affairs. To date, the Russian and Chinese advances have largely taken the form of strengthened economic ties [Schoen, Kaylan, 2014, 313].

However, should the USA "brand" continue to suffer, Chinese and Russian engagement could spread into the security portfolio. Despite the fact that the United States of America retains its status as the balancer of choice in the Middle East, the erosion of USA credibility and influence has created an opportunity for growing extra regional activism, even if such activism has to date largely complemented rather than supplanted the USA regional role. The following sections further assess the extent and nature of extra regional involvement in the Middle East in the years following the Iraq War 2003 [Kissinger, 2014, 191].

### China's position during Iraq war

Returning to the Iraq war period, China's political stance was popular and hostile USA invasion against Iraq, Chinese President (Hu Jintao) met with visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Mir (Zafarullah Khan Jamali) in Beijing on March 25, 2003. On the Iraq issue, Hu Jintao said the Chinese government has always insisted on a political solution within the framework of the United Nations and has made unremitting efforts to this end. He said it is regrettable that war has broken out and China is deeply worried about the humanitarian disasters and impact on regional and global peace, stability and development that it would cause. The president said peace is the common aspiration of people around the world. China calls for the countries involved to stop military actions as soon as possible and return to the correct path of solving the

Iraq issue by political means. The Chinese Government has already sent and will continue to offer humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people suffering from war [China and Iraq war – The President..., 2003].

Chinese Premier (Wen Jiabao) held talks with his visiting Pakistani counterpart Mil' (Zafarullah Khan Jamali) in Beijing on March 24, 2003. The two leaders exchanged views on bilateral relations and the international situation. Wen Jiabao said although the current global situation is undergoing profound changes, peace, development and cooperation remain the objective of most people. He said China is an important force in maintaining global peace, stability and development and will play an active and constructive role in international affairs. He said China, deeply concerned about the current situation in Iraq, has maintained a consistent and clear stance on the issue. "It has made unremitting efforts to solve the issue through political means," he added. The Chinese premier called for an early cessation of the war in Iraq and the return to the right path of political solution within the framework of the United Nations so as to reduce the humanitarian catastrophe suffered by the Iraqi people and to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq [China and Iraq war – The Premier..., 2003].

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China issued on March 20, 2003 a statement on the military operations against Republic of Iraq by the United States of America and some of its allies. Following is the full text of the statement:*

On March 20, bypassing the United Nation Security Council, the United States of America and some other countries launched military operations against Iraq. The Chinese Government hereby expresses its serious concern.

The Government of the People's Republic of China has all along stood for a political settlement of the Iraq issue within the United Nation framework, urging the Iraqi Government to fully and earnestly implement relevant Security Council resolutions and calling for respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the international community.

Security Council Resolution (1441) adopted unanimously last November is an important basis for a political settlement of the Iraq question. It is the widely held view in the international community that the strict implementation of Resolution (1441) can deny Iraq weapons of mass destruction through peaceful means. The Chinese Government has worked tirelessly with various countries to this end. War will inevitably lead to humanitarian disasters and undermine the security, stability and development of the region and the world at large. People throughout the world detest war and want to see peace preserved. The Chinese Government is always committed to peace and stability in the world. We stand for settlement of international disputes by political means and reject the use or threat of force in international affairs. The Chinese Government strongly appeals to the relevant countries to stop military actions and return to the right path of seeking a political solution to the Iraq question [China and Iraq war – The Ministry..., 2003].

*The Foreign Affairs Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC) issued a statement on March 21, 2003, expressing grave worries over the military actions against the republic*

*of Iraq by the United States of America and some of its allies and strongly calling for a halt to the operations. Following is the full text of the statement.*

On March 20 the United States of America and some other countries launched military actions against Iraq. We hereby express our grave worries. China, as a permanent member of the United Nation Security Council, has always devoted itself to safeguarding the unity, authority and role of the Security Council. It has always stood for a political solution to the Iraq issue within the United Nation framework, and urged the Iraqi Government to strictly, fully and earnestly implement relevant Security Council resolutions and to destroy completely any weapons of mass destruction. Meanwhile, China maintains that Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected. Resolution (1441), adopted unanimously by the Security Council, is an important basis for a political settlement of the Iraq issue. China has never given up a glimmer of hope for peace, and has always been making unremitting efforts to this end, along with relevant parties. The people of China and the rest of the world long for peace. We have always been committed to safeguarding world peace and stability, have always stood for settling international disputes by political means and have always opposed resorting to force in international disputes. The military actions against Iraq by the United States of America and other countries would cause humanitarian disasters, casualties and the loss of property of the Iraqi people, while endangering peace and stability in the region.

We are deeply worded about the development of the situation. And we strongly appeal to the relevant countries to comply with the will of the international community, stop military actions and promptly return to the track of seeking a political solution [China and Iraq war – The Statement..., 2003].

*The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee issued on 21 March 2003 a statement on the military actions against the republic of Iraq by the United States of America and some of its allies. Following is the full text of the statement:*

On March 20, without authorization from the United Nation Security Council and ignoring the world's common wish for peace, the United States of America and some other countries went their own way and launched military actions against Iraq. (CPPCC) National Committee members from all political parties, social groups, all walks of life and ethnic groups are shocked and concerned about this. For a long period, the United Nations has made unremitting efforts to solve the Iraq issue peacefully through political means and has made positive progress. In particular, Resolution (1441), passed unanimously by the United Nation Security Council, laid a sound basis for the United Nation weapons inspectors to carry out their mission and realize the goal of denying Iraq weapons of mass destruction through political means. When the door for peace was still open, the United States of America and some other countries wantonly used force against a sovereign country. Those activities, trampling over the United Nation Charter and the basic norms of international relations, set a vicious precedent for international relations in the 21st century. The military actions will not only cause humanitarian disasters for the Iraqi people, undermine the security, stability

and development of the region and the world at large, but cause grave harm to the people of the United States of America as well. The (CPPCC) National Committee firmly supports the Chinese Government's stance and proposition on solving the Iraq issue. The Chinese people have been consistently committed to maintaining world peace and stability and rejecting the use or threat of force in international relations. We are deeply worried about the condition of the Iraqi people trapped in the war. We appeal for the safety of lives and property of Iraqi civilians to be protected under any circumstances. Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected and maintained. We strongly call for the countries concerned to comply with the appeal of the international community, stop military actions and continue to seek a political solution to the Iraq issue within the United Nation framework [China and Iraq war – The Statement of Chinese..., 2003].

*The Islamic Association of China issued a statement on March 22, 2003, strongly calling for the United States of America and other countries to stop military actions against Iraq. Following is the full text of the statement:*

On March 20, the United States of America and some other countries, bypassing the United Nation Security Council and ignoring the opposition of the international community, launched military actions against Iraq.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry had issued a solemn statement on this. The Association fully supports the Chinese Government's principled stance on the Iraq issue. The United States of America and some other countries have outrageously started military actions against Iraq, regardless of the diplomatic mediation and efforts made by the international community to avoid war and the anti-war voices expressed by the people in most nations, including the American people. The Association is greatly indignant at their actions and strongly condemns them. We also express our great concern and sympathy to the Iraqi people who are suffering from the agony of war. The Association strongly calls for the United States of America and some other countries to stop military operations, and return to the correct path of political settlement of the Iraq issue. Islam advocates for peace and more than 20 million Chinese Muslims love peace and oppose war. The stances and opinions that the Chinese Government holds on the Iraq issue represent the wishes of the Chinese people, including the Muslims. We, the Chinese Muslims, should start from the national fundamental interests and speak out the wishes for peace and anti-war sentiments through normal channels. We believe Allah is just. Let's pray Allah for delivering Iraqi Muslim brothers and sisters from the disasters of war as early as possible and blessing the world with peace and tranquility. Amin! [China and Iraq war – Chinese Islamic..., 2003].

For the People's Republic of China, the Iraq war was a major turning point, because this war has changed in Chinese Prospects in the Gulf. China's recent engagement in the Gulf has largely been driven by its status as a "stakeholder state" favoring regime stability. That is to say, given the importance of China's economic growth as the source of its emerging power, China is heavily invested in promoting the stability conducive to the flow of Chinese exports to the region, as well as to the import of Middle Eastern oil and gas to China. However, the precariousness of regional

security in light of the repercussions of the war in Iraq creates both challenges and opportunities for China that are changing its posture (*vis-à-vis*) the region. Specifically, the disruption of Iraqi oil supplies is leading China to strengthen its relationships with other producers, notably the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, the USA entanglement in Iraq and the move of some Gulf States to hedge against an erosion of American power by diversifying their security alliances creates opportunities for China to expand its influence in the Gulf. However, while China has sought to expand its footprint in the region and become more proactive in ensuring its access to Middle East markets and share of the region's oil and gas, this expansion of China's role in regional affairs is likely to proceed gradually and remain focused on the economic dimension.

For the example: the war in Iraq and its results was very important for the (Chinese-Saudi) Dimension. Because the violence in Iraq has thwarted Chinese ambitions to maximize oil potential there, and while it is pushing for major oil deals with the new Iraqi government, its biggest focus on the Arab side of the Gulf is the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

From China's vantage point, the calculus is simple: As the world's largest oil producer, Saudi Arabia is a natural provider of China's energy needs. The benefit is equally clear for Saudi Arabia: The Iraq War underscores the risk of reliance on a single power for maintaining regional security. Saudi Arabia is therefore keen to strengthen its relationships with other powers that can be employed to reinforce the kingdom's security in a dangerous neighborhood. Ambassador Chas Freeman describes the underlying logic this way: What do the Arabs and Chinese see in each other after the war of Iraq?

The Arabs see a partner who will buy their oil without demanding that they accept a foreign ideology, abandon their way of life, or make other choices they'd rather avoid. They see a country that is far away and has no imperial agenda in their region, but which is internationally influential and likely in time to be militarily powerful. In short, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states view China as a stable market for their oil and gas resources and a potential check on the use of force in the region but not an alternative to the USA-led regional security order. Have observed that China cannot supplant the United States of America in the Middle East as a military power, lacking anything close to the requisite military might. Yet, Middle Eastern countries can use a relationship to China to supplement the bilateral relations with the United States of America and perhaps give those countries the freedom of greater distance from Washington. Put another way, China provides the Gulf States with an opportunity to reduce their dependence on the United States of America as the sole heavyweight in the region. By any measure, China's ties in the Middle East are growing. In 2006, King 'Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and President Hu Jintao of China exchanged visits. 'Abdullah's visit was the first by a Saudi head of state since the People's Republic of China and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia established formal diplomatic relations in 1990.

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1 The term stakeholder was used in September 2005 by then-Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick in remarks to the Committee on (USA-China) Relations.

This historic step culminated in an offer from Saudi Arabia to build and operate a strategic oil reserve in China that would hold 100 million barrels of oil, roughly 10 days' worth of Saudi oil output. While there is nothing suspicious about China's pursuit of Saudi oil, there is concern that China's demand for Gulf oil may lead to an intensification of (American-Chinese) energy competition. China is already the world's second-largest consumer of energy, and its demand for oil is forecast to rise faster than that of any other country over the next several decades.

Over the (1998–2007) periods, Chinese oil consumption grew nearly 85 percent. By 2030, it is estimated that China will need to import roughly 14 million barrels of oil per day to close the gap between its consumption and domestic production. While a prolonged global recession could certainly change these forecasts, China is still likely to be a strong source of demand relative to other energy consumers even if global demand fails to keep pace with forecasts. As for the regional breakout of the country's energy supply, the People's Republic of China currently imports a significant share of its demand. The USA Energy Information Administration (EIA) collects, analyzes, and disseminates independent and impartial energy information to promote sound policymaking, efficient markets, and public understanding of energy and its interaction with the economy and the environment (EIA, 2008).

From the Iranian perspective, China represents a growing market for its oil and gas output and, given China's ambivalence about imposing sanctions on Iran for its nuclear ambitions, a potential conduit for Iranian oil should the West move to freeze Iranian energy exports. Moreover, Iran can reasonably assume that cultivating closer ties with China helps to deter any aggression against it and would provide a window to the outside world should the West choose to ratchet up its isolation of the Islamic Republic. The economic ties between China and Iran are already considerable and are likely to grow. Iran, along with Saudi Arabia and Angola, provides the largest share of Chinese oil imports [Abu Taleb, 2008].

China is also the second-largest importer of Iranian oil, and by extension, an important source of foreign currency for the regime in Tehran. Moreover, economic cooperation has increased considerably in the aftermath of the Iraq War, in that China has looked to Iran to pick up the slack in Iraqi production that has gone off-line. In March 2004, China's state-owned oil trading company (Zhuhai Zhenrong) Corporation, signed a 25-year deal to import 110 million tons of liquefied natural gas from Iran. In December 2007, China and Iran finalized a \$2-billion deal awarding Sinopec the right to develop the (Yadavaran) field in Iran. In addition, China National Offshore Oil Corp recently signed a preliminary gas deal to develop Iran's North Pars Gas Field<sup>2</sup>.

With respect to Chinese direct investment in Iran's energy sector, Iran actually enjoys some advantage over Saudi Arabia in terms of its more-permissive regulatory environment. Specifically, Saudi Arabia still restricts foreign investment in its upstream oil sector (exploration and produc-

2 China National Offshore Oil Corporation ("CNOOC"), the largest offshore oil & gas producer in China, is a state-owned company operating directly under the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. Headquartered in Beijing, ("CNOOC" Confirms Preliminary Gas)

tion), but Iran has a mechanism that allows China to develop Iranian fields in return for a share of that field's future production.

The existence of this mechanism helps explain why Chinese investment in Iran's energy sector is projected to exceed \$100 billion USA over the next 25 years [Leverett, Bader, 2005-2006, 191].

On the political front, China has shown some willingness to support Western efforts to impose sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment. However, in 2006, China and Russia blocked a USA-led attempt to introduce a United Nation resolution against Iran, and China has consistently advocated a negotiated solution to the stand-off. This position is not only a reflection of China's preference for nonintervention but also speaks to China's economic interests in the region. Thus, China has been adamant that "actions to address this problem [nuclear proliferation] should not undermine normal trade and economic cooperation with Iran."

China's weaker resolve on the Iranian nuclear portfolio reinforces the view in Tehran that the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation are the weak links in the efforts of the international community to stop Iranian proliferation and thus constitute the best opening for Islamic republic of Iran to play the great powers off against each other.

However, while China is noticeably more averse to confronting Iran than the other permanent members of the United Nation Security Council, China's vested interest in a stable regional security order means that it is unlikely to use its position on the Security Council to shield Iran from future punitive measures.

Another consequence of the Iraq war in the Gulf region was changed the Regional Views of People's Republic of China. Within the region, China's noninterventionism is seen, on the one hand, as an attractive alternative to the more-muscular USA approach to regional affairs. It also exposes the limits of Chinese power. When Arabs are asked to identify what two countries pose the biggest threat to them, only 2 percent of respondents identify the People's Republic of China as a threat, as opposed to 88 percent who feel threatened by the United States of America [Gause, 2010, 136].

Similarly, when asked hypothetically: In a world where there is only one superpower, which country would you prefer to be that superpower? the People's Republic of China was tied for second with Germany and trailed only France. As Jon B. Alterman and John W. Carver have noted: On the popular level, China carries little of the baggage that the United States of America does in the Middle East. Local publics (and their governments) conveniently elide China's rigorous atheism and its ongoing battle with Muslim Uighur separatists in the Western provinces, and they see a country that manufactures affordable goods and communicates respect [Alterman, Carver, 2008, 69].

As in much of the developing world, Arab publics see China as a model, not only in terms of China's impressive economic development but also its ability to transform itself from a position of dependence to a regional power capable of charting an independent course. On the other hand,

among informed observers, China's inward-looking posture is recognized as a limitation in its ability to offset USA regional hegemony. For example, according to an Egyptian analyst Dr. Hassan Abo Taleb, a specialist in political and economic issues of (China-Arab world) in Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, and also he is an expert in many of the common issues between People's Republic of China and the Arab world, he thinks There is not much that is controversial in China's Middle East vision, but there remains the question: What is the actual role that China plays in order to achieve this vision?

This is a question that reflects the chasm or the great distance between a positive vision in terms of its content, and the presumed role China would play by virtue of its international responsibility and as a permanent member of the Security Council. But China turns away from this role for one reason or another or often takes it up only in a symbolic manner [Abu Taleb, 2008a].

Hence, we must talk about the possible role of China in the region after the first and the second war in Iraq, considered by the People's Republic of China as an Extra regional Power in the Gulf, while the war in Iraq has created opportunities for the expansion of Chinese influence in the Gulf, it should not be assumed that China's advance will necessarily come at the expense of American interests in the region.

In fact, American and Chinese interests intersect on many issues, most notably in terms of fostering the regional stability necessary for the free flow of the region's oil and gas production. The interruption of energy supplies is not in the interest of either state, and on this front there is considerable room for Sino-American cooperation [Freeman, 2012, 142].

Moreover, although China has shown greater initiative since the onset of the Iraq War in cultivating ties with Middle East energy producers, its role in the regional balance of power remains peripheral. That is to say, while China's status as a permanent member of the United Nation Security Council necessarily involves China in regional disputes, China has not made a significant effort to enhance its political role in the Middle East or offer itself as an alternative balancer to the United States of America in regional security [Suzanne Xiao Yang, 2012, 125].

Indeed, its growing but still limited ability to project military power outside its neighborhood leaves China as more economically significant than militarily significant in regional affairs. Given this backdrop, the extent of China's influence in the Middle East is likely to turn in large part on the degree to which the United States of America is able to improve its strategic position through the stabilization of Iraq. Thus, should the regional security environment improve freeing up American forces and enhancing the USA ability to project its influence this would certainly help keep China within the framework of a complimentary role in which it works to strengthen the USA-led regional security order .On the other hand, perceptions of USA weakness or a future push by China to move the international system toward (multipolarity) could lead China to play a spoiler role in regional affairs [Kissinger, 2014, 204].

With the USA invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003, observers and pundits have offered various categories to classify the latest adventure of the United States of America in the

Middle East. Supporters of the invasion have argued that the George W. Bush administration's actions in the Middle East are simply another installment of America's benevolent but heavy-handed involvement in the Persian Gulf. Realist observers protested the overtly ideological nature of the war and disregard for real politic principles. Critics on the left (and some self-proclaimed neo-conservatives on the right) argued that the latest Iraq war was beyond a mere hegemonic act but instead constituted a textbook example of imperialist behavior.

We must remember that with the rupture of the United Nation Security Council in March 2003 over the United States of America spearheaded intervention in Iraq, the attempts made to subject the use of force to the rule of law had failed. Widespread (Europe-USA) disagreement of the role of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) has hindered more effective decisions for China and its European and American counterparts in the Security Council. Iraq, China and the United Nation Security Council examines the role of China's policy behavior in relation to the Iraq intervention, in order to develop a better understanding of this fast-rising power within the United Nation.

The United States of America has long faced policy dilemmas in the Middle East arising from conflicts between its various interests, or between its interests and its values. As its interests in the Middle East increase and as the USA pulls back from the region, Beijing will face similar dilemmas that will test Chinese analysts' oft-repeated refrain that it faces no "fundamental conflict of interests" in the region.

One of the clearest examples of such a policy dilemma has been Libya. There, China was faced with an immediate crisis directly affecting its security the safety of its 36,000 nationals in the country. But it was also faced with a difficult choice regarding whether to support Libyan rebels. It could one the one hand uphold the principle of "non-interference" by opposing the ouster of Muammar Qadhafi, thereby running the risk of angering not only a future Libyan government – as it had soured relations with the Egyptian government through its strong support for ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak – but also China's other allies in the region, who as members of the Arab League were advocating action against Muammar Gadhafi. On the other, it could support for the sort of Western-led intervention that China had so long opposed. China sought to split the difference by supporting United Nations Security Council resolution (1970), which imposed sanctions on Libya, and abstaining from Internet Explorer not blocking resolution (1973), which authorized international intervention [Alterman, 2013].

In his book, As Dr. Jon Alterman details, Beijing hedged its bets by simultaneously continuing to cultivate close ties with Muammar Gadhafi, it also later supported Moscow's assertion that Russia and China had been "tricked" into withholding their vetoes and did not anticipate that the resolution would result in Gadhafi's overthrow [Charbonneau, 2012].

In effect, however, People's Republic of China not only supported an American intervention against an erstwhile ally, but conducted a small military expedition of its own to evacuate its nationals. Increasingly, the very old (Israeli-Palestinian) conflict also poses a conflict for Beijing, between the Chinese policy of the past and modern-day Chinese policy. The late PLO chairman

Yasser Arafat was characterized by one Chinese analyst as China's "only true friend" in the Middle East for many years [Liu Zhongmin, 2012, 8].

However, the real story has been the burgeoning relationship between China and Israel, which has tracked with the diminishing importance of "revolutionary" ideology in Chinese foreign relations. (China-Israel) trade has increased two hundred-fold in the last two decades, to \$10.8 billion in 2013 [Cohen, 2014].

Even more important than the quantity of the trade, from Beijing's perspective, has been its quality – China is enormously interested in Israeli expertise in high technology. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that when he met with the Chinese Prime Minister, he was interested in "three things: Israeli technology, Israeli technology, and Israeli technology." He also said the same of other world leaders.

Chinese policy toward the (Israeli-Palestinian) conflict has at the same time moved toward the international middle ground, such that the "four points" on the issue are nearly indistinguishable from USA and European policy.

To the extent China's diplomatic position is somewhat more favorable to the Palestinians than to Israel, it takes little action to advance it. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that when he met with the Chinese Prime Minister, he was interested in "three things: Israeli technology, Israeli technology, and Israeli technology." He also said the same of other world leaders.

China also faces dilemmas with respect to Syria and Iran. Beijing has exercised its United Nation Security Council veto four times in the past three years to thwart resolutions on Syria a remarkable number, given that China had previously used its veto power only five times over the previous four decades. Its decision to do so was not, it would seem, by any particular affinity for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is not one of China's closer allies in the region. Rather, the decision was likely informed not only by its experience with Libya, but also by a desire to demonstrate solidarity with Moscow and uphold the principle of "non-interference," especially given the simultaneous increase in tensions in the South and East China Seas. In doing so, however, China has risked angering Arab Gulf allies that it has courted assiduously, and with whom it will need smooth relations to assure its energy security in the future [Erickson, 2014, 178].

This same conflict is present to an even greater degree in regard to China's Iran policy. While China's Gulf Arab allies have been fervently opposed to the Assad regime in Syria, they regard Iran as the far greater threat – indeed; in their view Assad is a mere junior partner to the Iranian regime. Yet China's closest relationship in the region is with Iran, with which it enjoys not just a commonality of interests – whether based on energy relations or a shared desire to constrain American power – but a close affinity. Chinese officials have termed the (Sino-Iranian) relationship a "strategic partnership," rather than primarily a commercial one. The modern (Sino-Iranian) relationship predates China's need for oil imports, and even predates its opening of relations with the United States of America; the historical relationship between China and Iran goes back even further [Kissinger, 2014, 130].

This conflict has proven harder for China to dodge than that over Syria. While China has used its position in the so-called ("P5+1") group of countries to delay and dilute United Nations sanctions resolutions and international demands of Iran, it has nevertheless voted in favor of those resolutions and remained more or less aligned with the United States of America on the issue. It also reduced its oil imports from Iran, due not only to American pressure but to direct lobbying by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates though it has since increased its oil imports from Iran to record levels as American policy on Iran has softened and the threat of a Western military strike on Iran has diminished. Beijing has left itself the option of resuming a much stronger strategic and economic relationship with Iran in the event of such a diplomatic settlement.

Moreover Especially, Should shed light on some of security information which reported that China has made in the recent period many of the moves in the Middle East and the Gulf region, because these military movements reflects China's desire to have a strong influence in the region in the future, especially in light of the current circumstances in each of the countries in the region such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and other countries.

Little noticed amid the tumult in Syria, two Chinese naval ships a guided missile destroyer, the Changchun, and a frigate, the Changzhou visited the Iranian port of (Bandar Abbas) on September 2014 and began a four-day joint exercise with Iranian naval forces. According to China's navy, this was the first visit by Chinese warships to Iran. It was not, however, the first modern-day port call in the region by Chinese naval vessels; in March 2010, Chinese vessels docked at Port (Zayed) in the United Arab Emirates. Those vessels and the ones that arrived in Iran in the second half of this year 2014, had been participating in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. A few months after the Port (Zayed) visit, Chinese jets refueled in Iran Enroute to exercises in Turkey – the first visit to Iran by foreign warplanes since its 1979 revolution.

In 2011, observers noted that the Chinese military's evacuation of thousands of Chinese nationals from Libya demonstrated the military's expeditionary capabilities. This growing security presence in the region is just one element of China's deepening involvement in the Middle East, which has also included stepped-up diplomatic visits and ambitious new economic projects, such as a just-inked deal to build a port in Israel. While Beijing's interest in the Middle East is largely motivated by its thirst for markets and resources – China's dependence on foreign oil is increasing as fast as the USA's is decreasing – economics is not the whole story. Reliance on oil imports compromises China's energy security, which paired with its desire to exercise greater global influence has led it to seek out not just commercial but also strategic partnerships [Singh, 2014].

## Conclusions

Beijing's path to expanded influence in the Middle East is far from clear. Thus far People's Republic of China has sought to cultivate cordial ties with all states in the region. But as its regional involvement grows, Beijing is likely to find itself pressed by allies and events to take sides, as it

has done on Syrian Arab Republic by using its veto in the United Nation Security Council to shield the Assad regime. China's closest relationship may prove to be with Iran, which offers energy sources that can be accessed by both sea and land and which purchases arms from China. Tehran and Beijing have ties that predate the latter's need for oil imports. Iran is also the only country on the Gulf littoral not allied with Washington, a crucial fact for People's Liberation Army strategists who consider the USA China's likeliest adversary.

Sino-Iranian cooperation has been tempered somewhat by international sanctions on Tehran but is likely to expand in the wake of a nuclear agreement. None of this need because for alarm in Washington, but it's a long-term trend to which the United States of America must be attuned amid the Middle East's short-term demands. Today, China lacks the capacity (and probably the desire) to challenge the USA position in the Middle East. Indeed, the USA and China even have overlapping interests in the region, including a common aversion to ISIS (Islamic state in Iraq and Syria)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, China has a strong presence in the Middle East and in the Gulf region, and Beijing knows how to intervene and know when to intervene.

Moreover, China's reluctance to join the anti-international terrorist organization – ISIS (Islamic state in Iraq and Syria)<sup>4</sup> campaign – China sees counterterrorism as a veil for American power projection, while the West is concerned by China's tendency to conflate extremism and political dissent demonstrates how the starkly different strategies employed by the USA and China to advance their interests and broader bilateral tensions make cooperation unlikely.

But now after many years from the first Iraq war (1991), and the second Iraq war (2003), and after all of these dangerous movements of "Arabic spring" in many Arabic States, we must look at key questions such as:

*What consequences may arise if China's actions are based on a set of values and national interests far removed from those of the major Western powers?*

*And the other more important question: Could China's attitude disrupt the traditional working and normative practice of the United Nations?*

*And the last more important question: where is the position of China in the Middle East and the Gulf region, Especially if the maps of the countries in that region will change, and in particular the maps of the Arab States that witnessed the events of the so-called "Arab Spring"?*

All of these important questions, and all of these events, has given the People's Republic of China a great opportunity to be a strong presence in the Gulf region, and that all of these conditions can be a gift unexpected by the United States of America to China, so the People's Republic of China should take advantage of the existing conditions in the Gulf region after Iraq war, would be better to Beijing to cooperate with Moscow, because if China has made in collaboration with Russia, only then the People's Republic of China can play a major role in the Gulf region and in the Middle East with the help of Russia.

3 Forbidden in Russia.

4 Forbidden in Russia.

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**Иракский кризис: позиция Китая во время войны в Ираке  
2003 года и растущая роль Пекина на Ближнем Востоке  
и в Персидском заливе после войны против Ирака**

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### **Аннотация**

В данной статье автор говорит о возможности развития роли Китая на Ближнем Востоке в целом и в регионе Персидского Залива в частности, особенно после изменений условий в этих регионах, которые произошли в результате войны в Ираке и после американского вторжения. Рассматриваются возможные форматы сотрудничества между Китайской Народной Республикой и странами арабского мира. Автор замечает, что Китайская Народная Республика может играть наиболее важную роль в современных международных отношениях и в региональных вопросах, особенно когда она начинает эффективное сотрудничество с Российской Федерацией.

### **Для цитирования в научных исследованиях**

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### **Ключевые слова**

Ирак, Китай, Россия, Иран, США, многополярность, сотрудничество, Организация Объединенных Наций, Ближний Восток, война в Персидском заливе.