

«Հայոց ցեղասպանության մշակութային և նյութական հետևանքների հաղթահարման մեթոդաբանությունն ու գործիքակազմը» հետազոտական թեմայի շրջանակներում 2020 թ. հուլիս-սեպտեմբեր ամիսների ընթացքում կատարված աշխատանքների

ՀԱՇՎԵՏՎՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

2020 թթ. հուլիս-սեպտեմբեր ամիսների ընթացքում հետազոտական խմբում ընդգրկված գիտաաշխատողների կողմից շարունակվել են իրականացվել արխիվային փաստաթղթերի, հուշագրությունների, վիճակագրական տվյալների, ինչպես նաև մատենագիտական նյութերի հավաքման աշխատանքները:

Իմի են բերվել Իզմիրի գավառի հայության սոցիալ-տնտեսական ու մշակութային վիճակի, ինչպես նաև ցեղասպանության իրագործմամբ կրած նյութական կորուստների մասին Կ.Պոլսում, Իզմիրում և Պարտիզակում հրատարակվող «Բութանիա», «Պարտիզակ», «Փարոս», «Արևելք», «Մասիս», «Հայրենիք», «Կոհակ», «Բյուրակն», «Փունջ», «Մանգումեի էֆքեար», «Բյուզանդիոն», «Ժամանակ», «Ազատամարտ», «Վերջին լուր», «Ժողովուրդ» և «Ժողովուրդի ձայն» պարբերականներից, արխիվային և այլ աղբյուրներից քաղված տեղեկությունները: Նյութեր հավաքելուն զուգահեռ կատարվում են նաև գիտական տեքստի շարադրման աշխատանքները (արդեն շարադրվել է մոտ 60 էջ):

Շարունակվում են նաև Հալեպի նահանգի Այնթափի գավառի ֆինանսատնտեսական վիճակի ու հայ բնակչության կրած նյութական կորուստների վերաբերյալ նյութերի հավաքման և միաժամանակ դրանց շարադրման աշխատանքները (արդեն շարադրվել է մոտ 40 էջ): Գիտական տեքստի շարադրանքում տեղ են գտել Հալեպի նահանգի առաջնորդական վիճակների պաշտոնական տեղեկագրերից, արխիվային ու դիվանգիտական փաստաթղթերից, միսիոներների հաղորդած տեղեկություններից, վերապրածների հուշագրություններից ու ժամանակի մամուլից քաղված արժեքավոր տեղեկությունները:

Ծավալուն նյութեր են հավաքվել ցեղասպանության ընթացքում օսմանյան իշխանությունների կողմից հայերի նյութական ունեցվացքին տիրանալու և մշակութային արժեքները յուրացնելու ու ոչնչացնելու «օրենսդրական» մեխանիզմների և դրանց գործադրման վերաբերյալ:

Միաժամանակ կատարվում է մամուլի հրապարակումներից, մենագրություններից, արխիվային փաստաթղթերից և այլ աղբյուրներից քաղված փաստերն ու տեղեկությունները աղյուսակների վերածելու գործընթացը:

Գիտական ծրագրի ղեկավար, պ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր

Ա.Ց. Մարուքյան

**«Իսլամը Հարավային Կովկասում (Վրաստան, Ադրբեջան). արդի միտումներ,
հնարավոր մարտահրավերներ» գիտահետազոտական թեմայի վերաբերյալ երկրորդ
եռամսյակի համար**

**Ծրագրի անդամ, Թուրքիայի բաժնի գիտաշխատող Տաթևիկ Մանուկյանը իրականացրել է
արդեն ձեռք բերված գրականության ուսումնասիրման և մշակման աշխատանքներ: Հավաքել
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Նախանշել է թեմայի վերջնարդյունքում ակնկալվող հոդվածի աշխատաքային
ենթարժինները.

- Վրաստանում իսլամադավան համայնքի էթնոդավանական և լեզվական
առանձնահատկությունները

- աշխարհագրական տեղակայման և սոցիալական խճանկարը
- իսլամադավան համայնքի ղեկավարման մեխանիզմները. հոգևոր և քաղաքական առաջնորդներ
- պետական իշխանություններ- համայնք փոխհարաբերությունները և փոխգործակցության մակարդակը (կրթական, մշակութային և տնտեսական բաղադրիչներ)
- իսլամադավան համայնքի ներկայացվածությունը Վրաստանի հասարակական-քաղաքական կյանքում (քաղաքական կուսակցություններ, ՀԿ- ներ, սոցիալական ցանցեր)
- Վրաստանի իսլամական համայնքը որպես արտաքին ազդեցության հնարավոր թիրախ (Թուրքիա, Ադրբեջան, Իրան և Ռուսաստան)
- Հայաստանի սահմանամերձ շրջաններում իսլամադավան բնակչության կենտրոնացումը, բազմացման միտումները, և այդ իրողություններով պայմանավորված Հայաստանի անվտանգային խնդիրները:

Աշխատանքային շարադրանք է իրականացրել այս ենթաբաժինների մի մասի վերաբերյալ:

Մասնակցել է նաև հեռավար սեմինար քննարկումների տարբեր գիտահետազոտական հարթակներում՝ տարածաշրջանում ինքության, էթնոդավական խնդիրների, արտաքին ազդեցությունների և «փափուկ ուժի» կիրառման հնարավորությունների:

Գիտահետազոտական ծրագրի անդամ ԱԻ արաբական երկրների բաժնի վարիչ, պ.գ.թ., դոցենտ Լիլիթ Հարությունյանը ձեռնամուխ է եղել ընդհանուր թեմայի «Իսլամը Վրաստանում» հատվածի ուսումնասիրությունը: Այս տարվա հուլիս-սեպտեմբեր ամիսներին ևս իրականացրել է նյութերի հավաք՝ հայերեն, անգլերեն, ռուսերեն և ֆրանսերեն լեզուներով: Վերոնշյալ ժամանակահատվածում կարողացել է հավաքել և ուսումնասիրել իրականացվող ծրագրի հետ առնչվող հետազոտությունները.

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Ծրագրի անդամ, Իրանի բաժնի ավագ գիտաշխատող, պ.գ.թ. Նազելի Նավասարդյանը աշխատանքի թեմատիկ բաժանման շրջանակներում հրատարակության է պատրաստում հոդված, որը քննարկելու է հետևյալ հիմնահարցերը. 1. Շիայական իսլամը Վրաստանում, 2. Իսլամն ու ազգային ինքնությունը Վրաստանի ազերիների շրջանում, 3. Ազերիների հիմնական բնակության շրջանների և դրանց ռազմավարական նշանակության հետազոտություն, 3. Վրաստանի շիաներ-այլ էթնիկ և կրոնական փոքրամասնությունների հարաբերությունների առանձնահատկությունների ուսումնասիրություն, 4. Պետություն – իսլամադավան (մասնավորապես շիաներ) փոքրամասնությունների հարաբերությունների կարգավորման մեխանիզմների ուսումնասիրություն, 5. Ադրբեջանական և իրանական ազդեցությունները (փափուկ ուժի կիրառում) Վրաստանի շիաների շրջանում, 6. Իսլամական կրթական հաստատությունները Վրաստանի շիայաբնակ շրջաններում և դրանցում արտաքին հնարավոր ազդեցությունների հետազոտություն և այլն:

Մշակել և մասամբ շարադրել է «Իսլամական գործոնն իրանաադրբեջանական հարաբերություններում» աշխատանքային վերնագրով հոդվածի ենթաբաժիններից մեկը, որն առնչվում է հետխորհրդային Ադրբեջանի հասարակական-քաղաքական կյանքում էթնոդավանական ինքնության հիմնախնդիրներին, որոնցում շեշտադրվել են Ադրբեջանի իրանական ծագում ունեցող ժողովուրդների ինքնության հարցերը: Օգտագործվել է հետևյալ գրականությունը՝

1. Hema Kotecha, Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan: Emerging trends and tensions
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3. Vahram Ter-Matevosyan & Nelli Minasyan, Praying Under Restrictions: Islam, Identity and Social Change in Azerbaijan
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12. Mostafa Khalili, A comparative study of ethnic identity among Azerbaijani speakers in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan

Ծրագրի ղեկավար ԱԻ արաբական երկրների բաժնի առաջատար գիտաշխատող, պ.գ.թ., դոցենտ Արաքս Փաշայանը մշակել և գրեթե վերջնականորեն ավարտել է "Ադրբեջանի ազգային անվտանգությանը սպառնացող մարտահրավերները կրոնական դաշտում" թեմայի ուսումնասիրությունը մոտ քառասուն էջի շրջանակներում: Դրանում քննարկվում են հետևյալ խնդիրները՝

- Ադրբեջանի անկախությունից հետո Մերձավոր Արևելքից, ինչպես նաև տարածաշրջանի երկրներից Ադրբեջան հոսող կրոնական հոսանքները՝ թե՛ սուննիական, թե՛ շիայական, որոնք սկզբնական շրջանում Ադրբեջանի քաղաքական ղեկավարության կողմից համարժեք չէին ընկալվում:
- Հեյդար Ալիևի իշխանության գալուց հետո Ադրբեջանի ազգային անվտանգության համակարգն իր վերահսկողության տակ է վերցնում կրոնական դաշտը:
- Քննարկվում են Ադրբեջանում կրոնական ներթափանցումների սկզբնաղբյուրները՝ Մերձավոր Արևելքի տարբեր կենտրոններում սովորած և Ադրբեջան վերադարձած ուսանողներ, Ադրբեջանում հայտնված և Ադրբեջանի քաղաքացի չհամարվող կրոնական միսիոներներ ու հոգևորականներ, միջազգային տարբեր կենտրոններից Ադրբեջան առաքվող մեծածավալ կրոնական գրականություն՝ տարբեր ուղղություններով, Ադրբեջանի հասարակության տարբեր շրջանակներում, այդ թվում՝ աղքատ և Հայաստանից եկած փախստականների, քարոզչություն իրականացնող կրոնաքաղաքական միջազգային կազմակերպություններ, Չեչնիայում և Դադստանում ընթացող հակառուսական պայքարի ազդեցության շրջանակներում ձևավորված վահաբական գաղափարախոսության ներթափանցումներ, արցախյան պատերազմի հետևանքով Ադրբեջանում հայտնված վահաբիներ, Իրանից Ադրբեջան ներսված միսիոներներ, քաղաքական խոմեյնիզմի գաղափարախոսության տարածում Ադրբեջանի շիայական և իրանական ծագում ունեցող ժողովուրդների շրջանում, Թուրքիայից գյուլենականության, նուրջիականության, սուֆիականության և վերջապես՝ պաշտոնական թուրքական՝ սուննի հանաֆիականության ներթափանցումներ, Պարսզից ծոցի երկրներից վահաբական հոսանքների ներթափանցում, օտարերկրյա դրամաշնորհներով մզկիթների կառուցում և վերանորոգում, պաշտոնական իսլամից դուրս կրոնական ազդեցության կենտրոնների ձևավորում և այլն:

- Մանրամասն քննարկվում է Ադրբեջանի սահմանադրության այն օրենքները, որոնք ուղղակիորեն առնչվում են Կրոնի դավանման մասին օրենքին և դրա լրամշակումներին հետանկախության տարբեր ժամանակահատվածներում:
- Քննարկվում է միջազգային ահաբեկչության հետ առնչություններ ունեցող իսլամական կազմակերպությունների գործունեությունը Ադրբեջանում:
- Քննարկվում է արտաքին ազդեցությունների նշանակությունը կրոնական արտաքին նոր ինքնությունների ձևավորման հարցում անկախության շրջանից ի վեր:
- Քննարկվում է պաշտոնական իսլամական շրջանակների մոտեցումները դրա շրջանակներից դուրս գործող իսլամական հոսանքների հարցում՝ ի դեմս Մուսուլմանների հոգևոր վարչության նախագահ Ալլահ Շյուքրյուր Փաշազադեին:
- Քննարկվում է Ադրբեջանի Հանրապետության կառավարության շրջանակներում գործող Կրոնական կազմակերպությունների հետ աշխատանքի կազմակերպության գործունեության առանձնահատկությունները
- Ուսումնասիրվում են այն օրենքները, որոնք նոր իրավիճակ են սահմանել կրոնական կազմակերպությունների գրանցման և գործունեության հարցում:
- Հետազոտվել է արդի փուլում կրոնական ներթափանցումների և կրոնական դաշտում առկա մարտահրավերների հարցը:
- Ընդհանուր գծերով ուրվագծվել են վահաբական, խումեյնիստական, գյուլենական և նուրջուական գործունեությունների շրջանակները:
- Քննարկվել են արտաքին միջամտության կրոնական ակտիվության ծավալներ Ադրբեջանում:

➤ Նախատեսում է նաև հարցազրույց իրականացնել այժմ ԱՄՆ-ում բնակվող ադրբեջանցի գիտնական, իսլամի գծով հետազոտող Արիֆ Յունուսի հետ:

➤ Շարունակվում է նոր գրականության ձեռք բերումը:

«Իսլամը Հարավային Կովկասում (Կրաստան, Ադրբեջան). արդի միտումներ, հնարավոր մարտահրավերներ» գիտահետազոտական թեմայի ծրագրի ղեկավար՝ պ.գ.թ., դոցենտ Արաքս Փաշայան

29.09.2020

Հաշվետվություն
« Չինաստանի Նոր Մետաքսի ճանապարհի նախաձեռնության իրականացումը Մեծ
Մերձավոր Արևելքի տարածաշրջանում» թեմայի
երկրորդ եռամսյակում կատարված աշխատանքների վերաբերյալ
(01.07.20թ. - 30.09.20թ.)

Ծրագրի կատարող՝ պ.գ.թ. Ադավնի Ալեքսանդրի Հարությունյան

Գիտական այս ծրագրի երկրորդ եռամսյակի հիմնական խնդիրներից է եղել ուսումնասիրության շրջանակում շարունակել թեմային վերաբերող անհրաժեշտ մասնագիտական գրականության և փաստաթղթերի հավաքումը:

Հետազոտվող ծրագրի շրջանակներում շարունակվել է իրականացվել համապարփակ ուսումնասիրություն 2013թ. Չինաստանի նախագահ Սի Շինպինի կողմից գործարկված Նոր Մետաքսի ճանապարհ (ՆՄՃ) կամ "Մեկ գոտի, մեկ ուղի" (ՄԳՄՈՒ) նախաձեռնության վերաբերյալ, որը բաղկացած է ցամաքային՝ Մետաքսի ճանապարհի տնտեսական գոտուց (ՄՃՏԳ) և ծովային՝ 21-րդ դարի Ծովային Մետաքսի ուղուց (ԾՄՈՒ): Այն նպատակ ունի Ասիան և Եվրոպան կապել միմյանց Միջին և Մերձավոր Արևելքի, Աֆրիկայի և Կենտրոնական Ասիայի միջոցով: Իրենց ռազմավարական դիրքի շնորհիվ Միջին Արևելքն ու Հյուսիսային Աֆրիկան կարևոր հանգույց են Ասիան, Աֆրիկան ու Եվրոպան, ինչպես նաև երեք կարևորագույն տնտեսական ծովային շրջանները՝ *Հարավ-չինական ծովը*, *Պարսից ծոցն* ու *Միջերկրական ծովը*, միմյանց կապելու առումով: Նշենք, որ ՄԳՄՈՒ-ն նախատեսվում է իրականացնել մի շարք միջմայրցամաքային երկաթուղիների, խողովակաշարերի, նավահանգիստների, օդանավակայանների և ենթակառուցվածքային այլ նախագծերի ընդարձակ ցանցերի կառուցման միջոցով:

Նախորդ հաշվետվության մեջ անդրադարել ենք Չինաստանի կողմից ԾՄՈՒ-ի շրջանակներում Հնդկական օվկիանոսի ափերին, ինչպես նաև Պարսից ծոցում և Միջերկրական ծովում ռազմական կամ աշխարհաքաղաքական ազդեցությամբ չինական հենակետեր կամ «ռազմածովային կայաններ» ստեղծելու ռազմավարությանը, որը ստացել է «Մարգարտի շարան» անվանումը՝ միաժամանակ նույնացվելով «Երկակի նշանակությամբ լոգիստիկ հանգրվանների» հետ: Անդրադարձել ենք նաև դրանց ստեղծման պատճառներին, հետապնդած նպատակներին և հավանական դժվարություններին, որոնց հետ կարող է հանդիպել Պեկինն այդ ծրագրերի իրականացման գործընթացում:

Հիշեցնենք, որ հետազոտության ընթացքում եկել էինք այն հետևության, որ "Մարգարտի շարան"-ի ռազմավարության իրականացմամբ Պեկինը ձգտում է հասնել տարածաշրջանում գերիշխող դիրքերի և հզոր տերության կարգավիճակի՝ Հնդկական օվկիանոսից մինչև Կարմիր ծով ու Սուեզի ջրանցք նավարկության ազատություն ձեռք բերելու, ինչպես նաև Մերձավոր Արևելքում ու Հյուսիսային Աֆրիկայում անվտանգության հաստատմամբ իր ներկայությունն ընդլայնելու նպատակով:

Զիբութին Ծովային Մետաքսի ճանապարհի և "Մարգարտի շարան"-ի ռազմավարության շրջանակներում չինական ռազմաբազայի վերածված առաջին երկիրն է հետազոտվող տարածաշրջանում, որին նվիրվել է մեկ աշխատություն: 1979 թ. հունվարի 8-ին, Չինաստանի և Զիբութիի միջև դիվանագիտական կապերի հաստատումից ի վեր, երկու երկրների միջև հարաբերությունները կայուն զարգացում և առաջընթաց են ապրել: Զիբութին, որը հայտնի է որպես «աշխարհի ծովային մայրաքաղաք», 2000-ականներից դարձել է աֆրիկյան մայրցամաքի ծովային հաղորդակցություններին սպառնալիք ներկայացնող ահաբեկչական խմբավորումների դեմ պայքարի նպատակով ձևավորված միջազգային ուժերի ու կոալիցիաների (այդ թվում՝ չինական) գլխավոր հենակետը:

Վերջին տարիներին Ջիբութիի՝ իբրև Ասիան, Աֆրիկան և Եվրոպան միմյանց կապող առանցքային ծովային հանգույցի հանդեպ Չինաստանի աճող հետաքրքրությունը մեծապես պայմանավորված է միջազգային ծովային երթուղիների և նավահանգիստների նկատմամբ վերահսկողություն հաստատելու հարցում Պեկինի դրսևորած հավակնություններով: Այն Չինաստանի «ՄԳՄՌ» ռազմավարության մաս է կազմում, որի ծովային բաղկացուցչի՝ «21-րդ դարի Ծովային Մետաքսի ճանապարհի» երկայնքով նախատեսված երթուղիների կայունության և անվտանգության ապահովման նպատակով Պեկինը «հյուսում» է լոգիստիկ կենտրոններից և հենակետերից կազմված յուրահատուկ «Մարգարտի շարան»: Ջիբութիում կառուցված չինական առաջին ծովային ռազմահանգրվանը համարվում է այդ «շարանի» կարևոր ծայրակետերից մեկը:

«Մարգարտի շարան»-ի թեմայի ուսումնասիրության վերաբերյալ մեկ հոդված՝ *«Մարգարտի շարան»-ի ռազմավարությունը՝ որպես Չինաստանի Ծովային Մետաքսի ճանապարհի նախաձեռնության իրականացման միջոց*՝ վերնագրով տպագրվել է, մյուս երկու աշխատությունը՝ *«Մերձավոր Արևելքը և Հյուսիսային Աֆրիկան՝ որպես չինական «Մարգարտի շարան»-ի ռազմավարության մաս*», և *«Ջիբութի. Չինաստանի առաջին արտերկրյա ամրոցը Ծովային Մետաքսի ճանապարհի ռազմավարությունում*՝ վերնագրով գտնվում են հրապարակման փուլում:

Տպագրվել է նաև *«Չինաստանի փափուկ ուժի քաղաքականությունը Միջին Արևելքում և Հյուսիսային Աֆրիկայում*՝ վերնագրով աշխատությունը: Այն նվիրված է Պեկինի հանդեպ գրավչություն ստեղծելու, տարածաշրջանում չինական ներկայությունն ապահովելու և ծավալապաշտությունն ընդլայնելու նպատակով Չինաստանի փափուկ և կոշտ ուժերի համակցման միջոցով Մերձավոր Արևելքի ու Հյուսիսային Աֆրիկայի երկրներ *«Պեկինյան կոնսենսուսի»* և զարգացման չինական մոդելի արտահանման թեմային:

Հետազոտության նախորդ փուլում առանձին ուսումնասիրվել էին նաև Թուրքիան ու Իսրայելը, որոնք իրենց ռազմավարական և աշխարհաքաղաքական նպաստավոր դիրքի շնորհիվ ընդգրկվել են ՄԳՄՌ-ի ծովային և ցամաքային ճանապարհների կառուցման նախագծերում:

Թուրքիային նվիրված՝ *«Չինական Գոտի ու ուղի նախաձեռնությունը և Թուրքիայի Միջին միջանցքը»* վերնագրով աշխատությունը գտնվում է տպագրության փուլում, որին նվիրված զեկույցով էլույթ է նախատեսվում արտերկրյա միջազգային գիտաժողովին:

Իսրայելին նվիրված *«Չինաստան և Իսրայել. Ջարգացող հարաբերություններ Գոտու և ուղու նախաձեռնության շրջանակներում»* վերնագրով հոդվածը տպագրվել է:

Երկրորդ եռամսյակում հիմնականում ուսումնասիրվել է Չինաստանի և Իրանի միջև Համապարփակ ռազմավարական գործընկերության վերաբերյալ պայմանագրի ստորագրման ու ՄԳՄՌ նախաձեռնության շրջանակներում համագործակցության խորացման վերաբերյալ թեմաները: Ներկայումս Իրանը, որն իր աշխարհագրական դիրքի շնորհիվ աշխարհառազմավարական և քաղաքական առճակատման նոր "Մեծ խաղում" մերձավորարևելյան հիմնական դերակատարներից է, կարևոր գործոն է դարձել նաև Կենտրոնական Ասիայում և Մերձավոր Արևելքում Չինաստանի աշխարհաքաղաքական նկրտումներում: Ավելին, որպես Մերձավոր Արևելքի անհանգիստ տարածաշրջանում անվտանգության համեմատաբար կայուն գործընկեր, Թեհրանը չինական Նոր Մետաքսի ճանապարհ նախաձեռնության շրջանակներում կարող է դառնալ Կենտրոնական Ասիան, Մերձավոր Արևելքը և Եվրոպան միմյանց կապող հիմնական օղակներից մեկը:

Հարկ է նշել, որ Նոր Մետաքսի ճանապարհ նախաձեռնությունը հենց սկզբից ջերմորեն ընդունվեց Թեհրանի կողմից: Լինելով Ասիական ենթակառուցվածքների ներդրումային բանկի (AIIB) հիմնադիրներից մեկը՝ Իրանի Իսլամական Հանրապետությունը 2014թ. ապրիլի 7-ին միացավ բանկին՝ որպես 34-րդ անդամ: 2016 թ. հունվարի 23-ին Թեհրանում

Չինաստանի Նախագահ Սի Ծինպինի հետ բանակցություններից հետո Իրանը և Չինաստանը պայմանավորվեցին ընդլայնել երկկողմ հարաբերությունները և առևտուրը հասցնել 600 միլիարդ ԱՄՆ դոլարի առաջիկա 10 տարիների ընթացքում, ինչպես նաև ստեղծել ռազմավարական հարաբերություններ, որն արտացոլված է 25 տարվա համապարփակ փաստաթղթում: Իրանը պատրաստակամություն հայտնեց մասնակցել Չինաստանի ԾՄՃ և ՄՃՏԳ-ով առևտրային ուղիների կառուցման նախագծերին, որոնք կարող են տարածաշրջանային մակարդակով սպասարկել Իրանի քաղաքական, տնտեսական, աշխարհառազմավարական և անվտանգային շահերը: Ստորագրվել է 17 համաձայնագիր՝ երկաթուղու, նավահանգիստների, էներգետիկայի, արդյունաբերության, առևտրի և ծառայությունների, ֆինանսների, կապի, հեռահաղորդակցման և այլ ոլորտներում համագործակցության և փոխադարձ ներդրումների ընդլայնման ուղղությամբ:

Նշենք, որ 2015 թ. Ուֆայում կայացած Շանհայյան համագործակցության կազմակերպության (ՇՀԿ) գագաթնաժողովում ՇՀԿ-ի անդամ և դիտորդ պետությունների ղեկավարները, որոնց թվում՝ Վ. Պուտինը, Սի Ծինպինը և Հ. Ռուհանին, կարևորեցին ՇՀԿ-ի շրջանակներում միասնական տրանսպորտային համակարգ ստեղծելու նախաձեռնության հեռանկարները և ընդլայնված նիստում քննարկեցին Եվրասիական տնտեսական միությունը (ԵԱՏՄ) և ՄՃՏԳ-ն համակցելու վերաբերյալ ծրագրերը: Այս առումով, կարևորվում է ԵԱՏՄ ոչ-անդամ երկրների հետ առևտրի գոտիների ստեղծման գործընթացում Իրանի ու ԵԱՏՄ-ի միջև կնքված և 2019թ. հոկտեմբերի 27-ից ուժի մեջ մտած ազատ առևտրի գոտու մասին միջանկյալ համաձայնագիրը:

2020թ. հունիսին երկու երկրների միջև ստորագրվեց «Չին-իրանական համապարփակ ռազմավարական գործընկերություն» կոչվող 18 էջանոց փաստաթուղթը: Պեկինի և Թեհրանի միջև առևտրի, էներգետիկայի, ենթակառուցվածքների, հեռահաղորդակցության և նույնիսկ ռազմական համագործակցությունն ընդգրկող դեռևս կնքվելիք համաձայնագիրը ենթադրում է, որ Չինաստանը պարտավորվում է ընդհանուր առմամբ 400 միլիարդ ԱՄՆ դոլար ներդնել Իրանի բանկային, տրանսպորտային և զարգացման ոլորտներում: Համաձայնագրի հիմնապայմանը պետք է լինի առաջիկա հինգ տարվա ընթացքում Չինաստանի կողմից իրանական վառելիքաէներգետիկ համալիրում 280 միլիարդ ԱՄՆ դոլարի ներդրումների իրականացումը: Պայմանագրի համաձայն՝ Պեկինն ակնկալում է առաջիկա 25 տարվա ընթացքում զգալի զեղչերով իրանական նավթի կանոնավոր մատակարարումներ ապահովել:

Համաձայնագիրը ներառում է նաև Իրանում մի քանի նավահանգիստ զարգացնելու ծրագրեր, որոնց համաձայն Կիշ կղզին կամ ռազմավարական կարևորագույն Բանդար-է-Ջասկ նավահանգիստը չինական կողմին երկարաժամկետ վարձակալության կտրամադրվեն: Կապահովվի նաև Չինաստանի ժողովրդական ազատագրական բանակի (PLA) 5,000 զինծառայողի տեղակայումը Իրանի տարածքում (որոշ մասը՝ Պարսից ծոցի շրջանում՝ Չինաստանի ծովային ուժերն ամրապնդելու հեռանկարով և չինական անձնակազմի քանակը մեծացնելու հնարավորությամբ), որոնք կապահովեն նավթի, գազի և նավթաքիմիական արտադրանքի տարանցման անվտանգությունը դեպի Չինաստան: Բանդար-է-Ջասկում հենակետի առկայությունը Չինաստանին թույլ կտա ոչ միայն վերահսկել Բահրեյնում տեղակայված ԱՄՆ հինգերորդ նավատորմը, այլև Զիբութիի և Գվադարի (Պակիստան) նավահանգիստներում ներկայությանապահովման հետ մեկտեղ կարող է մեծացնել Չինաստանի դիրքերը Հնդկական օվկիանոսի տարածաշրջանում:

Համաձայնագրով առաջիկա հինգ տարիներին նախատեսվում է ևս 120 միլիարդ ԱՄՆ դոլարի ներդրում կատարել Իրանի տրանսպորտային և արդյունաբերական ենթակառուցվածքներում: Գրեթե 100 համատեղ չին-իրանական նախագիծ ընդգրկվելու են ՄԳՄՈՒ նախաձեռնությունում: Այստեղ կկառուցվեն օդանավակայաններ, արագընթաց երկաթուղիներ, ծովային նավահանգիստներ, կամուրջներ, նավահանգիստներ,

ճանապարհներ և այլ ենթակառուցվածքային օբյեկտներ: ՉԺՀ-ը զարգացնելու է ազատ առևտրի գոտիներ Մակաուում՝ Իրանի հյուսիսում, Պարսից ծոցի ափին՝ Աբադանում (որտեղ Շաթ-ալ-Արաբը թափվում է Պարսից ծոց) և Քեշմ կղզում՝ բուն ծոցում: Կարևոր նախաձեռնությունների թվում են Հարավ-Հյուսիս միջանցքի (Չարահար-Կենտրոնական Ասիա), Հարավ-Արևմուտք միջանցքի (Չարահար և Բանդար Աբբաս-Թուրքիա և Ադրբեջան) և Պակիստան-Իրան-Իրաք-Սիրիա «ուխտագնացության երկաթուղու» զարգացումը:

Հնդկական օվկիանոսի խորջրյա Չարահար նավահանգստի դիրքը Հյուսիս-հարավ միջազգային տրանսպորտային միջանցքի (INSTC) ուղղությամբ, մի կողմից՝ Ռուսաստանի, Արևելյան Եվրոպայի, Հյուսիսային, Կենտրոնական Ասիայի և Կովկասի միջև, մյուս կողմից՝ Հարավարևելյան Ասիայի, Հեռավոր Արևելքի, Օվկիանիայի և Պարսից ծոցի երկրների միջև տարանցիկ հարաբերություններով զգալի առավելություն են ապահովում Թեհրանին՝ ՆԱՃ-ին մասնակցության համար:

Չին-իրանական համապարփակ ռազմավարական դաշնագիրը կարող է թույլ տալ Չինաստանին, որն արդեն ռազմաբազա ունի Զիրուֆում, ռազմական ներկայություն հաստատել Իրանի և Պակիստանի ափերին:

Այս թեմային նվիրված աշխատությունը՝ **“Առյուծը և վիշապը. Չին-իրանական ռազմավարական գործընկերության նոր փուլը”** վերնագրով շուտով կհանձնվի տպագրության:

Հետազոտության այս փուլի համար տպագրված հոդվածներն են՝

1. *“String of Pearls” Strategy as a Measure for the Implementation of The Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative*, *Международный научный журнал "Современные востоковедческие исследования"*, *Казань*, International Science Journal “Modern Oriental Studies”, Kazan, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2020, pp. 101-121. ISSN. Российский индекс научного цитирования (РИИЦ) https://www.academia.edu/43643483/STRING_OF_PEARLS_STRATEGY_AS_A_MEASURE_FOR_THE_IMPLEMENTATION_OF_THE_CHINESE_MARITIME_SILK_ROAD_INITIATIVE
2. *China’s Soft Power Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, Collection of Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Chinese Studies THE SILK ROAD, Organized by Confucius Institute in Sofia 30-31 May 2019, Confucius Institute in Sofia, 2020, pp. 153-163. ISSN. [https://www.academia.edu/43745431/China s Soft Power Policy in the Middle East and North Africa](https://www.academia.edu/43745431/China_s_Soft_Power_Policy_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa); <https://confuciusinstitute.bg/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Silk-Road-2019.pdf>
3. *China and Israel: Evolving Relationship Within the Belt and Road Initiative*, Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Taylor and Francis Group, Shanghai International Studies University, 2020, pp. 1-20. ISSN <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/25765949.2020.1808378?needAccess=true>; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25765949.2020.1808378>; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25765949.2020.1808378#aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudGFuZGZvbmxpbmUuY29tL2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTA4MC8yNTc2NTk0OS4yMDIwLjE4MDgzNzg/bmVlZEFjY2Vzcz10cnVlQEBAMA==>

Հետազոտության այս փուլի համար տպագրության հաստատված հոդվածներն են՝

1. *Middle East and North Africa as a Part of Chinese String of Pearls Strategy*, ORBIS LINGUARUM, Vol., Issue, *Езиков свят, Филологическия факултет при ЮЗУ „Неофит Рилски”, Благоевград, България*, 2020, pp. (DOI: CEEOL, ERIH PLUS, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, RISC and Scopus)

2. *Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey's Middle Corridor*, Россия – Китай: история и культура: сборник статей и докладов участников XIII Международной научно-практической конференции. – Казань: Издательство «Фэн» АНРТ, 2020, с. ISBN.
3. *Djibouti: China's First Overseas Strategic Stronghold in the Maritime Silk Road Strategy*, Eastern Asian Studies, Vol.: IV, IOS NAS RA, Yerevan, 2020, pp. ISBN.
4. *The Lion and the Dragon: A New Stage in Sino-Iranian Strategic Partnership*, Digest of Foreign Social Sciences, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 2020, pp. ISSN.

Հարկ է նշել, որ հաշվետու ժամանակահատվածում գիտական ծրագրի անդամը հետազոտվող թեմայի շրջանակներում զեկույցներով հանդես կգա մեկ միջազգային գիտաժողովի՝

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<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25765949.2020.1808378#aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudGFuZGZvbmxpbmUuY29tL2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTA4MC8yNTc2NTk0OS4yMDIwLjE4MDgzNzg/bmVlZEFjY2Vzcz10cnVlQEBAMA==>

China and Israel: Evolving Relationship Within the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract: In recent years, with the cessation of defense relations, Israel and China have sought to expand their diplomatic and economic relations, mainly in the field of industrial research and development, large-scale academic cooperation, and investment. The expansion of cooperation between the two countries is mainly due to the status of Israel as a start-up country, which can satisfy China's technological needs and help it modernize many of its industries. Beijing also sees Israel as a strategic

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outpost in its regional interests - a small but vital stopover under the China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), connecting the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Gulf of Suez, as a land bridge connecting trade and energy routes from the Far East through Africa to the Middle East and further to Europe on profitable trade routes by land and sea. The construction of a railway line from Eilat to Ashdod connecting the Red and Mediterranean Seas, as well as the construction of a new port in Ashdod, will provide a safe alternative route to the Suez Canal, filling another ring in the Beijing strategy of a “String of Pearls”. Israel’s well-secured human capital, a developed economy, a high-tech foundation, a stable public and state business environment have further enhanced the country's attractiveness as a key element of BRI.

Keywords and phases: China-Israel relations, Belt and Road Initiative, infrastructure, investment, innovation, start-up nation.

Introduction

Israel was the first and, until 1956, the only country from the Middle East (ME) to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC), even though the two countries did not exchange ambassadors until 1992.² In the 1980s, under Deng Xiaoping, when China began to look with interest at developing arms cooperation with Israel, making the first deliveries of Israeli weapons to the PRC, and began the active phase of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, this allowed both countries to establish full-fledged diplomatic relations in January, 1992.³ Following the opening of embassies in Beijing and Tel Aviv, economic and trade ties between Israel and the China grew, first moderately and then at a faster pace.⁴

Although in the early 2000s, under pressure from the United States (U.S.), Israel unilaterally abandoned existing military contracts and broke off its close relations with Beijing, the mutual perception of future economic and technological benefits contributed most to overcoming the crisis between the two countries.⁵ On November 1, 2005, the PRC and Israel signed an intergovernmental agreement in Jerusalem, according to which Israel officially recognized the full *market status* of the Chinese economy.⁶

From 1992 to 2018, the volume of bilateral trade with China increased from 50 million to US 13.9/15.6 % billion dollars.⁷ It makes China the largest trading partner of the Jewish state in Asia and the third largest foreign trade partner in the world after the U.S. and the European Union (EU),⁸ and second

² Jin Liangxiang, “Energy First. China and the Middle East,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No 2, Spring 2005, available at: <http://www.meforum.org/article/694>; Harutyunyan Aghavni, «Chinese-Israeli Contacts Before the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,” *Middle East. History. Politics. Culture*, Vol. 9-10, IOS NAS RA, Yerevan, 2014, p. 423, available at: http://orient.sci.am/files/publications/20160211_131121_am_X,,X1ЦЪX±XŸXsXêЦЪ%20Ф±ЦЪЦ‡XIX-Ц,,%20IX-X%202014.compressed.pdf.

³ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?», *Российский совет по международным делам (НП РСМД)*, 22 Августа 2017, available at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/kitay-i-izrail-strategicheskie-partnyery/>.

⁴ Aron Shai, “Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects,” *Institute for National Security Studies, Memorandum No.100*, Tel Aviv, September 2009, p. 25.

⁵ Yoram Evron, “The Economic Dimension of China–Israel Relations: Political Implications, Roles and Limitations,” *Israel Affairs*, 2017, pp. 1-2, available at: https://www.academia.edu/34603269/The_economic_dimension_of_China_Israel_relations_political_implications_roles_and_limitations.

⁶ Комаров И., «Китайско-Израильские Отношения: Проблемы, Достижения, Перспективы», *История Международных Отношений и Мировой Дипломатии*, Нижний Новгород, Нижегородский журнал международных исследований, Осень-зима 2009, с. 47.

⁷ Халдей Александр, «Вашингтон в панике: Китай уводит Израиль», *IA REX*, 08 Апреля, 2019, available at: <http://www.iarex.ru/articles/65733.html>.

⁸ Субботин Игорь, «Израилю предрекают превращение в колонию Китая», *Независимая газета*, 08 Августа 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-08-08/6_7645_izrael.html.

only to the U.S. by 2019.⁹ The U.S. remains the main country for export to Israel, but China, together with Hong Kong, occupy the second line.¹⁰ Since Chinese trade excludes business relations with Hong Kong, despite the fact that most of it is directed to the mainland, the actual trade figures are higher than officially announced. Moreover, these figures do not include Israel's lucrative arms sales to China.¹¹ However, Israel is not an important market for the Chinese economy, since transactions with Israel account for only 0.3 % of total Chinese trade.¹²

One of the main reasons Israel seeks to deepen its economic relations with the fastest growing large economies in the world and expand trade with Asian markets is the desire to diversify its export markets and investment sources from its traditional partners, the U.S. and the EU.¹³ Israeli companies are increasingly turning to Asia to capture a boom in demand for their technology, as the government urges them to diversify export markets in response to Europe's rising "anti-Semitism" and potential trade sanctions.¹⁴

China is one of the leading manufacturing markets on the planet, and Israel is one of the leaders in research and development (R&D).¹⁵ The fields wherein Israel envisaged economic cooperation with China included *industrial R&D, large-scale academic cooperation, investments*.¹⁶ Israel's achievements in innovation and in some technical fields make it a particularly attractive partner for China, as Beijing is trying to become a world leader in high technology, moving from an economy focused on *investment and exports* to an economy focused on *innovation and consumption*.¹⁷ For a long time, Israel's exports to China consisted of high-tech products, including electronics, optical, agricultural and water technologies, chemical industry, communications, while China's exports to the Israeli market include popular and competitive raw materials, textile products and consumer goods.¹⁸

China has relatively low labor costs, huge production capacities and high demand for advanced technologies, and Israel is looking for export markets for its advanced technological products, while it carries high labor costs and limited industrial production capabilities.¹⁹ Well-secured human capital, a developed economy and high-tech base, as well as a stable business environment for society and

⁹ Халдей Александр, «Вашингтон в панике: Китай уводит Израиль».

¹⁰ «Haaretz: на смену США на Ближнем Востоке придёт не Россия, а Китай», ИноТВ, 19 Октября, 2019, available at: <https://russian.rt.com/inotv/2019-10-19/Haaretz-na-smenu-SSHA-na>.

¹¹ Aron Shai, "Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects," p. 25.

¹² Янушевский Нир, «The Marker (Израиль): угрожают ли Израилю китайские инвестиции?», ИноСМИ.RU, 21 Августа, 2019, available at: <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20190821/245670969.html>.

¹³ Mercy A. Kuo, "Israel Balancing US-China Relations: Geostrategic Context. Insights from Shira Efron," The Diplomat, 16 April, 2019, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/israel-balancing-us-china-relations-geostrategic-context/>; Robert R. Bianchi, "China's Interests in Preserving the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse," The University of Nottingham, 25 February, 2015, available at: <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/02/25/will-china-help-preserve-the-israeli-palestinian-impasse/>.

¹⁴ "Israel Applies to Join China-backed AIIB Investment Bank," Reuters, 01 April, 2015, available at: <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0MS46J20150401?irpc=932>.

¹⁵ Цатурян С., «Китай идёт на Турцию, а Германия внедряется в Армению. Что дальше?», ИА REGNUM, 10 Июня, 2016, available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2143681.html>.

¹⁶ Yoram Evron, "Israel's Response to China's Rise: A Dependent State's Dilemma," Asian Survey, Vol. 56, No. 2, The Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS) at UC Berkeley, March/April 2016, p. 399, available at: <https://as.ucpress.edu/content/56/2/392.full.pdf+html>.

¹⁷ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, "The Evolving Israel-China Relationship," RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif, 2019, pp. xii –xiii, available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2600/RR2641/RAND_RR2641.pdf.

¹⁸ Xian Xiao, "The "Belt and Road Initiative" and China-Israeli Relations," Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia), Vol. 10, No. 3, 2016, p. 6, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19370679.2016.12023285>; Aron Shai, "Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects," p. 25.

¹⁹ Yoram Evron, "The Economic Dimension of China-Israel Relations: Political Implications," pp. 1-2.

government, make Israel a particularly valuable asset for the Chinese New Silk Road Initiative (NSRI) or “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) in the long run.²⁰

I. Israel's Significance in the China's Belt and Road Initiative

1.1. Israel as a Part of Belt and Roads Initiative

Originally announced in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping with the goal of restoring the ancient Silk Road linking Asia and Europe, the scope of the NSRI has expanded over time to include new territories and development initiatives. This project, also called the BRI or Belt and Road (B&R), envisages the construction of a large network of roads, railways, seaports, electric networks, oil and gas pipelines, and related infrastructure projects. The first part of the project is called the Economic Belt of Silk Road (EBSR) or *Belt*, which is actually a network of predominantly land roads that are expected to connect China with Central Asia (CA), Eastern and Western Europe. The second is called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) or *Road*, which is a sea route that is expected to connect China's southern coast with the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, Southeast Asia and CA.²¹

Israel did not declare its position on the BRI after its announcement, and only after China launched the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)²² in October 2014, Israel became one of the last seven countries to apply for membership. On March 31, 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formally signed a declaration of accession to the AIIB, and Israel became one of the 57 founding states. In this way, Tel Aviv positively supported the Chinese BRI, which could cause confusion in Washington.²³ In January 2016, the Knesset Finance Commission approved in the second and third readings the bill on Israel's entry into the AIIB, which became the first pan-Asian economic structure with full membership of Israel in one working group with South Korea, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and several other Asian countries. Of the bank's total registered capital of US \$ 100 billion, Israel's share will be US \$ 150 million (Israel has 0.91 % of the vote), and Tel Aviv will provide commitments in the amount of US \$ 600 million in case of need to buy back shares.²⁴

Israel's AIIB membership will open up opportunities for the integration of Israeli companies into bank-financed infrastructure projects. The Israeli Foreign Ministry hailed the AIIB as "a diplomatic achievement" and "one of the most important initiatives in terms of China's foreign policy and, in particular, for President Xi Jinping".²⁵

²⁰ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, “The Evolving Israel-China Relationship,” p. 39.

²¹ Harutyunyan Aghavni, «On Some Obstacles and Challenges to the Implementation of the Chinese Initiative One Belt, One Road,” *Orbis Linguarum*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, Езиков свят, Филологически факултет при ЮЗУ “Неофит Рилски,” Благоевград, България, 2019, p. 143, available at: http://ezikovsvyat.com/images/stories/issue17.2-2019/17.%20Harutyunyan_143-156.pdf.

²² Established in 2015 as one of the financing arms of BRI, the Beijing-based AIIB aims to boost infrastructure connectivity in Asia and beyond.

²³ Xian Xiao, “The ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ and China-Israeli Relations,” p. 12; “Israel Applies to Join China-backed AIIB Investment Bank,” <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0MS46J20150401?irpc=932>.

²⁴ «Финансовя комиссия Кнессета утвърдила ко второму и третьему чтениям законопроект о вступлении Израиля в Азиатский банк инфраструктурных инвестиций», Кнессет, 11 Января, 2016, available at: https://m.knesset.gov.il/RU/News/PressReleases/pages/Pr1464_pg.aspx.

²⁵ Mehreen Khan, “Israel Applies to Become Founding Member of China Development Bank,” *The Telegraph*, 01 April, 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11509242/Israel-applies-to-become-founding-member-of-China-development-bank.html>.

During Netanyahu's visit to China in March 2017, President Xi announced the intention of the two countries to consistently promote major joint projects as part of the jointly building of the BRI. Prime Minister Netanyahu also expressed the readiness of the Israeli side to actively participate in infrastructure and other cooperation within the framework of BRI,²⁶ and declared that Chinese-Israeli ties are "a marriage made in heaven".²⁷ Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang reminded that "the Chinese people and the Jewish people are the great nations of the world".²⁸

In March 2015, Premier Li Keqiang underscored in the "Report on the Work of the Government" that China should promote Free Trade Area negotiations with Israel and other countries.²⁹ The two nations wrapped up their 7th round in November 2019, and could very well finalize the deal by the close of 2020. The idea that one of America's closest allies would enter into such an agreement with its "strategic rival" could have been accepted without enthusiasm in Washington.³⁰ However, it should be noted that this is part of the Chinese strategy to create free trade zones (FTZ) in those states that can be called traditional U.S. allies in order to facilitate the supply of goods and simplify the creation of joint ventures through the FTZ.³¹

1.2. *Israel as a Logistics Center and a Potential Hub for China's BRI*

On March 28, 2015, a year and a half after Xi Jinping's first proposal of the BRI, the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), authorized by the State Council, jointly published a document entitled "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road".³² It describes also plans for how the *Belt* will link China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through CA and West Asia (passing through Gwadar, Istanbul and Tehran and through Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Turkey); and how the *Road* will connect China's South China Sea all the way to the Mediterranean via the Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and Suez Canal.³³

²⁶ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, "The Evolving Israel-China Relationship," p. 38.

²⁷ Shannon Tiezzi, "Israel and China a 'Marriage Made in Heaven,' Says Netanyahu," *The Diplomat*, 22 March, 2017, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/israel-and-china-a-marriage-made-in-heaven-says-netanyahu/>.

²⁸ Michael Martina, "After Saudi king, China Warmly Welcomes Israel's Prime Minister," *Reuters*, 20 March, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-israel-idUSKBN16R0XX>.

²⁹ Xian Xiao, "The 'Belt and Road Initiative' and China-Israeli Relations," p. 7.

³⁰ "Why America Might Support a Sino-Israel Free Trade Agreement," *The Times of Israel*, 20 February, 2020, available at: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/why-america-might-support-a-sino-israel-free-trade-agreement/>.

³¹ Субботин Игорь, «Израиль игнорирует сигналы США об опасности Китая», *Независимая газета*, 24 Декабря, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-12-24/2_7760_israel.html.

³² Yitzhak Shichor, "China's Belt and Road Initiative Revisited: Challenges and Ways Forward," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* Vol. 4, No. 1, World Century Publishing Corporation and Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, 2018, p. 42, available at: <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S237774001850001X>; "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," Issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China with State Council Authorization, 28 March, 2015, available at: http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html.

³³ Harutyunyan Aghavni, "Chinese "Belt and Road" Initiative in the Middle East and North Africa," *Россия – Китай: история и культура: сборник статей и докладов участников XII Международной научно-практической конференции*, Казань: Издательство «Фэн» АН РТ, 2019, с. 32, available at: https://www.academia.edu/41684296/Chinese_Belt_and_Road_Initiative_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa.

Given the country's geographical position, China also needs Israel as a BRI logistics center and land bridge connecting China's trade routes from the Far East through Africa to the ME and further to Europe.³⁴ Since BRI routes require not only seaports, but also railways, logistics centers, warehouses, airports, as well as hardware and software for the transportation system, Israeli companies can contribute to B&R projects by developing and integrating transport and logistics technologies and related systems, for example, for trains, aircraft and marine equipment.³⁵ Through BRI, China seeks to play a more active role in the ME, and improved ties with Israel could offset China's historically closer ties with other countries in the region, including Iran and Israel's Arab neighbors.³⁶ Some Chinese authors even see Israel's location next to the Arab states as a "balancing factor" that can "give credibility to Chinese soft power in the region", considering Israel's limited role in the BRI due to its small size, bounded transport links with countries in its region and lack of experience in large-scale projects.³⁷ Tel Aviv's deep ties with the U.S. and the EU can help China expand its ties in the Eastern Mediterranean and the ME, and Sino-Israeli ties can enhance Israel's role in trade between Asia and Europe.³⁸

Chinese companies, involved in national infrastructure and construction projects in Israel, have good experience in implementing infrastructure projects at a lower price and in a shorter time.³⁹ The ability of Chinese companies to successfully build infrastructure in a highly developed country such as Israel, not only can help Chinese infrastructure companies enter the U.S. or Europe, but will improve their image and give legitimacy to their activities, leading to additional projects in other developed states, since most BRI countries where Chinese companies are building infrastructure have low and medium incomes.⁴⁰

1.3. Israel as Pivotal Location for the Implementation of Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI)

To implement MSRI, China has been actively developing several global infrastructure and investment projects designed to increase the efficiency of the economic interaction of the Asian giant with its partners around the world. One such project is a network of commercial ports "String of Pearls", similar to the "Dual Use Logistics Facility",⁴¹ which focuses on creating Chinese strongholds or "naval posts" with military or geopolitical influence along the Indian Ocean littoral, in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea.⁴²

³⁴ Roi Feder, "What China's New Silk Road Means for Israel," *Diplomatic Courier*, 01 September, 2016, available at: <https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/chinas-new-silk-road-means-israel/>.

³⁵ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, "The Evolving Israel-China Relationship," p. 39.

³⁶ Shira Efron, Karen Schwindt, Emily Haskel, "Chinese Investment in Israeli Technology and Infrastructure: Security Implications for Israel and the United States," RAND Corporation, 2020, p. 17, available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR3100/RR3176/RAND_RR3176.pdf.

³⁷ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, "The Evolving Israel-China Relationship," pp. 39-40.

³⁸ Jacopo Franceschini, "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Reshaping the Political Scenario of the Eastern Mediterranean?" 07 November, 2018, available at: <http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/belt-road-initiative-bri-mediterranean/?fbclid=IwAR0o9I3-CyfkIrS1SzsJBZoZeHplm3gckaavxOaMR1UsASa8Ae5q94I138>.

³⁹ Mercy A. Kuo, "Israel Balancing US-China Relations: Geostrategic Context. Insights from Shira Efron."

⁴⁰ Shira Efron, Karen Schwindt, Emily Haskel, "Chinese Investment in Israeli Technology and Infrastructure: Security Implications for Israel and the United States," p. 18.

⁴¹ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

⁴² Christina Lin, "The New Silk Road China's Energy Strategy in the Greater Middle East," *Policy Focus*, No. 109, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 2011, p. 10, available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus109.pdf>.

Israel has the potential to be a small but important stop on the MSR, connecting the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal.⁴³ From the east coast of the China, the ships follow the South China Sea to the Straits of Malacca, from where they are sent to the shores of northern and northeast Africa to reach the Israeli ports via the Bab el-Eilat and Ashdod - bypassing the Suez Canal.⁴⁴ To ensure reliable access for Chinese commercial shipments from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, Beijing took an adopted a dual-track approach while expanding its interests in the Suez Canal corridor and following the land route through Israel.⁴⁵

The massive development of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, new ports appearing on its Mediterranean shores, new trade routes between Israel and its Arab neighbors, a growing geo-economic alliance between Israel, Cyprus and Greece and significant financial resources in Israeli investment intuition make this a very attractive market BRI for China.⁴⁶ **China has raised its naval presence in the strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb strait, and Suez Canal as well as made ports of call across the Gulf and in Egypt, Israel and Iran. Given the natural naval points of the ME (Hormuz, Suez, Mandeb), each of which faces a high level of geopolitical uncertainty, China's modern dependence on others for providing these points of attraction and sea routes is unstable in the long run.**⁴⁷ While most of these transcontinental routes will be located in Central and South Asia, the littoral states of the Eastern Mediterranean—Turkey, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt—play a crucial role in completing China's Eurasian bridges.⁴⁸

“String of Pearls” strategy is particularly evident in the fact that China gained control of two of Israel's three sea gates, the ports of Haifa and Ashdod, which are part of China's ambitious trans-Asian strategy to use three key resources for China's future greatness: *petrochemicals, consumer markets and advanced technologies*.⁴⁹

In 2014, one of China's largest state-owned enterprises and the second largest dredging company in the world - the China Harbor Engineering Co. Ltd - won a tender for the construction of new container terminals in Ashdod port (25 miles/40 km south of Tel Aviv), worth US \$ 3 billion,⁵⁰ which will become the most important port for maritime trade with Europe. Ashdod on the Mediterranean coast is the destination of 90 % of Israel's international maritime traffic. It is one of the largest foreign investment projects in Israel in history, as well as one of the largest projects for the China Harbor Engineering.⁵¹

And in 2015, Shanghai International Port Group (SIPG), which operates the Port of Shanghai, won the bid to expand the deep-sea private Haifa Port, near Israel's alleged nuclear-armed submarines. It will also have the operation rights for the terminal for 25 years after the facilities enter into service in

⁴³ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, “The Evolving Israel-China Relationship,” p. 38.

⁴⁴ “Turkey and Israel are Intercepted at Sea “Silk Road” of Iran,” CypLIVE, 12 March, 2017, available at: <http://en.cyplive.com/ru/news/turciya-i-izrail-perehvatyvayut-u-irana-morskoy-shelkovyy-put.html>.

⁴⁵ Emma Scott, “China's Silk Road Strategy: A Foothold in the Suez, But Looking to Israel,” China Brief, Vol. 15, Issue 19, The Jamestown Foundation, 10 October, 2014, p. 10, available at: https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/China_Brief_Vol_14_Issue_19_5.pdf?x71854.

⁴⁶ Mercy A. Kuo, “China and Israel in the Belt and Road Initiative. Insights from Roi Feder,” The Diplomat, 19 September, 2018, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/china-and-israel-in-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

⁴⁷ Mercy A. Kuo, “China and the Middle East: Israel's Strategic Stakes. Insights from Sam Chester,” The Diplomat, 29 August, 2018, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/china-and-the-middle-east-israels-strategic-stakes/>.

⁴⁸ Sam Chester, “Is China Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process?” The University of Nottingham, 02 March, 2015, available at: <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/03/02/is-china-part-of-the-solution-or-part-of-the-problem-in-the-arab-israeli-peace-process/>.

⁴⁹ «Китай все ближе подходит к Израилю?», Кто в курсе, 25 Декабря, 2018, available at: <https://ktovkurse.com/politika/kitaj-vse-blizhe-podhodit-k-izrailyu>.

⁵⁰ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

⁵¹ «Китай все ближе подходит к Израилю?», <https://ktovkurse.com/politika/kitaj-vse-blizhe-podhodit-k-izrailyu>.

2021. This new terminal is just 1 km from the docks, where U.S. warships are anchored when they call at the port of Haifa.⁵² The Israelis allowed to rent and maintain a terminal in the port of Haifa due to traffic difficulties and increased strikes by local workers. It was assumed that new facilities built by the Chinese would unload the old port, and enterprises arriving from China would violate the Israeli state port company's monopoly. However, some observers believe that if the SIPG extends the lease of the port due to the lack of competing offers, then the Israeli authorities will be in a dependent position for a long time.⁵³ It is also noteworthy that the decisions to award the Haifa tender to a Chinese company were made by the Transportation Ministry and the Ports Authority without involvement of the National Security Council and the participation of the Navy.⁵⁴

Another long-term plan, that Israel hopes China could participate in, is building a railroad connection between the port of Eilat (in the southernmost point of Israel on the Red Sea) and the port of Ashdod, so-called "Red-Med Railway". It will connect the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, thereby providing a safe alternative to the Suez Canal, and creating an inland trade and logistics center for Chinese trade between Asia and Europe via the Red Sea.⁵⁵ From Eilat goods will be transported by new railway to the port of Ashdod on the Mediterranean coast and delivered further by sea to European customers, thereby bypassing the vulnerable neck of the Suez Canal, provided that the fare on the new line remains at a fairly competitive level.⁵⁶

From an Israeli perspective, the "Red-Med" would bring economic benefits as a catalyst for development of the southern Negev region. It could also improve its regional standing and strengthen its bargaining position vis-à-vis Egypt. For decades, Cairo was able to partially isolate Israel by threatening to close the Suez Canal.⁵⁷ To solve the problems of competition between Egypt and Israel over China in the construction of new transport corridors between the Red and Mediterranean Seas, the presidents of China and Egypt met and discussed trilateral negotiations with Israel in December 2015.⁵⁸

To avoid a bottleneck in the Strait of Malacca, China is building the Sino-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a workaround. And Bab al-Mandab will guard Beijing's military base in Djibouti. The only missing node in ensuring the security of China's Sea Lines of Communication and "String of Pearls" is the Suez Canal, for which the "Red-Med railway" is considered the ideal logistics solution.⁵⁹ Taking into account the fact that the full railway and road corridor going to the port of Gwadar (on the Arabian Sea) between China and Pakistan, Turkey-Pakistan FTA will strengthen the interaction of Beijing, Ankara and Tel-Aviv.⁶⁰

⁵² Altay Atlı, "China, Israel, and the Geopolitics of Seaports," *The Diplomat*, 16 July, 2019, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/china-israel-and-the-geopolitics-of-seaports/>.

⁵³ Субботин Игорь, «Израилю предрекают превращение в колонию Китая», *Независимая газета*, 08 Августа, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-08-08/6_7645_izrael.html.

⁵⁴ Amos Harel, "Analysis Israel Is Giving China the Keys to Its Largest Port – and the U.S. Navy May Abandon Israel," *Haaretz*, 15 September, 2018, available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-is-giving-china-the-keys-to-its-largest-port-1.6470527>.

⁵⁵ Alexander B. Pevzner, "China's 'New Silk Road' and the Middle East," *The Jerusalem Post*, 08 May, 2017, available at: <HTTP://WWW.JPOST.COM/OPINION/CHINAS-NEW-SILK-ROAD-AND-THE-MIDDLE-EAST-490157>; "China's 'Belt and Road' Offers Middle East Opportunities Galore," *Ameinfo.com*, 19 June, 2017, available at: <https://ameinfo.com/money/economy/chinas-belt-road-offers-middle-east-opportunities-galore/>.

⁵⁶ «Баланс сверхдержав в преддверии Третьей войны в Заливе», Центр стратегических оценок и прогнозов, 25 Апреля, 2012, available at: <http://csef.ru/ru/politica-i-geopolitica/484/balans-sverhderzhav-v-preddverii-tretej-vojnny-v-zalive-3050>.

⁵⁷ George N. Tzogopoulos, "Greece, Israel, and China's 'Belt and Road' Initiative," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, No. 139, The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, October 2014, p. 24, available at: <https://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/139-Greece-Israel-and-Chinas-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-Tzogopoulos-Web.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Sam Chester, "Is China Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process?"

⁵⁹ Andrew Korybko, "Why is China Choosing to Partner with Israel and Saudi Arabia?" *The Duran*, 25 March, 2017, available at: <https://theduran.com/china-israel-saudi-arabia/>.

⁶⁰ "Turkey and Israel are Intercepted at Sea "Silk Road" of Iran," <http://en.cyplive.com/ru/news/turciya-i-izrail-perehvatyvayut-u-irana-morskoy-shelkovyy-put.html>

China has been a partner in important national initiatives, such as construction of the Red Line - the first stretch of a light rail line going from Petah Tikvah to Tel Aviv.⁶¹ Israel has added a rail line from the port of Haifa to Beit She'an (less than 10 km from the border with Jordan) and has invited Chinese companies to take part in a project of extending further its north-eastern spur right up to the border with Jordan. From there, a short link to the Jordanian town of Irbid will enable connection to the Jordanian rail network and on to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Under the auspices of BRI, this international project, led by multinational corporations, and built on a centuries-old Ottoman network, with the intention of linking the Palestinian Authority and incorporating an inland logistics and trading port in Jordan, passed through non-diplomatic countries, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia.⁶²

In 1997, Israel and Jordan signed an agreement on the establishment of a Special Industrial Zone (SIZ) in the Jordanian city of Irbid (it began to operate in 1998). Apparently, using the holes in the SIZ agreement, the main advantage of the work of the SIZ in Jordan is received by the Chinese, who invest in the enterprises operating there, and manage to hire cheaper Chinese workers, not Jordanians. Of the 71 companies operating in 2008 in the SIZ, the majority of employees 23 of them came from mainland China. At least 50 % of the profits from the supply of textiles to the U.S. from Irbid are received by companies with Chinese ownership.⁶³

If we add to this that China is actively interested participating in the construction of a light metro in Tel Aviv and digging a tunnel on Mount Carmel in Haifa, it seems that the PRC seriously considers Israel as a logistic hub between Europe and Asia.⁶⁴ It is believed that the strategic security implications of the tunnel on Mount Carmel and the high-speed train in Tel Aviv, were also not considered.⁶⁵

In recent years, a significant breakthrough has been made in the field of inbound Chinese tourism in Israel. As a result of a strategic decision taken in 2012 by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism to focus on attracting a large number of tourists from China, the flow of tourists from China to Israel increases by 15-30 % annually. And if in 2015 the country was visited by 47,000 Chinese tourists, then in 2016 it was already 79,000, and in 2017 their number for the first time in history exceeded 100,000, amounting to 113.6 thousand people. The increase in tourist flow from the Middle Kingdom was stimulated, in addition to the growth of general interest in Israel, as well as marketing campaigns and simplification of visa procedures.⁶⁶

50 weekly flights help not only to establish an exchange of tourist flows but learn to understand each other's culture and mentality.⁶⁷ By early 2019, there were direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Hainan and Chengdu to Israel, which not only bring economic benefits of tourism but also greatly promote exchanges and cooperation between Israel and China in various fields. With the booming China-Israel tourism industry, China's e-commerce giant Alibaba has launched payment service in Israel since January 2018 to provide convenience for Chinese tourists in Israel. At present, Alipay is available at

⁶¹ Svetlova Ksenia, "Will Post-Coronavirus World Bring Chill to Israel-China Relations?" Al-Monitor, 22 April, 2020, available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/04/israel-china-us-benjamin-netanyahu-coronavirus-university.html>.

⁶² Alexander B. Pevzner, "China's 'New Silk Road' and the Middle East."

⁶³ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль: 25 лет экономического сотрудничества», Азия и Африка сегодня, № 7, 2018, с. 42.

⁶⁴ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

⁶⁵ Amos Harel, "Analysis Israel Is Giving China the Keys to Its Largest Port – and the U.S. Navy May Abandon Israel."

⁶⁶ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль: 25 лет экономического сотрудничества», с. 42.

⁶⁷ Халдей Александр, «Вашингтон в панике: Китай уводит Израиль».

nearly 100 vendors in Israel, while Tencent, Alibaba's competitor in China, has geared up to launch WeChat payment service in Israel.⁶⁸

2. The Promotion of Innovation on China-Israel Relations and the Increase in China's Investment in Israel.

2.1. *Israel's Attractiveness for China as a "Start-up Nation"*

In order to achieve its ambitions to become a leading superpower and dominate the global high-tech industry, China uses not only the strategy of BRI, but also the policy "Made in China 2025" (MIC 25) - a state industrial initiative aimed at opening their capital markets.⁶⁹ China wants to become a world leader in advanced technology, both for commercial and military purposes, and has many national plans designed to stimulate the development of its technology sector. The Chinese government is issuing various industry-specific plans, such as the *Next-Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan, released in July 2017*. Key plans and policies include the *National Long- and Medium-Term Plan for Science and Technology Development (2006–2020)*, *Internet Plus*, and *MIC 2025*.⁷⁰

The MIC 2025 Initiative, launched by Prime Minister Li Keqiang in 2015, aimed at modernizing China's industrial potential, consolidating China's global leadership position in high technology, reducing the country's dependence on foreign technology imports, and investing in significant funds in their own innovations to create Chinese companies that can compete both domestically and around the world. China sees MIC 2025 as a chance to fully integrate into the global manufacturing chain and more effectively cooperate with industrialized economies.⁷¹ Beijing's ambitious plan to create one of the world's most advanced and competitive economies using innovative manufacturing technologies ("smart manufacturing") aims to turn the country into a "manufacturing superpower" in the coming decades and challenge the economic primacy of today's leading economies and international corporations.⁷²

In July 2017, China's state council released its new generation artificial intelligence (AI) development plan, intended to make China the leading global powerhouse in AI by 2030. In July 2018, two state-backed Chinese companies, China Merchants Group and peer SPF Group, announced a partnership with London-based investment firm Centricus to launch a US \$ 15 billion fund that will invest in or acquire tech companies in both China and globally.⁷³

Thus, China is making its move from a commodity manufacturer economy to a high-tech one – and Israel is playing a key part.⁷⁴ Since 2005, when defensive and diplomatic relations between China and Israel were in decline, China was still looking for opportunities for technological cooperation with Israel. Chinese companies have set their sights on Israeli commercial technology in line with China's national

⁶⁸ "Belt and Road News Network (BRN)," Belt and Road News, 21 December, 2019, available at: <https://www.beltandroad.news/2019/12/21/belt-road-boosts-china-israel-economic-trade-cooperation/>.

⁶⁹ "Made in China 2025' vs 'Make America Great Again," Belt and Road News, 03 December, 2019, available at: <https://www.beltandroad.news/2019/12/03/made-in-china-2025-vs-make-america-great-again/>.

⁷⁰ Shira Efron, Karen Schwindt, Emily Haskel, "Chinese Investment in Israeli Technology and Infrastructure: Security Implications for Israel and the United States," p. 12.

⁷¹ "Made in China 2025, Backgrounder," Institute for Security & Development Policy, June 2018, p. 1, available at: <https://isdp.eu/content/uploads/2018/06/Made-in-China-Backgrounder.pdf>.

⁷² Jost Wübbeke, Mirjam Meissner, Max J. Zenglein, Jaqueline Ives, Björn Conrad, "Made in China 2025. The Making of a High-Tech Superpower and Consequences for Industrial Countries," Papers on China No 2, Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), December 2016, p. 6, available at: https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/MPOC_No.2_MadeinChina2025.pdf.

⁷³ Hagar Ravet, "China's Minister of Science Wang Zhigang on a Two-Day Visit to Israel," CTech, 19 August, 2018, available at: <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctech/articles/0,7340,L-3744592,00.html>.

⁷⁴ David Shamah, "Israeli Tech to Power a Robot Revolution in China," The Times of Israel, 08 October, 2015, available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-tech-to-power-a-robot-revolution-in-china/>.

mandate to become a world leader in industrial technology by 2025.⁷⁵ Israeli technology attracts Chinese companies because many of them have global operations and the same standards as in Silicon Valley, but without sky-high cost estimates. Chinese investment in Israel covers almost every major breakthrough technology sector in industries such as autonomous and electric vehicles, where major Chinese automakers support research centers. In other sectors, such as the use of artificial intelligence, Israel is one of the leaders in almost every area.⁷⁶

It is no coincidence that Chinese investors have focused on Israel, the “start-up nation”, with the highest number of start-ups per capita of any country in the world and the highest absolute number outside of Silicon Valley. Israel is especially known for its high-tech sector, with thousands of well-regarded companies focusing on cybersecurity, defense, agriculture, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals—all of which have found eager investors in China.⁷⁷ Israeli entrepreneurs are highly sought after in China, predominantly in the fields of mobile and web technologies, telecommunications, gaming, clean-tech, agro-tech and digital health, which all go hand in hand with Israeli high-tech expertise.⁷⁸

In 2018, 12 % of all investments in Israeli startups were Chinese. Regarding large investments, whose size is US \$ 25 million or more, 25 % of all investments in Israeli startups are of Chinese origin.⁷⁹ More than 1,000 Chinese companies are active in Israel and several hundred Israeli in China. Of all foreign investments in Israeli hi-tech, 20 % belong to the Chinese.⁸⁰

However, some experts consider that for the U.S. and other major industrialized democracies, the Chinese tactics of MIC 2025 not only undermine Beijing's stated commitment to international trade rules, but also pose a security risk and are based on discriminatory treatment of foreign investment, forced technology transfer, intellectual property theft and cyber espionage. This prompts the U.S. President Donald J. Trump to set tariffs on Chinese goods and block several China-backed acquisitions of technology companies.⁸¹ In addition to the U.S. trade war, which is an important tool to curb the rapid growth of its strategic competitor China, Washington has also put the MIC 2025 at the forefront, trying to hinder the development of China's high-tech sector, including artificial intelligence, chip manufacturing, and 5G technology.⁸² Meanwhile, many other countries have tightened control over foreign investment, and debate has intensified on how to respond to China's behavior.⁸³

2.2. *China-Israel Cooperation in Innovation Economy*

The successes of military-technical cooperation (MTC) have pushed the Chinese leadership and business people to look closely at Israel in terms of evaluating its successes in developing China's innovation economy.⁸⁴ China's unique interest in Israel is evidenced by the dozens of delegations of

⁷⁵ Mercy A. Kuo, “China and the Middle East: Israel's Strategic Stakes. Insights from Sam Chester.”

⁷⁶ «Китай наращивает инвестиции в технологический сектор Израйля», Рамблер, 20 Августа, 2018, available at: <https://finance.rambler.ru/economics/40377879-kitay-naraschivaet-investitsii-v-tehnologicheskij-sektor-izrailya/?updated>.

⁷⁷ Sharone Tobias, “China's Investment in Israel's Technology Sector,” The University of Nottingham, 26 February, 2015, available at: <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/02/26/chinas-investment-in-israels-technology-sector/>.

⁷⁸ Barnea Jaffa Lande, “China Increased Tech Investments in Israel,” Lexology, 25 June, 2017, available at: <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=6f84b814-ea73-4b61-93bc-25bedc9ef188>.

⁷⁹ **Субботин Игорь**, «Израиль рискует стать шпионским форпостом Китая», Независимая газета, 25 Марта, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-03-25/1_7539_israel.html.

⁸⁰ Халдей Александр, «Вашингтон в панике: Китай уводит Израиль».

⁸¹ James McBride, Andrew Chatzky, “Is ‘Made in China 2025’ a Threat to Global Trade?” Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May, 2019, available at: <https://www.cfr.org/background/made-china-2025-threat-global-trade>.

⁸² Han Jianwei, “Can US Disrupt Sino-Israeli Cooperation?” Global Times, 22 January, 2019, available at: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1136611.shtml>.

⁸³ James McBride, Andrew Chatzky, “Is ‘Made in China 2025’ a Threat to Global Trade?”

⁸⁴ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

senior government officials and businesspeople who have visited Israel in recent years. Representatives of large companies and private investors from China often arrive in Israel in an attempt to crack “the Israeli code”, to understand the local innovation ecosystem and to implement the innovative and entrepreneurial Israeli character into their own DNA.⁸⁵

China and Israel have both made innovation a top priority in their domestic development strategies. China’s strategy of pursuing innovation on three investment direction: *bilateral, regional, and global*, has become an essential part of China’s “New Era” vision of a country of innovators, as articulated by Xi Jinping in his 2017 speech to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at the 19th Party Congress. In addition, through many projects under the BRI, China promotes and invests in innovation, both regionally and globally. At the regional level China seeks large investments in industrial parks in countries neighboring China, such as Vietnam, Thailand and Russia. At the global level, under the BRI flag, China seeks and invests in innovation in less developed countries such as Africa, as well as in countries with developed innovative economies such as Switzerland and Belgium. If, in the framework of investment diplomacy with innovation, China and Israel cooperate on a bilateral basis, within the framework of the BRI, in the context of Beijing’s desire for scientific and technological innovation, it cooperates at the global level.⁸⁶

Technology and innovation was one of the main topics of conversation during the two separate visits of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and then-President Shimon Peres to Beijing.⁸⁷ In May 2014, Liu Yandong, Deputy Prime Minister of China, during his visit to Israel, attended the first Innovation Conference in Israel, and published an article entitled “to Make China-Israel STI Cooperation Bloom” on the Jerusalem Post. In January 2015, in Beijing, at the first meeting of China-Israel Innovation Cooperation Joint Committee, the two sides signed “*the Three-Year Action Plan for Cooperative Innovation*”, including the establishment of the *Cooperative Innovation Center*, set-up of *China-Israel “7+7 University Research Federation”*, agreement on the *2015-2019 Cultural Cooperation Action Plan*, and the start of construction of *China-Israel Changzhou Innovation Park*.⁸⁸

In March 2017, Beijing hosted a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The parties announced the creation of an innovative comprehensive partnership.⁸⁹ In 2018, Israel and China held the fourth intergovernmental “*Innovation Conference: Israel-China*” for the establishment of a comprehensive partnership in the field of innovation. A Sino-Israeli trading platform has been created, the first of its kind in China. And immediately, 4 patents were acquired, which Tel Aviv University possessed: *from the field of intellectual production, smart cities, digital economy and biomedicine*. The Chinese bought a patent to detect neuropathy for a symbolic sum of US \$ 49 thousand, acquiring not supporters, but advocates and lobbyists. The first China-Israel Changzhou Innovation Park (CIP), created by the two governments in the area of complementary technological innovation, was founded in Changzhou⁹⁰ for Israeli companies seeking to open a branch in China and to give Israeli companies a “soft landing” in the Chinese market, to facilitate the adaptation of

⁸⁵ Avi Luvton, “An Economic Powerhouse and a Rising Hi-Tech Superpower – 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Israel,” *The Times of Israel*, 23 March, 2017, available at: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/an-economic-powerhouse-and-a-rising-hi-tech-superpower-25-years-of-diplomatic-relations-between-china-and-israel/>.

⁸⁶ Hadas Peled, Marica Don Harpaz, “Innovation as a Catalyst in the China-Israel Investment Relationship: The China-Israel BIT (2009) and the Prospective FTA,” *Hebrew University of Jerusalem Legal Studies Research Paper No. 01-18*, January 2018, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁷ Sharone Tobias, “China’s Investment in Israel’s Technology Sector.”

⁸⁸ Xian Xiao, “The “Belt and Road Initiative” and China-Israeli Relations,” p. 8; “China, Israel Look forward to Closer Innovative Cooperation,” *Global Times*, 12 August, 2018, available at: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1115054.shtml>.

⁸⁹ «Китай инвестировал в Израиль \$16,5 млрд в 2016 году», *IT Business Week Israel*, 14 Мая, 2017, available at: <https://itbusinessweek.com/china-israel-2016-16-5b/>.

⁹⁰ Халдей Александр, «Вашингтон в панике: Китай уводит Израиль».

Israeli technology in the Middle Kingdom.⁹¹ China is encouraging the establishment of Israeli innovative enterprise in China, such as Shouguang's Water City, which incorporates Israeli water technologies.⁹²

2.3 Israeli-China Research and Development (R&D) Collaboration

A more substantial channel of Israeli technology transfer to China is R&D collaboration between companies and academic institutions of both states, as well as R&D activity of Israeli companies in China. In the early 2000s, Israeli government bodies and Venture capital (VC) firms started to promote technological-commercial cooperation between companies in the two states. The national academic science foundations in the two countries signed an agreement in 2012 to support joint research projects in science and engineering (Council for Higher Education). While the projects are purely academic, some of them, for example, in nanotechnology, new materials, and satellite technology, can be of military relevance.⁹³

In September 2013, Tel Aviv University (TAU) and Tsinghua University signed a memorandum of understanding to establish the XIN ("new" in Mandarin Chinese) Center. It should become one of the largest academic R&D centers in both countries, develop strategic cooperation in research and teaching, and will also serve as an international center for scientific and technological innovation for research both in the early stages and projects that can be prepared for market. Two governments provided funding for the project, but most of the money came from private sources in both countries.⁹⁴ In 2014, TAU and Tsinghua launched a US \$ 300 million joint center for innovative research and education, initially focusing on nanotechnology,⁹⁵ particularly with medical and optics applications, but will later expand to other areas, such as raw materials, water treatment, and environmental issues.⁹⁶

On December 16, 2015, the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, a world leader in science and technology education, funded by billionaire Lee Ka-shing in the amount of US \$ 130 million, laid the foundation for the establishment of the Guangdong Technion Israel Institute of Technology (GTIIT) in Shantou (Guangdong Province, PRC). For the Technion, GTIIT means increasing global reach and status, and the industrial park planned for the GTIIT campus will serve as a stronghold for Israeli companies to crack key markets in the U.S. and China.⁹⁷

To bring down the cost of production for the many consumer and industrial products made in its factories, China is undergoing a robotics revolution, installing machines to replace people on the assembly line, and working with Israel to develop smarter and better robots, via the newly established

⁹¹ Avi Luvton, "An Economic Powerhouse and a Rising Hi-Tech Superpower – 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Israel," *The Times of Israel*, 23 March, 2017, available at: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/an-economic-powerhouse-and-a-rising-hi-tech-superpower-25-years-of-diplomatic-relations-between-china-and-israel/>.

⁹² "Israel and China: Toward a Comprehensive Innovative Partnership," *Israel Defense*, 22 March, 2017, available at: <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/28943>.

⁹³ Yoram Evron, "Between Beijing and Washington: Israel's Technology Transfers to China," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, Issue 3, December 2013, pp. 517-518, available at: https://www.academia.edu/19603521/Between_Beijing_and_Washington_Israel_s_Technology_Transfers_to_China.

⁹⁴ David Shamah, "Israel, China to Open \$300 Million Research Center," *The Times of Israel*, 19 May, 2014, available at: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-china-to-open-300-million-research-center>.

⁹⁵ Sharone Tobias, "China's Investment in Israel's Technology Sector."

⁹⁶ "TAU and Tsinghua University Launch \$300M Research Center," *Tel Aviv University*, 27 May, 2014, available at: https://english.tau.ac.il/news/xin_center.

⁹⁷ "Launch of First Israeli University in China," *Technion Israel Institute of Technology*, 16 December, 2015, available at: <https://www.technion.ac.il/en/launch-of-first-israeli-university-in-china-five-thousand-in-attendance-for-groundbreaking-of-guangdong-technion-israel-institute-of-technology/>.

GTIIT will be comprised of three units: the College of Engineering; the College of Science; and the College of Life Science. GTIIT will offer high-level, innovative and research-oriented undergraduate and graduate education. Investments in this collaboration will also benefit research facilities and infrastructure on the Technion campus in Haifa. It will also become an anchor in the Far East, which complements Technion's partnership with Cornell University at the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute at Cornell Tech in New York City.

Sino-Israeli Robotics Institute. It will be the centerpiece of a new US \$ 2 billion industrial park in the Guangzhou region of China that will be built around the technology developed jointly by Israeli and Chinese researchers. It is noteworthy that some Israeli scientists believe that laid-off workers who will be replaced by robots will eventually find more paid jobs with a higher status, and that automation will not lead to higher unemployment, but to expand the economy, resulting in more workers places than lost, which is the goal of China.⁹⁸

Israeli-Chinese private equity firm Infinity Group and Neusoft Corporation - China's largest IT Corporation, holding a 50 % share of the medical market in China - have approved the establishment of a US \$ 250 million investment to back Israeli life science companies operating in China. This fund will assist Israeli medical companies to connect with the Chinese market through the integration of cloud-based platforms, which assists Israeli life science companies with regulatory approvals and product promotion in China.⁹⁹

The state structures of both countries have also formed special programs to support bilateral scientific and technical cooperation with an applied bias, making it possible for joint research and development to receive state money on preferential terms from the governments of both countries. In the Chinese case, it can be state structures of a regional scale. In fact, these programs are unique funds that invest in projects if they meet established requirements. It is important that, most often, the money received should not be returned to the company in case of failure. And if successful, the government agencies that issued the money will receive royalties until the grant is fully repaid. Such financial infrastructure stimulates the effective and intensive development of scientific and technical cooperation between China and Israel.¹⁰⁰

2.4. *China as a Strategic Market for Israel: Israel as a Strategic Investor for China*

Though situated in a turbulent region, Israel is an island of relative stability with the highest "B&R risk on investment" ranking.¹⁰¹ Israel ranked as the second lowest investment risk on the Economist Intelligence Unit BRI risk index, making investment in the market highly attractive for China, which is currently looking for a more strategic regional footprint. China is likely to pay more attention to the fact that Israel does not have more serious national security problems than in the past, which will give Israel more leverage as a stable, prosperous and growing geopolitical force in the region.¹⁰²

Against the backdrop of increased confrontation between China and the U.S., forcing Chinese investors to reduce their presence in this market, in 2016 there was an unprecedented increase in investment from China to Israeli high-tech. If in 2015 the amount of Chinese investment in Israeli companies was less than a billion dollars, then in 2016 it soared to a fantastic figure of US \$ 16.5 billion.¹⁰³ A significant portion of this amount came from investing in Israeli startup companies, with a focus on the field of information and computer (cyber) security and medical technologies.¹⁰⁴ The MSRI agreement with Israel includes Chinese investments in several sectors as renewable energy, the use of solar energy (solar energy technologies), robotics, telecommunications, chemicals market, biotechnology,

⁹⁸ David Shamah, "Israeli Tech to Power a Robot Revolution in China."

⁹⁹ Barnea Jaffa Lande, "China Increased Tech Investments in Israel," Lexology, 25 June, 2017, available at: <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=6f84b814-ea73-4b61-93bc-25bedc9ef188>.

¹⁰⁰ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

¹⁰¹ Roi Feder, "What China's New Silk Road Means for Israel."

¹⁰² Mercy A. Kuo, "China and Israel in the Belt and Road Initiative. Insights from Roi Feder."

¹⁰³ Марьясис Дмитрий, «Китай и Израиль — стратегические партнёры?».

¹⁰⁴ «Китай инвестировал в Израиль \$16,5 млрд в 2016 году», IT Business Week Israel, 14 Мая, 2017, available at: <https://itbusinessweek.com/china-israel-2016-16-5b/>.

agriculture, irrigation and the secondary use of water resources, infrastructures beyond ports and other areas of high technology.¹⁰⁵

In 2001, Netafim, a leading Israeli agri-tech company and a world leader in drip irrigation systems, invested in its first manufacturing facility in China.¹⁰⁶ The Israel Global Environment Service (GES) is participating in a US \$ 5 million water treatment project in Inner Mongolia of China.¹⁰⁷ The Chinese "water city" Shaoxin has benefited from Israel's innovative water technologies for developing municipal, agricultural and industrial water infrastructure. Such cooperation will be adopted in the northwestern part of China - in the Xinjiang province, where China seeks to stimulate development in order to maintain stability in the region, as well as bridge the economic gap between the eastern and western parts of the country. The introduction of Israeli inventions and technological solutions in the field of agriculture, water supply and renewable energy sources can help China turn the country's west into an agricultural production center in order to meet China's growing food needs.¹⁰⁸

One of China's biggest and best-known technology companies, Baidu, is also keen on investments. Ping An Ventures, a major Chinese VC fund, has made investments in eight Israeli companies.¹⁰⁹ In 2004, after receiving a number of requests from various foreign VC funds, China's first foreign-funded onshore RMB denominated license was granted to Infinity. Furthermore, one of the group's companies, a leading global manufacturer in the chip industry, became the first company with a foreign c-founder to go public on the Shanghai Stock Exchange. Infinity, on its part, pledged to introduce, invest, and generate innovation in China.¹¹⁰ ECI Telecom, a maker of telecommunications equipment, initially entered the market through a joint venture, but in the course of 2006 took over full control of the venture.¹¹¹

Another method of importing Israeli technology into China is acquisition of Israeli companies by Chinese.¹¹² The China National Chemical Corporation bought Israeli pesticides manufacturer ADAMA Agricultural Solutions Ltd. for US \$ 2.4 billion in 2011.¹¹³ In 2014, state-owned Bright Food Group Co bought a 70 % stake in Israeli dairy company Tnuva, one of the most famous Israeli companies, for a deal worth US \$ 960 million.¹¹⁴ China purchased controlling shares in Makhteshim Agan by Chinese state-owned firm ChemChina in 2011, the purchase of Alma Lasers by Fosun Pharma in 2013, and the acquisition of Ahava Cosmetics by Fosun in 2016.¹¹⁵ Unlike the stark opposition that state-owned Chinese firms often run into when they claim a stake in foreign energy or mineral companies in the West,

¹⁰⁵ Jacopo Franceschini, "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Reshaping the Political Scenario of the Eastern Mediterranean?" *Mediterranean Affairs*, 07 November, 2018, available at: http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/belt-road-initiative-bri-mediterranean/?fbclid=IwAR0o9I3-CyfkIrS1SzsJBZozeHplm3gckaatvxOaMR1UsASa8Ae5_q94II38; Ханин Зэев, «Израильско-китайский вектор, или зачем Пекину Ближний Восток», 9tv.co.il, 05 Августа, 2017, available at: <http://9tv.co.il/news/2017/08/05/246355.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Hadas Peled, Marica Don Harpaz, "Innovation as a Catalyst in the China-Israel Investment Relationship: The China-Israel BIT (2009) and the Prospective FTA," p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Aron Shai, "Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects," p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Galia Lavi, Jingjie He, and Oded Eran, "China and Israel: On the Same Belt and Road?" *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 18, No. 3, October 2015, p. 86, available at: [https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/systemfiles/adkan18_3ENG%20\(4\)_Lavi,%20He,%20Eran.pdf](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/systemfiles/adkan18_3ENG%20(4)_Lavi,%20He,%20Eran.pdf).

¹⁰⁹ Sharone Tobias, "China's Investment in Israel's Technology Sector."

¹¹⁰ Hadas Peled, Marica Don Harpaz, "Innovation as a Catalyst in the China-Israel Investment Relationship: The China-Israel BIT (2009) and the Prospective FTA," p. 10.

¹¹¹ Aron Shai, "Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects," p. 26.

¹¹² Yoram Evron, "Between Beijing and Washington: Israel's Technology Transfers to China," p. 518.

¹¹³ Sharone Tobias, "China's Investment in Israel's Technology Sector."

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; Jinitzail Hernandez, David Lee, "East Asia Soft Power Strikes Hard in Middle East," *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 August, 2018, available at: <https://www.jpost.com/International/East-Asia-soft-power-strikes-hard-in-Middle-East-564616>.

¹¹⁵ Avi Luvton, "An Economic Powerhouse and a Rising Hi-Tech Superpower – 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Israel."

the deal with ChemChina was mostly welcomed in Israel precisely because it was probably approved by the Politburo and interpreted as a sign of China's confidence in the future of Israel.¹¹⁶ Israeli company, Nextec Technologies, which developed measurement technology for the auto-motive and aviation industries, was acquired by a Chinese company in 2014.¹¹⁷ China has become a major buyer of Israeli agricultural technology from companies such as Netafim, the world leader in drip irrigation systems.¹¹⁸

Chinese investors are interested in several of Israel's largest arms exporters — Israel Aerospace Industries, Rafael, and Elbit Systems. The first two are state-owned corporations, but all three have “daughters” in the U.S. who also develop modern weapons.¹¹⁹

Experts explain that one of the reasons for such a sharp increase in Chinese investment in Israel was their reduction in the U.S. and the redirection of the flow of Chinese investment by tightening regulation in the U.S., as well as lower ratings of Israeli companies compared to American ones.¹²⁰ However, it should be noted that Israel did not want to oppose the U.S. and strictly adhered to its understanding of the mid-2000s with the U.S., according to which scientific and technical cooperation with China includes only civilian know-how. But China's direct investment in Israel's high-tech industry is relatively small and sporadic. More than 90 % of China's direct investment in Israel at the end of 2018 was made by purchases of only three companies, of which only one is a high-tech company. The remaining technology investments are limited to a few hundred million U.S. dollars per year. Other Chinese investments in Israel are through VC funds, providing investors with very limited access to know-how. Overall, by mid-2018 Chinese investments in Israel constituted just 4 % of Israel's foreign direct investments (FDI), compared to the U.S. with a share of 35 %. Considering the limited flow of Chinese FDI to Israel (around US \$ 100 million in 2018 out of the total US \$ 21.8 billion), China is far from gaining a foothold in Israel's high-tech sector.¹²¹ Meanwhile, it is very difficult to determine the full scope of Chinese FDI in Israel, since in many cases, investments were carried out through off-shore Chinese companies.¹²²

3. The Obstacles and Prospects for the Development of China-Israel Relations

Of course, relations between Israel and China are not without problems. The most vulnerable areas are now at risk: Israeli spy technology and the defense sector.¹²³ A 2019 RAND corporation report states that current and former Israeli parliamentarians have pointed out many problems that could arise with Chinese investment, including the “risk of cyber espionage by the PRC and corruption crimes”, as well as the possibility of gaining control of China over Israel's basic infrastructure, especially important to the national security of Israel.¹²⁴ It is known that the Americans supported Israel on key issues of Jerusalem

¹¹⁶ Niv Horesh, “Israel's Geo-Politics in the Early ‘Chinese Century’,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 4, 2011, p. 299.

¹¹⁷ Shira Efron, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, “The Evolving Israel-China Relationship,” p. 39.

¹¹⁸ Aron Shai, “Sino-Israeli Relations: Current Reality and Future Prospects,” p. 26.

¹¹⁹ **Субботин Игорь**, «Израиль рискует стать шпионским форпостом Китая».

¹²⁰ «Китай инвестировал в Израиль \$16,5 млрд в 2016 году», <https://itbusinessweek.com/china-israel-2016-16-5b/>.

¹²¹ Yoram Evron, “Why is the United States Concerned about Israel–China Technology Cooperation?” *East Asia Forum*, 15 November, 2019, available at: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/11/15/why-is-the-united-states-concerned-about-israel-china-technology-cooperation/>.

¹²² Hadas Peled, Marica Don Harpaz, “Innovation as a Catalyst in the China-Israel Investment Relationship: The China-Israel BIT (2009) and the Prospective FTA,” p. 11.

¹²³ **Субботин Игорь**, «Израиль рискует стать шпионским форпостом Китая».

¹²⁴ Исаев Максим, «Atlantic: США обеспокоены инвестициями КНР в Израиль», *ИА REGNUM*, 12 Июля, 2019, available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2664450.html>.

and sovereignty in Judea and Samaria and now demand that their younger ally curtail a significant part of their cooperation with China.¹²⁵

Some representatives of the Western intelligence community called Israel's decision to award a Haifa tender to a Chinese company a serious threat to the security of the Jewish state.¹²⁶ This caused serious criticism from the U.S. for security reasons, since the anchoring of U.S. Navy ships close to Chinese targets makes them easy prey to China's intelligence activities.¹²⁷ The civilian port in Haifa is adjacent to the exit route from the neighboring naval base, which houses the Israeli submarine fleet (which has the ability to deliver a second strike at launching nuclear missiles).¹²⁸ The scandal was also caused by the fact that the Chinese company is developing an underground section of the Tel Aviv tram metro station, which is only tens of meters from the General Staff building and the main military intelligence directorate.¹²⁹ *Israeli Navy Brigadier General Shaul Horev* notes that since Americans now turn most of their attention to the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf, Israel should strengthen its status as a strategic base for the Americans.¹³⁰ According to several former senior Pentagon and navy personnel, once China is in the picture, the Israeli navy will not be able to count to maintain close relations with the Sixth Fleet.¹³¹ It is no coincidence that in December 2019, Zhai Jun, special envoy of the Chinese government in the ME, who made a working trip to the region, condemned U.S. pressure on the Israeli government to block Chinese investment.¹³²

Among some analysts there is an opinion that although Beijing has spoken about its intentions to have foreign bases, however, under the pretext of creating a trade route from the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal to Europe, it buys ports, for example, the port of Piraeus in Greece,¹³³ Italian port of Trieste, and even acquired base in Djibouti.¹³⁴

The Israeli intelligence community also protests against the admission of one of the Chinese companies to build a new desalination plant 15 km south of Tel Aviv, where the nuclear facility is located. This can be undertaken by local companies IDE Technologies and Hutchison Water International (a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based Hutchison Holdings), with Chinese participation. The problem is that the desalination plant, which is supposed to produce about 200 million cubic meters of water per year, was planned to be built in the area where the Israeli Air Force Palmahim is located, as well as the Nahal Soreq nuclear center, which was built under a contract with the U.S. in 1955 and in the territory of which the first nuclear reactor in Israel is located.¹³⁵ This was the reason why the head of the security service of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Nir Ben-Moshe sent a letter to the Israeli Ministry of Energy with an objection to participation in the tender of Hutchison Water International.¹³⁶

¹²⁵ «Нетаньяху сделает все для сохранения отношений с Китаем», ИА Реалист, 26 Мая, 2020, available at: <http://realtribune.ru/news/news/4326>.

¹²⁶ Субботин Игорь, «Израиль игнорирует сигналы США об опасности Китая».

¹²⁷ Altay Atlı, "China, Israel, and the Geopolitics of Seaports."

¹²⁸ Amos Harel, "Analysis Israel Is Giving China the Keys to Its Largest Port – and the U.S. Navy May Abandon Israel."

¹²⁹ Субботин Игорь, «Израиль игнорирует сигналы США об опасности Китая», Независимая газета, 24 Декабря, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-12-24/2_7760_israel.html.

¹³⁰ «Израиль передаёт Китаю управление портом Хайфы – Нааретз», ИА Реалист, 16 Сентября, 2018, available at: <http://realtribune.ru/news/news/1075>.

¹³¹ Amos Harel, "Analysis Israel Is Giving China the Keys to Its Largest Port – and the U.S. Navy May Abandon Israel."

¹³² «Спецпосланник КНР на Ближнем Востоке: США запугивают Израиль, пытаясь заблокировать китайские инвестиции», NEWSru.co.il, 10 Декабря, 2019, available at: <http://newsru.co.il/finance/10dec2019/china307.html>.

¹³³ «Израиль передаёт Китаю управление портом Хайфы – Нааретз», <http://realtribune.ru/news/news/1075>.

¹³⁴ Субботин Игорь, «Израилю предрекают превращение в колонию Китая».

¹³⁵ **Субботин Игорь**, «Китай добрался до ядерного реактора Израиля», Независимая газета, 10 Сентября, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-09-10/1_7672_anxiety.html.

¹³⁶ **Субботин Игорь**, «Китай прибирает к рукам стратегическую инфраструктуру Израиля», Независимая газета, 31 Октября, 2019, available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2019-10-31/1_7717_israel.html.

Investigations by Israeli counterintelligence experts have shown that links between Israeli businesses and U.S. defense contractors are the subject of scrutiny by Chinese hackers. They consider it likely that China perceives Israel as a window through which it can gain access to U.S. secret programs.¹³⁷

Anyway, in a difficult situation, Israel cannot afford to lose either its ally - the U.S., or China, its largest economic partner with significant investment and infrastructure potential. However, maintaining a delicate balance is becoming increasingly difficult, because on the one hand, construction has already begun in the port of Haifa, and on the other hand, Washington is increasingly disagreeing with the withdrawal of the Sixth Fleet from Haifa. In addition to the importance of global competition between the U.S. and China, the problem of the regional influence of the expanded port of Haifa and the influence of a complex network of relations in the ME, when more trade begins to flow into the region through the Israeli port, which is expanded and served by the Chinese, is equally important.¹³⁸

4. Conclusion

As we know, Israel's relations with China have not developed easily. Their official aspect has long been hindered by the ideological confrontation between the two countries in the Cold War era, the support that Beijing provided to the Palestine Liberation Organization and other Arab opponents of the Jewish state. Only in the early 1990s, shortly after the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries (January, 1992), the existence of various cooperation schemes between Jerusalem and Beijing in the previous period was first announced, and cooperation in the fields of economics, high technology, agriculture and especially in the military industry began to develop rapidly. However, Israeli-Chinese defense cooperation was practically frozen at the beginning of the new century under pressure from the United States. And the military sphere, which initially was primarily of interest to Beijing in relations with Israel, began to clearly give way to cooperation in civilian areas.

The complementarity of the two countries can be considered obvious: the status of the PRC as a world power and a potential superpower, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, capable of lobbying the interests of Israel, has prompted Tel Aviv to maintain closer ties with it, integrating China's global influence with Israel's pragmatic economic governance, political stability and its strategic importance as one of the regional pillar of China's influence in vital ME region and the world. Israel for China is a developed Middle Eastern state with enormous potential in the field of advanced scientific technologies and the military-defense complex. For Israel, China is the most important market for startups and military equipment, an investor in the development of infrastructure, where Israel has big problems. Due to its geographical and political-economic features, Israel can claim to be the strategic partner of China, and the creation of a free trade zone within the framework of the Chinese BRI can help double trade and expand cooperation in the field of technology; increase the number and volume of investments and the further development of economic relations between the two states.

And indeed, following President Xi's BRI, Chinese investment in Israel has expanded significantly, covering most sectors of its economy. Chinese systemic and strategic investments through state-owned or state-affiliated companies (mainly Chinese giants such as Ali Baba, Baidu, Huawei, Lenovo and others) in Israeli technology and infrastructure are more or less aimed at technology and financial companies and startups whose work can be redirected to increase security, privacy and dual-use technologies with the obvious goal of creating integrated financial ecosystems that combine finance, healthcare, social issues, banking, insurance, education, etc.

¹³⁷ Субботин Игорь, «Израиль рискует стать шпионским форпостом Китая».

¹³⁸ Altay Athi, "China, Israel, and the Geopolitics of Seaports."

However, the fact that China is actively involved in the Israeli economy and, according to some resources, controls about 15 % of the Israeli economy, have been the subject of a geopolitical struggle and a new front in the competition between the U.S. and China. Although Washington's influence on the ME has somewhat diminished, it remains the most prominent player in the region, hence the growing activity of China in the region and the rather successful development of ties with Israel seriously worried the U.S. and prompted it to pursue a containment policy. One of the political reasons for China's investment in Israel is the breakdown of U.S.-China relations in information technology and cybersecurity. The technological leap made with Israel's help will turn China into a leader in e-commerce and digital banking, replacing the U.S. as a leader in technology. In addition to reinforcing the rhetoric of the Trump administration regarding China due to trade wars, the problem is that China will have a significant impact on Israel's critical infrastructure and will carefully examine some of Israel's military capabilities. It is no coincidence that many Israeli experts have criticized the privatization of Israeli ports, arguing that this poses a significant threat to Israeli security.

However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has put the world on the brink of a comprehensive economic crisis, which cannot but affect China and its very active economic promotion of the BRI in the ME. In this situation, even the most active proponents of economic cooperation with China will need to compare opportunities with the risks identified during the current crisis. Some experts consider, that the growing tensions between the U.S. and China, Israel should be expected to join Washington and exercise great caution in its dealings with Chinese firms, especially when it comes to strategic national infrastructure and sensitive technologies. Despite the fact that Israel must modernize its transport infrastructure and improve trade relations with China, it must take into account the risks associated with this. Israel needs to create a mechanism that will examine Chinese investments to ensure that they do not put Israel's security interests at risk. And if Tel Aviv fails to strike a balance between national security needs and economic interests, Israel could give up many of the BRI's opportunities.

However, there is a group of experts who believe that if leveraged cautiously and with full consideration of America's interests in the region, Israel could become a small yet strategically critical outpost on China's BRI, and Israeli-Chinese economic partnership should be a model in how other western successful states deal with China. Although Jerusalem has a deeper and stronger relationship with Washington than Beijing, both capitals are vital to the economy and prosperity of Tel Aviv. Nevertheless, when the financial benefits of economic and military-technical cooperation are on the map, the parties prefer to remain within the framework of a pragmatic approach and turn a blind eye to some political differences.

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“STRING OF PEARLS” STRATEGY AS A MEASURE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHINESE MARITIME SILK ROAD INITIATIVE

Abstract: The article attempts to show the significance of the “String of Pearls” strategy - similarly to the “Dual-Use Logistics Facilities” as a measure for the implementation of the Chinese initiative Maritime Silk Road, aimed at creating sea strongholds or "Choke Points" with military or geopolitical influence along the Indian coast ocean, as well as in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. The “String of Pearls” strategy is designed to build infrastructure projects covering the Chinese Sea Lines of Communication and based on the need of China to acquire foreign oil and trade routes, which are crucial for its development, as well as to strengthen its influence and expand its presence on the sea routes through the use of investments, economic, political, diplomatic and military means. Chinese expansion and its military presence grow steadily in order to protect its interests and ensure the safety of Chinese multi-billion-dollar investments in infrastructure projects across the entire width of the Maritime Silk Road. Thanks to strategic control over key points along the “String of Pearls” and new opportunities for launching military operations of the People’s Liberation Army Navy, China can not only change the balance of power at the regional level, but also have an impact that goes far beyond its traditional scope.

The author analyzes the reasons for advancing these strategies, characterizes the likely difficulties that Beijing may encounter in their implementation process.

Keywords and phases: China, One Belt, One Road, Maritime Silk Road, “String of Pearls”, “Choke Points”, Sea Lines of Communication.

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СТРАТЕГИЯ «ЖЕМЧУЖНОЙ НИТИ» КАК МЕРА ДЛЯ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ ИНИЦИАТИВЫ КИТАЙСКОГО МОРСКОГО ШЕЛКОВОГО ПУТИ

Аннотация: В статье предпринята попытка показать значение стратегии «Жемчужная нить» - аналогично «Логистическому комплексу двойного назначения» в качестве меры для реализации

китайской инициативы Морской Шелковый путь, нацеленного на создание морских опорных пунктов или «точек удушья» с военным или геополитическим влиянием вдоль побережья Индийского океана, а также в Персидском заливе и Средиземном море. Стратегия «Жемчужной нити» предназначена для построения инфраструктурных проектов, охватывающих китайские морские линии связи и основана на потребности Китая в приобретении иностранных нефтяных и торговых маршрутов, имеющих решающее значение для его развития, а также в усилении влияния и расширении присутствия на морских путях за счет использования инвестиций, экономических, политических, дипломатических и военных средств. Китайская экспансия и его военное присутствие неуклонно растет с целью защиты своих интересов и обеспечения безопасности китайских многомиллиардных инвестиций в инфраструктурные проекты по всей ширине Морского Шелкового пути. Благодаря стратегическому контролю над ключевыми точками вдоль «Жемчужной нити» и новым возможностям для начала военных операций Военно-морского флота Народно-освободительной армии, Китай может не только изменить баланс сил на региональном уровне, но и оказать влияние, выходящее далеко за рамки его традиционные возможности.

Автор анализирует причины выдвижения этих стратегий, характеризует вероятные трудности, с которыми Пекин может столкнуться в процессе их осуществления.

Ключевые слова: Китай, Один пояс, один путь, Морской Шелковый путь, «Жемчужная нить», «точки удушья», морские линии связи.

Chinese Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century

"All rivers flow into the sea; everything returns to its owner."

This old Chinese saying is the key to the Chinese strategy of the New Silk Road (NSR) or One Belt, One Road (OBOR), with the official goal of creating a public good for all of humanity, the main beneficiary of which is, above all, the creator [Алиханов, 2017]. The strategy was officially renamed the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI or Belt and Road (B&R)) in 2016 and was written into the constitution of the Chinese Communist Party, showing how dedicated Beijing is to developing the project as a way to ensure China's economic influence [EFSAS, 2019, P. 3].

BRI was launched by President of People's Republic of China (PRC) Xi Jinping in 2013, which aims to connect Asia and Europe via the Middle East (ME), Africa and Central Asia (CA) through a series of vast networks of transcontinental railways, pipelines, ports, airports and other infrastructure projects [Molavi, 2018]. The idea of the NSR is to create both the Economic Belt of the Silk Road (EBSR) - rail and roads running through CA and onto Europe complemented by the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century (MSR) - ports and shipping lanes that will connect Southeast Asian States and countries which border the wider Indian Ocean. Together, both sections make up the BRI - an extensive global trade project that will potentially encompass a region of over 70 countries with a total population of 4.4 billion people [ISDP, 2016, P. 1]. The funding pledged for this ambitious project is an additional US \$124 billion including assistance, grants, and loans to countries within the BRI. Various estimates for the capital needs of the projects under the BRI range from US \$ 2 trillion to US \$ 8 trillion for an indefinite period [Sharma, A., 2019, P. 2].

At the Chinese B&R forum in 2019, it was announced that Chinese companies had invested US \$ 90 billion in B&R countries, which is a lot, but this is only a drop in the ocean. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) New Development Bank have US \$ 150 billion at their disposal, and the Silk Road Fund (SRF) for infrastructure – US \$ 40 billion. Chinese companies can gain access just under US \$ 600 billion from the state-controlled financial sector [Sharma, M., 2019].

The idea of establishment the MSR was revealed during Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's attendance at the 16th ASEAN+China summit in Brunei (9-10 October, 2013) and Xi Jinping's speech in the Indonesian parliament (3 October, 2013) [Szczudlik-Tatar, 2013, P. 3]. At the Indonesian legislature, Chinese President particularly talked about the sea path of the Silk Road (SR) [Bai, 2013, P. 12] and called for establishing a MSR adapted to

the needs of the 21st century. Premier Li said that since ancient times, Southeast Asia has been an important center of the ancient sea Silk Road, China will strengthen maritime cooperation with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and use the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund, founded by Government of China, for the active development of maritime partnerships under the MSR [Ruan, 2014]. This coincides with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's pledge to upgrade the Gold Decade (2000-2010) of China-ASEAN cooperation into a Diamond Decade [Zhou, 2014].

Relying mainly on ASEAN countries, the MSR should contribute to the development of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and further strengthen China's commitment to supporting the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity [Rahardjo, 2015, P. 13].¹ As part of its comprehensive transport strategy, China intends to solve the problems of financing the ASEAN railways with the help of the SRF, creating transport corridors through Asia [Beauchamp-Mustafaga, 2015, P. 3].

MSR covers more than 20 countries, varying in size, development, history, religion, language and culture, and passes through the regions that are sensitive to international strategy and has complex geopolitics [Li, C., 2014, P. 9]. The main attention in the planning of MSR was paid to close cooperation in the field of finance and economics, infrastructure projects (joint construction of roads and railways), expansion of cooperation in the field of security, technology and science [Szcudlik-Tatar, 2013, P. 3].

MSR as a Tool to Support the Chinese “Great Maritime Wall”

The MSR will complement the EBSR by linking Chinese ports with other countries via maritime links, focusing on the use of sea routes and Chinese coastal ports [BDO, 2015, P. 4]² to connect China with Europe via the South China Sea,³ the Straits of Malacca, Lombok, Sudan and along the north Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, encompassing South and Southeast Asia, particularly Sri Lanka. Thus, the MSR will extend from Asia to the Near East, ME, East Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe, China's largest export market [Clemens, 2015, P. 6].

The two from six OBOR economic corridors are included to MSR:

- *China-Indo-China Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC); or China-Southeast Asia Corridors - (three lines Kunming through Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar also connect through Nanning to Guangdong Province);*
- *Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) - (rail construction, road construction, industrial parks) [Harutyunyan, 2017b, P. 76-86].⁴*

- The Maritime Silk Road will begin:
- *From Quanzhou in Fujian province and also hit other southern Chinese ports - Guangzhou (Guangdong province), Beihai (Guangxi) and Haikou (Hainan) before heading south to the Malacca Strait;*
- *From Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) the MSR heads to Kolkata (India) then crosses the rest of the Indian Ocean to Nairobi (Kenya);*
- *From Nairobi goes north around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, with a stop in Athens (Greece) before meeting the land-based EBSR in Venice (Italy) [Brugier, 2014, P. 1-2; Tiezzi, 2014].*

MSR targets key littoral states along major Indian Ocean trade arteries for the construction of two mega-projects - *the land-based CPEC⁵* and *the sea-based BCIM-EC*, which, with large investments from China, can fundamentally change the political and economic landscape of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) [Zhou, 2014], one of the most strategically significant in a world which has become a friction point for tension between the United States (U.S.), China and India, and where China and India are fighting for superiority over sea lines. Such tension intensifies as each state takes measures to counter the others and project dominance within the region [Abeyagoonasekera, 2019, P. 48].

MSR will allow China to enter the Pacific Ocean, "control the South China Sea in the south" and enter the Indian Ocean from the South China Seas through the Strait of Malacca, breaking through the U.S. environment [Beauchamp-Mustafaga, 2015, P. 3]. Thus, putting the South China Sea in its sphere of influence may lead to China's transition from geopolitical vulnerability to a strong position, effectively supporting the "**Great Maritime Wall**", and providing China with unhindered access to the Indian and Pacific Oceans [Bouvin, 2019].

The "**Choke Points**" of the Indian Ocean as the Most Strategically Significant in the World

In 21st century the Indian Ocean will have more significance; its waters cover an approximated 73.5 million square km, combining half the world's latitudes and seven of its zones, along with 48 independent seashores and island countries including of 2.6 billion people which is world's 39% of population [Khan, Khalid, 2018, P. 247-248].

Unlike the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Indian Ocean is a closed one, bordering four continents, which makes its access very limited. Its many straits, called "Choke Points",⁶ some of the famous of them around the world are:

- *The **Malaccan Strait** in the Indian Ocean;*
- *The **Gulf of Hormuz** in the Middle East;*
- *The **Suez Canal** linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea;*
- *The **Panama Canal** linking the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean;*
- *The **Strait of Bosphorus** (Turkish Strait) linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea;*
- *The three **Danish Straits** linking the Baltic Sea with the North Sea;*
- *The **Strait of Bab al-Mandeb** forming a gateway for vessels to pass through the Suez Canal, through the east coast of Africa [Marine Insight, 2019].*

These narrow straits regulate incoming and outgoing traffic and have historically been used to restrict access to trade routes during the war. The Indian Ocean multiple straits are its main access points:

- *the **Strait of Bab al-Mandab**⁷ connecting the **Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden**;*
- *the **Strait of Hormuz**⁸ connecting the **Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman**;*
- *the **Strait of Malacca**⁹ between **Malaysia and Indonesia**;*
- *the **Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait** in **Indonesia** [EFSAS, 2019, P. 2].*

More than 80% of the world's maritime trade oil passes through Indian Ocean "Choke Points", in which:

- 40% oil passes through Strait of Hormuz;
- 35% passes through Strait of Malacca;
- 8% passes through the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

A significant part of exported goods produced in the PRC goes to the world market through the Indian Ocean to the Strait of Malacca [Jash, 2018, P. 73]. Through the **Suez Canal** 14% of world merchandise trade and 60% of Chinese exports to Europe pass; and half of the imported Chinese oil source with expectations that it will double by 2035. Through the **Bab al-Mandab Strait** passes most of China's daily exports to Europe cost US \$ 1 billion [Matar, 2018]. Some 30% of China's sea trade worth more than US \$ 300 billion presently moves across Indian Ocean [Khurana, 2008, P. 2-3]. China imports 80% of its oil (through the Strait of Malacca) and India imports 65% of its oil through Indian Ocean from ME and North Africa (MENA) [Khan, Khalid, 2018, P. 248]. According to U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), more than 17 billion barrels of oil passed out through the **Hormuz Strait** per day. More than 85% of the crude oil passing through the **Strait of Hormuz** - the geographical "Choke Point" and the main artery for transporting oil from the MENA - goes to Asian markets, especially to two rapidly growing economies and

largest oil importers - China and India, and also in South Korea and Japan, whose fuel dependence is growing and highly dependent on MENA oil [Roudgar, 2017, P. 74].

By the end of 2013, China had become the largest trader and largest importer of oil in the world. And since China becomes more and more dependent on oceans for international trade, fuel supply and cargo shipment, the ME remains the most important source of energy, security in the Indian Ocean and, therefore, Sea Lines of Communication security from Bab el Mandeb, Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca are vital for China [Zhou, 2014].

The Indian Ocean also plays an important role for China in its space exploration program. The vessel for tracking and controlling spacecraft and satellites "Yuan Wang" is based west of Australia; and in the port of Karachi there is a Chinese ground station that performs this kind of function. Under the auspices of the PRC, the Asia-Pacific Space Organization has been created, which includes Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries [Лебедева, 2011].

Sea Lane Safe Communications as a Key to Sustainable Development of the Maritime Silk Road

The Indian Ocean also has an impressive number of shipping lines, also known as Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) - sea passages between ports. Given that over 90% of world trade is shipping, these SLOCs have great geopolitical value, since the country that controls them can either open or restrict their access. As some of the fastest growing economies are located in Asia, the number of SLOCs in the Indian Ocean is expected to grow over the next few decades. The 13 busiest ports in the world are in Asia, and as production grows, the need for safe transit routes in the Indian Ocean is growing more than ever [EFSAS, 2019, P. 2].

The Indian Ocean as well is home to China's important SLOCs, thus raising the stakes for China to maintain security and stability in the IOR to avoid any instances of being choked [Jash, 2018, P. 73]. In this sense, China's strategic and defensive goals for the MSR project are the securing seaports as "outposts", naval support, route development, supply lines, political and economic ties [Kuo, 2017], as well as definition of the broader geopolitics, maritime order and balance of power in the Asia, ME, Africa and IOR [Chellaney, 2015a].¹⁰

The most critical interest is China's energy "life line", passing through the IOR and, to a large extent, constituting its "strategic vulnerability" from the ban on the part of the U.S. or India. This makes the defense of its SLOC one of the most important functions of the Chinese **People's Liberation Army (PLA)**'s **Navy (PLAN)** missions in the IOR and reinforces the need for China's continued presence on the naval forces in the IOR [Khurana, 2018a, P. 201]. The PLAN's modernization has been merged with the B&R, so that the goals of the two projects can mutually benefit one another [Payette, Sun, 2017, P. 4].

Modern Chinese maritime policy is based on the "Agenda of China on the Seas and Oceans for the 21st Century" (1996) and the "White Paper on the Development of the Marine Economy in China" (1998), which put forward a strategy for the continued development of the country's marine economy and set the following goals:

1. *effective protection of the marine rights and interests of the state;*
2. *rational development and use of marine resources;*
3. *effective protection of the marine environment;*
4. *the development of science, technology and education in the field of oceanology;*
5. *integrated marine management;*
6. *ensuring the peaceful use, development and protection of the seas and oceans and the resolution of all maritime disputes on an equitable basis* [Ли, 2011, C. 162-163].

It is no coincidence, that President Xi Jinping's vision of the MSR reinforced the PLA's naval imperative, which adheres to the principle of "flag follows trade". The 2014 Chinese White Paper on Defense — the first official formulation of China's military doctrine or strategy, published May 26, 2015 — for the first time explicitly pointed to the PLAN's task of "open seas protection". This indicated a shift from the PLA Navy's doctrine of

'*offshore defense*' to that of '*offshore defense-cum-open seas protection*' for securing China's distant interests [Khurana, 2018a, P. 201]. The White Paper says: "... (World) Ocean is the guarantor of China's peaceful existence and sustainable development. The traditional mentality proclaiming the dogma of land over the (World) Ocean should be discarded ... Great importance should be attached to the presence in the (World) Ocean in order to protect communications and the foreign presence of China" [Алиханов, 2017]. That means, developing the ocean fleet, and also solving the problem of the lack of logistics infrastructure, that is, creating a base for the Chinese fleet in the Indian Ocean. White Paper emphasizes that China's national interests change as China grows — these are now various global factors, such as the threat of international terrorism, global epidemics, or the problem of maritime piracy [Кувалдин, 2015].

Thus, the Chinese military doctrine of MSR illustrates the shift in China's emphasis from continental to maritime *strategy*, that is, a shift from long-standing attention to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to the Indian *Ocean*, which has become the world's largest and strategically important maritime corridor for the global economy and security. China's ambitions towards the status of a great power can be achieved by strengthening the dominant role and gaining freedom of navigation in the most important waters of the Indian Ocean, which is catalyzed by the Chinese Dream [Jash, 2018, P. 73]. The goal of the Chinese *Dream* or *Great Dream* is the revival and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation [Qiu, 2014, P. 108; Harutyunyan, 2018, P. 28-43], which Beijing formulates as "universal harmony in the world" [Hu, 2013, P. 126]. To realize this dream, China needs a peaceful and stable international and peripheral environment, and will realize its dream through persistent endeavors for peaceful development [Yang, 2014, P. 9].

In this context, Beijing's MSR strategy is of great interest, which focuses on creating Chinese strongholds or "naval posts" with military or geopolitical influence along the Indian Ocean littoral, in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, called a "*String of Pearls*" - similar to the "*Dual Use Logistics Facility*" [Lin, 2011, P. 10].

Chinese Strategy of Maritime "String of Pearls"

Beijing has begun work on projects for the "*Dual Use Logistics Facility*", which should make up the "*String of Pearls*", at the end of the 20th century and continues to this day. The "*Dual Use Logistics Facility*" is characterized by its light footprint, its emphasis on providing logistics support to overseas non-traditional security missions, and its dual commercial and military nature. The "*String of Pearls*" model is similar to the "*Dual Use Logistics Facility*" except that it would include secret access agreements and covert development of commercial facilities to support later military use, with the ultimate objective of being able to support major combat operations against India and to dominate the IOR [Yung, 2015].

According to Christina Lin, several elements are needed to carry out "String of Pearls" strategy:

- *Gaining access to airfields and ports through the construction of new facilities (sometimes with significant subsidies for construction, given that they will be provided if necessary) or the establishment of cordial relations with countries that already have key facilities.*
- *Expanding diplomatic relations, so that airspace and shipping lanes remain free and are often accompanied by mutually beneficial trade and export agreements. Since securing a "String of Pearls" depends on linking a number of dissimilar places, it is important to ensure that each pearl is safe from any potential threats from neighboring states.*
- *Modernization of the armed forces for an effective movement to maintain individual pearls, if necessary, as well as in preparation for appropriate actions and exercises* [Lin, 2011, P. 10].

The theory for the Chinese "String of Pearls" is related to Beijing's need for geostrategic security of the "Choke Points" and maritime [oil and trade] routes critical to its development] [Bozhev, 2019]. The "String of Pearls" strategy is designed to build infrastructure projects covering the Chinese SLOCs [Кувалдин, 2015], and based on China's need to establish an increased level of influence and advanced presence on the sea routes through the use of investment, port development, economic, political, diplomatic and military means [Devonshire-Ellis,

2009]. Dai Xu, a former PLA Air Force colonel, argued in 2009 that to effectively fulfill its international responsibilities and build a good image, China “needs sufficient power to protect world peace”. Fulfilling this obligation requires a special supply facility for the provision of support” [Yung, Rustici, Devary, Lin, 2014, P. 14].

Worth to note, that China has never officially used the term “String of Pearls” strategy in relation to the Chinese network of marine facilities in the Pacific and Indian Oceans [Кувалдин, 2015]. The term was coined in 2005, when the U.S. consultancy Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH) published the “Energy Futures in Asia: Final Report”, predicting that China would try to expand its naval presence throughout the IOR by building maritime civilian infrastructure in friendly states in the region, a strategy dubbed the “String of Pearls” [Baker, 2015]. The authors argued that if China needed to protect its flow of energy through the Indian Ocean, it could build on its existing commercial and security relationships to establish a string of military facilities in South Asia. The analysis in the BAH study has come to be accepted in some Indian and U.S. policy circles as a description of China’s actual strategy for its out of area activities. At the time, China had contributed to construction of naval bases in Burma, funded construction of a new port in Gwadar, Pakistan, and invested in commercial port facilities in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh [Yung, Rustici, Devary, Lin, 2014, P. 14].

Moreover, China’s economic assistance in the aforementioned countries (and Greece), together with investments in overland pipelines, roads and railways through the Caspian region (EBSR), is part of the “String of Pearls” military strategy to ensure a free flow of energy and naval-access outposts along the great trade arteries in the event of a Taiwan conflict and resultant U.S. naval blockade [Lin, 2011, P. 10].

In essence, the “String of Pearls” strategy is aimed at achieving the goal of obtaining direct access to China in the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal, bypassing the Strait of Malacca, which became doubly relevant in connection with the adoption in 2000 of the program for the accelerated development of the southwestern provinces of China - Yunnan, Sichuan etc. The construction of a network of roads and pipelines in these provinces and deep into China from ports in the Indian Ocean, for example, in Myanmar, accelerates and cheapens the delivery of goods and energy resources [Лебедева, 2011].

It is also worth remembering that the “String of Pearls” strategy was developed in part due to the lack of progress on the Kra-Canal project (across the Kra isthmus in Southern Thailand) which would allow Chinese vessels to enter the Indian Ocean from the South China Sea [Devonshire-Ellis, 2009], bypassing the Strait of Malacca and Singapore located on its shores. Then the Thai authorities were not ready to delegate national sovereignty to the Chinese, explaining their refusal by the quirks of local legislation that prohibits foreigners from registering land as property [Цатурян, 2016].¹¹

Currently China’s investment is spreading from Hainan Island in the South China Sea through the coastal areas of the Strait of Malacca, including port facilities at Malacca (Malaysia), a container port in Chittagong (Bangladesh); Coco, Hianggyi, Sittwe or Kyaukphyu (Myanmar), port of Chauphyu on Ramree Island in the Bay of Bengal (Myanmar), Mergui and Zadetkyi Kyun (Myanmar); Laem Chabang (Thailand) and Sihanoukville (Cambodia). They stretch across the Indian Ocean, Colombo and Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Male (Maldives), the port of Gwadar and Pasni (Pakistan), port of Djibouti (Djibouti), Victoria (Seychelles) and the islands within the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf [Храмчихин, 2017; Devonshire-Ellis, 2009]. China has invested as well in ports of Greece, the Netherlands, Singapore, Kenya, Togo [Takes, 2016, P. 7].

Beijing insists that all these investments were economically motivated and part of the MSR [Kleven, 2015]. By 2017, about US \$ 46.6 billion of investments were announced or completed in China, including 40 port projects, the largest of which are:

- *Tanzania (Bagamoyo – US \$10 billion);*
- *Sri Lanka (Colombo and Habamtota - US \$ 3 billion);*
- *Burma [Myanmar] (Sittwe port in Maday Island - US \$ 2.5 billion);*
- *Australia (Darwin, Newcastle, and Melbourne -US \$ 2.2 billion);*
- *Israel (Ashdod and Haifa - US \$ 2.9 billion) [Kuo, 2017].*

Level of ownership and volume of investments in the port vary. Taken together, Chinese port operators China Merchants Port Holdings, China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company (COSCO Group) and China Shipping Terminal Development, all mainland companies, easily compete with the two largest container flow companies in the world - PSA International of Singapore and Hutchison Ports Holdings from Hong Kong [Kuo, 2017].

The “String of Pearls” Strategy as a Military Initiative

In fact, the “String of Pearls” concept is often viewed a military initiative, with the aim of providing China’s navy access to a series of ports stretching from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea and oil-rich ME [Harutyunyan, 2017a, P. 95-102]. It begins at the Yulin Naval Base on the territory of the PRC itself, on Hainan Island - the largest naval base in Asia, capable of receiving and servicing ships of all classes. In the underground shelter of the Naval Base there can be up to 20 submarines, including a nuclear submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and a nuclear submarine. Although in the Pacific Ocean, outside the territorial waters of the China, there were no PLA naval bases, but there were two auxiliary facilities - a satellite weather station on the island of Karakira (Solomon Islands) and a post of equipment for monitoring the surface situation on the island of Tuamotu (French Polynesia). The latter is interesting because the PRC intelligence object is, in fact, located on the territory of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member country. In addition, the PLA Navy can be used to refuel Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) [Храмчихин, 2017].

Actually, China was adopting a “**Dual-Use Logistics Facility**” approach, involving ports that would ostensibly serve *both commercial* and *logistics purposes* rather than full-scale military operations [Dorsey, 2019, P. 210].

Here are some of the dual-use Chinese logistics facilities:

- **Hong Kong (China):** *strong central base;*
- **Sanya (China):** *submarine base;*
- **Paracel Islands:** *base area for resupply; an upgraded airstrip on Woody Island, located in the Paracel archipelago about 300 nautical miles east of Vietnam;*
- **Spratly Islands:** *submarine locations and resupply;*
- **Sihanoukville (Cambodia):** *naval access base;*
- **Isthmus of Kra (southern Thailand):** *strategic protected corridor for access from South China Sea to Gulf of Thailand to Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean;*
- **Smith Island (Myanmar):** *naval base with electronic intelligence;*
- **Sittwe (Myanmar):** *Strategic location as resupply point, a deep-water port under construction;*
- **Chittagong (Bangladesh):** *amphibious naval installation, a container shipping facility;*
- **Hambantota (Sri Lanka):** *military base utilized for protection;*
- **Marao (Maldives):** *military base utilized for protection and marine expeditions;*
- **Gwadar (Pakistan):** *strategic, protected location for China as a naval base and intelligence installation;*
- **Port Sudan (Sudan):** *strategic location for resupply and resources, upgraded facilities which provide vital access to the Suez Canal and the Horn of Africa;*
- **Al- Ahdab (Iraq):** *oil and petroleum location, troop support location;*
- **Lamu (Kenya):** *strategic port location for African resources [Sterioti, 2017, P. 3-4];*
- **Hainan Island (China):** *upgraded military facilities;*
- **The South China Sea:** *oil-drilling platforms and ocean survey ships;*
- **Great Coco Island (Myanmar) near the Strait of Malacca:** *intelligence-gathering facilities;*
- **Irrawaddy transportation corridor:** *it would link China’s Yunnan province to the Bay of Bengal through Burma;*

- **The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline:** *a potential extension of the IPI through Islamabad and over the Karakoram Highway to Kashgar in Xinjiang province, intended to transport fuel into China* [Lin, 2011, P. 11].

In fact, the Indian Ocean is considered the main region for preparing the PLA navy and provides the conditions for navigation and operation in the deep-sea region, which gives the PLAN an excellent opportunity to practice the escort and defense of the Chinese commercial fleet [Payette, Sun, 2017, P. 5]. A recent announcement by the Chinese government about the reduction of the PLA with the calculation of an increase in the size of the Marine Corps from 20,000 to 1,000,000 indicates a tectonic shift in its focus from protecting the periphery of China to protecting the naval forces. Some of these buildings will be located at facilities operating in China, in Djibouti and Gwadar [Tsering, 2018, P. 70]. China's military exchanges between Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Pakistan, the Maldives, Sudan, the Seychelles, Saudi Arabia, and others, have laid a foundation for further military cooperation in the western Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf [Degang, 2015].

However, it would take the PLA Navy many years to bring into operation a full-fledged Carrier Task Force, and possibly decades to make it effective enough to achieve sea-control against advanced navies. Meanwhile, this process can deliver an indelible blow to China's goal of promoting a "soft" and "constructive" image in the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), including through its MSR [Khurana, 2018b, P. 177]. It is nothing more than an attempt to restructure the strategy of the "String of Pearls" in harmless soft terms [Chellaney, 2015b].

For comparison, on the MSR, special attention is paid to infrastructure programs that will stimulate economic growth and development along their path and link the component of the "road" with the component of the land-based "belt". To achieve this, the roadmap requires coordination of policies, expansion of ties in transport (both water- and land-based) and energy infrastructure, as well as the removal of trade barriers. Commonalities between "String of Pearls" theory and the MSR include:

- *Deepening relationships with target countries;*
- *Focusing on strategic waterways in the Indo-Pacific;*
- *Developing infrastructure in target areas;*
- *Sustaining and encouraging economic growth;*
- *Safeguarding and enhancing China's energy security* [Drun, 2017].

China's defense guidance tasks the PLA with playing a more prominent role in Beijing's new military diplomacy and national security strategy, a further shift away from "keeping a low profile." The PLA Navy's participation in international counterpiracy patrols in the Gulfs of Aden and Guinea, China's first naval deployment outside Asia, is one example of the PLA's recalibrated engagement [Nantulya, 2019]. In the eyes of foreign observers, the most striking illustration of China's global ambitions was the sending of Chinese ships to the shores of Somalia to fight pirates in 2008 - the first in 500 years China's participation in a naval campaign outside its territorial waters [Ли, 2011, C. 163]. Between December 2008 and August 2018, China sent 30 naval escort task forces to Somalia in the international anti-piracy effort in the Gulf of Aden. More recently, Beijing also conducted mass evacuations of Chinese and foreign nationals from Libya and Yemen [Gaoyuem, Charm, 2019, P. 5-6].

May assume that a naval presence in Africa will give China greater latitude to support its peacekeeping troops, humanitarian interests, and hard security operations. Together, these deployments form part of a diverse set of deployments that the PLA calls "new historical missions" [Nantulya, 2019].

Does the "String of Pearls" Strategy Contradict the Chinese Principle of Non-Interference Policy?

There has been much discussion in the expert community about the possible links between "String of Pearls" theory and MSR, and their contradictory role to the Chinese principle of non-interference policy. Many

experts are sure that having developed the “String of Pearls” policy and established bases in ports, it will be difficult for Beijing to adhere to the principle of protecting non-alignment and non-interference and refuse to pursue a policy of building military bases abroad.

Some analysts believe that “String of Pearls” is not a coordinated strategy on the part of China, and there is no substantial evidence in Chinese sources or elsewhere to support the allegations of commentators, scholars, and officials who use it as a basis for explaining Beijing’s intentions in the Indian Ocean [Naval War College Press, 2011, P. 61]. According to Zhou Bo, Honorary Fellow, PLA Academy of Military Science, the only thing that can be justified in the “String of Pearls” theory is that it emphasizes the growing importance of the Indian Ocean for China's ever-expanding national interests [Drun, 2017].

China’s stated non-interference policy is an important element of its national security policy, and the absence of Chinese military bases abroad is often cited as an example of Beijing’s commitment to non-interference and non-alignment [Naval War College Press, 2011, P. 61], which in turn was seen as a pragmatic step towards securing and maintaining access to vital resources in most developing countries, and played an important role in enhancing “South-South” solidarity in these countries [Aidoo, Hess, 2015, P. 111]. “South-South cooperation,” “non-interference,” and “non-conditionality” were at the forefront and at the center of China's approach, presented as “one of humanitarian and development aid plus influence without interference, in contrast to the West’s coercive approach of sanctions plus military intervention” [Campbell, Wheeler, Attree, Butler, Mariani, 2012, P. 8-9].

However, China’s long-standing commitment to non-intervention does not mean that the foreign policy community in China has always reached consensus on its validity and relevance. If a few years ago, almost no Chinese scientist challenged the principle of non-interference, infringement on the sovereignty of other nations, in recent years more and more have been arguing about this issue. One important factor contributing to the current domestic criticism of China’s strict commitment to non-intervention is regulatory change in the international system [Duchâtel, Bräuner, Hang, 2014, P. 6]. The current debate in China is resolving around the establishment of what are commonly referred to in the U.S. military as “places”, as opposed to bases. This type of strategy involves securing with friendly governments diplomatic agreements allowing access to those nations’ facilities in order to obtain essential supplies, such as fuel, food, and freshwater, for deployed forces. Such agreements can also involve reciprocal guarantees of military support in such areas as training, equipment and education [Naval War College Press, 2011, P. 61].

The adherence to non-interference or non-intervention has been perceived as a pragmatic step towards securing and sustaining access to vital resources in most of the developing world.

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However, it should be noted that China's first overseas base in Djibouti, opened in mid-2017, like one pearl in a string, adds the first explicit military component to its MSR, despite the fact that official statements emphasize the purpose of the base: providing support for military operations other than war (MOOTW) [Drun, 2017]. The official goal was to open a logistics support base to become the center of peacekeeping and other strategic policies in Africa and the Indian Ocean region [Lanteigne, 2018, P. 4]. But actually, in addition to providing a demanded supply point for the PLA Navy, the base will be crucial to expand China's intelligence gathering capabilities in the area and provide the PLA Air Force with the long-awaited opportunity to reach world level [Ghiselli, 2016, P. 7].

From here it should be concluded that the Chinese principle of a policy of non-interference, the rejection of a foreign military presence and ensuring the development of mutually beneficial economic and trade relations as the main task no longer corresponds to the need to ensure China's security and vital interests. Therefore, it is possible that in the foreseeable future, China will increasingly have to become a regional player in competitive cooperation with the U.S. and India [Dorsey, 2017, P. 1].

Chinese Naval Activities in the Indian Ocean as a Security Dilemma in the Region

It follows from the foregoing that the establishment of places to support extended Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean creates a security dilemma in the region, particularly for U.S. and India. The emergence of tensions regarding the regional order was facilitated by the modernization of the armed forces and the increase in military spending in China, which led to naval expansionism and the construction of artificial islands - not prohibited by international law - and military bases on the islands; also, accelerating the regional arms race in Southeast Asia [Roudgar, 2017, P. 74]. As a result of the implementation of the first stage of the long-term modernization plan, the Chinese navy acquired the ability to "project power" over the entire Yellow Sea, East China and South China Seas within the Philippine Islands and the Ryukyu Islands archipelago [Титаренко, 2008, С. 441].

The U.S. and India are concerned that part of the construction of artificial islands includes the modernization of runways, largely supported by military facilities such as the site on Woody Island, near Vietnam. This means shifting the balance of power in the Indian and Arabian Gulf from traditional Indian government, backed by U.S. military power, to China, backed by regional diplomatic ties. Now the U.S. and India are more concerned about whether this strategy is intended solely for supply of building materials and trade routes, or whether China will subsequently use them to ensure regional superiority [Devonshire-Ellis, 2009].

Since the IPR is a freedom of action for the U.S. Navy and Air Force in accordance with the principle of "freedom of navigation", Beijing's attempts to establish sovereignty over the South China Sea, as well as its territorial disputes in the region, are seen by U.S. as an encroachment on the principle "Freedom and openness", and as "undermining the sovereignty of neighboring countries" for turning them into "satellites" of Beijing [Морозов, 2018, С. 111]. In this regard, it is not surprising that in 2017 the Trump administration introduced a new strategy in Afghanistan: withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); put an end to the Trans-Atlantic Partnership (TAP) and pursue the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) in the region [Морозов, 2018, С. 108].

The challenge from the PRC in the struggle for control of the sea spaces to many American experts seems to be perhaps the main threat to American leadership and the existence of the entire international order. They believe that in addition to turning the South China Sea into an inland sea, it will also deprive the U.S. Navy of the ability to act globally to maintain a secure environment and the supremacy at sea that is necessary to maintain the Bretton Woods system [Пономарев, 2016, P. 111].

However, many experts are sure that China did not pose a serious challenge to U.S. naval superiority, and the U.S. Navy continues to maintain a dominant position in the Western Pacific and around the world [Li, F.,

2014].¹² The growing anxiety surrounding China's military spending must be properly contextualized, particularly given the continued dominance of the U.S. military. China's potential nuclear threat, while growing, is still comparatively small and vulnerable when viewed alongside that of the U.S. China's nuclear stockpile is currently between a tenth and a hundredth the size of the U.S. arsenal [Renic, 2012; Harutyunyan, 2017b, p. 14].

As for India, despite the fact that MSR covers ports in countries around India, such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Pakistan, but not in India itself, New Delhi believes that China is invading India's waterways. China's investment in CPEC, which cuts through the disputed areas of Kashmir, and also underlines China's strong connection with Pakistan, is another problem for India [Lain, Pantucci, 2015, P. 2]. Consequently, India views the MSR as a threat or form of competition and the "String of Pearls" - as a challenge to the existing balance of power in the Indian Ocean [Chellaney, 2015a], a threat to Indian security in the IOR, as well as a tool to strategically encircle India. The OBOR is described as "the double road of China to superpower status" to implement global hegemony that would threaten India's dominant position in South Asia and the Indian Ocean and put China in dominant position in Asia-Africa-Europe [Gan, 2015, P. 68-69].

Some experts believe that since America's influence in these regions is weakening, and the peaceful region no longer necessarily requires a U.S. military presence, China's strategy may be conservatively supported by other countries in Southeast Asia, with the possible exception of India. Pro-American countries such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines can take advantage of improving and developing ties with China, while countries such as Pakistan, North Korea, Myanmar, and Cambodia are already strong allies of Beijing [Devonshire-Ellis, 2009].

However, more likely that countries in the Indian Ocean may be reluctant to support the Chinese military presence and be interested in maintaining balanced relations with the U.S. and India while developing ties with China.

CONCLUSION

At the end of our study, we conclude that while the Chinese legacy denies the concept of creating a superpower based on naval power to maximize its global dominance, like the British and Americans, Chinese expansion and its naval presence will grow steadily, which according to R. Alikhanov [2017] puts the "String of Pearls" strategy in the forefront, combining key strongholds like Guo stones. Here it is appropriate to draw a parallel, drawn by Henry Kissinger in his book "On China", between the Guo game and the strategy implemented in PRC practice: "While the Western tradition highly values the decisive battle and glorifies acts of heroism, the Chinese ideal [strategy] emphasizes the subtlety, sophistication and patient accumulation of benefits". If other world or regional players, as is customary in chess, strive for absolute superiority or complete defeat of the enemy, then Beijing, as in the game of Guo, tends to achieve relative superiority by avoiding strategic emptiness and filling it, in this case, by implementing its "String of Pearls" strategy and MSR initiative.

However, despite the fact that the partial success of the "String of Pears" strategy can become the most important condition for the emergence of the Chinese fleet in the Indo-Pacific region on an ongoing basis, for its practical implementation there are a number of geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economics problems that China has to solve. And in order to reduce resistance to its rise as a sea power, Beijing needs not only to pay special attention to the realization of its maritime interests and, to this end, to increase its sea power, but also to strengthen political and economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific region with Japan, the U.S., India and countries of the ASEAN, the MENA. China should not follow the traditional naval force strategy to strengthen the fleet, because the globalization of the world economy has tied the interests of different states in such a tight knot that if any of them wants to ensure the safety of their vital marine communications, then this can only be achieved through cooperation, and not traditional force struggle at sea with rivals.

NOTES

1. The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity is envisaged to connect ASEAN through enhanced physical infrastructure development (physical connectivity), effective institutional arrangements (institutional connectivity) and empowered people (people-to-people connectivity).
2. The EBSR focuses on connecting China to Europe through Central Asia and Russia, the Persian Gulf through Central Asia and South East Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean.
3. Control over the South China Sea is one of the milestones in the Chinese strategy for dominance. The sea itself is one of the busiest commercial routes and the shortest possible way connecting the West Pacific/East Asia with the Indian Ocean, Africa, and Europe. It also provides direct access to nine of the ten largest commercial ports in the world. Seven of them are Chinese, including Hong Kong and the other two are Busan in South Korea and Taiwan.
4. Four of the NSR's six economic corridors are included in the EBSR: China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB), China-Central and West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC).
5. One of the six NSR economic corridors included in the EBSR is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), that will extend the Karakoram Highway; it already crosses the mountains between China and Pakistan and build highway and rail links all the way through Pakistan to the port of Gwadar.
6. A "Choke Points" refers to a point of natural congestion along two wider and important navigable passages. Maritime "Choke Points" are naturally narrow channels of shipping having high traffic because of their strategic locations. Maritime "Choke Points", or oil "Choke Points", are congestive pathways in some of the world's famous shipping routes. There are many such "Choke Points" around the world, however, a few of them are extremely famous for ships and thus face high international security conflicts and cross-border terrorism threats.
7. The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb is located between Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa. The Bab-el-Mandeb acts as a strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.
8. The Strait of Hormuz is a strait between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean and is one of the world's most strategically important "Choke Points". On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south coast the United Arab Emirates and Musandam, an exclave of Oman. A third of the world's liquefied natural gas and almost 20-25% of total global oil consumption passes through the strait, making it a highly important strategic location for international trade.
9. The Strait of Malacca is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world and is the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, linking major Asian economies such as India, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Over 94,000 vessels pass through the strait each year (2008) making it the busiest strait in the world, carrying about 25% of the world's traded goods, including oil, Chinese manufactured products, coal, palm oil and Indonesian coffee. About a quarter of all oil carried by sea passes through the Strait, mainly from Persian Gulf suppliers to Asian markets. In addition, it is also one of the world's most congested shipping "Choke Points" because it narrows to only 2.8 km wide at the Phillips Channel (close to the south of Singapore).
10. China's interest in the Indian Ocean has grown steadily since 2008, when it embarked on a naval mission as part of a multilateral effort to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa.
11. And this is not only a matter of regional competition, but of history itself: since 1897, an agreement has been in effect between Thailand and Britain, according to which the Thai side refuses to build a canal in order to preserve the significance of Singapore. Now Americans are concentrating military efforts in Asia to maintain control of the Chinese economy.
12. According to statistics for 2010, the total tonnage of the American fleet amounted to about 2.6 billion, which is more than the total tonnage of all the remaining 17 fleets following it (out of 17 fleets, 14 belong to U.S. allies). The U.S. Navy is equipped with the most advanced weapons in the world, including centralized and networked weapons systems. In terms of overall missile capabilities, the missile capabilities of the U.S. Navy exceed the combined

capabilities of all the other 20 fleets in the world ranking after it. As for the total number of battleships, the U.S. Navy at least corresponds to the sum of the Chinese and Russian Navy (203 versus 205), but the total U.S. Navy tonnage is 263 times the total tonnage of the Chinese and Russian Navy.

13. Here, the Chinese allude to the travel of Zheng He (15th century), which demonstrated its ability, but not ambition, to dominate the seas or build maritime empires, as they were stopped when it was proved that there were no enemies threatening China from the seas.

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China's Soft Power Policy in the Middle East and North Africa

Aghavni Harutyunyan

Abstract. Until the 1980s, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was a relatively low priority for Beijing. Sino-Middle Eastern cultural exchanges and diplomatic contacts were relatively rare, personal and institutional relationships were small, and China's ability to project hard or soft power was limited. But with the boom in Chinese economy and its growing influence in the world order, with an active multi-vector policy aimed at increasing the effectiveness of its soft power, China managed to improve its perception of the countries abroad, including the ones in the MENA region.

Keywords: China, Middle East (ME), soft power, foreign aid and investment as a tool of soft power, combination of soft and hard power, One Belt, One Road, mediation diplomacy.

Introduction

China's rapid economic growth, military modernization and rising energy demand in recent years have led many to talk about the "Chinese threat", since China's growth has been viewed in the west with uncertainty, anxiety and suspicion. In order to counter the international perception of the looming "Chinese threat", Beijing proclaimed several "big ideas", including "Peaceful Rise", "Peaceful Development" and "Harmonious Society" as China's metanarrative of its rise. Moreover, to project the influence of soft power on the international environment and to shape a positive image, Beijing used public diplomacy trying to transform China's rise from a hard rise to a soft rise. The notion of "Beijing Consensus" became the most vivid reflection of China's modern experience in creating an effective ideological product combining elements of "soft" and "hard" power (Harutyunyan 2017: 5-6).

The “Beijing Consensus” or China Economic Development Model also serves as a means of rapprochement with MENA. This model became more popular and attractive mainly among the authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries of the MENA against the background of the “Washington Consensus” defined by western economic ideals of the free market and supported by the dominant United States (US) institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the world Bank. although the Middle Eastern regimes were largely unable to ensure state capacity, industrialization, and the institutional structures necessary to achieve success, like the China Model, Beijing’s economic alternative is likely to remain China’s soft power source to enhance its impact in the MENA region (Iyall 2019). and Chinese economic, political and military assistance to the MENA countries could help emulate the China Model among them (Huwaitin 2018: 67). The fact that China has never been an occupying power in its modern history was another positive factor for rapprochement with the countries of the region, who view the Asian giant as a country without colonial ambitions. China skillfully uses these comparative advantages, although it has not yet developed a concept or policy to transform the region (Calabrese 2005: 3).

Chinese Investment, Foreign Aid and Humanitarian Contacts as a Soft Power Tool

The economic direction plays an important role in the Chinese strategy of soft power and is realized mainly due to investment attractiveness, which, unlike the west, does not impose requirements on human rights, transparency or sustainability. Investments are an important tool to ensure a national economy with resources and markets (Harutyunyan 2018: 186). They aim to improve China’s world position, as the country’s prosperity increasingly depends on road, sea and air links with the rest of the world (Molawi, 2018). To facilitate the direction of energy resources in the world’s fastest growing economy, the Chinese government, following the tactic of “not offending anyone” in the region, uses its soft power to promote China’s long- term economic interests and creates favorable conditions for the interests of Chinese business (Mao 2007: 113). It is worth to note that while adhering to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, Chinese foreign aid and investment in developing countries are provided on one condition: adopting the “one China” policy and recognizing Taiwan as part of China’s sovereign territory (Harutyunyan 2018: 186).

However, in the MENA countries that receive Chinese aid and investment, there are problems associated with high levels of corruption, weak institutional capacity, and the likelihood of default by the recipient countries on debt with strategic and political consequences (Almeida 2018). There are also a number of legal problems related to serious differences in the system of employment, tax and financial law, security in the legislation of most countries in the MENA, as well as suspicions of Chinese experts in the judicial systems of the MENA countries about their possible control by “external forces,” which can significantly complicate legal issues (Glazunov & Savchenko 2018: 4).

However, Beijing believes that thanks to substantial investments in capital, personnel and technology, Chinese enterprises in MENA could play an important role in maintaining and modernizing the regional economy and promoting social stability in an often-conflicting region (Xinhua, english.news.cn 2016). Beijing is confident that any solution to hot spots and political issues, especially in the Arab countries, depends on economic growth and improving people’s lives through national development and economic recovery, that is, security through development. Chinese experts find that this approach to MENA is different from the west, which mainly cared about political interests and security issues, while China is focused only on economy and trade (Fulton 2018).

China’s soft power policy in the MENA is implemented also through the allocation of foreign aid and the strengthening of humanitarian contacts (Deutsche Welle 2018). China was one of the first

countries to provide humanitarian aid to Egypt, Tunisia (US\$ 5 million), Syria and Libya during the Arab Spring events (Yao 2012: 18). In July 2018, Beijing pledged US\$ 20 billion in loans to Arab countries and over US\$ 100 million in financial aid to countries most in need, including Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Yemen (Almeida 2018; Reuters 2017). In total, the Chinese authorities have allocated a credit line in the amount of US\$ 20 billion to restore the economies affected by the conflicts of Arab countries (EA Daily 2018; Alexeeva 2018; Interfax 2018). as part of its aid programme in Arab countries, China has sent nearly 2,000 medical workers to Yemen in the past 40 years to implement health projects in the impoverished countries (al Tamimi 2017).

One Belt, One Road as a Means of China's Soft Power in MENA

One of the main tools of China's soft power in the MENA has become the Chinese geopolitical and geo-economic project OBOR or BRI¹³⁹, which consists of land and sea routes - SREB and MSR. The MENA is important for the project because of its strategic location at the intersection of land and sea roads, as it connects Asia, Africa and Europe and links three of the most important economic maritime regions: the South China Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea (Matar 2018). The MENA is of strategic importance for BRI as it provides security of energy supplies to China through the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait, and is the only sea route and narrow bridge for access to ME, Africa and Europe that can be blocked in wartime (BBC 2015). ports are vital links for China's land and sea trade routes, spanning the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The China-run Gwadar port in Pakistan reduces distances between East African and Persian Gulf ports to western China by more than four times the distance between Eastern China and these regions via the Malacca Strait and Indonesia (Zenn 2015: 10).

It should be noted that BRI, called "the most significant and far-reaching initiative that China has ever put forward" is dramatically expanding Chinese interests (Fulton 2019: 1) and providing China with unprecedented means of influencing regional processes. It boosted Beijing's interests in the MENA by significantly expanding China's share in regional stability. at the same time, Beijing is replacing its polemic tone against the US with a spirit of cooperation and can use the OBOR-related means to foster dialogue (Evron 2017).

Combination of "Soft" and "Hard" Power to Counter Some Challenges and Threats

As it is known, China rejects the "spheres of influence" mentality, but when Chinese interests are threatened, in order to increase the effectiveness of the soft power strategy, to protect its commercial interests and confront some security challenges and threats (Islamic radicalism, piracy, transnational crime, etc.), China sometimes applies measures using a combination of "soft" and "hard" powers (Glazunov & Savchenko 2018: 4). Beijing even passed a law in December 2015, allowing the Chinese army to conduct anti-terrorist operations outside the borders of China, with the consent of the country in which the operations will be conducted. This law gives China the opportunity to play a larger role in the fight against the Islamic state or any other organization that is detrimental to international stability, and not just to provide troops to the United Nations' peacekeeping force (Yellinek 2016: 3). Since China has limited resources of hard power, due to the fact that the country

¹³⁹ "One Belt - One Road" (OBOR or BRI/B&R) or New Silk Road (NSR) is the abbreviated name of the double concept of the Economic Belt of the Silk Road (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) of the 21st century, about which the president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Xi Jinping spoke for the first time in 2013.

is not part of military alliances and did not have a military presence in the MENA, Beijing is trying to expand its influence creating new military bases in Africa and in ME and is actively developing the naval forces (Mao 2007: 124).

China's permanent military presence abroad, which is taking three main forms: escort fleet in the Gulf of Aden; Navy technical service stops and peacekeeping forces in the ME (Sun 2015), will help China increase the frequency of people's liberation army (PLA) operations in the region and multiply the number of Chinese ships passing through the waters of the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (panda 2015). Chinese companies have gained a significant presence or control in ports along the Indo-pacific Sea Route through the so-called "pearl string" that connects the Strait of Malacca with the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean (linden 2018: 4).

However, the long-term Chinese military presence in Djibouti, Gwadar and other ports of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, which can also serve as stops for the expansion of the Navy of the PLA, create problems for Delhi, Washington and other regional powers. The US is concerned about China's growing global military presence, while India is concerned about China's ability to project its power in the Indian Ocean without hindrance (Panda 2015; Molavi 2018).

China's Soft Power as Mediation Diplomacy in the Region

Another pillar of China's soft power politics is mediation diplomacy, where Beijing positions itself as a mediator and peacemaker of managing conflicts, crises and other security events in the MENA region (in Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process) (Mordechai 2018). China expressed its desire to join the four-party Center for the Exchange of Security Information between Iran, Russia, Iraq and Syria, established in 2015 in Baghdad (Dialog Tsivilizatsiy 2019). China's Middle East foundation for peace and Development (MEFPD) in cooperation with the China-Arab Exchange association launched in December 2015 the ME peace forum to promote peacemaking efforts in the turmoil-stricken region and to enhance methods of resolving ME issues and pushing for the development in the region (Xinhua, China.org.cn, 16.05.2016).

However, China still sees itself as the second-tier actor, and not as one of the main external powers affecting the developments in the MENA. Beijing has tried to balance the geopolitics of the MENA carefully, accommodating but restraining the US and European union's agenda on issues such as Iran, and backing the Russian stance on issues such as Syria while attempting to portray itself as the more moderate, balanced party in its backing for the Syrian government (Domínguez & Juan 2015). Chinese diplomats played a key role in the P5 + 1 negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and in brokering the Joint Comprehensive plan of action (JCPA). China seeks to mediate in the Syrian and Palestinian conflicts, by hosting opposing parties in Beijing and engaging in pre-summit peace talks (Hornschild 2016: 2). with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, China made a proposal in 2013, and in 2014, China put forward a five-point proposal to end the armed conflict in Gaza. In 2012, China came up with a four-point proposal to end the Syrian civil war (Evron 2017). Beijing proposed during a visit in mid-July 2017 by Palestinian authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to establish a "China-Palestine-Israel tripartite dialogue mechanism" (South China Morning post 2017).

Ultimately, it can be assumed that in the near future a gradual abandonment of its cautious position focused on protecting long-term access to the MENA may lead Beijing to take a strategic decision to play a more decisive role in resolving regional disputes or to insist that no regional problem is resolved without the participation of China.

China's Cultural Diplomacy in the MENA

Another influential tool of China's soft power policy in the ME is cultural diplomacy, through the active use of which Beijing intends to foster goodwill and friendship, as well as develop inter-civilizational harmony and mutual understanding (Mao 2007: 123). Beijing pays more attention to teaching Chinese in the MENA by creating dozens of Confucius Institutes, trying to educate a generation of Arabs better attributed to the Chinese state, who understand the country, appreciate the spirit of its language and help build bridges between China and the Arab world. Apart from the Confucius centers, Beijing is working on setting up and expanding Chinese language departments at various universities (al Tamimi 2017), funding Chinese cultural institutions, sponsoring several Chinese Cultural weeks, Chinese Movie weeks, and exhibitions of Chinese arts and history in the MENA countries. In 2001, a non-governmental Sino-Arab friendship association was established, headed by a Chinese Muslim and the deputy director of the standing committee of the National People's Congress, to encourage friendly activities and cultural understanding (Mao 2007: 123). China has also stepped up its efforts to reach Arab audiences with an Arabic version of the monthly magazine "China Today", which has a regional office in Cairo (Alterman 2009: 74). Many conferences related to Arab countries have been held in cities across China for a few years now, and dozens of Arab researchers and academics are invited to attend (al Tamimi 2017).

Conclusion

Thanks to the strategy of soft power, China has achieved tangible political and economic success in this complex region of MENA with minimal resources, especially without interfering in internal affairs and conflicts. This is due to the fact that the Middle kingdom interacts with MENA countries without imposing ideological or political prerequisites, for example, in exchange for foreign aid or investment. Although it would be naive to think that China does this without any expectations of reciprocity or without its own benefits.

As for mediation diplomacy, it makes China more visible and authoritative, which, in addition to increasing its national and international prestige, helps to gain power and influence in the wider transformation of the regional balance of power. It also promotes its own economic interests and political influence in countries and regions where some of its strategic competitors were previously dominant.

However, some observers, especially in the west, believe that China has "hidden agenda" behind its soft power policy, arguing that China has become more active and ambitious in the MENA in a bid to expand geopolitical reach. Despite Beijing's denial of its intentions to fill the "vacuum" left by the "rebalancing" of the US from the MENA to the Asia-Pacific region, the new choice offered by China's OBOR is tacitly understood as an alternative to the "old choice" of reliance on the US. The scale of the BRI and the reduction of the active US military presence in the region means that Beijing "will be forced" to increase its economic and security presence in the MENA. And looking to the future, there are a number of factors that will complicate the future paradigm of non-intervention in the context of China's presence. Thus, until the hard power of China is fully formed, China will continue to fight for influence through soft power policies and public diplomacy in the form of foreign aid and investment, cultural and educational exchanges, and encouraging dialogue between people.

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