CHINA'S ENERGY SECURITY IN THE GULF

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

DECEMBER 2023

Approval of the thesis:

CHINA'S ENERGY SECURITY IN THE GULF

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ABSTRACT

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December 2023, 92 pages

China became the world's largest net oil importer in 2013; half of this oil comes from the Middle East, and about 30% comes from the Gulf countries. Despite efforts to diversify its energy use, China is expected to import more oil from the Middle East. During the 21st Century, China has intensified its relations with most Middle Eastern countries. Chinese-Middle Eastern ties witnessed an extraordinary acceleration after the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launch in 2015. China's interest in the Middle East has started to include infrastructure and transportation projects, long-term investments, renewable energy, and much more. As it depends so heavily on Middle Eastern energy, it is evident that Chinese energy security in the region will be a crucial element of its foreign policy in the coming years. The research question is: “What is the role of energy security in China-Gulf relations, especially after BRI is proclaimed?” The findings show that Beijing appreciates its energy security complications in the region and tries to take advantage of the opportunities that arise. It is engaged in increasing the number and quality of its energy transit channels. People's Liberation Army Navy

(PLAN) is rapidly modernized to protect Chinese vessels and territorial integrity. Beijing is strategically hedging against the US by increasing its partnerships with Middle Eastern states. Although the US hegemony in the area is expected to continue in the near future, through BRI, China will indeed penetrate more into the Middle East and continue to influence the geoeconomics of the region.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese Energy Policy, Energy Security, Energy Transition, Gulf Cooperation Council

ÖZ

ÇİN'İN KÖRFEZ'DEKİ ENERJİ GÜVENLİĞİ

YONCACI, Alperen
Yüksek Lisans, Orta doğu Araştırmaları Bölümü
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Aralık 2023, 92 sayfa

Çin, 2013 yılında dünyanın en büyük net petrol ithalatçısı oldu; Bu petrolün yarısı Orta Doğu'dan, yaklaşık %30'u ise Körfez ülkelerinden geliyor. Enerji kullanımını çeşitlendirme çabalarına rağmen Çin'in Orta Doğu'dan daha fazla petrol ithal etmesi bekleniyor. 21. Yüzyılda Çin, Orta Doğu ülkelerinin çoğuyla ilişkilerini yoğunlaştırdı. Çin-Ortadoğu ilişkileri, 2015 yılında Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin (BRI) başlatılmasının ardından olağanüstü bir ivme kazandı. Çin'in Orta Doğu'ya ilgisi, altyapı ve ulaşım projelerini, uzun vadeli yatırımları, yenilenebilir enerjiyi ve çok daha fazlasını içermeye başladı. Orta Doğu enerjisine bu kadar bağımlı olduğundan, Çin'in bölgedeki enerji güvenliğinin önümüzdeki yıllarda dış politikasının önemli bir unsuru olacağı açık. Araştırma sorusu şu: "Özellikle BRI ilan edildikten sonra Çin-Körfez ilişkilerinde enerji güvenliğinin rolü nedir?" Bulgular, Pekin'in bölgedeki enerji güvenliği sorunlarını takdir ettiğini ve ortaya çıkan fırsatlardan yararlanmaya çalıştığını gösteriyor. Enerji geçiş kanallarının sayısını ve kalitesini artırmak için çalışmaktadır. Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu Donanması (PLAN), Çin gemilerini ve toprak

bütünlüğünü korumak için hızla modernize ediliyor. Pekin, Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle ortaklıklarını artırarak stratejik olarak ABD'ye karşı koruma sağlıyor. Her ne kadar ABD'nin bölgedeki hegemonyasının yakın gelecekte devam etmesi beklense de, BRI aracılığıyla Çin aslında Orta Doğu'ya daha fazla nüfuz edecek ve bölgenin jeoekonomisini etkilemeye devam edecek.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi, Çin Enerji Politikası, Enerji Güvenliği, Enerji Geçişi, Körfez Arap Ülkeleri İşbirliği Konseyi

I dedicate this to my parents and my wife, Nazlı, for their love and support. Thank you for not letting me give up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Assist. Prof. Derya GÖÇER, for her guidance, criticism, and insight throughout the research.

I also want to thank my wonderful parents, İlker Yoncacı and Vahide Yoncacı. In moments of uncertainty, you stood as my unwavering pillars of support. Your boundless encouragement and understanding fueled my academic journey and made this thesis possible. Mom and Dad, you have instilled in me the values of perseverance and curiosity, shaping not just my education but the person I have become. This thesis stands as a testament to your collective belief in me.

My dearest Nazlı, your love has been the steady heartbeat in the background, infusing joy and balance into the challenges of academia. Thank you for your unwavering belief and for being my partner in every step of this journey. I am deeply fortunate to have found you.

Lastly, I would like to thank my academic home METU, for it is much more than a university. In its hallowed halls and beautiful campus, I have found not just knowledge but a community that fostered growth and curiosity. As I complete this thesis, I am deeply grateful for the invaluable experiences, and friendships I've cultivated here.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BP	British Petroleum
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCS	Carbon Capture and Storage
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
COFDI	Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment
CPC	The Communist Party of China
EIA	US Energy Information Administration
EV	Electric Vehicles
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEA	International Energy Agency
JAFZA	Jebel Ali Free Zone
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JOCIC	Jiangsu Provincial Overseas Cooperation and Investment Company
NEC	National Energy Company
NOC	National Oil Company
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMB	Chinese Renminbi
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SINOPEC	China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SRF	Silk Road Fund

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The process of China's emergence as a powerful player in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) can be characterized as "Gradually, then suddenly" (Fulton, 2022, p. 20). Those not paying attention would be surprised by the apparent depth of China's presence in the region. Since the proclamation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), bilateral relations in energy, transportation, finance, and renewables have increased incredibly fast.

China's energy relations in the Middle East mostly began in the mid-1990s, after the country became a net oil importer in 1993, and has improved in many ways since (Ehteshami & Horesh, 2020). China became the world's largest oil importer in 2013, and half of this oil comes from the Middle East, and about 30% of it comes from the Gulf countries. "Today, China is the world's largest importer of oil and its biggest energy consumer, and its future oil needs are growing" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 83). Despite efforts to diversify its energy use, oil consumption in China is expected to increase. Chinese domestic production will not be able to satisfy this increase, and China is expected to import more oil from the Middle East. Despite efforts to diversify its energy sources, China will continue to buy oil and gas from the Middle East (Niblock, 2022).

During the 21st century, China has intensified its relations with most Middle Eastern countries both bilaterally and within multilateral organizations. After the launch of One Belt, One Road (OBOR) in 2013, renamed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2015, Sino-MENA ties witnessed an extraordinary acceleration. China's interest in the Middle East has started to include infrastructure and transportation projects, long-term investments, cooperation in finance, renewable energy, and much more. Driven partially by the security needs of its energy supply, Beijing's strategy towards the

region is to avoid taking sides in the power struggles while taking advantage of the relative stability provided by the United States. Beijing is becoming a stakeholder in the Middle East's stability because of its increasing assets in the region (investments, corporations, Chinese personnel). Evidence suggests that China is strategically hedging against the US by increasing its bilateral relations with Gulf countries while increasing its energy and transportation investments under the BRI framework (Tessman & Wolfe, 2011).

1.1 Research Topic And Question

In the coming years, Chinese energy security will be a crucial element of its foreign policy. The research questions are: "How does energy security factor into the decisions made regarding Beijing's foreign policy with the Gulf?" and "What is the role of energy security in China-Gulf relations, especially after BRI is proclaimed?"

1.2 Significance of Research

Growing Chinese involvement in the Middle East is a subject of significant academic study and analysis in recent years. Increasing China's economic, political, and strategic presence in the Middle East can change the regional balance of power and influence global changes. The subjects that are being studied include energy transition, energy security, Chinese energy security, strategic hedging, Chinese-Middle Eastern and Chinese-Gulf relations, China-US rivalry, and BRI investments in the Gulf.

1.3 Thesis Outline

To understand today's increasing Chinese involvement in the Middle East, one must review its history after the Second World War. In the first chapter, the historical background of China will be discussed, with a particular focus on the liberal economic reforms of the 1980s and the Chinese going abroad strategy. The second chapter starts with the energy transition of the 21st century and the possible geopolitical changes it brings to the world. The third chapter focuses on energy security and Chinese energy security. The fourth chapter will focus on the concept of strategic hedging and Chinese

activities in the Middle East, such as diplomatic relations and energy cooperation. Later, the Belt and Road Initiative will be explained in detail, and its implications for the Middle East will be discussed. The fourth chapter focuses on Chinese-US rivalry in the Gulf, China-Gulf relations in the BRI era, and how Chinese energy security affects the relationship.

1.4 Literature Review

In order to understand how China became so involved in the Middle East, one must understand the historical background first. According to Economy & Levi (2014) and Niblock (2022), after WWII, China first relied heavily on the Soviets, and after Chinese-Soviet relations deteriorated, it adopted a self-reliance policy. This process was marked by a high degree of state economic involvement. During the middle of the 1960s, the PRC started supporting national liberation movements worldwide. However, Kobayashi et al. (1999) and Niblock (2022) argue that Deng Xiaoping's reforms at the end of the 1970s initiated China's integration into the world economy. Kobayashi et al. (1999) argue that this process attracted foreign capital, technology, and technical know-how for China to utilize its working force and attain rapid economic growth. Using BP World Energy Review (2012) statistics and Bo (2010 as cited in Tessman & Wolfe, 2011), one can see that high growth rates quickly surged demand for natural resources. Although this demand was first tried to be covered domestically, Chinese officials understood that it wouldn't be enough, and the resources would need to be imported. Thus, China's energy diplomacy with the world began. The change in Chinese energy differences is shown using the works of Kuteleva (2022) and the World Bank, 2009 (as cited in Tessman & Wolfe 2011). Niblock (2022) argues that China's admission to the WTO in 2001 substantially boosted its integration into the world economy. The works of Stuart (2023), Andrews-Speed (2012 as cited in Kuteleva, 2022), Buckley et al. (2007, p. 510), Moran & Russell (2009), Kong (2010), Sainsbury (2010 as cited in Tessman & Wolfe, 2011), Chen; Tunsj (2011, p. 600; 2010, p. 31) are all used to show the degree of Chinese state support given to its going-out strategy. As of 2022, 97 state-owned enterprises are working abroad to find, extract, process, and transport energy sources for Chinese economic growth. When Beijing establishes diplomatic links with energy-producing nations, National Energy

Companies (NECs) develop their positions. By 2013, Chinese oil companies had 200 projects in 50 countries (Kong & Gallagher, 2016). Furthermore, under President Xi Jinping, these SOEs became even more active, argues Yu (2022).

The second chapter of the thesis is about the future of energy and energy transition. International Renewable Energy Agency's "A New World Report" (2019) is used to show the trends in the energy transition of the 21st century, especially the future of renewable energy. Wang et al. (2018) and Shell Sky Scenario (2018) argue that renewables will be taking over fossil fuels in consumption around 2050. What will happen to fossil fuels in this process is examined using Cameron's The Global Energy Transition (2020). Bloomberg New Energy Finance's January 2023 report shows that China is spearheading the renewable manufacturing sector today. Later, three possible future scenarios projected by the International Energy Agency (2022) are used to create a forecast for the future of energy consumption. STEPS, APS, and NZE scenarios all project different outcomes according to our actions today, and the table is explained in detail.

Cameron et al. (2020) warn us that the transition to renewables will destabilize geopolitics, and its repercussions may create further poverty if unprepared. Wright (2023) argues that moving on to renewables will indeed create fundamental changes like previous energy transitions. IRENA's 2021 report on the impact of the energy transition positions various countries on a table according to their readiness for the transition. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have high fossil fuel export dependence; meanwhile, they have nearly no renewable patents; thus, this transition will affect them the most. Conversely, countries like China, the USA, and the EU have the opposite features; thus, they are ready for the change. Using Al-Sarihi's (2023) work, the climate targets of GCC countries are shown. The following section focuses on energy transition in China, using the work of Altun and Ergenç (2023), showing the process of Chinese reorientation on renewable energies. Chen & Lees (2016) and Moe (2015) give examples of President Xi Jinping's efforts to achieve a green transition in China. Using Al-Sarihi's (2023) work, Chinese targets for energy transition, like increasing energy efficiency and non-fossil energy consumption to 80% by 2060, are shown. Although Chinese efforts are visible, Nedopil argues that because

of the pandemic and the Ukranian War, after 2019, fossil fuel and coal investments are again on the rise. Chen et al. (2019) and Andrews-Speed & Yao (2022) argue that China sees energy transition as an energy security issue and aims to develop its nuclear power capacity. Lastly, Lee et al. (2023) and Bogacheva & Smorodinov (2017) argue that green finance is key to achieving energy transition, and it has been proven successful in China.

Espen Moe's book "Renewable Energy Transformation or Fossil Fuel Backlash" (2015) shows the success of the Chinese renewable breakthroughs. IRENA (2019) and Andrews-Speed & Yao (2022) argue that no country has worked more than China to become a renewable energy superpower, and it is now the world's largest producer, exporter, and installer of renewable technologies. Zhang et al. (2013) argue that the renewable sector grew in China as an export industry rather than for domestic deployment. When the Trump Administration pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, the EU called on China to be a responsible climate superpower. Oertel et al. (2020) argue that the EU sees China as an economic competitor, systemic rival, and a negotiating partner. For Altun and Ergenç (2023), the two powers work in a collaboration-competition nexus. Lastly, Li (2014) shows the reader that the Green New Deal is the best transition method for China. The third chapter of the thesis is about energy security and Chinese energy security. Benjamin Sovacool's Routledge Handbook of Energy Security (2011) defines energy security comprehensively. Much like Gitelman et al. (2023), Sovacool mainly categorizes energy security under reliability, affordability, availability, and sustainability. Later, Bahgat's (2011) ideas are used to explain the security of demand. Sovacool (2011) and Moran & Russell (2009) argue that energy security has become so central an issue that they are part of national security today. Gawdat (2011) proposes an interdisciplinary approach to energy security problems worldwide. Energy security should not be seen as a zero-sum game and should represent the interest of all parties involved in the process. For Song et al. (2019), as Chinese household incomes increase and more people enter the middle class, energy demand will only go up; thus, Chinese energy security will become increasingly important. Kuteleva (2022) argues that Chinese energy security now includes sustainable and conscious development. Moran & Russell (2009) argue that China and India are pursuing resource mercantilism, using their national

companies to secure access to Middle Eastern hydrocarbon resources. CIA sees China's activities as a national strategy of domination in energy markets (Lohr, 2005).

Later on, the case of Sudan, specifically the War in Darfur, is explained in detail to show how China fared in the face of energy security crises. Economy & Levi (2014) and Tessman & Wolfe (2011) show that through its UNSC veto power, Chinese resource interests can delay or prevent international intervention missions in its heavily invested countries. According to where the supplies come from, Chinese vulnerability in energy security changes. Using the works of Moran & Russell (2009), Huwaidin (2022), and Newmyer (2009), the shipping lanes are explained in detail, and a picture of the routes further supports the explanations (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019). As Chinese imports pass these many straits, the Chinese navy should become stronger and protect its vessels.

Using the works of Blazevic (2009), the China Power Project Project (2023), and the US Department of Defense (2023), the degree of development that the Chinese navy achieved in the recent decade is shown. Cordesman (2020) argues that anti-piracy activities have allowed the Chinese to install a military base in Djibouti. China has surpassed the US in terms of total naval size, and it is fitting out its third-generation aircraft carrier (China Power Project, 2023). The next chapter starts with Chinese engagement with the Middle East. Niblock (2022) and Tessman & Wolfe (2011) argue that China established diplomatic relations with its energy suppliers, coming closer to the 21st century. According to Kemp (2010) and Salman et al. (2017), energy security, arms sales, and geopolitics are the most essential drivers of Beijing's foreign policy regarding the Middle East. Fulton (2018) says that China prefers development together rather than political or hard-power solutions; however, according to Ehteshami and Horesh (2020), the more China remains non-interferent, the more it appears opportunistic and apathetic. Later, strategic hedging is explained to better explain China's and Gulf countries' foreign policies in the face of waning US influence in the region. Different definitions of strategic hedging are given using the works of Medeiros (2005), Kuik (2008), Ciorciari & Haacke (2019), Chaziza (2015), and Tessman (2012). Samaan explains the Gulf states rapprochement with China as looking for an alternative security provider. Using strategic hedging, Arab Kingdoms

may start a new era of regional security complex (Samaan, 2018). However, Korolev (2016) argues that as the unipolar system wanes and China becomes more powerful, hedging becomes more challenging, and Gulf states are pressured to take a side openly. According to Verma (2007) and Tunsj (2010), China is hedging to protect its economy from unstable oil prices and supplies.

Since the end of the Cold War, the PRC has established 78 bilateral partnerships with countries and five multilateral partnerships with regional organizations (Chaziza, 2020). Chinese partnership diplomacy and its levels are explained in detail using Chaziza (2020) and Fulton (2022). Using Sun's (2022) ideas, the highest level of Chinese partnerships in the Middle East and their rationale are explained. Niblock (2022) and Scobell (2018) believe that strategic partnerships help China remain neutral outside power. Scobell (2018) and Salim (2013) explain that another purpose of Chinese involvement in the region is to alleviate criticism over China's handling of its Muslim population.

The next chapter is about Chinese energy cooperation with the Middle East. It is dominated by oil, as China imports 50% of its oil from the Middle East. Regarding natural gas, the Middle East is relatively small for Chinese imports; however, Qatar is enjoying the tremendous sales figures they have for the Chinese. Moran & Russell (2009) and Ehteshami (2022) give a brief history of their energy relations. Using the information from Andrews-Speed & Yao (2022), Xuanli (2023), Huwaidin (2022), Chinese oil trade with Iraq and Iran, and its natural gas trade with Iran and Qatar is shown. US Energy Information Administration's graphs on Chinese Crude Oil Imports and Natural Gas Imports by source (2021) further explain the point. Next up, the Belt and Road Initiative is being explained in detail. Kugelman (2022) talks about the magnitude of the mega project; meanwhile, Yu (2022) compares the BRI project's features with today's institutions that ensure global order, like the WTO, the World Bank, and so on. Kugelman argues that BRI is not only an economic undertaking but also Beijing's way of expanding its influence and global footprint (2022). Later on, Kugelman (2022) and Meidan (2016) warn the reader that BRI has many potential risks, such as the security of its intended trade routes, water shortages in the Middle East, and debt traps for local states. Dorsey argues that (2019) China is accepting to

install and upgrade various infrastructures in Middle Eastern countries in return for their support of the One China policy, which includes supporting Beijing in its handling of Uyghurs in mainland China, limiting diplomatic relations with Taiwan, support China in UNSC and give Chinese SOEs priority in state tenders. The Beijing Consensus is due attention because China does not require local states to adhere to democracy or liberal market practices; it just requires them to cooperate. Is democracy a must-have for prosperity? This subject is being discussed using Yu's (2022), Callick's (2000) and Sun's (2022) ideas. On the subject of Middle Eastern-China relations in the BRI era, statistical information on oil trade is given using Xuanli (2023), Chaziza (2023), Niblock (2022) and Ghasseminejad (2021). Later, Zoubir's (2023) and Samaan's (2018) ideas are used to show what the increasing cooperation between China and the Arab states in recent years means. Zoubir (2023) argues that the ties will be established under China's time-honored Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

The last chapter is about China-Gulf relations in the BRI Era. Fulton & Qian (2018) inform us about the growing trade relations between the Gulf and China after the BRI was proclaimed. Huwaidin (2022) shows why the Gulf is so crucial for the success of the BRI. Samaan (2018) argues that the fact that there is no colonial background between China and the Gulf greatly helps foster the relationship. Ehteshami (2022) talks about President Xi Jinping's plans for the region's future. Fulton (2019b) argues that BRI is also designed to take advantage of Muslim finance. Using American Enterprise Insitute's data, China's investment in the Gulf states is shown. Huwaidin (2022) argues that China hopes to transport Iranian oil and gas via overland to China, thereby reducing maritime shipping risks. The increasing rivalry between China and the US is a stark development in the region. In the following subsection, the reasons behind the deterioration of relations between the powers are explained in detail. Using the work of Wang & Ran (2019), a historical rundown is given. Ponížilová argues that the US influence in the region is waning; however, China is not ready or willing to fill its space. In addition, Sun argues that Western markets' dependence on Middle Eastern oil is decreasing. Salman et al. (2015), Garver (2016), Saleh & Yazdanshenas (2023) all argue that Chinese Iranian energy relations will develop, which will surely antagonize the US. For the future of the region Fulton & Qian (2018) argue that

China's BRI offers the most clearly articulated path; however, Samaan (2018) and Ehteshami (2022) argue that Gulf countries cannot rely on the Chinese to solve their problems.

Huwaidin (2022) argues that although China emphasizes the importance of multilateral cooperation, the realities of the Gulf have forced it to adopt bilateral foreign policy. Li & Ye (2019) agree, stating that China is the world's strongest voice for partnerships. Young (2019) argues that increasing relations is due to rapidly increasing trade; meanwhile, Huwaidin (2022) attaches importance to energy sources. Using the works of Nadkarni (2010), Fulton (2019), Kroeber (2016), Li & Ye (2019), Chinese strategic partnerships are reviewed in detail, and the reason why China does not prefer alliances is explained.

Sintusingha & Wu (2021) and Oxford Business Group (2019) show that the BRI will help small states attain the infrastructure they crave with Chinese expertise. According to Young, the Arab Awakening has left the Gulf states needing ways to liven their economies, and BRI will help build the infrastructure for such momentum. Fulton & Qian (2018) argue that Chinese firms are already involved in many Gulf economic diversification plans. Fulton and Qian (2018) argue that the most prominent examples of BRI infrastructure projects are connectivity projects between the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Later, Huwaidin (2022) and Fulton (2020) explain the projects in these countries in detail. According to Mogielnicki (2022), Chinese foreign investments in the Gulf are highly active. In this chapter, Huwaidin (2022) and Fulton (2020) show where COFDI goes in detail. According to Carrai et al. (2020) and Fulton (2021), Chinese Renminbi usage is also increasing in the Gulf. Lastly, Fulton & Qian (2018) discuss the Chinese efforts to conclude an FTA with the Gulf countries and the benefits it will bring. Andrews-Speed & Yao (2022) argue that there is increased interest in renewable energies and nuclear energy in the Gulf. Sintusingha (2021) argues that the BRI is being challenged to achieve higher trade with lower environmental damage. According to Atalay (2017), since the 2008 crisis, Gulf countries have been more willing to diversify their economies. Al-Maamary et al. (2017) argue that the Middle East's high solar intensity and wind velocities are sufficient to boost electricity generation powerfully. According to Al-Sarihi (2023),

China has already powerfully penetrated the GCC renewables market. Mogielnicki (2020) argues it will only continue as Beijing is keen on financing renewable projects throughout the Gulf.

1.5 Historical Context: Rise Of PRC And Going-Out Strategy

To understand how China became the "world's second-biggest economy, the largest trading nation and a crucial manufacturing base" (Kroeber, 2016, p.253) today, one must first look at its near history and see its pathways to progress and how it situated itself in the world. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. The postwar experience showed the CCP the value of state planning and self-sufficiency in basic industrial needs. As relations with the Soviets deteriorated in the 1960s, Mao Zedong, began to extol the virtues of self-reliance. (Economy & Levi, 2014). The first five-year economy plan (1953-1957) aimed at regulating the state's economic development by increasing heavy industry capacity and agricultural yield, virtually eliminating the role of the market in the process. "China's pursuit of self-reliance gave limited scope for any economic dynamic driving relationships" (Niblock, 2022, p. 38). During this time, China tried to politically assert itself to the world by acting as the leader of the non-aligned movement. In 1954, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were ushered in: mutual respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty, nonaggression, noninterference, equality, and mutual benefit (Economy & Levi, 2014). Although the PRC was poor, it tried to assert itself as a provider of assistance to the developing world. In the middle of the 1960s, China changed its foreign policy towards supporting national liberation movements and supplied military and financial support to the revolutionary forces in countries like Angola, Indonesia, and Mozambique. During these years, trade between the PRC and the developing world continued to increase. China established new connections in Africa and increased its trade with its neighbors like Japan, Hong Kong, and others. When the PRC was admitted into the UN in 1971, which led to new official relations with many countries, China began to trade more openly and boldly with the world. By 1979, Chinese trade grew tenfold compared to 1950, and the GDP growth rate jumped to 7% (Economy & Levi, 2014). China's reform and open-door policy began with the adoption of a new economic development strategy in late 1978 under

the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (Kobayashi et al., 1999). He gradually introduced market forces to penetrate the state-run economy and foreign investment (like capital and technology) through special economic zones (SEZs) in certain coastal provinces. "The establishment of these zones triggered massive inflows of foreign investment, technology, and technical know-how that enabled China to turn its vast labor resources and space to rapid economic growth" (Kobayashi et al., 1999, p. 1). High growth rates quickly created a surge in demand for natural resources. Figure 1 shows the production and consumption rates of crude oil and natural gas in China between 1980 and 2010 (BP World Energy Review, 2012). Oil and coal demand nearly doubled every decade; natural gas demand doubled every five years between 1995 and 2010. Between 1980 and 2010, electricity use in China doubled every eight years (Economy & Levi, 2014). "Rapid economic expansion has led to a growing appetite for energy: Consumption in 1980 was about 603 million standard coal equivalent (SCE) tons, but by 2007, it had grown to 2.655 billion SCE" (Bo, 2010 as cited in Tessman & Wolfe, 2011).

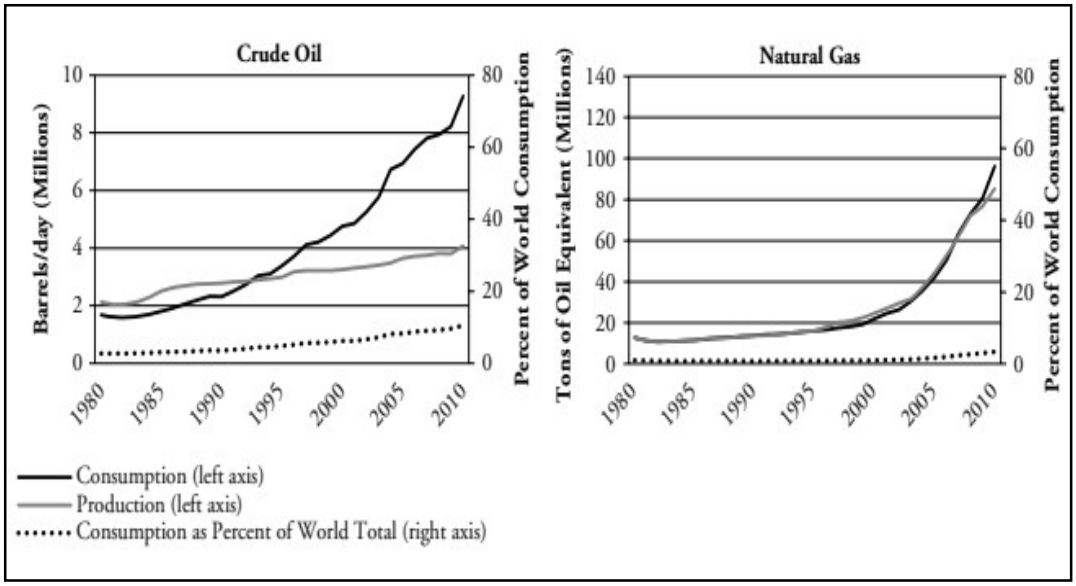

Figure 1 Production and Consumption Rates of Crude Oil and Natural Gas in China (BP World Energy Review 2012, p. 39)

China became a net oil importer in 1993, a net natural gas importer in 2007, and a net coal importer in 2009. Between 1993 and 2015, China's net oil import dependency climbed from 8% to 59% (Kuteleva, 2022). "China has achieved remarkable economic

growth during the past three decades, with Real GDP increasing at an average annual rate of over 10% between 1978 and 2008" (World Bank, 2009, as cited in Tessman & Wolfe 2011). It was clear that China would become a large consumer of the world's energy resources in the foreseeable future.

With the open-door policies, momentum was reached. China would further open itself to the world market, importing energy and raw materials to increase production. During the 1980s and 1990s, Beijing loosened the reins on overseas investment, and many private Chinese companies started investing abroad (Economy & Levi, 2014). Premier Zhu Rongji invoked the term "going out" in 1999 in a speech about the country's economic future. He argued that domestic production cannot keep up anymore, and foreign resources abroad should be claimed. "Since 1999, China has undergone a process of intensified economic reform, with the government encouraging Chinese enterprises to acquire assets overseas and expand their international business" (Niblock, 2022, p. 31). Zhu Rongji's support was not something new in China, but the degree of political support he got was considerable. "Beijing and provincial governments offered these companies incentives like tax breaks, cheap land at home, and low-interest funding from state-owned banks (Economy & Levi, 2014, p. 49). "China's admission to the World Trade Organization in 2001 substantially boosted the new economic direction" (Niblock, 2022, p. 32). President Jiang Zemin positioned international expansion as critical to the development and survival of China's social system. He supported importing and exporting foreign funds, resources, technology, and skilled personnel. Many new institutions were found to help Chinese companies in their investments overseas. Established in 2003, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) owns or controls shares of 97 SOEs (Stuart, 2023). All overseas projects initiated by the National Energy Companies (NECs) are subject to authorization by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be implemented (Andrews-Speed, 2012, as cited in Kuteleva, 2022). "The search for fossil fuel resources has become an increasingly important driver of overseas foreign investment, and resource companies account for a large share of China's foreign investments" (Buckley et al., 2007, p. 510). Finance for Chinese projects is supplied by state-owned banks, of which two stand out. "The Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank)

oversees all the country's concessional loans and provides export credits for commercial undertakings overseas, primarily in infrastructure development" (Economy & Levi, 2014, p. 51). China Development Bank (CDB) also provides inexpensive loans for massive foreign investments.

In the process of reorganization of the energy ministries in China, three national oil companies (NOCs) were created in the 1980s: China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), and Sinopec. (Kuteleva, 2022). These three major companies dominate China's overseas oil investments. "Chinese NECs secure more energy for China by purchasing equity shares in oil and gas producing assets overseas, engage in the exploration and production of new fields abroad, and the construction of refineries and pipelines" (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 218). During the following generations of leadership, these NECs became even more market-oriented and profit-driven (Moran & Russell, 2009). "Since PRC became a net oil importer in 1993, CNPC, Sinopec, and CNOOC have made significant equity investments in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Asia" (Houser 2008:156 as cited in Tessman & Wolfe, 2011). "China's oilfield service companies, especially those owned by CNPC, have been particularly successful at building international businesses that span more countries than the exploration and production companies" (Kong, 2010, p. 19). During President Xi Jinping's reign, there has been a certain increase in the role and weight of SOEs in China. "Chinese government builds waves of diplomatic links to key energy-producing regions, to pave the way for Chinese NECs to develop positions in these regions" (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 218). With a large amount of financial backing from the state, the SOEs can represent Chinese strategic interests overseas and secure bigger shares of BRIs than private companies (Yu, 2022). "The support for China's NECs is a state-led contribution to the profit-maximization of these companies out of an understanding of the critical necessity to respond to the country's energy needs" (Chen, 2011, p. 600; Tunsj, 2010, p. 31). Such a policy is the geostrategic translation of long-term geopolitical calculations into commercial investment planning. "By 2013, after 20 years of overseas expansion, Chinese oil companies had a stake in more than 200 projects in about 50 countries. By 2015, the aggregate value of the NOCs' overseas investments is estimated to have been $170 billion" (Kong & Gallagher, 2016).

CHAPTER 2

ENERGY SECURITY AND TRANSITION

2.1 What Is Energy Security?

The International Energy Agency (IEA) explains energy security as: “Adequate, affordable, and reliable access to energy services, including the availability of resources, decreasing dependence on imports and reliance on environmentally clean resources” (Sovacool, 2011, p. 4). Gitelman and Sovacool agree that energy security has four main elements: availability, reliability, affordability, and sustainability, as shown in Figure 2. Availability refers to the degree of security that consumers have over energy and physical sources, investments, and technology, as well as the legal framework to ensure it. Reliability entails the degree of protection of energy sources and their secure transportation. Affordability refers to non-volatile prices which are judicious relative to household incomes. People should be able to afford energy, and prices should stay stable. Sustainability aims to minimize the environmental, social, and economic damage that energy infrastructure deals (Gitelman, 2023 & Sovacool, 2011).

A critical moment in history when energy security became prominent was the 1973-1974 oil crisis, which showed everyone that energy prices were no longer taken for granted. In turn, the energy-importer countries implemented individual and collective measures to be prepared for future shocks. These measures included storing oil for future use, the creation of the International Energy Agency, and a gradual transition towards renewable energies. However, as developed countries have recently lowered their demand for oil, developing countries continue to be susceptible to crises, and oil-abundant countries continue to rely on their oil revenues. Thus, another aspect of energy security, the security of demand, became prevalent. Abdullah Salem El-Badri, Secretary General of the OPEC, says: “Energy security should be reciprocal. It is a

two-way street" (Bahgat, 2011, p. 2). Today, "energy security challenges have become so severe that some experts propose the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should ensure a secure supply of energy, survey maritime transportation corridors, secure pipelines, and interdict energy terrorists" (Sovacool, 2011, p. 1). "Energy security is now deemed so central to national security that threats to the former are liable to be reflexively interpreted as threats to the latter" (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 2).

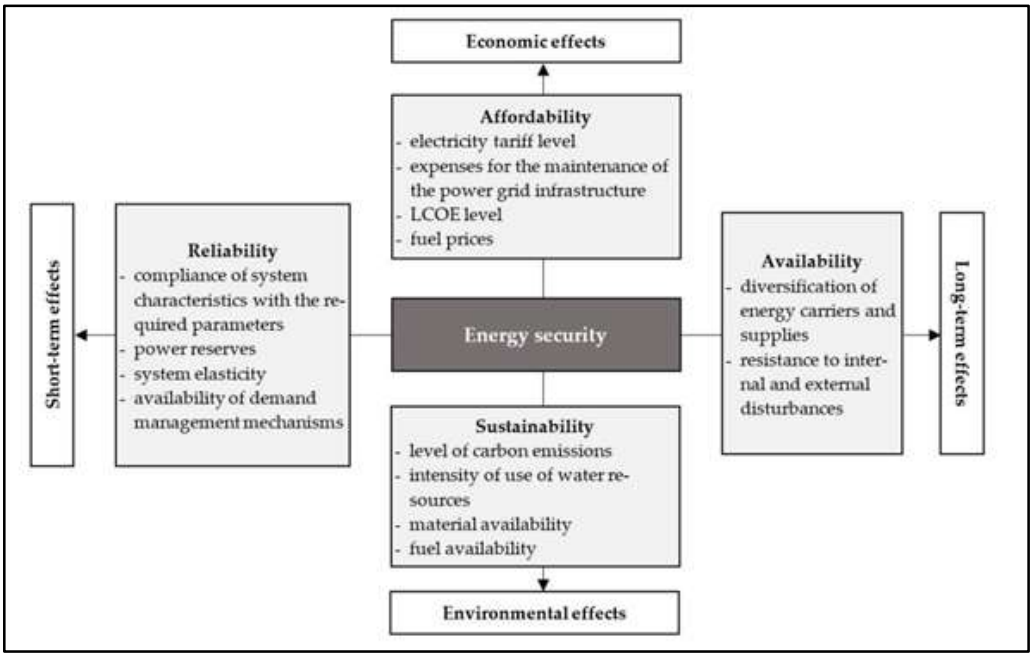

Figure 2 Energy Security (Gitelman, 2023, p. 6)

Modern economies rely heavily on oil, natural gas, coal, and uranium, which are often imported. The world's oil reserves are concentrated in a handful of volatile countries: Middle Eastern countries, Russia, Nigeria, and Venezuela. Russia is known to use this to its advantage again and again. In 2005, Russia manipulated the market and gained concessions on gas prices from Ukraine at the risk of an international outrage. Russia used the same tactic again with Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Germany between 2007 and 2008. Unfortunately, since the rewards for these actions always outweigh the costs, international law cannot prevent this from happening (Sovacool, 2011). Despite much concern, for the moment, the world's combined fuel sources seem to be enough for future consumption. "Stated differently, geology poses less of a challenge to energy

security than geo-policy. What happens above ground is more likely to shape global energy markets than what is available underground" (Gawdat, 2011, p. 16). These challenges include consumer-producer relations, investment trends, environmental hazards, and so on. That is why Bahgat proposes an interdisciplinary solution to these issues: Energy security should reflect the interests of all of the parties, including governments, corporations, and environmentalist organizations, among others (Gawdat, 2011, p. 17).

2.2 Energy Transition In The 21st Century

In the last decades, technological advancements have made renewables cost-competitive with most fossil fuels, even before taking into account their contributions to the struggle against climate change. "These trends are creating an irreversible momentum for a global energy transformation" (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019, p. 16).

As shown in Figure 3, Shell Sky Scenario predicts renewables will overtake fossil fuels around 2050. As former US President Jimmy Carter once said: 'No one can embargo the sun or interrupt its delivery,' renewables offer much more freedom than the geostrategic binds of fossil fuels. Wind, solar, and other renewables are improving electricity generation; meanwhile, electric vehicles (EVs) and heat pumps are enhancing transport, housing, and industry.

There are six enabling trends that drive the rapid increase in renewables: declining costs (1), climate change (2), renewable energy targets (3), technological advancements (4), corporate and investor actions (5), and public opinion (6) (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019).

"Since 2012, renewables have added more new power generation capacity than conventional sources of energy. Solar power added more new capacity in 2017 than coal, gas, and nuclear plants combined" (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019, p. 20). There is evidence that industrialized economies are changing the energy sources they have relied upon for many years. In 2016, there were 176 countries setting

renewable energy goals, and renewables accounted for 30% of installed capacity and 24.5% of the electricity supply globally (Wang et al., 2018).

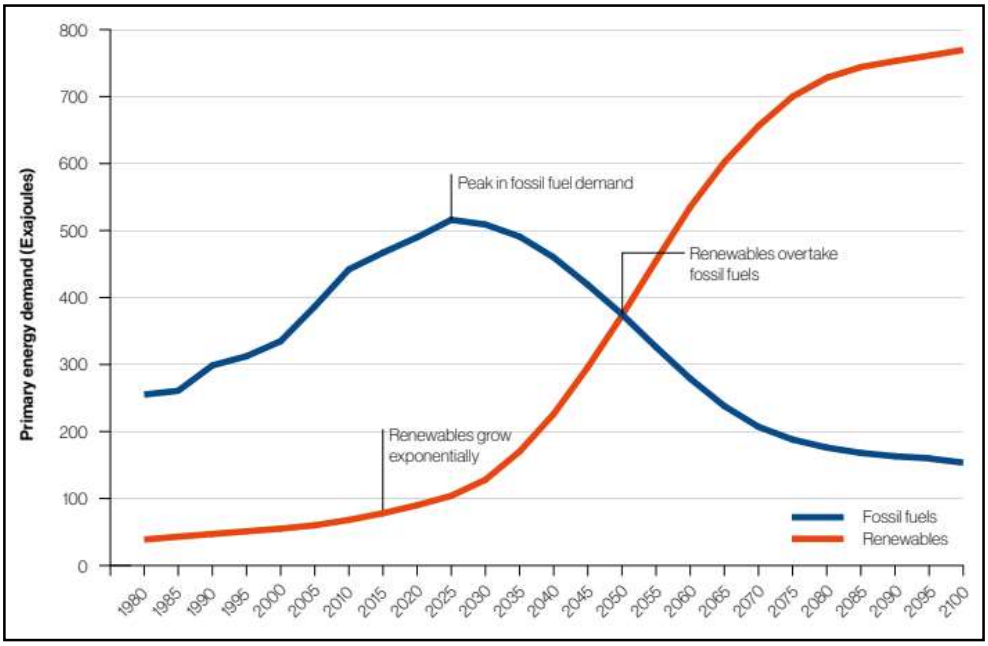

Figure 3 The Energy Transition Framework (Shell Sky Scenario, 2018, p. 24)

In the last decade, energy consumption in Asia Pacific has grown at an annual rate of 4%, Africa at 2.4%, and OECD countries at 0.6%, respectively. In addition, the annual growth rate for renewable energy consumption was 27% in Asia Pacific and 13 in OECD countries (Cameron et al., 2020). Therefore, geographically, primary energy consumption is shifting eastwards to Asia and southwards to Africa. "The world's economic center of gravity is shifting eastward, so is the political center. With the Western-centered world fading away, the diversity of the world is coming back" (Wang & Liu, 2022, p. 105). According to the Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) January 2023 report, global investment for energy transition has totaled $1.1 trillion (shown in Figure 4), with China as the largest investor, amounting to nearly half of the investments in 2022 ($546 billion) in renewable energy, storage, electrified transport, carbon capture and more (BNEF, 2023). "China accounted for 91% of manufacturing investments in 2022, in spite of efforts from other countries to capture more of the global clean energy opportunity" (BNEF, 2023). The International Energy Agency explores three scenarios to provide a possible framework for thinking about

how the future of energy, policy choices, and investment trends will play out every year (shown in Figure 5). Stated Policies Scenario (STEPS) looks at the de facto policies and implementations by the governments. Announced Pledges Scenario (APS) takes into account the announced and pledged energy and climate commitments. Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario (NZE) assumes that key UN Sustainable Development Goals are being achieved and global temperature stays below 1.5°C increase (International Energy Agency, 2022). Common to each scenario is a rising demand for energy driven by increased economic and demographic forces.

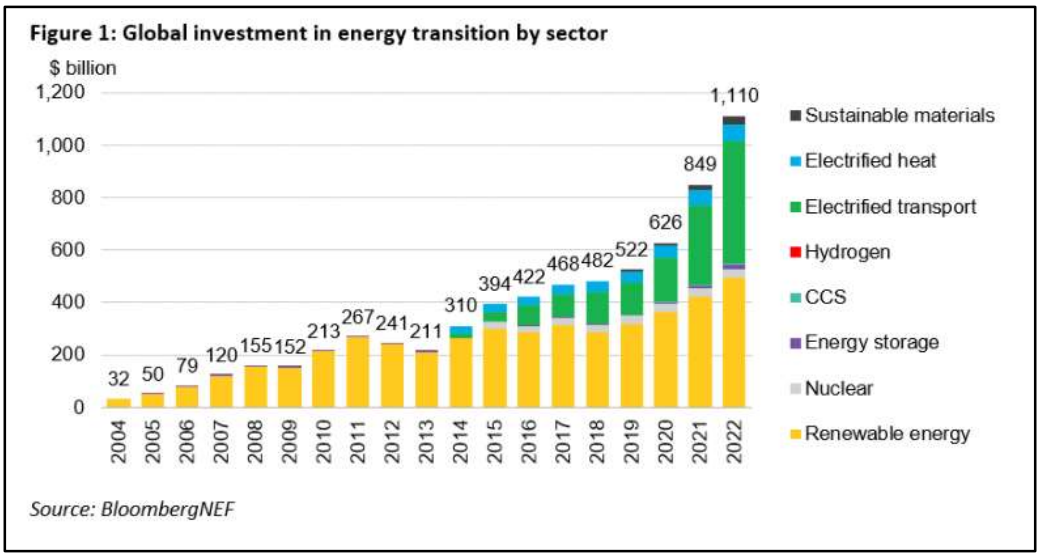

Figure 4 Global investment in energy transition by sector (BNEF, 2023)

In all scenarios, hydrocarbon energies like oil, coal, and natural gas either stay the same or decrease. Renewable energy increases more than any other energy source in each scenario. IEA projects that EVs will account for 20% of global car sales by 2025 (2022). With the advancements in EV technology, oil consumption is expected to peak around 2030 and then decrease. Nuclear power generation will increase by 2030 in both STEPS and APS, with the majority holder, China, opening up 22 new nuclear power plants. Renewables are expected to overtake the majority of energy supply by 2050. Today, the share of renewables in electricity generation is 28%, and it is expected to rise to 43% in 2030, with wind and solar PV alone accounting for nearly 90% of the increase by 2030. In the NZE ideal scenario, renewables occupy a remarkable 70% of the total energy supply with near-zero CO2 emissions. Across all

scenarios, CO2 emissions peak around 2025 and then decrease. Our actions will eventually determine the rise in global temperature (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2022).

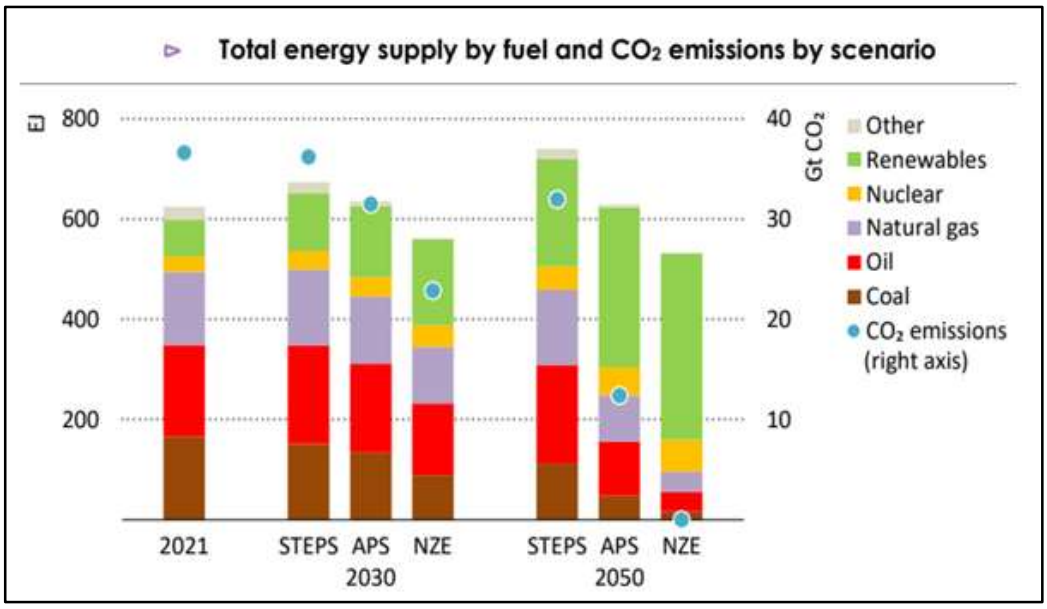

Figure 5 Total Energy Supply by Fuel Type (International Energy Agency, 2022, p. 237)

2.3 Changing Geoeconomics Due To Energy Transition

"The accelerating deployment of renewables has set in motion a global energy transformation that will have profound geoeconomic consequences" (Cameron et al., 2020, p. 16). Historical power relations followed the energy sources of wood and coal in the 19th century and oil in the 20th century. The transition to renewables may very well disrupt the global power politics of the 21st century. As Wright highlights, "It is imperative to consider the historical precedent established by previous energy transitions"; the ongoing transition to renewables will have a transformative impact (2023, p. 66). Countries that are heavily dependent on their exports of fossil fuels will need to adapt quickly to the transformation if they want to avoid serious economic consequences. What the countries will face in the context of the energy transition will depend mostly on how exposed they are to the changes in the flow of fossil fuels. (Cameron et al., 2020, p. 31). If the governments of these countries do not adequately

plan for the future, they may face severe repercussions, says Manley et al. (2020). "These challenges may destabilize the geoeconomic in some parts of the world (e.g., Russia, Middle East) and create further poverty in others (e.g., West Africa)" (Manley et al., 2020, p. 27).

Table 1 Diversification plans of GCC countries (Author's Work)

Diversification Plans Of The GCC Countries		
Year	**Country**	**Plan**
1995	Oman	Oman 2020: Visions for Oman's Economy
2008	Bahrain	Economic Vision 2030
2008	Qatar	Qatar National Vision 2030
2009	Kuwait	State Vision Kuwait 2035
2010	UAE	Vision 2021
2016	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Vision 2030
2017	Kuwait	New Vision 2035

The decarbonization of the energy supply as the primary purpose of energy transformation is often perceived by energy-importing countries as an opportunity to improve their energy security. *"*Increasing energy security through renewable energy deployment will change the dynamics between energy exporters and importers. It will also diminish the role of oil and gas in international politics" (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019, p. 43). However, energy transformation may bring higher energy costs and dependence on rare earth materials, equipment, technology, and services needed for the decarbonization of energy (Gitelman et al., 2023). In addition, to transform their energy sector, energy exporters will require serious financial resources and technology. Renewables will change geopolitical balances because they are not geographically concentrated. "This reduces the importance of current energy choke points, such as the narrow sea channels" (Cameron et al., 2020, p. 27). Secondly, renewables are in the form of a flow; thus, they cannot be exhausted once they are used. Thirdly, renewables can be deployed almost anywhere; thus, they will help in democratizing energy. Finally, renewables have nearly zero marginal costs, and they are getting cheaper to use every day. In recognition of this reality, in the last decade,

several oil-exporter countries of the GCC have announced their diversification plans to increase their resilience against this transition.

Table 2 Climate Targets of GCC Countries (Author's Work)

Climate Targets of GCC Countries		
Country	**Net-Zero Target**	**Renewable Energy Targets**
UAE	Yes, by 2050	Clean energy 50 % (44 % RE, 6 % Nuclear) by 2050
Oman	Yes, by 2050	10 % by 2025 30 % by 2030
Bahrain	Yes, by 2060	5 % by 2025 10 % by 2035
Kuwait	Yes, by 2060	15 % by 2030
Saudi Arabia	Yes, by 2060	50 % by 2030
Qatar	No	20 % by 2030

2.4 Energy Transition In China

"The green transformation in China evolved through action and development plans from the 2010s onwards, namely the National Action Plan on Climate Change (2014), and the 13th Five-Year Energy Development Plan (2016)" (Altun & Ergenç, 2023, p. 5). Environmental problems became high-profile under President Xi Jinping as they required immediate action. In this regard, environmental governance in China has become a comprehensive development strategy using the renewables sector as the driver of the initiative (Chen & Lees, 2016). "In 2013, President Xi Jinping declared that China will no longer sacrifice the environment for temporary economic growth." (Moe, 2015, p. 1). A year later, Premier Li Keqiang stated that they would declare war against pollution as they had declared war against poverty before (Moe, 2015). In October 2021, the Chinese Central Committee expressed China's commitment to achieving a green transition through targeting carbon peaking by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060. (Altun and Ergenç, 2023). Beijing aims to reduce carbon intensity per unit of GDP by 65%, increase the share of renewables in primary consumption to

25%, and increase its installed capacity of wind and solar power. It aims to increase energy efficiency and increase non-fossil energy consumption to 80% by 2060 to achieve carbon neutrality (Al-Sarihi, 2023).

China's road to climate leadership requires a delicate balance between climate governance as a development strategy and energy security. At first, climate governance was seen as a win-win because it eliminated environmental degradation and secured new markets for SOEs in the future. "However, economic shrinking after the pandemic and the Ukrainian War made energy security a more immediate concern" (Altun & Ergenç, 2023, p. 6). Chinese SOEs and banks have been investing in fossil energy projects throughout the world, especially in coal, despite President Xi Jinping's efforts for energy transformation (Nedopil, 2021). Christoph Nedopil found out that although green energy investments increased from 2013 to 2018, from 2019 until now, fossil energy investments have been on the rise (2021). However, it seems this turn of events is only temporary, and China will continue to work towards its renewable goals to increase its energy security. "Renewable energy policy in China started out as an industrial policy with an eye to energy security" (Moe, 2015, p. 95). Zhang et al. (2013) support this view by asserting that China prefers to export new renewable industries rather than deploy them domestically.

PV started out as an export industry only, and wind was focused more on installation rather than electricity generation. Because Chinese leadership perceived these as the growth industries of the future, their supply surpassed their demand in China; Zhang et al. (2013) claim that this was intended. Moe argued in 2015 that although Beijing wants to create a structural change, it does not want renewables to replace fossil fuels for the moment. Today, only that renewables become a successful export industry is enough for China (2015).

Nuclear power is also included in China's renewables policy, which suggests that China sees the energy transition through an energy security lens (Chen et al., 2019). "China hosts the world's largest ongoing program for constructing nuclear power plants and has developed substantial indigenous expertise as well as capacity for research, design, and construction" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 231). Germany

phased out its nuclear power because it's not regarded as green or sustainable, whereas "China has been steadily increasing its nuclear capacity to compensate for phasing out domestic coal-based electricity production" (Altun & Ergenç, 2023, p.6). Worldwide, 62 nuclear reactors are being built, and China is adding 26 new ones to its existing 16. With this increase, China is expecting to generate 10% of its electricity from nuclear by 2030. Nevertheless, Moe argues that renewables are the real focus here since they are expanding faster than nuclear power, and in 2012, total wind output in China exceeded nuclear output for the first time (2015, p. 12). While the global energy transition is advancing, it has been largely due to the contributions of a few countries. For Lee et al., breaking the financial constraints to develop renewable energies will be a challenge in the near future (2023). They found out in their study that green finance directly promoted renewable energy in China (2023). Party thanks to green finance applications, the use of renewable energy in China rose from 0.03 EJ in 2000 to 7.79 EJ in 2020, an increase of more than 250 times (2023). "China works with the G20 to formulate common standards for green finance, to promote the coordinated development of finance markets, and to facilitate cross-border investment" (Bogacheva & Smorodinov, 2017, p. 10)

2.5 Renewable Energy Technologies Of China

No country has worked more than China to become a renewable energy superpower. It is now the world's largest producer, exporter, and installer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019). China dominates the production of mass-manufactured renewable energies and components – thanks to low manufacturing costs. Today, China controls nearly half of the output in renewable technologies, "notably solar PV and electric vehicle (EV) batteries, presenting new opportunities for technology transfer to technology-importing countries, such as the GCC" (ETP & IEA, 2023).

Globally, China is the leading country in the renewable energy market, such as hydropower capacity, wind power capacity, solar photovoltaic capacity, and others. Before the 21st Century, wind power was weak compared to other renewables. However, thanks to many technological improvements, it has become the third biggest

source of electricity generation, exceeding nuclear power in 2012 (Wang et al., 2018). "The initial motive for the internationalization of China's wind energy industry was to gain access to technology in order to raise the quality of the turbines deployed in its home market" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 231).

By acquiring the technology abroad, China became the world's largest wind power installed country and later a leader in the production of solar photovoltaic cells in 2016. "China has had the world's largest fleet of deployed wind power and solar PV modules for several years, as well as the largest annual capacity growth. It also has some of the world's largest manufacturers of wind turbines and solar PV modules and cells" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 231).

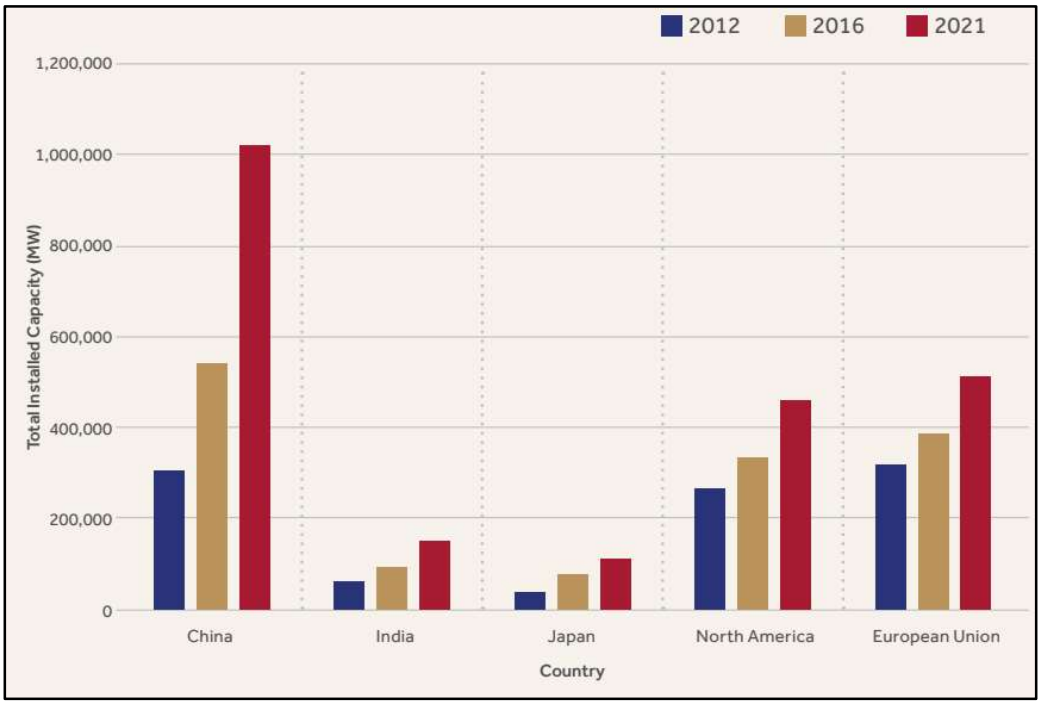

Figure 6 Total Renewable Energy Installed Capacity in China compared to India, Japan, EU 27, and North America, 2012-2017 (IRENA, 2021, p. 41).

Both solar and wind are steadfastly supported by the Chinese government, and they are considered strategic industries for the future (Moe, 2015). "In both Japan and China, solar PV was as much about building new export industries as it was about energy security" (Moe, 2015, p. 228). Wang believes that renewables can become a

clean energy source that provides energy security for China and also mitigates rural energy poverty in mainland China (Wang et al., 2018). When the Trump Administration withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, the EU remained the primary player in global climate governance, and it called on China to become a responsible climate superpower. Now, the Chinese government needs to find a delicate balance between economic and environmental goals.

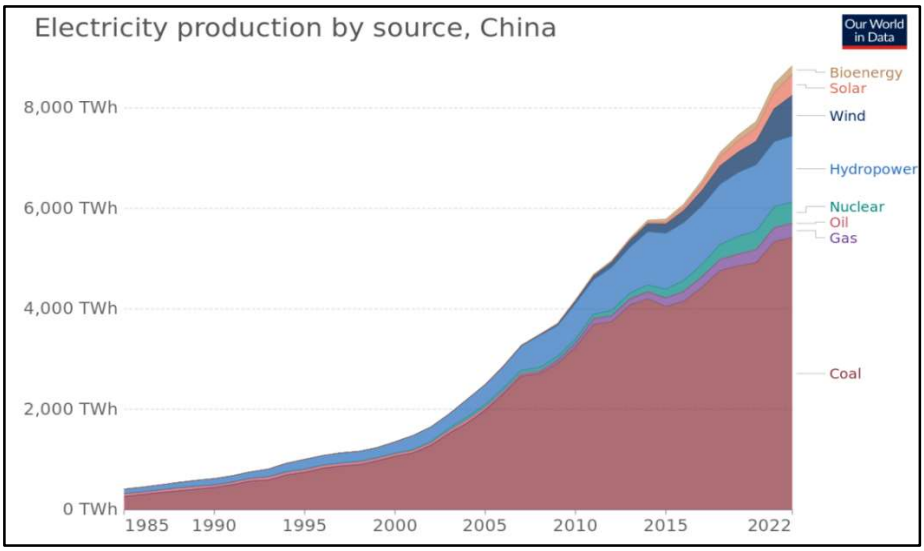

Figure 7 China's Electricity production by source (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2022, p. 34).

Defined by Oertel et al. (2020) as climate superpowers, the relationship between the EU and China has significant implications for the future of energy transition. The EU sees China as an economic competitor, a systemic rival, and a negotiating partner (Oertel et al., 2020). Altun and Ergenç show that China and the EU have both common and divergent goals in the green transition process; they call it collaboration-competition nexus (2023, p. 16).

For Altun and Ergenç, the EU's and China's bid for global climate leadership entails two goals: a materialistic goal of transforming into a green economy and a normative goal of ensuring that everyone is adhering to this new climate agenda. (2023, p. 16). What are the advantages the Green New Deal can provide to China? For Li, there are plenty of reasons: First, it is a widely accepted agreement around the world; thus,

China will have an easy time reaching a consensus with the international community. Secondly, it gives a direction and purpose to the reform discussions. Thirdly, the New Green Deal is consistent with China's 12th Five-Year Plan, which gives great importance to green transition in the economy and society. Therefore, it will try to find a balance between economic and social development (2014).

CHAPTER 3

CHINESE ENERGY SECURITY

3.1 Chinese Energy Security

China is now in the last stage of industrialization and urbanization; however, its per capita living energy consumption is far lower than developed countries (Song et al., 2019). With increased Chinese household income, demand for oil, natural gas, and electricity will surely follow. “Thus, China’s energy plan and strategy will increasingly affect the competition of the world energy market and rising concerns about energy security” (Song et al., 2019, p. 167). At the core of China’s energy security lies development. The availability of fossil fuels is seen as a prerequisite for development. “China faced challenges to its energy security, such as dependence on foreign sources, maritime transportation routes in need of protection, price fluctuations, and instability in resource-rich areas of the world” (Murphy, 2022, p. 30). China’s official energy discourses emphasize the current inequality of the world order and call for reducing the gap between the Global North and Global South. Following its new development strategy, China’s energy security now includes sustainable and conscious development (Kuteleva, 2022). China and India seem to pursue “resource mercantilism” – their governments help their NECs secure access to Middle Eastern hydrocarbon resources (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 211). The former director of the CIA, James Woolsey, argued that ‘China is pursuing a national strategy of domination of the energy markets and strategic dominance of the Western Pacific,’ which is a national security issue (Lohr, 2005). To protect its energy sources, through its companies and their investments, China can become entangled in events far from home. Usually, these events have severe consequences for international security beyond bilateral relationships. “Energy security is crucial to the sustenance of China’s economic growth. Analysts have linked China’s investments in oil sectors worldwide as part of its energy security strategy to ensure a sustainable oil supply” (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 83).

Much like what the US encountered in search of its oil security, China will undoubtedly face hard choices. “China perceives acute vulnerabilities to its energy security stemming from growing reliance on imported hydrocarbons” (Moran & Rusell, 2009, p. 214).

3.1.1 Testing Chinese Energy Security: Case Of Sudan

A prominent example when Chinese energy security was tested in the Middle East, happened in Sudan in the last decade. Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has been engulfed in endless civil wars. In early 2003, another conflict was sparked in the Darfur region (south), which led to a seven-year conflict with the government in Khartoum. “By 2009, CNPC held a 35% stake in oil developments, and China imported nearly 50% of the Sudanese oil production. The result was the strong bond between CNPC and the government at Khartoum” (Economy & Levi, 2014, p. 180). Between 2004 and 2008, rebels attacked CNPC oil fields three times, “raising concerns and drawing Beijing deeper into the Sudanese politics” (Economy & Levi, 2014, p. 180). In the face of international efforts to mediate the conflict in favor of Darfur, Chinese vetoes steered the resolution to the point that the government in Khartoum was allowed to approve the UN peacekeeping force in Darfur in a delayed manner. During the conflict, China continued to supply Khartoum with small arms and ammunition in order to protect its energy sources despite the UNSC’s ban on doing so. Ultimately, the conflict in Darfur showed everyone that Chinese resource interests, through its UNSC veto power, can delay or prevent international intervention missions in its heavily invested countries. “Beijing has used its veto-wielding seat on the UNSC as a way to delay and water down sanctions against both Sudan and Iran. The Chinese have used their influence in the UNSC to prevent action against two of their largest sources of imported oil” (Tessman & Wolfe, 2011, p. 227).

3.1.2 Security Of Energy Transit

In any crisis, China needs to maintain its energy supplies so that its military and economy can continue to function. It would require China to be able to protect ships through key choke points like the Straits of Malacca and the Taiwan Straits (Newmyer,

2009). According to where the supplies come from, Chinese vulnerability in energy security varies (shown in Figure 8).

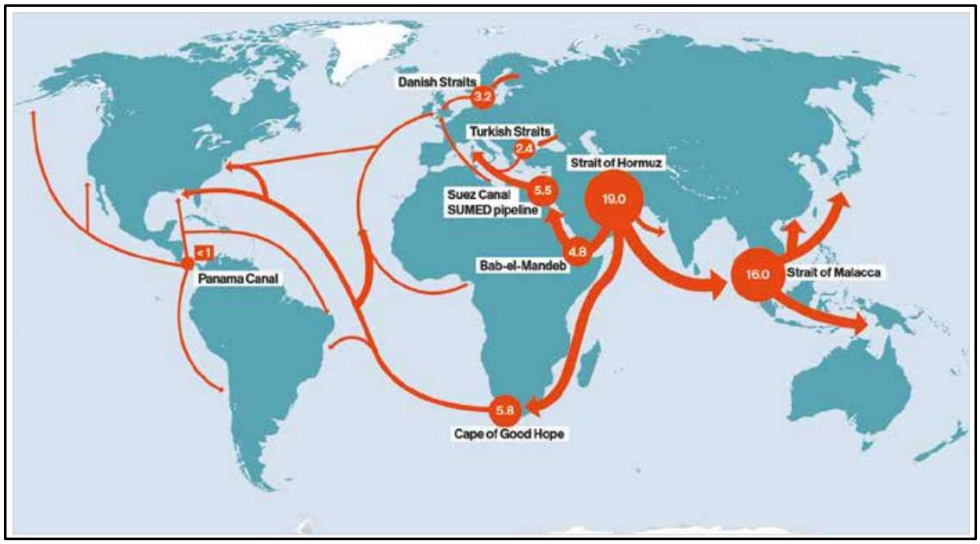

Figure 8 Daily Transit Volumes Through World Maritime Oil Chokepoints (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019, p. 57).

Resources imported from Yemen, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan pass through the Bab El-Mandeb Strait, a narrow passage between Yemen on one side and Djibouti and Eritrea on the other. Other oil and gas that is imported from this region pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which is between Iran and Oman and is a regular worry for international observers. After passing these Straits, the transport must pass the Strait of Malacca, bordered by Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, to reach China fastest. “80 percent of China’s oil imports, including all of its oil imports from the Persian Gulf, currently pass through the Straits of Malacca, where they are vulnerable to piracy, terrorism and interdiction by US naval forces” (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 217). There are other routes to reach China, like the Sunda and Lombok Straits, or traveling around Australia, but they take longer.

“Saudi Arabia is the biggest Middle Eastern provider of oil to China. Saudi ports, such as Yanbu and Jeddah, can improve the BRI’s access to the Red Sea” (Cordesman, 2020, p. 3). China also hopes to use the Gwadar port and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a new oil and gas transportation route. This will help to alleviate

the Malacca dilemma confronting China. “It is crucial for China to have an alternative import route to the Strait of Malacca” (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 84).

3.1.3 Increasing Chinese Naval Power

As Chinese imports pass these many Straits, it poses a severe challenge to Chinese military planners. China does not want to rely on the United States for secure seaway transit in the future. In 2001, President Jiang Zemin emphasized the need for China to enhance its far-seas defense and operation capabilities. “In 2003, President Hu Jintao asserted that ‘certain major powers’ were attempting to dominate the Straits and that a more powerful navy was needed to uphold Chinese maritime rights and interests” (Blazevic 2009:62 as cited in Tessman & Wolfe, 2011, p. 229). After a series of hijackings and kidnappings started to happen in the Gulf of Aden around 2008, Chinese officials dispatched the first Chinese Naval Escort Taskforce (CNET) in the Middle East. In 2012, at the 18th Party Congress, President Hu Jintao called for China to become a great maritime power (China Power Project, 2023).

By 2013, fifteen task forces were deployed to the Gulf of Aden to provide protection to the Chinese vessels (Economy & Levi, 2014). “China has dealt with the piracy in Somalia to project its naval power in that part of the Indian Ocean, and it has created both a naval base and a new port in Djibouti near the Eastern end of the Red Sea” (Cordesman, 2020, p. 4). In 2018, President Xi Jinping announced that the task of building a powerful navy is crucial timing. The 2019 Chinese defense white paper proclaimed the need for a modernized and powerful navy capable of operating in far seas (China Power Project, 2023). “Overseas development and security interests under BRI will drive the PRC towards expanding its overseas security relationships and presence to protect those interests” (US Department of Defense, 2023, p. 3).

As shown in Figure 9, “around 2015, the Chinese Navy surpassed the US Navy in total size” (China Power Project, 2023). “The PRC has an overall battle force of over 370 ships and submarines; meanwhile, the US Navy has 295 ships in active service” (US Department of Defense, 2023 & China Power Project, 2023). Undoubtedly, it is not all about the number of vessels but their capabilities. The US has 11 active aircraft

carriers; meanwhile, China only has two. However, China is building new ships at an impressive rate.

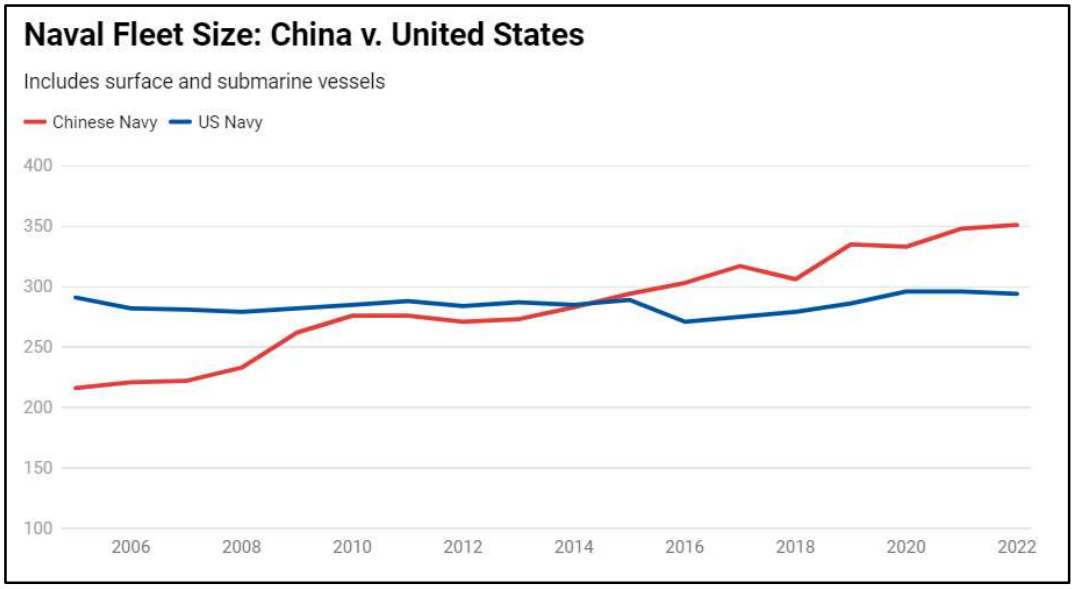

Figure 9 Naval Fleet Size (China Power Project, 2023).

"Between 2017 and 2019, China reportedly built more vessels than India, Japan, Australia, France, and the United Kingdom combined" (China Power Project, 2023). In 2022, the PLAN announced its third aircraft carrier, CV-18 Fujian, which is now being fitted out (US Department of Defense, 2023). Chinese investments in aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered submarines show that it aims to influence far-reaching points of the ocean. "Beijing races to catch up with US military capabilities and make good on its threats to retake Taiwan by force if necessary" (Hille K. & Mitchell T., 2022, para. 1).

CHAPTER 4

CHINA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Chinese diplomatic engagements with the Middle East started soon after its foundation. During the 1950s and 1960s, China established diplomatic relations with Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia. When the PRC won a seat at the UN in 1971, Kuwait, Turkey, Iran, and Lebanon broke relations with Taiwan and established relations with the PRC instead. Increasing Chinese relations with Middle Eastern states were mainly related to oil trade, whereas political engagements were insubstantial (Niblock, 2022). Establishing diplomatic relations with Gulf monarchies took longer; they were formed with UAE in 1984, Qatar in 1988, Bahrain in 1989, and Saudi Arabia in 1990. "Regarding foreign assistance and military aid, China's heavy involvement with oil-rich countries has led to closer ties with its most important energy suppliers" (Tessman & Wolfe, 2011, p. 226).

In the 21st Century, when Beijing was articulating its foreign policy toward the Middle East, dynamic balancing was too risky, and bandwagoning or neutrality was inconsistent with Chinese ambitions (Tessman, 2020). Therefore, China used the relative stability provided by the US to develop close relations with essential actors in the Middle East. These relations were primarily economic, but as they become increasingly multifaceted, there is a growing interest in strategic considerations. "Energy security, arms sales, and geopolitics are the most important material drivers of China's policy in the Middle East" (Kemp, 2010, p. 5; Yoshihara & Sokolsky, 2002, p. 75 cited in Salman et al., 2015, p.7). As China establishes closer relations with the US strategic allies like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and the US's enemy Iran, China's involvement in the region becomes worrisome for the Americans (Samaan, 2018). "Another emerging threat to regional stability that endangers China's interests in the Middle East is the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Saudi and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar, and Iran and Israel animosity" (Murphy, 2022, p.

33). As it increases its involvement in the region's economies, it is crucial to ask how Beijing will avoid the region's contradictions. Beijing has been reluctant to assume a leadership role (Fulton, 2018). Instead, it tries to find mediation, sending envoys and supporting the UN to assist at least. "In its bid to contribute to MENA stability, China has emphasized development rather than political or hard-power solutions" (Fulton, 2018, para. 5). Ehteshami and Horesh argue that the more China claims neutrality and non-interference, the more it appears opportunistic and apathetic to the plight of the region, which can be harmful to China's image (2020).

4.1 Strategic Hedging

"How do states respond to rising powers that may challenge their security interests? When they forge protective ties with a friendly great power, how do they guard against the possibility of abandonment?" (Ciorciari & Hacke, 2019, p. 367). When theories about balancing or bandwagoning came short of finding an answer to these questions, international relations scholars found the answer in the concept of strategic hedging. Studies by Medeiros, 2005; Kuik, 2008; Tunsjø, 2017; present hedging as a smaller state engaging with a superpower economically and diplomatically meanwhile adopting security measures as a form of insurance (Ciorciari & Haacke, 2019). Chaziza defines it as: "a foreign policy behavior employed by second-tier states in competing and cooperating with the system leader to cope with the uncertainties typical of unipolar systems" (2015). Strategic hedging aims to develop economic and military capabilities while avoiding direct confrontation with the leader (Tessman, 2012, cited in Salman et al., 2015).

"Gulf leaders, long concerned about the durability of their asymmetrical alliances with the US, have looked to other external powers as potential security partners" (Fulton, 2021, p. 229). As the US partially withdraws from the region, it leaves the monarchies of the GCC with the opportunity to look for alternative security providers, like China. "Hence the ongoing rapprochement between Gulf and Asian countries" (Samaan, 2018, p. 11). As China tries to protect its energy and trade relations in the Middle East, establishing more robust relations under a strategic hedging framework is a definite advantage (Chaziza, 2015). For Tessman & Wolfe, "China is strategically hedging

against the US as it diversifies its' supply sources import avenues, and builds a strategic petroleum reserve, meanwhile crafting stronger ties with important supplier states" (2011, p. 228).

Samaan underlines that this transitional shift is not the result of a coordinated effort by GCC members. Instead, these policies remain unilateral initiatives pursued by Arab monarchies. However, it is essential to remember that Gulf countries' "outreach to China represents an effort to diversify their security cooperation, and not to downgrade or sever security ties with the United States" (Calabrese, 2018, p. 22). Nevertheless, Korolev argues that hedging is easier in unipolar systems. Increasing Chinese-US competition today is shrinking the space to hedge as it pressures Gulf states more to take definitive sides (Korolev, 2016). Beijing is concerned that China's foreign energy supplies may be disrupted by political factors in the supplying countries or by geopolitical competitors such as the United States (Verma, 2007, p. 3282). China's hedge to ensure future energy supplies is thus intended to protect Chinese economic interests, such as the stability of oil supplies (Tunsj, 2010, p. 32). "Its assistance in building up the military capabilities of supplier countries through logistical and weapons support serves as another element of that strategy" (Newmyer, 2009, p. 205, cited in Salman et al., 2015, p. 9). Such a positioning amounts to a hedging behavior in the face of uncertainty of future events and other actors' intentions.

4.2 Partnership Diplomacy

Over the past two decades, strategic partnerships have become an effective method in many states' diplomatic toolkit. China is undoubtedly one of these states (Strüver, 2017). "As of 2022, China has established 110 strategic partnerships without stipulating any formal treaty of alliance" (Boni, 2023, p. 740). Chinese partnership structure has five levels, each signaling different priorities. From the highest to lowest: comprehensive strategic partnership involves full cooperation on regional and international events. The strategic partnership involves close coordination on regional and international affairs. Comprehensive cooperative partnership involves high-level exchanges and increased mutual understanding of issues. Cooperative partnership involves cooperation on mutual respect and benefit. The friendly cooperative

partnership strengthens cooperation on trade. As shown in Figure 10, China has a comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. It has strategic partnerships with Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. Finally, it has friendly cooperative partnerships with Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen (Chaziza, 2020; Fulton, 2022). "China's five comprehensive strategic partners in the Middle East – Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE – serve as pivots for the Maghreb, the Red Sea, and the Gulf subregions" (Sun, 2022, p. 302). The level of economic power and regional influence a country holds designates its level of Chinese diplomatic engagement. The higher the level, the more proactive Chinese diplomacy becomes. In the past two decades, Beijing built a regional presence without alienating the US or the Middle Eastern powers.

"Chinese diplomacy has facilitated a methodical buildup of economic relations, while the US security umbrella provides a low-cost entry into the region" (Chaziza, 2020, p. 10). Beginning with trade, Chinese involvement in the region later incorporated political and security objectives; however, Beijing kept friendly ties with everyone despite the competitive regional environment (Fulton, 2019). China's Peaceful Development, a white paper published in 2011, announces that China would not ally with any other country, nor does it use ideology to determine its relations with other countries (Li & Ye, 2019).

"Neutrality and non-involvement in interstate rivalries and regional conflicts will remain basic to China's role in the Middle East" (Niblock, 2022, p. 42). China wants to maintain its unique status as an outside great power that has cordial relations with each Middle Eastern country. "Therefore, Beijing tends to spout high-minded rhetoric, make high-profile diplomatic gestures, and small but well-publicized tangible commitments of resources" (Scobell, 2018, p. 12). Beijing is working with others in the Middle East to combat terrorism and, in return, expects the same support against the Islamic opposition inside its borders. "China's desire for support for its activities in Xinjiang is a driver of developing positive relations with Muslim countries" (Murphy, 2022, p. 36). Since the 2000s, PRC's ethnic minorities – Uyghurs and Tibetans in particular – have become a serious internal security threat to China. Although ethnic minorities constitute less than 8% of the PRC total population, Beijing

is alarmed by their more significant manifestations of discontent and apparent radicalization. (Scobell, 2018). China fears the possible coordination and cooperation between PRC Uyghurs, the Uyghur diaspora, and Muslim groups in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Partner state	*Classification of State*	*Year*	*Category of partnership*	*Region*
Algeria	Pivot	2014	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Maghreb
Egypt	Pivot	2014	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Saudi Arabia	Pivot	2016	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Gulf
Iran	Pivot	2016	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Gulf
UAE	Pivot	2018	Comprehensive strategic partnership	The Gulf
Turkey	Node	2010	Strategic cooperation relationship	Eastern Mediterranean
Israel	Node	2017	Innovative comprehensive partnership	Eastern Mediterranean
Sudan	Key	2015	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Iraq	Key	2015	Strategic partnership	The Gulf
Morocco	Key	2016	Strategic partnership	The Maghreb
Qatar	Stronghold	2014	Strategic partnership	The Gulf
Jordan	Stronghold	2015	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Djibouti	Stronghold	2017	Strategic partnership	The Red Sea
Kuwait	Stronghold	2018	Strategic partnership	The Gulf
Oman	Stronghold	2018	Strategic partnership	The Gulf

Figure 10 Hierarchy of Chinese Partnerships in the Middle East (Fulton, 2022, p. 306).

“Uighur radicals have reportedly been trained in Pakistan, fought with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and joined the ranks of ISIL in Syria and Iraq” (Scobell, 2018, p. 16). Although the Middle East does not geographically border China, ethnic, religious, and cultural linkages extend from the Middle East to Beijing. “China was concerned about the impact of the Arab Spring on Chinese Muslims, as the new Islamist governments in the Arab world could provide support to the separatist Islamic movements in China’s Xinjiang region” (Salim, 2013, p. 46). Therefore, Beijing works hard to discourage overseas support for Muslim Uyghurs and tries to label them with terrorism and separatism.

4.3 Energy Cooperation

China’s first Middle Eastern oil import came from Oman in 1983, and gradually, energy has become the centerpiece of its relationship with the Middle East. To meet

the vast energy demand in China, Beijing has launched a massive going-abroad initiative using national energy companies like CNPC, Sinopec, and CNOOC, all of which have their role and mandate to meet China's increasing energy demand (Moran & Russell, 2009).

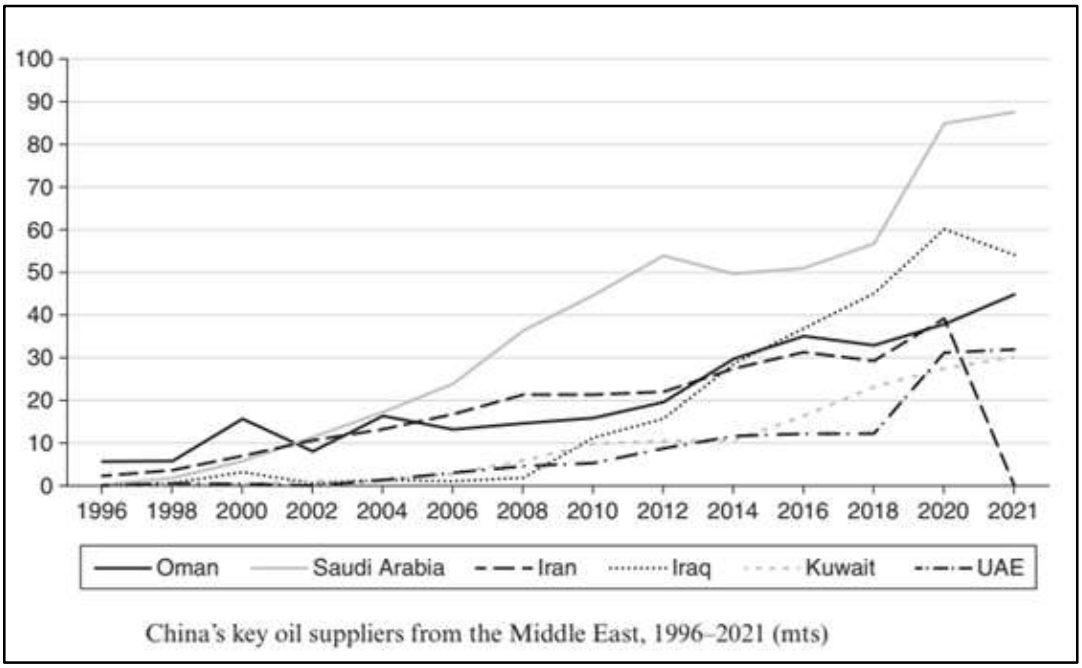

Figure 11 China's Key Oil Suppliers from The Middle East (Xuanli, 2023, p. 28)

Following the all-out oil diplomacy, economic relations with Yemen, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia were established in the 1990s, followed by Gulf countries like UAE and Kuwait at the start of the 21st century. "The Middle East, according to Chinese scholars, was the most vital region for its energy security. They characterized its energy resources as the blood of the world's economic development" (Murphy, 2022, p. 30). China became a net oil importer in 1993, and gradually China–Middle East relations were being reset around energy (Ehteshami, 2022). In 1999, an extensive oil cooperation was agreed upon between the Chinese and the Saudis. Three years later, the Saudi Kingdom became the biggest provider of oil and petrochemical products for China. After 2003, Chinese investments grew in the UAE, Qatar, Iran, Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria as shown in Figure 11. "Since 2008, CNPC has become the dominant international player in Iraqi oil production" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 234). Iraq has attracted more than $20 billion in Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment

(COFDI) since 2009, mostly in energy. These investments are made for an oil refinery in Fao, natural gas facilities, exploration and development of oil and gas reserves.

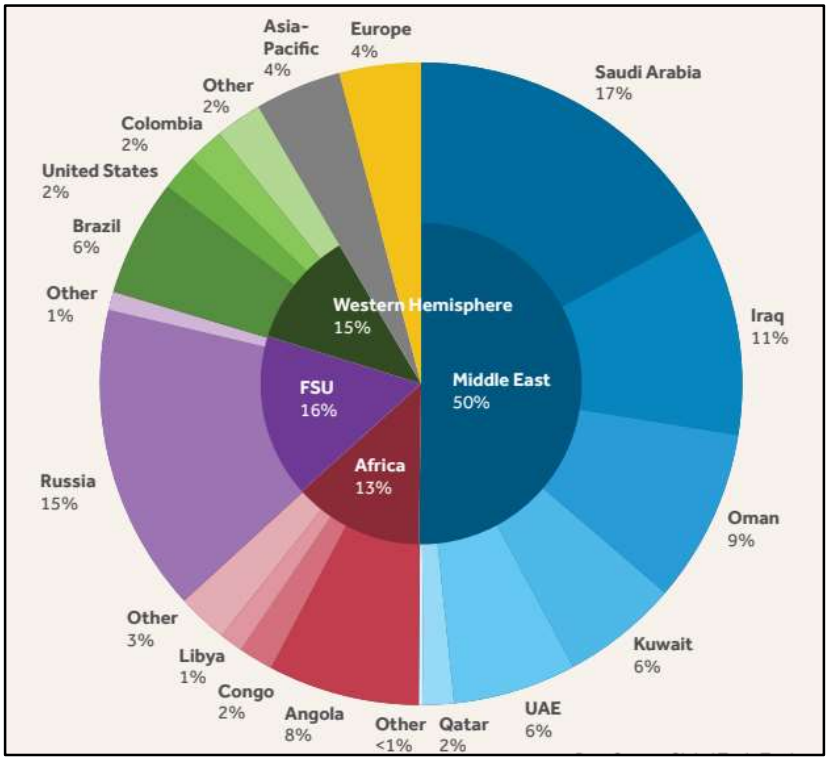

Figure 12 China's Crude Oil Imports by Source, 2021 (US Energy Information Administration)

China also aims to build infrastructure in Iraq and help in its reconstruction. Despite international pressures, since 2004, the state-owned corporations of CNPC, Sinopec, and CNOOC have operated in Iran's oil and gas sectors. Between 2004 and 2011, China committed $130 billion to Iran's oil and gas production facilities (Xuanli, 2023). China was Iran's biggest trade partner in terms of both imports and exports in 2018 (Mirgholami, 2021, p. 209). However, trade with Iran has been susceptible to international sanctions and plummeted in 2019 due to fierce sanctions by the Trump Administration. Oman continues to be a significant supplier to China since 1998. "In 2019, Saudi Arabia took the lead in Gulf states, supplying China's oil needs (16.8 percent), followed by Iraq (9.9 percent), Oman (6.8 percent), Kuwait (4.5 percent), the UAE (3.1 percent), and Iran (3 percent)" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 83). All the natural gas exported from the Middle East takes the form of LNG. In 2014, Middle Eastern LNG

exports constituted 50% of Chinese LNG purchases worldwide, but as Australian and Central Asian LNG markets became more competitive, they decreased to 15% by 2019. “Today, Qatar is the world’s largest exporter of LNG, and it supplied nearly 90 percent of Middle East supplies of LNG to China in 2019” (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 234).

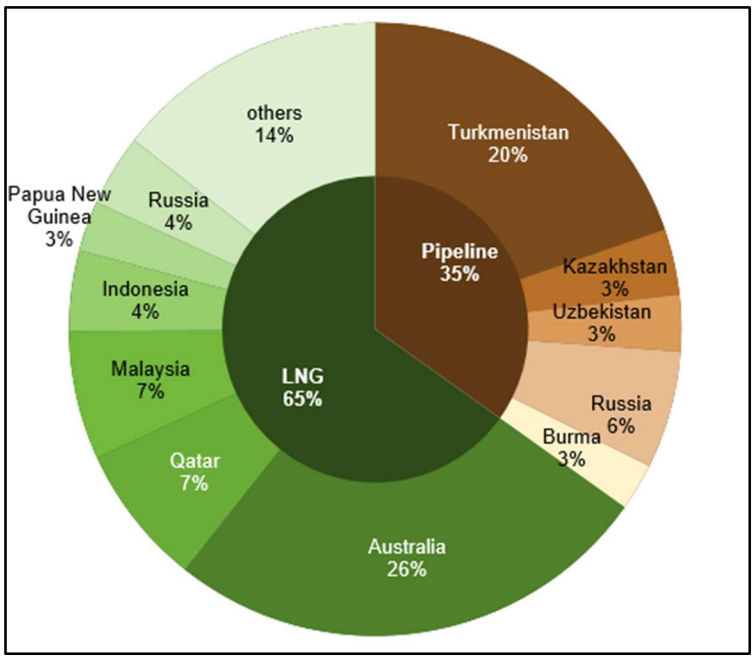

Figure 13 China’s Natural Gas Imports by Source (US Energy Information Administration, 2021)

Xuanli argues, “There is a US-China tacit compromise whereby China partly agrees to the US-led multilateral sanctions against Iran, while the US refrains from applying unilateral sanctions against major Chinese corporations” (2023, p. 33). Therefore, although a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was reached between CNOOC and the National Iranian Oil Company to develop the North Pars gas field in 2006, Chinese firms withdrew in 2008, citing the reason as Iran’s non-compliance with the UNSC Resolutions. “Iran and China have concluded various major deals on natural gas, but many have failed to come to fruition” (Dorraj & Blanchard, 2021, p. 170). Between 2009 and 2011, CNPC was given the right to develop the oil fields in Northern and Southern Azadegan oilfields as the Western companies withdrew their investments. However, when the IAEA reported in November 2011 that Iran had obtained some of

the expertise needed to produce its nuclear weapons, the EU and China significantly reduced their oil imports while CNPC pulled out from the South Pars gas project. However, in July 2012, Iran announced that China plans to invest $20 billion to develop the oil fields in Azadegan and Yadavaran, marking a mixed policy. The standoff with Iran shows that it is becoming harder for Western powers to impose sanctions on Iran as the Chinese sporadically engage in new energy investments. Chinese oil and gas interests are blamed for its reluctance to put pressure on Iran about its nuclear weaponry development (Xuanli, 2023).

4.4 Belt And Road Initiative (BRI)

The BRI represents something so big that, no matter how far any country is, it cannot ignore it because, whether directly or indirectly, it affects the whole world. As of April 2023, the number of countries signed a MoU to join the BRI network is 148 (Nedopil & Christoph, 2023). BRI entails a rising superpower from the East with one of the world's most significant and most expensive projects. "If it achieves its potential, it could even threaten Bretton Woods global economic model– one dominated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund" (Kugelman, 2022, p. 12).

BRI marks a 'coming of age' in the rise of Chinese economic power. Thus, it is generally framed by geopolitics, and China is viewed as a challenger to US global hegemony (Sintusingha & Wu, 2021). Geographically, BRI intends to build and open two major pathways: A continental road linking China to Europe through Central and South Asia and a sea corridor that connects China to Europe through the Indian Ocean. On land, the BRI will focus on building and developing China–Mongolia–Russia, China–Central Asia–West Asia, China–Pakistan, Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar, and the China–Indochina corridors. At sea, the BRI will focus on jointly building smooth, secure, and efficient transport routes (Wen Wang et al., 2019).

Thus, the BRI entails projects in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The Chinese approach is rooted in a westward expansion strategy to balance its maritime weakness. It aims to expand into the Greater Middle East, which includes Central Asia and parts of South Asia. China advertises 'five links' that underpin the BRI's

implementation: policy coordination, people-to-people, facilities, transnational trade, and financial networks (Sintusingha & Wu, 2021).

Table 3 BRI's Regional Institutions in Comparison to The Current Global Mechanism (Yu, 2022, p. 20)

Multilateral Institutional Mechanism	BRI Region	Global Order
Regional Trade Integration	16+1	WTO
	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership	European Union
	ASEAN+3	
	BRI Economic Corridor	
Regional Financial Integration	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	The World Bank
	Silk Road Fund	
	New Development Bank	
Regional Military Security Organization	Shanghai Cooperation Organization	NATO

The official motivation for BRI seems to be purely economic: China wants to open more trade lines to far-reaching markets to feed its rapidly growing economy. This entails the development of infrastructure like roads, rail lines, and power plants, as well as newer infrastructure like cross-border fiber optics and modern telecommunication projects. "The construction of new transport facilities in Asia will reduce transport times and stimulate demand for Chinese materials and high-value manufactured goods" (Ehteshami, 2018, p. 198). The BRI also has plenty of digital communication and internet development projects. It has become clear to the Chinese that investment in modern technologies such as these will yield much more profit than traditional infrastructure.

"The telecom infrastructure networks led by Huawei and ZTE are expanding rapidly through the BRI region" (Yu, 2022, p. 22). "In 2022, Beijing continued prioritizing public health, digital infrastructure, and green energy opportunities" (US Department of Defense, 2023, p. 3). The mega project is seen to serve different objectives, depending on who is analyzing it. Kugelman argues that "a likely unstated goal of BRI is to expand China's influence and deepen an already-entrenched global footprint"

(2022, p. 13). On the contrary, Wang & Liu argue that: “the Belt and Road Initiative is not China’s geopolitical strategy; instead, it emphasizes strategic links and connectivity” (2022, p. 107). Djibouti, which has China’s only known overseas base for the moment, is a massive recipient of its infrastructure projects. “A 2017 Pentagon report argued that Beijing will likely seek additional military bases in countries which it has longstanding and good relations” (Kugelman, 2022, p. 13). China repeatedly denies such allegations. As the BRI represents one of the most concrete examples of the growing Chinese presence worldwide, it causes much concern in the US Administration. “When the Trump White House released its first national security strategy in December 2017, it described strategic rivalry, not terrorism, as America’s top national security threat” (Kugelman, 2022, p. 13).

BRI could achieve better infrastructure in poorly functioning regions, more electricity generation for electricity-poor areas, new local employment opportunities, and higher prosperity for everyone. It is hard to oppose these claims. However, significant obstacles threaten the possibility of these positive outcomes. The first is security; BRI is projected to pass through some of the world’s most unstable regions like Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. China has demonstrated a willingness to tolerate large amounts of risk, as it made some investments in the volatile nations of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. “Still, China will struggle to build out BRI in areas mired in conflict or where terrorists hold sway” (Kugelman, 2022, p. 15). In geopolitical terms, Central Asia and the Middle East present possible dangers. “Stability and security are very closely linked with prosperity and with conditions that enable and encourage people to trade together” (Frankopan, 2019, p. 267). The deepening rivalry between China’s primary energy partners, Saudi Arabia and Iran, is an ongoing risk in the Middle East. “Much will depend on the skill of Chinese diplomats and officials to soothe tensions” (Frankopan, 2019, p. 272). China cannot pick sides, and according to Ehteshami, it is not ready to play a more active and interventionist role in Middle Eastern politics (2018). There is little consensus on the role that China should play in managing insecurity in the BRI region. Political instability results in negative impacts on the strategy, weak continuity of laws, increased commercial risks, higher financing costs for projects, and lower feasibility (Wenqi Lin et al., 2021). In technical terms, countless issues require the strong

cooperation of BRI mechanisms and national governments. Water shortage will be a definite problem (Kugelman, 2022). Many South Asia and the Middle East areas are short on water supplies. Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of per capita water availability globally. However, one of BRI's signature projects, the Gwadar Port, is being built in the bone-dry Baluchistan province. The project requires ample water, and its water supply largely depends on tankers that trucks supply from 100 miles away – "clearly not a sustainable solution to water insecurity" (Kugelman, 2022, p. 15).

Another risk to the BRI is financial: whether or not the host countries can pay their debts back. "A recent bilateral agreement ties oil supplies to China with loans to Iraq for infrastructure projects" (Meidan, 2016). "According to a 2018 study by the Center for Global Development (CGD) 23 countries are at high risk of a debt crisis from additional BRI-related financing" (Kugelman, 2022, p. 15). Djibouti is one of these high-risk countries where debt to GDP is at 85%, with much of the debt owed to the Chinese Exim Bank. Montenegro has an 85% ratio, again mainly indebted to Exim Bank. Pakistan is another country where the ratio is close to 70%. Unsurprisingly, some countries have backed out from their BRI investments due to financial fears. "Most famously, in 2018, Malaysia's new government – riding an anti-corruption wave that helped catapult it to power – canceled $20 billion in China-funded projects" (Kugelman, 2022, p. 16). In addition, in 2021, Bangladesh and Myanmar canceled or renegotiated their earlier commitments to China. However, GCC countries are more shielded from this debt trap thanks to their substantial energy and sovereign wealth. Instead, they enjoy international FDI, being less reliant solely on China.

Although Chinese officials do not tire of noting that their aid and investments do not come with intrusive conditions like adherence to human rights, economic liberalization, and good governance attached; China requires that its partners commit to the One China policy, limit diplomatic relations with Taiwan, cooperate with PRC in terms of its handling Uyghur nationalists, support China's position at the UNSC, and give Chinese companies priority in Chinese funded projects (Dorsey, 2019).

"In the Middle East, today's China offers a seductive model to states that have not yet settled into a democratic structure" (Callick, 2000, p. 791). As the Middle East is

predominantly ruled by; quasi-democracies, failed democracies, and autocratic governments, the China Model, "which is built upon political authoritarianism and selected privatization," seems well fitted to the needs of local rulers (Yu, 2022, p. 24). While desiring increased integration with the global economy, BRI has emerged as a model that diverges from the Western mainstream liberal market economy (Luk & Preston, 2016). The success of the BRI is essentially a competition over economic effectiveness delivered between market liberalization and market authoritarianism.

Is there a correlation between democracy and prosperity? The decades-long debate that started with political scientist Seymour Lipset is still being debated. Lipset argues that democracy directly results from economic growth, and continuing growth leads to more democratization (Lipset, 1959). This correlation has been tested, retested, and contested since its inception. BRI and Beijing's foreign policy will surely test this concept as well. If Lipset is correct, as BRI countries develop more and more, they should become more democratic. These countries may become inclined to align themselves more with the West. This is not the desired outcome for the Chinese. "However, data from the World Bank and the EIU Global Democracy Ranking suggests that as the BRI regional countries develop economically, but there is no significant tendency turning them towards liberal democracy" (Yu, 2022, p. 23). This is highly disappointing for the West. However, according to Sun, "the appeal of the China model has not translated into success because of continued underdevelopment of the institutions of the state; the emergence of crony capitalism within a narrow group of economic elite and the state's inability to articulate a clear developmental agenda" (2022, p. 339). In addition, for Kroeber, the Chinese ascension to the world's most outstanding economy will still depend to a substantial degree on its ability to integrate with the global system. China cannot conjure up a new international system because it is technologically behind, has no alliances, and lacks regional leadership because its neighbors distrust its intentions and hedge against it (2016).

4.5 Chinese-Middle Eastern Relations In The BRI Era

Today, the Middle East holds 48% of the world's proven oil reserves and 32% of total oil output and annually supplies nearly 50% of China's oil (Xuanli, 2023). BRI will

ensure this energy flow; thus, China pays more attention to the Middle East. “The BRI provides an underlying rationale for the strategic (largely economic) partnerships of China” (Niblock, 2022, p. 32). Between 2013 and 2019, Beijing made investments totaling $93.3 billion in the region, mainly in the energy sector ($52.8 billion), followed by transport ($18.6 billion), real estate ($18.4 billion), and utilities ($3.5 billion) (Chaziza, 2023). To date, China has surpassed the United States as the top trading partner in the Middle East and is also the most prominent external source of direct foreign investment to the region (Ghasseminejad, 2021).

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping noted: “China is prepared to support Arab states in increasing development, advancing industrialization, and pushing economic development” (Zoubir, 2023, p. 1). He created a novel approach to the relations between China and the Middle East. It is called the “1+2+3 cooperation model”, where “1” stands as the central aspect of cooperation mainly focused on energy trade. “2” represents infrastructure building, trade, and investment. The “3” stands for nuclear, space, satellites, and renewable energy cooperation. China’s infrastructure diplomacy is crucial to 21st-century geopolitics (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019). “In 2016, Beijing published the Arab Policy Paper, which acknowledges Arab states’ sovereignty and territorial integrity and promotes peace and stability in the Middle East” (Samaan, 2018, p. 47). The paper emphasizes the role of oil and gas in these relations and explicitly identifies nuclear and renewable energy as fields for cooperation (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022).

Chinese-Middle Eastern ties would be established under strategic cooperation and joint development by promoting China’s time-honored Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity (1); mutual non-aggression (2); mutual non-interference in internal affairs (3); equality and mutual benefit (4); and peaceful coexistence (5) (Zoubir, 2023). Although China’s initial relations are formed around trade, China’s interest in the Middle East has expanded to military, weapons, vaccines, automobiles, and telecommunications. These developments have been worrisome for the influential powers in the region, like the US and EU. Since the proclamation of BRI, energy investments, and politics seem to converge more and more. Beijing has been working closely with two regional giants,

Saudi Arabia and Iran, “despite the differences in their capacity of oil provision and political ambitions” (Xuanli, 2023, p. 27).

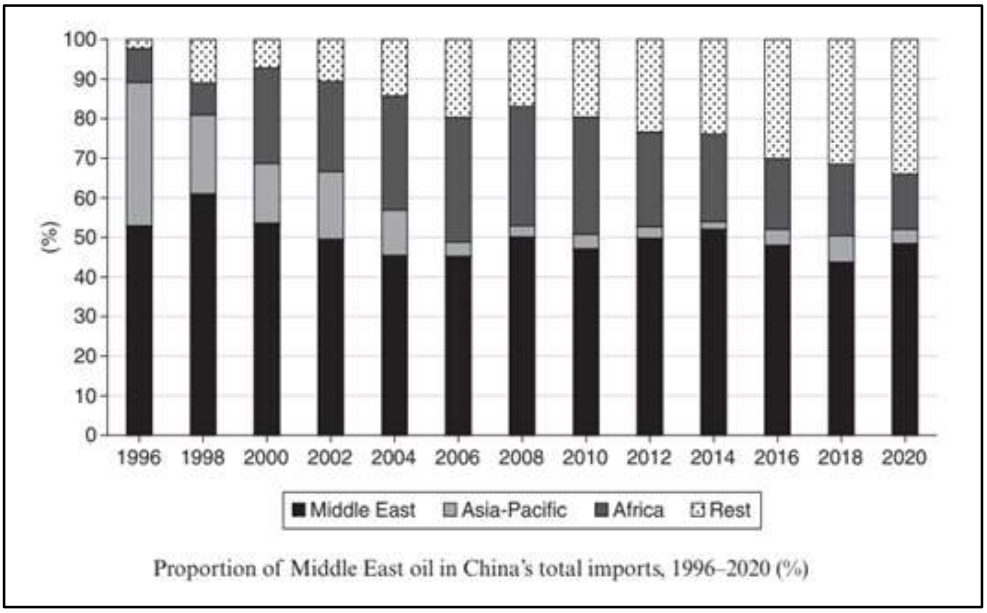

Figure 14 Proportion of Middle East Oil in China’s Total Imports (Xuanli, 2023, p. 27)

CHAPTER 5

CHINA-GULF RELATIONS IN THE BRI ERA

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, GCC countries faced fluctuating hydrocarbon revenues, demographic pressures, unemployment, and a lack of economic diversity. Asian powers will have an essential role for the GCC in overcoming these issues and tackling climate change (Ghafar & Baabood, 2023). China's state-led economic development can serve as a model for the Gulf states to achieve economic diversification and development. (Mishrif, 2018). "Each GCC member state is trying to diversify its economy from a one resource rentier model to a post-oil one" (Fulton, 2021, p. 235). Gulf is responsible for China's 33% of main crude oil imports.

China is projected to surpass the US in oil consumption by 2034 and could increase its oil imports from the region (Fulton & Qian, 2018). When China announced the BRI in 2013, GCC countries regarded it as the best means to improve bilateral coordination despite the lack of a dedicated economic corridor on the Arabian Peninsula (Fulton, 2021).

Since its proclamation, state visits to China have been made by the King of Saudi Arabia, the Emir of Qatar, the Prime Minister of Kuwait, and the Crown Prince of UAE. "These increasingly frequent visits and intensifying partnerships indicate that both China and the GCC states perceive bilateral relations as not simply economic; they are also increasingly strategic" (Fulton, 2021, p. 229).

China proposed that the GCC countries open their borders for more investment, assist them in achieving greater energy production, build better facilities, advance technology, and work toward achieving growth and prosperity together. "The Gulf's location provides China with an important connection to the markets in the MENA region and Europe" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 83). Therefore, Iraq, Iran, and member-states

of the GCC – are of strategic importance to China. “Chinese trade volume with the Gulf states alone surpassed $196 billion in 2017, making China the world’s biggest investor in the Middle East” (Ehteshami, 2022, p. 49).

Chinese-Gulf energy trade is complementary. GCC states need long-term export markets, and Chinese demand will increase in the near future. The primary energy producers are the highest priority targets for Chinese energy diplomacy (Morel, Russell, 2009). “Saudi Arabia has become China’s most important trade partner in the Gulf, and the UAE ranks second” as shown in Figure 15 (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 14).

“Ambitious GCC development plans require significant imports of agricultural machinery, industrial equipment, and building materials” (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 14). China depends on imported energy sources to be used in domestic manufacturing. “For policy-makers and strategic planners in Beijing, the growing reliance on imported hydrocarbons from the Persian Gulf is at the heart of the energy security challenge” (Moran & Russell, 2009, p. 215).

Observers of Gulf politics may wonder how long China can maintain this neutrality. Beijing has established various partnerships with Gulf countries in the last decades to hedge against the US. For Fulton, there are two ways that China’s Gulf diplomacy may follow. First, it can prefer a US-led status quo where it continues to hedge, “building relations with minimal security responsibilities” (Fulton, 2019a, p. 36). In this view, China supports and takes advantage of the US’s Gulf order.

Alternatively, China may cooperate with Iran in establishing an emerging regional security order. This will indeed challenge the US, and Beijing should prepare for its post-hedging role in a future Gulf order (Fulton, 2019a).

China’s state-owned oil companies are constantly investing in oil explorations and development projects in the Gulf region. “China’s energy investments in the Gulf amounted to over $50 billion from 2010 to 2020, with the UAE at the top of the list ($13.95 billion), followed by Saudi Arabia ($12.69 billion), Iraq ($12.01 billion), Iran ($3.92 billion), Oman ($3.92 billion), and Kuwait ($3.86 billion)” (American

Enterprise Institute, 2022). “For leaders in the Arabian Peninsula, energy policies are the primary national security policies. This is a consequence of the rentier model economies” (Samaan, 2018, p.39).

Year	China–GCC	China–Bahrain	China–Kuwait	China–Oman	China–Qatar	China–Saudi Arabia	China–UAE
2005	34,624.02	255.89	1,648.97	4,465.92	676.25	16,111.28	11,465.71
2006	45,411.93	349.44	2,785.69	6,043.44	998.31	20,140.91	15,094.14
2007	69,208.1	515.5	4,614.77	7,020.10	1,701.66	40,211.76	15,144.31
2008	110,452.14	1,227.34	7,575.21	12,179.34	2,777.51	64,971.51	21,721.23
2009	70,638.49	899.69	5,725.55	5,689.24	2,890.01	39,971.51	15,462.49
2010	93,949.51	1,351.26	9,145.22	10,220.61	4,329.13	51,198.18	17,705.11
2011	133,022.17	1,764.08	11,934.95	15,287.29	6,649.69	74,629.08	22,757.08
2012	169,198.82	1,729.3	13,085.18	18,590.93	9,276.89	84,413.01	42,103.51
2013	178,585.1	1,856.29	13,038.18	21,622.58	11,110.28	82,559.14	48,398.63
2014	193,586.84	2,618.8	13,888.91	24,302.09	12,708.04	80,386.55	59,682.45
2015	130,298.43	1,886.36	12,152.58	15,883.05	9,055	57,834.38	33,487.06
2016	111,900.94	1,964.38	10,664.99	12,369.91	7,806	47,297.29	31,798.37
2017	148,279.51	2,762.98	13,911.97	15,670.79	10,640.73	45,550.6	59,742.44
2018	155,176.11	2,209.25	6,271.24	20,408.52	13,525.55	59,434.88	53,326.67
2019	170,478.53	2,102.21	17,142.1	16,553.95	12,571.09	72,850.22	49,258.96

Figure 15 Chinese Trade with the GCC countries 2005-2019 (USD millions) (Fulton, 2021, p. 231)

Against the European efforts to reduce the reliance on oil, the arrival of the Chinese emerging oil market is a godsend (Ehteshami, 2022). China has vested interests in Iran’s oil and gas facilities. “Iran ranks second in the world in natural gas reserves and fourth in proven crude oil reserves” (Mirgholami, 2021, p. 208). “Both Beijing and Tehran hope that Iranian oil will one day go overland to China as well, thereby reducing dependence on seaborne shipping and the risks it entails” (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 83).

With the lifting of the sanctions in 2016, there has been much hope for Iran’s integration into the world economy through the BRI, but the withdrawal of the USA from the JCPOA obscured future hopes again (Mirgholami, 2021). As such, China’s Iran policy essentially became a strategic hedge against potential risks arising in the future from a deterioration of relations (Salman et al., 2015, p. 12). The two countries share a resistance to US dominance of the international system and that is why China rejects US efforts to weaken Iran severely (Garver, 2016). Samaan argues that the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and the China–Central Asia–West Asia Economic Corridor bypass the Gulf, and the Chinese may sideline the Arabian Peninsula by

working closely with Iran (2018, p. 44). In light of this, Saudi Arabia has created a strategy of reciprocal investments with China.

"Saudi development strategy aims to turn this Red Sea area into a future trade hub and to position itself as a major regional actor of the BRI" (Samaan, 2018, p. 44). According to Huwaidin, China sees Gwadar Port in Pakistan as the safest and shortest route for GCC oil supplies to reach China. It is cost-effective, safe, and secure compared to the maritime route (Huwaidin, 2022). To make Gwadar Port yield positive results, GCC members are needed to be ready in terms of infrastructure.

GCC Crude Petroleum Export by Destination (percentage of total fuel exports), 2020

Destination Rank	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
1	Japan (100%)	China (28.7%)	China (85.2%)	Japan (32.6%)	China (25.3%)	Japan (28.7%)
2		South Korea (17.3%)	India (6.3%)	Singapore (19.1%)	Japan (15.5%)	China (20.8%)
3		Japan (12.3%)	Chinese Taipei (3.5%)	South Korea (15.8%)	South Korea (13.1%)	India (14.8%)
4		India (10.7%)	Japan (2.1%)	China (14.3%)	India (11.4%)	Thailand (9.1%)
5		Vietnam (9.9%)	South Korea (1.3%)	India (10.8%)	Chinese Taipei (3.7%)	South Korea (7.5%)
6		Chinese Taipei (7.6%)	Malaysia (1%)	Chinese Taipei (4.3%)	Thailand (2.7%)	Singapore (7.2%)

Figure 16 GCC Crude Petroleum Export by Destination (Al-Sarihi, 2023, p. 79)

The absence of a colonial legacy between the Gulf states and China puts aside misperceptions and prejudices that frequently shape Arab–Western interactions. More importantly, leaders of the Gulf regimes appreciate Asian reluctance to interfere in their local affairs (Samaan, 2018).

"This relationship is vice versa: GCC members, in return, keep their distance from issues such as the status of Taiwan or the treatment of the Muslim Uighur community in China" (Samaan, 2018, p. 47). Thus, aside from Turkish condemnations, the Gulf powers have not criticized China's Uighur detainment camps. In addition, during his last visit to China, Mohammed Bin Salman described the situation as a domestic

political event. He supported China's right to execute anti-terrorism and de-extremization work for its national security (Fulton, 2019b).

4.6 US-China Rivalry In The Gulf

During the 21st century, China's rapid economic growth, military modernization, and greater global influence have alerted the United States. Trade imbalances, intellectual property issues, human rights abuses, and South China Sea territorial disputes further increased Washington's worries. Therefore, "from 2009 to 2019, China–US relations have experienced a gradual yet sustained downturn" (Wang & Ran, 2019, p. 1). The tensions started with US reactions to Chinese island reclamations in the South China Sea in 2010, later the Obama Administration's Pivot to Asia policy, and US arms sales to Taiwan in 2011. Washington increasingly became more aware of Beijing's potential challenge to its liberal world order after the launch of BRI in 2013, the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014, and the Asia Infrastructure Bank (AIB) in 2016. Murphy argues that as China's power grows, it increasingly competes with the West and challenges the liberal international system by building spheres of influence in the Middle East (2022).

Between 2013 and 2016, the powers over the Taiwan issue sparked a series of frictions. "China's 'Made in China 2025' plan and consolidation of SOEs greatly raised the American business community's concerns about unfair treatment and unequal competition" (Wang & Ran, 2019, p. 3). Meanwhile, Chinese political circles believed that the 'Occupy Central' movement in Hong Kong was a US plot, and between 2014-2016, the Chinese Congress passed the Counterespionage Law and the Law on the Administration of Domestic Activities of Overseas Non-Governmental Organizations (Jiji & Ran, 2019).

After 2017, the bilateral relationship has suffered significant damage in almost every dimension. "Under the Trump Administration, the White House redefined China as a revisionist power and a strategic rival of the US, which wants to shape the world consistent with their authoritarian model" (Jian & Ran, 2019, p. 4). "China and Russia are singled out as the major potential threats to the US as China joined Russia in

actively opposing the renewal of the UN arms embargo on Iran" (Cordesman, 2020, p. 4). Driven by an isolationist' America First' foreign policy, President Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and escalated trade wars with China (Sintusingha & Wu, 2021).

PRC leaders believe that a confrontational United States is intensifying their strategic competition (US Department of Defense, 2023, p. 1). "In March 2023, Xi Jinping said, Western countries led by the United States have implemented comprehensive containment and suppression against us, bringing unprecedented challenges to our country's development" (US Department of Defense, 2023, p. 1).

Ponížilová argues that during the last two decades, there has been a decline of American power and influence in the Middle East, starting with two controversial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, continuing with hesitant US support to the Arab Uprisings and the Qatar diplomatic crisis. As the US achieves self-sufficiency in energy, it has come to rely less on Middle Eastern oil (2018).

Sun argues that Middle East energy exporters' dependence on Western markets has decreased while Asian markets have become more significant. As a result, there has been a decrease in strategic dependence on the United States and an increase in the connections with the East (2022). Analyzing Chinese and US foreign policies in the Middle East is a case study of coexistence between a declining hegemon and a rising power (Salman et al., 2015).

The Gulf states' economic wealth will rely on China's global rise, while US security provisions may ensure their political survival. As the US-China bilateral relations deteriorate, this relationship will indeed be tested. "Gulf countries may not be able to ignore the US–China strategic equation indefinitely" (Samaan, 2018, p. 92). "It is becoming clear that the US cannot count on its Arab strategic partners unless it shows it will stay in the Gulf and be a genuine partner" (Cordesman, 2020, p. 4).

There are different opinions on how the future of alliances will look like in the region. For Fulton & Qian, over inconsistent and vague promises of US foreign policy,

"China's BRI offers the most clearly articulated path to stabilizing the MENA status quo" (2018, p. 8). For Samaan, Chinese strategic restraint in the Gulf regarding the disputes between GCC members - Iran and Saudi Arabia-Qatar shows that the Gulf states cannot rely on the Chinese to resolve their problems (Samaan, 2018).

4.7 Chinese Strategic Partnerships With Gulf Countries

"Even though China emphasizes the importance of multilateral cooperation for the BRI's success, the Gulf region's situation has forced it to adopt a bilateral approach in its balanced foreign policy" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 88). Since Premier Wen Jiabao's UAE visit in 2012 and the consequent signing of the strategic partnership agreement, every Gulf state except Bahrain has signed a strategic or comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with China. "Very few other countries have attached more significance to establishing partnerships than China" (Li & Ye, 2019, p. 66). This growing diplomatic engagement can be attributed to several reasons: Firstly, China-Gulf trade has seen tremendous growth in the 21st Century. The value was under $10 billion in 2000 and increased to $123 billion by 2016 (Young, 2019). Energy is the main factor in these trade relationships. China wants to establish long-term, stable, and reliable supply lines in this region. BRI is another major factor in this increasing relationship. In recent decades, Gulf states have increased their efforts to forge strategic partnerships with China to incorporate BRI into their national development plans.

China's strategic partnerships help establish economic relations without serious commitments. China established a comprehensive strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia (2016), Iran (2016), and the UAE (2018). "China's investments in these three countries account for 73 percent of China's total investments in the region from 2016 to 2019" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 84). A level down, strategic partnerships with Qatar (2014), Iraq (2015), Oman (2018), and Kuwait (2018) are established. Bahrain is the only Gulf state that does not have an official partnership with China.

The fact that UAE, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have the highest level of partnership with China shows their importance to Beijing. "There are strong economic (oil, trade and

investments) and political reasons for China's pursuit of such relationships with the countries in the Gulf" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 82). GCC states are under constant threat from; Islamist jihadist groups, Iran's intervention in their internal affairs, and US retrenchment from the region.

Table 4 Levels of Chinese Strategic Partnerships (Author's work)

Level of Chinese Strategic Partnerships	
Partnership	**Priorities**
Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	Full pursuit of cooperation and development in regional and international affairs
Strategic Partnerships	Coordinate more closely in regional and international affairs, including military
Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership	Maintain momentum of high-level exchanges, increased mutual understanding
Cooperative Partnership	Develop cooperation on bilateral issues, based on mutual respect and benefit
Friendly Cooperative Partnership	Strengthen cooperation on bilateral issues such as trade

The GCC states' strategic partnerships with China signal their desire to hedge against a possible breakdown of the alliance system in the Middle East. Nadkarni describes a strategic partnership as a "diplomatic instrument that allows for hedging against all eventualities while allowing for the common pursuit of mutual interests" (Nadkarni, 2010, p. 46).

By 'comprehensive,' the cooperation should be all-dimensional, wide, bilateral, and multilateral. By 'strategic,' cooperation should be long-term and stable, overcoming ideological differences. By 'partnership,' the two countries cooperate with mutual respect, trust, and equality (Fulton, 2019, p. 34; Li & Ye, 2019). China enjoys productive relations with the Gulf countries but has no allies. "Diplomatically, it is thus fully engaged, but also in an important sense isolated" (Kroeber, 2016, p. 254). Why doesn't China establish alliances instead? Fulton argues that "they are considered

costly and risky" (Fulton, 2018, para. 6). Strüver highlights that "partnerships are goal-driven rather than threat-driven, an important contrast with alliances" (2017, p. 37). Beijing fears the risk of entrapment: being dragged into a conflict over an ally's interests that one does not fully share. Beyond the reluctance to become entrapped, there is also a structural explanation for China's general aversion to alliances. Post-Cold War hegemony of the US provided rising powers of the 21st Century, like China, the unique opportunity to take advantage of the relative stability to develop relations with the Gulf states without antagonizing the US. If China were to establish alliances, it would surely make it a US target. However, establishing partnerships while integrating into the global network of production is relatively safe for China (Li & Ye, 2019). While this approach has been described as "free riding" by the West, it is considered strategic hedging by Nadkarni (2010). China has been improving its competitive abilities while avoiding conflict with the US. "Strategic partnership diplomacy has provided the space to build up its economic relations while the US security umbrella provided a low-cost entry into the Gulf" (Fulton, 2019, p. 35).

Table 5 China's Partnerships with Gulf States (Author's Work)

China's Partnership with Gulf States (From Newest to Oldest)		
State	**Level**	**Year Signed**
UAE	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	2018
Kuwait	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	2018
Oman	Strategic Partnership	2018
Iran	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	2016
Saudi Arabia	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	2016
Iraq	Strategic Partnership	2015
Qatar	Strategic Partnership	2014

Examining the dates in Table 5, it is evident that China has established partnerships with all of the Gulf countries after BRI was proclaimed in 2013. This shows the degree of importance that is given to the project and its possible prospects in these countries.

Unsurprisingly, Saudi Arabia and Iran are comprehensive strategic partners of China: they are critical regional states and important trade partners for China.

The elevation of the UAE's position to a comprehensive level in 2018 can be attributed to its relatively stable political environment, being a regional logistics hub, and offering excellent trade and investment opportunities (Fulton, 2019). For a comprehensive strategic partnership, Beijing needs three conditions: a "high level of political trust, dense economic ties, and good relations in other sectors" (Fulton, 2019, p. 36). Given these requirements, it is unlikely that any other adjacent state will be elevated to this level. Iraq has internal turmoil and does not have dense economic ties with China yet, Qatar has problems with other Gulf states, Oman and Bahrain offer low bilateral trade. "For the time being then, China's approach to the Gulf will largely rest on the three pillars of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE" (Fulton, 2019, p. 36).

4.8 Building Infrastructure Throughout The Gulf

Several motivations lie behind China's infrastructure diplomacy. There is a need for improved transport infrastructure in developing Asia. The planned new infrastructure will help China secure energy supplies via routes the US military cannot easily interdict. It will also create new linkages to the affluent markets of Europe. The construction projects will provide much-needed business for Chinese engineering firms and materials suppliers, which now face a stagnant market at home (Kroeber, 2016).

How can developing countries – that lack large-scale private businesses, have weak state powers, and minimal global influence – undertake the development of vital infrastructure? BRI aims to efficiently organize the hard infrastructure, soft infrastructure (knowledge), and financial capital to operate in a highly different range of geographic contexts (Sintusingha & Wu, 2021). Gulf states want to use China's expertise and experience in its path to economic development (Oxford Business Group, 2019). In the wake of the Arab Spring and civil wars, the Gulf countries are pressured to boost and sustain economic growth to maintain social stability. To achieve this, they have announced long-term plans to reconstruct their infrastructure, and a

"comprehensive Chinese engagement provides the impetus for it" (Young, 2019, p. 74). Each Gulf monarchy has embarked upon economic diversification plans: Saudi Vision 2030, Abu Dhabi 2030, New Kuwait 2035, Qatar National Vision 2030, Oman Vision 2040, and Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030. In these visions, Gulf monarchies are trying to strengthen their private sectors, diversify their economies, and build more infrastructure and construction. Chinese firms are already deeply involved in this process (Fulton & Qian, 2018). Chinese construction and engineering expertise are becoming essential in developing more ties with the GCC states. Over 230 Chinese firms have set up regional headquarters in JAFZA, supporting the bilateral economic relationship (Fulton, 2021). "Many Chinese SOEs have been using UAE's JAFZA as a hub to service projects across the peninsula" (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 15).

Labor coordination is another industry where GCC countries and China increase cooperation. With a small skilled labor force, GCC countries require many expatriate workers, and China is rich in human resources; thus, it has great potential in this industry. For Fulton, the most prominent examples of BRI investments in the Arabian Peninsula are interconnectivity projects between UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. "China wants to connect Chinese-developed Industrial parks in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman with regional ports in Oman, the UAE, Djibouti, and Egypt" (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 7). Huwaidin also argues that "China looks for this physical connectivity to link supply chains across the Middle East, which is crucial to the success of the BRI" (2022, p. 83).

"Oman is important for economic and trade shipping between Asia, Africa, and Europe. It stands at the intersection of the BRI's land and maritime routes" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 84). The most popular investment in Oman has been the Special Economic Zone Authority (SEZAD) in Duqm. With an oil refinery and the Middle East's largest oil storage, "SEZAD offers an energy hub that avoids the Hormuz Strait chokepoint" (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 7). Oman Wanfang, a Chinese consortium, has begun its projects in Duqm, and the port is expected to attract around $11 billion in Chinese investments. The Khalifa Industrial Zone in Abu Dhabi is another place where the Jiangsu Provincial Overseas Cooperation and Investment Company (JOCIC) is investing. The company signed a 50-year lease in 2017 and invested over $1 billion in

the project. “With large ports, sophisticated infrastructure, and a good geographical location, the UAE is well suited to be a global trading hub under the BRI” (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 84). Another Chinese Industrial Park is in Jazan, in south-west Saudi Arabia. It is situated in the Red Sea, where the Chinese also have a port project in Egypt’s Port Said and a military base in Djibouti. These three park and port complexes are the physical manifestation of Chinese BRI investments in the Gulf to date. “The emphasis on infrastructure investment reflects a core priority for both sides (supply and demand): ensuring the uninterrupted flow of commodities necessary for Gulf and Asian economies” (Samaan, 2018, p. 46).

For Fulton, the nature of the China-Gulf trade balance largely favors the Gulf states (2020). Out of the eight regional states, six of them enjoy a trade surplus with China. China accounts for 44% of Omani exports and 28% of Iranian exports. UAE’s oil exports are accounting for 4% of China’s oil imports. “In addition, UAE’s re-export model centered on Dubai’s Jebel Ali Free Zone, makes it a major entrepôt for Chinese goods to other markets, with 60 percent of China’s trade with Europe and Africa passing through Dubai” (Fulton, 2020, p. 496).

4.9 Increasing Chinese Investments In The Gulf, And FTA Agreement

Based on American Enterprise Institute’s Chinese Global Investment Tracker, between 2005-2021, total Chinese investment in Suadi Arabia was $43 billion, in UAE $36 billion, in Kuwait $11 billion, in Qatar $8 billion, in Oman $6 billion, and in Bahrain $1 billion (Mogielnicki, 2022). Fulton remarks that in 2016, China became the largest extra-regional source of FDI to the Gulf (Fulton, 2021). In Gulf countries, Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment (COFDI) has been highly active, as shown in Figure 17. “Financial cooperation within the framework of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Silk Road Fund (SRF) is gaining traction” as more projects come online (Wang et al., 2019, p. 17).

Central to the New Kuwait 2035 Plan, Madinat-al Hareer (Silk City) is a project estimated at $160 billion, with $40 billion as COFDI. Oman’s Duqm Special Economic Zone Authority (SEZAD) is expected to be over $11 billion, with major

Chinese consortiums as the lead. The UAE's dual economic engines of Dubai and Abu Dhabi also attract large amounts of COFDI. "The Chinese investments in the UAE from 2016 to 2019 amounted to over $23.5 billion, the largest Chinese investment in MENA" (Huwaidin, 2022, p. 84).

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Bahrain	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1,420	1,420
Kuwait	0	0	840	0	390	570	260	510	0	100	2,480	1,620	1,330	2,070	220	10,430
Oman	150	0	0	160	720	0	0	0	0	0	300	700	0	320	970	5,490
Qatar	100	540	0	140	740	0	1,850	0	600	560	1,400	1,110	0	230	0	7,050
Saudi Arabia	1,100	0	5,770	1,170	4,230	2,060	4,320	1,830	1,080	4,260	1,390	1,250	1,720	4,710	5,500	38,210
UAE	0	300	650	3,550	670	130	450	3,150	730	640	760	4,150	5,260	8,010	4,320	33,300

Figure 17 Contracting and COFDI in GCC states (USD millions) (Fulton, 2021, p. 234).

Dubai's World Expo 2020, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Complex – the world's largest solar power plant – and the Dubai Motor City residential complex are among the main attractions for Chinese investment. Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, announced in 2019 that Chinese firms signed $3.4 billion in new investments in Dubai. In Abu Dhabi, the Khalifa Port Free Trade Zone (KPFTZ) and Khalifa Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD) had significant investments from the Chinese.

The Chinese are expected to invest up to $10 billion in various projects around Abu Dhabi (Fulton, 2020). Using BRI-related opportunities, the Chinese have been actively partnering with GCC sovereign wealth funds. In his 2015 state visit, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed created the UAE-China Joint Investment Fund, with $5 billion awarded from each side.

Qatar Investment Authority had the same deal with the Chinese over again for $10 billion. Kuwait announced plans for its fund for the Kuwait-China Silk Road. Saudi Arabia announced a $20 billion to topple previous amounts (Fulton, 2020). China's four largest banks opened branches in Dubai to serve the growing demand. Both Qatar and UAE have signed currency swap agreements with China. "The UAE has used its

financial infrastructure to establish itself as a hub for Chinese institutions. There are an estimated 300,000 Chinese citizens in Dubai alone and more than 4,200 Chinese companies in the UAE" (Fulton, 2021, p. 232).

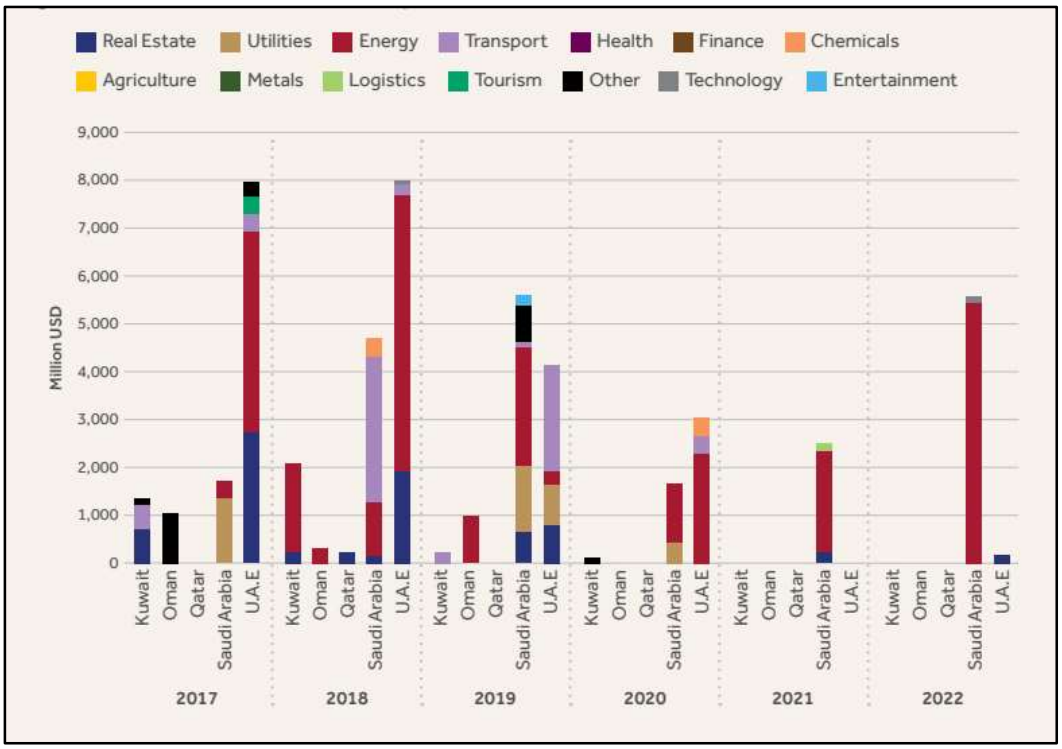

Figure 18 Chinese Investments in The GCC Per Sector, 2017-2022 (American Enterprise Institute, 2022).

The Persian Gulf has increased Chinese Renminbi (RMB) use in the last decade. "The BRI's main benefits include diversification of its sizable foreign exchange reserves and capital, and the internalization of the RMB" (Carrai et al., 2020, p. 3). After activating the UAE-China currency swap agreement in 2017, $6.5 billion was cleared in 2018 alone. Since its activation in 2015, Qatar's clearing center has been used for a remarkable $86 billion, with Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait as its leading users (Fulton, 2020).

"China persistently develops the RMB trade settlement, currency swap, and investment credit between countries along the Belt and Road and other economies" (Wang et al., 2019, p. 28). In 2018, Pakistan also signed a currency swap agreement

with China, which will have implications for the internationalization of RMB (Qin et al., 2021). In the face of low oil prices and to pay the contracts awarded to the Chinese firms for the Saudi Vision 2030 projects, Saudi Arabia is also considering using RMB-dominated bonds. “Iran has been using the RMB for oil payments since 2012, and in 2018 replaced the US dollar with the RMB from its official currency rate reporting platform” (Fulton, 2020, p. 497).

“China is actively pursuing FTAs around the world, with thirteen existing agreements, nine under negotiation, and another eight under consideration” (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 20). In 2004, China and GCC signed the Economy, Investment, and Technology Cooperation Framework Agreement. Under this agreement, the intention to establish a China-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was announced (Fulton, 2020).

Until then, there have been many attempts at finalizing it. In January 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with the Secretary General of GCC and stressed China’s desire to accelerate the FTA talks. Later, several FTA talks were organized throughout 2016 in Riyadh, Guangzhou, and Beijing. “With momentum building, there is considerable political desire on both sides to conclude negotiations as soon as possible” (Fulton & Qian, 2018, p. 17).

By 2019, China has signed FTAs with 11 countries and bilateral investment agreements with 56 countries along the Belt and Road corridors, promoting trade and investment cooperation (Wang et al., 2019). The China-GCC FTA negotiation is of great importance for the Chinese. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait are core members of OPEC; China will have their support if this agreement passes.

The Chinese can combine the FTA with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to create geopolitical economic support for China’s go-west strategy. Economic and trade cooperation is expected to skyrocket through this agreement.

The Gulf region is one of the world’s largest engineering contracting and labor markets, meaning the agreement will create many opportunities for Chinese SOEs and private companies to invest and work in the Middle East. The Chinese can exert more

significant diplomatic and economic influence in the Middle Eastern market through the agreement and create a forward base for Chinese expansion (Fulton & Qian, 2018).

5.5 Renewable Energy Cooperation

"Almost half the carbon emissions from Middle East countries come from generating electricity and producing heat. As a result, there is a growing interest in renewable and nuclear energy in the region" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 227). "Meanwhile, the BRI is being challenged to achieve global trade and cooperation with lower environmental impacts" (Sintusingha, 2021, p. 15). The Middle East has high solar intensity and sufficient wind velocities that can generate clean power without increasing carbon emissions (Al-Maamary et al., 2017).

Since the 2008 financial crisis revealed the GCC countries' vulnerability to oil price fluctuations, they have become more willing to diversify their economies (Atalay, 2017, p. 730). Therefore, GCC countries aim to develop renewable energy as a feasible alternative to fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia and the UAE hope to generate their future energy from renewables and nuclear energy (Huwaidin, 2022). The Gulf provides an excellent opportunity for Chinese renewable energy companies as their domestic renewable energy markets are becoming riskier. "These companies can engage as either equipment suppliers or project developers or as both" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 236).

The total renewable energy installed in the Gulf was 56 megawatts (MW) in 2011, and it has increased to 3261 MWs in 2020 (Al-Sarihi, 2023). The distribution of renewables is as follows: Solar PV (71%), Concentrated Solar Power (23%), biomass (4%), and wind (2%). In the GCC countries, the UAE is the regional leader in adopting renewables, followed by Saudi Arabia and Oman as shown in Figure 19 (Al-Sarihi, 2023). Al-Sarihi argues that "China has used its expertise in renewable technology to gain a substantial foothold in the GCC market" (2023, p. 83).

China's penetration into the GCC markets is mostly in solar PV. Chinese solar share is 76% in Oman, 41% in Qatar, 48% in Saudi Arabia, and 53% in UAE. "Several

Middle Eastern countries have aligned their low-carbon development strategies with BRI to leverage the expertise of Chinese companies and access financing" (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 236).

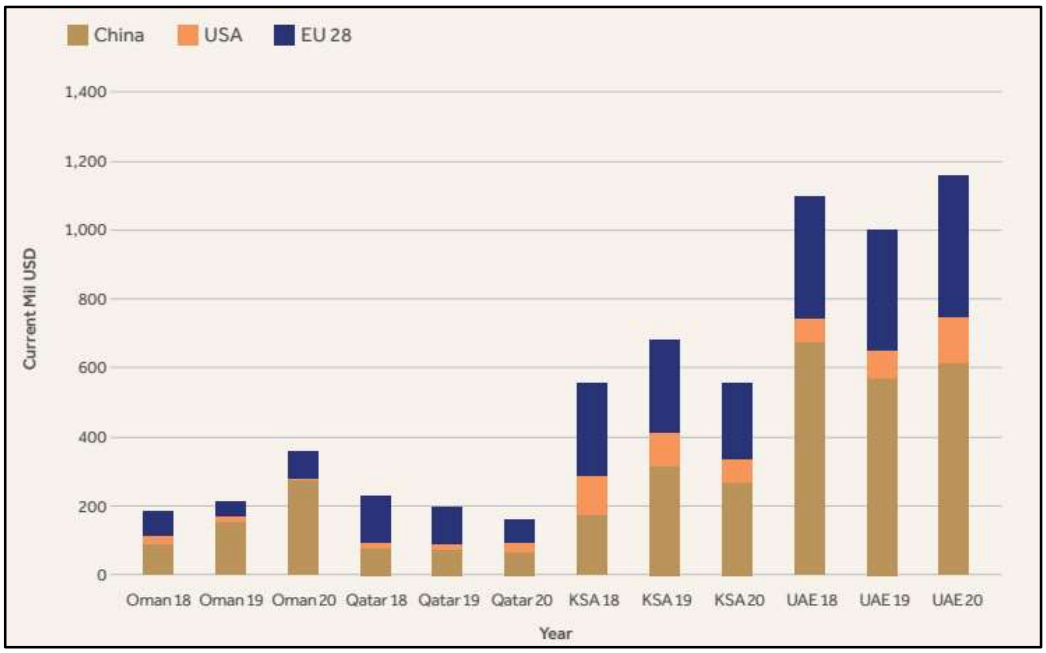

Figure 20 GCC Solar Components Imports by Supplier Country, 2018-2020 (Hatipoğlu et al., 2023, p. 44).

China is keen on financing renewable energy projects in the GCC through the Silk Road Fund under the BRI framework. The Fund acquired 49% of Saudi Arabia's holding ACWA Renewable, which has several projects in the Middle East, such as the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in UAE. China now has ownership of these projects through its acquisition of ACWA.

China's Jinko Solar Holding is a co-developer of the development of the Noor Abu Dhabi solar plant as well. In addition, UAE's Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company) aims to increase its BRI projects and equity partnership with China Resources Group. China's Jinko Solar has a 20% equity stake in Abu Dhabi's Sweihan solar project. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank agreed to lend $60 million to the Ibri II solar project in Oman, marking the first time this bank invested in a renewable energy project in the Gulf (Mogielnicki, 2020). Currently, China dominates

the solar energy technologies and components market, expanding in wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage (CCS) (Mogielnicki, 2020). As most GCC countries and China aim to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, their relationship can extend beyond the oil and gas trade. “The needs of the Middle East recipients vary depending on their capacities in the relevant energy industry. Nevertheless, there are few countries in the region where Chinese energy companies have not been involved” (Andrews-Speed & Yao, 2022, p. 238).

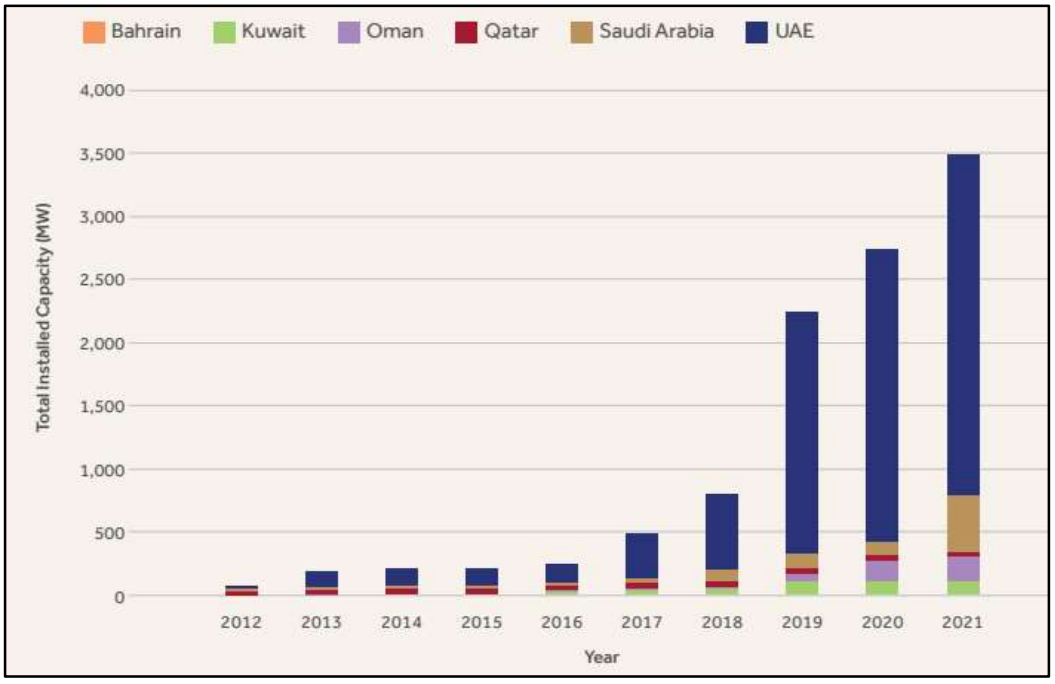

Figure 19 Renewable Energy Installed Capacity in GCC Countries, 2011-2021 (Al-Sarihi, 2023, p. 83)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The research question for this paper was: “How does energy security factor into the decisions that are made regarding Beijing’s foreign policy with the Gulf?” and “What is the role of energy security in China-Gulf relations, especially after BRI is proclaimed?” As China’s ambitious economy continues to grow, the Gulf’s hydrocarbon resources remain as significant as ever; meanwhile, more prospects for the renewables market are opening up. Beijing’s pursuit of diversified and secure energy sources has intensified its relations with the Gulf. Since the proclamation of the BRI, new energy agreements and infrastructure projects have become the cornerstone of this relationship. Energy production investments like new refineries or drilling sites and energy transit investments like pipeline and logistics center constructions are all signaling the improvement in the confidence in Chinese energy investments in the region. Transportation, communication, and infrastructure projects that have been initiated in the Gulf are signaling China’s long-term desire to link the Middle East to Asia. China seems determined to transform the region into a connectivity hub for its energy needs and growing consumer market goods. In return, the Gulf states have recognized the importance of Chinese energy consumption needs and the secure supply of demand. Both sides are poised to utilize this symbiotic relationship fully. Finalizing and announcing the Free Trade Agreement between China and the Gulf could skyrocket the trade relations and create a much more porous relationship. Since the BRI was proclaimed in 2013, China has established five comprehensive strategic partnerships (Egypt, Algeria, UAE, Iran, Saudi Arabia) and eight strategic partnerships (Sudan, Iraq, Morocco, Qatar, Jordan, Djibouti, Kuwait, Oman) in the Middle East. These partnerships underscore China’s multifaceted diplomatic engagement in the region as they involve economic cooperation, infrastructure development, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic collaboration. Beijing has already established the highest level of partnerships with three of the six Gulf

states, signaling full cooperation on regional and international events. The BRI further prompts infrastructure connectivity and economic integration. Passing through a massively Islam-dominated region, the BRI is also expected to uphold the social standing of the Chinese in the eyes of the Muslims and relieve Beijing from the international pressure about its way of handling its Uyghur population.

The unstable environment in the Middle East inevitably raises concerns in China. As China's influence in the region grows, balancing economic imperatives with regional stability or the diversification of partnerships represents a significant challenge. In addition, the intensifying competition between China and the United States reflects a shifting geopolitical landscape as both states seek to safeguard their strategic interests and influence in the region. Energy security, economic investments, and diplomatic engagements have become critical subjects in this rivalry. The US's decreasing dependence on imported hydrocarbon sources and its Pivot to Asia policy have decreased American influence in the Middle East. Coinciding with the rising Chinese involvement in the Middle East, coupled with the BRI, represents a unique moment in history as the geoeconomics of the region is fundamentally changing.

The Gulf region, rich in solar and wind resources, presents significant opportunities for collaboration in developing renewable energy projects. Agreements have been made to develop large-scale solar projects, leveraging Chinese expertise and technology. This aligns with China's commitment to environmental sustainability and the global transition to cleaner energy sources. However, China faces a significant dilemma in balancing economic growth with sustainability; therefore, a dynamic roadmap will be needed to balance global energy dynamics and the pursuit of sustainable growth. China's pursuit of energy security also underscores the country's evolving role as a global player with a stake in the stability and prosperity of the Gulf region. The success of China's energy security endeavors in the Gulf hinges on navigating geopolitical complexities, fostering sustainable partnerships, and adapting to the evolving dynamics of the international energy landscape.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Turkish Summary/Türkçe Özet

Giriş bölümünde yazar tezin konusu olan Çin'in Orta Doğu'da ve özellikle Körfez ülkelerinde son zamanlarda hızla artan nüfuzunu belirtir. Daha sonra bu nüfuza yol açan enerji ticareti üzerinde durur. 21. Yüzyılda hızla artan ikili ilişkilerin, 2013'de açıklanan "Bir Kuşak Bir Yol", 2015'de ise güncellenen "Kuşak Yol Girişimi (KYG)" adı altında ne kadar gelişebileceği belirtilmiştir. Çin, Körfezde artan çok katmanlı yatırımlarından dolayı bölgenin istikrarında bir oyuncu haline gelmiş ve enerji güvenliği Çin için kritik bir anlam kazanmıştır.

Çin'in enerji güvenliği, dış politikasını belirlemesinde önemli bir etken olacaktır. Bu bağlamda, araştırma sorusu: "Çin-Körfez ilişkilerinde KYG açıklandıktan sonra enerji güvenliğinin rolü nedir? Pekin'in Körfez'deki dış politikasına ilişkin alınan kararlarda enerji güvenliği nasıl etkili oluyor?" şeklindedir. Bulgular, Pekin'in bölgedeki enerji güvenliği sorunlarını takdir ettiğini ve ortaya çıkan fırsatlardan yararlanmaya çalıştığını gösteriyor. Çin, enerji geçiş kanallarının sayısını ve kalitesini artırmanın yanı sıra tedarikçilerini çeşitlendirme çalışmaları da yürütmektedir. Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu Donanması, Çin gemilerini ve toprak bütünlüğünü koruyabilecek şekilde hızla modernize edilmektedir. Pekin, Orta Doğu ülkeleriyle ortaklıklarını artırarak stratejik olarak ABD'ye karşı koruma sağlıyor.

Çin, Körfez'deki artan çok boyutlu faaliyetlerini, her devlet için kazan-kazan ekonomik iş birliği modeli olarak tanıtılan devasa BRI çerçevesi altında meşrulaştırabiliyor. ABD-Çin ilişkilerinin son on yılda kötüleşmesi, ABD'nin Orta Doğu'daki nüfuzunun azalmasıyla aynı zamana denk gelmekte, bu da süper güçler arasında daha fazla gerilim yaratmaktadır ve bölge devletlerini bölgenin geleceği konusunda daha fazla sorumluluk almaya zorlamaktadır. ABD'nin bölgedeki hegemonyasının yakın gelecekte devam etmesi beklense de; KYG aracılığıyla Çin

kesinlikle Orta Doğu'ya daha fazla nüfuz edecek ve bölgenin jeoekonomiğini etkilemeye devam edecektir.

Giriş bölümünün devamında araştırmanın önemine yer verilmiştir. Çin'in büyüyen ekonomik gücü devam edecek ve potansiyel olarak küresel ticaret modellerinde, yatırım eğilimlerinde ve ekonomik güç dengesinde değişimlere yol açacaktır. Çin, büyüyen ekonomisini beslemek için büyük miktarlarda enerji, hammadde ve emtiaya ihtiyaç duyacaktır. Bu da Pekin'in artan enerji ihtiyaçlarına göre dış politikasını nasıl şekillendireceğini anlamayı zorunlu kılıyor. Altyapı projeleriyle Çin ile birçok ülke arasındaki bağlantıyı ve ekonomik iş birliğini geliştirmeyi amaçlayan KYG, küresel ticaret yollarını ve nihayetinde dünyanın en stratejik yerlerinin jeopolitiğini yeniden şekillendirebilir. Sonraki bölümde literatür taramasına yer verilmiş olup, tezin işleyişini takip edecek şekilde çeşitli yazarların tez konuları hakkında çalışmaları tartışılmıştır.

Giriş bölümünün son başlıkları, bugünkü Çin'i anlayabilmek adına İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası kurulmuş olan Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk yıllarına ve gelişimine odaklanmaktadır. 1949'da başlayan Mao Zedong döneminde Çin kendi kendine yeterlilik amaçlamıştır ve 1960'lara kadar dış politikasında tarafsız kalmıştır. 1960-1976 arasında Çin dış politikası daha çok milli özgürlük hareketlerini desteklemiş olsa da Mao'nun 1976'daki ölümünden sonra tekrar tarafsız bir politikaya dönülmüştür. Günümüz Çin'in karakteristik ekonomik modelinin temeli 1978'de göreve gelen Deng Xiaoping tarafından atılmıştır. Kendisi Çin'in sosyalist marketine özel ekonomik güçleri tanıtmış, yerel Çinli satıcıları dış dünyaya açılmaları için teşvik etmiştir. Xiaoping'in "Özel Ekonomik Alanlar" stratejisi sayesinde Çin'in belli bölgeleri dış dünyaya açılmış, dış yatırımlar ülkeye çekilmiştir. Xiaoping'in Çin ekonomisini liberalleştirmesi, kısa sürede yüksek büyüme sağlamış, bu da Çin'in hammadde ihtiyacını 1990'lara gelindiğinde hayli arttırmıştır. Xiaoping'den sonraki başkanlar da yurtdışına açılmayı desteklemiş, Çin devleti zamanla dış politikasını yurtdışı yatırımlarına ve hammadde ithalatına çevirmiştir. Çin devleti hem "Devlete Ait İşletmeler" adı altında oluşturulan şirketler aracılığıyla, hem de özel şirketlere verilen kredi, istihbarat, bürokratik destekler şeklinde bu girişimi destekler hale gelmiştir. Tezin ikinci bölümü enerjiye odaklanmıştır ve ilk olarak enerji güvenliği ele alınmıştır.

Enerji güvenliği teriminin literatürde pek çok farklı tanımı bulunmaktadır. Konuyla ilgilenen kişilerin en çok karşılaştığı sorunlardan biri ortak kesin bir tanımın bulunmamasıdır. Tez için yazar Uluslararası Enerji Ajansı'nın tanımını açıklamış ve kullanmıştır. Enerji güvenliğini oluşturan alt başlıklar olan: bulunabilirlik, güvenilirlik, karşılanabilirlik ve sürdürülebilirlik ayrıntılı anlatılmıştır. Tarihsel olarak enerji güvenliği 1973-1974 petrol krizi sırasında önemli hale gelmiştir. Bu tarihlerde yaşanan fiyat şokları tüm alıcıları gelecekte enerji konusunda daha sağlam ilişkiler kurma konusunda motive etmiştir. Günümüzde en çok kullanılan enerji kaynaklarından birisi olan petrol ve doğal gaz az sayıda ülkenin topraklarında bulunmaktadır. Bu durum yakın tarihte pek çok kez üretici, taşıyıcı ve alıcı ülkeler tarafından enerji güvenliğine müdahale edilmesine sebep olmuştur. Günümüzde uluslararası hukuk bu durumun önüne geçememektedir.

Sonraki bölümde 21. yüzyıldaki enerji transformasyonuna değinilir. Günümüzde karbon salınımı nedeniyle çevrede oluşan zararlar göz önüne alındığında, hızla yenilenebilir enerjilere geçme ihtiyacı doğmaktadır. Bu enerji değişimi ani olmayacaktır, ve gerçekleşmesi pek çok jeopolitik değişime yol açacaktır. Enerji değişiminden zarar görecek ülkeler bu bölümde tartışılmış, Orta Doğu'da değişecek olan jeopolitik dengelere değinilmiştir.

Körfez ülkelerinin bu değişim için hedefledikleri 5, 10 ve 15 yıllık planlar gösterilmiştir. Uluslararası Enerji Ajansı'nın (UEA) 2022 enerji kaynakları raporu ayrıntılı olarak incelenmiş, 2050 yılına kadar tahmin edilen enerji kaynağı tüketim miktarları karşılaştırılmıştır. Verilen üç farklı senaryo için oluşturulmuş olup, çevreye zararlı enerji kaynakları tüketimini ne kadar sınırlayabildiğimiz ölçüsünde farklı gelecekler tahmin edilmektedir.

Sonraki bölümde Çin'deki enerji değişimi incelemiştir. Çin'de 2010 yılından itibaren önem kazanan çevreci enerji kullanımı, Başkan Xi Jinping'in 2013'de "artık geçici ekonomik gelişme için çevreyi feda etmeyeceğiz" açıklaması ile somut bir seviyeye ulaşmıştır. Çin 2021'de hırslı bir plan içinde 2030 yılında karbon salınımı zirvesini görüp, 2060'a kadar karbon nötrlüğünü sağlamayı hedeflemektedir. Fakat Çin'in enerji değişimi, gelişim ile çevre yönetimi arasında hassas bir denge gerektirmektedir. Çin bu değişimi bir enerji güvenliği meselesi olarak görüyor olacak ki, kömür

tüketimini azaltmayı planlarken, kaybettiği enerjiyi sağlamak için bir yandan da nükleer enerjiye yatırım yapmaktadır. Almanya nükleer enerji üretimini ortadan kaldırmaya çalışırken Çin hali hazırda olan 16 santraline 26 tane daha eklemeyi planlamaktadır. Bölümün devamında ABD Enerji Bilgi Yönetimi'nin grafikleri kullanılarak, yıllar içinde Çin'in elektrik üretim tiplerindeki değişimler ve günümüz oranları gösterilmiş ve Çin'in yenilenebilir enerjiler teknolojisinde kat ettiği yol anlatılmıştır. Çin şu anda yenilenebilir enerji üretim tesis adeti, teknoloji patentleri ve yedek parça üretimi konusunda dünya lideri konumundadır. Bir sonraki bölümde, ABD'nin Paris Anlaşmasından çekilmesi sonucu dünya iklim devleri konumuna yükselen Avrupa Birliği ve Çin'in enerji değişimini konusunda beraber çalışabilecekleri alanlar tartışılmıştır.

Üçüncü bölüm Çin'in enerji güvenliği hakkındadır. Çin'de orta sınıfa ulaşan kitleler arttıkça enerji ihtiyacı yükselecek, Çin ithal ettiği enerjilerin güvenliğini, büyümesini devam ettirebilmek adına sağlamak zorunda kalacaktır. Çin enerji güvenliğine politik bir ambargo ihtimali düşük gözükmektedir, çünkü pek çok farklı alıcı ile çalışmaktadır ve uluslararası camiada tarafsız bir dış politika izlemektedir. Çin ithal ettiği enerjinin büyük bölümünü kıtalararası yollarla almaktadır, bu da deniz kuvvetleri gücünü öne çıkarmaktadır. Çin için en büyük enerji güvenliği tehdidi şu an için enerji transit rotalarının güvenliğidir. Bu bölümde Çin'in enerji transit yolları ve olası tehditler anlatılmaktadır. Çeşitli Amerikan askeri kuruluşları Çin'in deniz kabiliyetlerini yıllardır izlemekte ve bu konuda raporlar sunmaktadır. Bu raporlar incelendiğinde Çin'in 2010'dan sonrasında uluslararası sularda yatırımlarını koruyabilecek seviyeyi hedeflediği gözükmekte ve ABD'ye rakip olarak jet taşıyıcı 3. Savaş gemisini suya çıkartmayı planladığı gözükmektedir. Çin ayrıca Orta Doğu'da Aden Körfezi açıklarındaki korsan gemilere karşı 2008'den beri bölgedeki gemileri korumaktadır.

Sudan örneği, Çin'in enerji güvenliğini sağlamak için uluslararası camia ile nasıl ters düşebileceğini gösteren örneklerden birisidir. 2000'li yıllarda Darfur'daki iç karışıklık nedeniyle Çin'in ülkedeki petrol yatırımları zarar görmüştür. Çin merkez hükümet ile Darfur'daki militan güçler arasında bir denge bulmaya çalışmış, Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi'nde alınan kararlarda zaman zaman kararsız kalma hakkını kullanmıştır. Bu örnek Çin'in bazen enerji güvenliğini sağlamak için uluslararası

eleştirilerin hedefi haline gelebileceğini ve otoriter rejimlere destek verebileceğini göstermiştir.

Enerji güvenliğinin öbür yüzü olan "talep güvenliği" Çin'in Orta Doğu'ya sağladığı faydalardan birisidir. Çin devamlı büyüyen ekonomisini devam ettirebilmek için Orta Doğu'ya bir nevi sürekli enerji ithalatı imkânı vermiş bulunmaktadır. Bu talep güvenliği imkânı, bölgede en çok İran'ın işine yaramıştır. İran, ABD'nin kendisine koyduğu ambargoları Çin ile iyi ilişkileri sayesinde hafifletmiş, petrol ve doğalgazını satabileceği bir alıcı bulmuştur. İran örneği gösteriyor ki, Çin Orta Doğu'da Batılı ülkelerin koyduğu ambargoları delmek için güçlü bir alternatif olarak kalacaktır.

Tezin dördüncü bölümü Çin ile Orta Doğu ilişkileri hakkındadır. Bölüm başlangıcında son yıllarda uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe yer kazanmış "stratejik riskten korunma" (strategic hedging) terimi açıklanmıştır. Terim Chaziza (2015) tarafından "tek kutuplu sistemlere özgü belirsizliklerle başa çıkmak için ikinci kademe devletlerin sistem lideriyle rekabet etme ve işbirliği yapma konusunda kullandığı bir dış politika davranışı" şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Çin'in Orta Doğu'daki çeşitli ülkeler ile yakınlaşması ve ABD'ye karşı gardını alırken, ABD'nin tepki vermeyeceği bir seviye izlemesi, stratejik riskten korunma terimi ile açıklandığında daha da anlam kazanmaktadır. Çin'in Orta Doğu ülkeleri ile artan ilişkileri bu bölümde ilk olarak diplomatik olarak incelenmiştir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden beri Çin 78 ülke ve 5 bölgesel kuruluşla stratejik partnerlik kurmuştur. Çin'in dış politikasında önem sırasına göre beş farklı seviyede partnerlik ilişkisi mevcuttur. En önemli seviye olarak İran, Suudi Arabistan ve BAE ile kapsamlı stratejik partnerliği mevcuttur. Daha az önemli olarak Irak, Kuveyt, Oman ve Katar ile stratejik partnerliği bulunmaktadır. En son olarak Bahreyn, Lübnan, Suriye ve Yemenle dostluk iş birliği ortaklığına sahiptir. Çin diplomasisi, ABD güvenlik şemsiyesi altında Orta Doğu'ya düşük maliyetle giriş yapabildi. Geçtiğimiz 20 yıl içinde Pekin, ABD'yi ve Orta Doğulu devletleri yabancılaştırmadan bölgesel bir varlık inşa edebilmeyi başardı. Çin, bölgedeki (Suudi Arabistan ve İran gibi) rekabetlere karşı tarafsız bir duruş sergiliyor. Sıfır düşman politikası var ve bazı çatışmaların çözümüne yardımcı olmak için zaman zaman diplomasiye başvuruyor. Ancak bölgedeki yatırımları arttıkça, bölgenin stabilitesinde bir oyuncu haline geldi. Güvenliği sağlamak için bölgede terörizm ile mücadele ediyor

ve uluslararası kamuoyunda da aynı desteği kendi ülkesindeki İslami muhalifler için bekliyor. Çin, ÇHC Uygurları, Uygur diasporası ve Orta Asya ve Orta Doğu'daki Müslüman gruplar arasındaki olası koordinasyon ve iş birliğinden korkuyor. Her ne kadar Orta Doğu coğrafi olarak Çin ile sınır komşusu olmasa da etnik, dini ve kültürel bağlar Ortadoğu'dan Pekin'e kadar uzanıyor.

Çin'in bölgeyle en güçlü ilişkisi enerji üzerinden kuruluyor. Petrol için ilk ithalatını 1983'de Oman'dan yapan Çin, günümüzde petrol ihtiyacının yaklaşık %30'unu Körfez ülkelerinden, %50'sini ise Orta Doğu'dan ithal ediyor. 1999'da "Stratejik Petrol İş birliği Anlaşması" ile petrol ilişkilerini derinleştiren Çin ve Suudi Arabistan ilişkisi, 2002'de Suudi Arabistan'ın Çin'in en büyük petrol sağlayıcısı ülke haline gelmesi ile zirveye ulaştı. 2008'den beri Çin Ulusal Petrol Şirketi Irak petrolünde baskın oyuncu haline geldi. 2009'dan beri de Irak $20 milyar üzerinde Çin Dışa Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımı aldı. Çin, Irak'taki petrol ve doğal gaz kaynaklarını çıkartmak ve işlemek istemektedir. Uluslararası ambargolara rağmen Çin'in en büyük üç devlet destekli enerji firması İran'da 2004'den beri faaliyet göstermektedirler. 2004 ile 2011 arasında İran'ın petrol ve doğal gaz kaynaklarına $130 milyar yatırım yapıldı. Fakat Çin'in İran ile ticareti ABD ambargoları yüzünden kesik kesik olmaktadır. En son Trump yönetiminin ağır yaptırımları doğrultusunda 2019'da Çin, İran'dan ithal ettiği enerjiyi yarıya indirmiştir. Çin'in Orta Doğu'daki diğer petrol tedarikçileri Oman, Kuveyt, BAE'dir.

Tezin bir sonraki bölümü Kuşak Yol Girişimi hakkındadır. KYG 60'dan fazla ülkeyi, 4,5 milyardan fazla insanı ve $8 trilyon yatırımdan fazlasını kapsar. KYG bugüne kadar yapılmış dünyanın en büyük ve en pahalı projelerinden birisidir ve, Doğu'dan yükselen bir süper gücü temsil etmektedir. Eğer KYG başarılı olursa, 2. Dünya Savaşı sonrası ABD'nin kurduğu global ekonomik düzeni yerinden edebilecek güce sahip. KYG'nin iki ana hedefi var: ekonomik olarak ticareti canlandırmak ve politik-sosyal olarak Çin'in nüfuzunu global olarak arttırmak. KYG tarihi İpek Yolu'nu örnek alan iki ana hattı canlandırmak istiyor: Orta ve Güney Asya'dan geçerek Çin'i Avrupa'ya bağlayan bir kara yolu, ve Hint Okyanusundan geçip Çin'i Avrupa'ya bağlayan bir deniz yolu. Pekin KYG'nin asıl motivasyonunun ekonomik olduğunu belirtse de eleştirmenler Çin'in politik ve sosyal olarak yumuşak gücünü arttırmak için bu projeyi

kullandığını belirtiyor. Ayrıca KYG kapsamında büyük borçların altına girip geri ödeyemeyen ve tavizler vermek zorunda kalan ülkeler arttıkça projenin bir borç krizini körüklediğinden de korkuluyor. Bir 2018 araştırmasına göre 23 ülke KYG için aldığı borçları ödeyemeyecek durumda kalmış vaziyette. Cibuti bu ülkeler arasında en kötü durumda olanı, borcunun Gayri Safi Milli Hasılasına oranı %85, ve borcun büyük bir kısmı Çin Exim Bankası'na. KYG'nin potansiyelleri kadar riskleri de bir hayli çok. Proje, dünyanın en dengesiz bölgelerinden geçiyor (Irak, Suriye, Afganistan gibi). Projenin öngördüğü değişiklikler kurulduğu bölgelerde su sıkıntısına yol açacağı riski yüksek. Mesela Pakistan'daki Gwadar limanı için kullanılacak sular 100 mil uzaktan getirtiliyor. Çin KYG kapsamında ev sahibi ülkelerden Tek Çin politikasına uymalarını bekliyor. Bu politika kapsamında Tayvan ile ilişkileri azaltmak, Çin'in Uygur azınlığını ele alma şeklini onaylamak, Tibet konusunda Çin'e destek olmak, Çin'in pozisyonunu Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi'nde desteklemek ve projelerde Çinli firmalara öncelik vermek gibi koşullar var. Çin'in son yıllarda Orta Doğu'daki hızla gelişen ilişkileri ister istemez ABD'nin bölgedeki aktiviteleri ile karşılaştırılmaktadır. ABD'nin aksine Çin'in iş yaptığı ülkelerden insan hakları veya demokrasiye önem vermesini şart koşmaması, bazı uzmanlar tarafından ABD'ye göre bölgede daha hızlı yayılmasının sebebi olarak gösterilmektedir. "Pekin Mutabakatı" olarak anılan terim politik otoriterlik, bir tanım ekonomik özgürlükler, seçici özelleştirme ve limitli endüstri düzenlemesini temsil etmektedir. Çin'in Orta Doğu'daki başarısı Pekin Mutabakatının Washington Mutabakatına göre bölgeye daha uygun olması ve hali hazırda işleyen sistemi değiştirmeye çalışmaması olarak gösterilebilir.

Tezin bir sonraki bölümü KYG döneminde Çin-Orta Doğu İlişkileri hakkındadır. KYG'nin başarılı olmasını sağlamak için Çin bölgede yüksek yatırımlar yapmaktadır. 2013-2019 arası Çin bölgeye $93,3 milyar yatırım yapmıştır. Bu yatırımın $52 milyarı enerjiye, $18 milyarı taşımacılığa, $18 milyarı konuta yapılmıştır. Çin Orta Doğu'nun ticari partneri olarak ABD'yi aşmış ve bölgenin en büyük direkt dış yatırımcısı olmuştur. 2016 yılında Çin Başkanı Xi Jinping Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika (ODKA) bölgesine verdiği önemi göstermek için Arap Politikası Belgesini yayınladı. Bu belgeye göre bölge ile yapılacak etkileşimlere yeni bir yaklaşım getirildi. 1+2+3 adını verdiği formüle göre "1" iş birliğinin ana maddesi olan enerji ticareti, "2" altyapı

kurulumu, ticaret ve yatırımlar, "3" ise nükleer enerji, uzay uyduları ve yenilenebilir enerji üzerine olacak. Arap Politikası Belgesine göre ilişkiler Çin'in Barış İçinde Bir Arada Yaşamanın Beş İlkesini üzerine kurulacaktı: egemenlik ve toprak bütünlüğüne karşılıklı saygı (1); karşılıklı saldırmazlık (2); içişlerine karşılıklı karışmama (3); eşitlik ve karşılıklı yarar (4); ve barış içinde bir arada yaşama (5). KYG ile Çin'in bölgedeki ilişkisi ticareti ve petrol alım satımını aşarak askeri, silah, aşılar, otomobil, telekomünikasyon gibi sektörleri de içine aldı. Bu gelişmeler ABD ve Avrupa gibi bölgede tarihsel olarak dominant olan güçleri tedirgin etti.

Tezin son ana bölümü Çin ile Körfez ülkelerinin KYG dönemindeki ilişkileri hakkındadır. 21. Yüzyılda Çin'in hızlı ekonomik büyümesi, ordu ve donanmasının modernize hale gelmesi ve uluslararası alanda artan nüfuzu ABD'yi tedirgin etmektedir. 2009-2019 yılları arasında Çin-ABD ilişkileri; Güney Çin Denizinde artan gerilim, ticaret dengesizlikleri, fikri mülkiyet sorunları, Tayvan sorunu, Hong Kong'daki protestolar gibi konular nedeniyle bir hayli zarar gördü. Trump yönetimi Çin'i revizyonist bir güç ilan etmesi ve ABD'ye tehdit olduğunu belirtmesi ile ilişkiler dibi gördü. İzolasyonist Trump yönetimi Trans-Pasifik İşbirliği'nden ayrıldı ve Çin'e ticari savaş açtı. ABD'nin Obama yönetimi altında Asya Pivotu olarak başlattığı dış politika çerçevesinde yüzünü Orta Doğu'dan Asya'ya çevirmesi, hidrokarbon kaynaklara olan ihtiyacının azalması ve Arap Baharı, Suriye İç Savaşı ve Katar Krizi sırasında pasif davranışları sebebiyle, ABD nüfuzu Orta Doğu'da zayıfladı. Bu durumda bazı uzmanlar ABD'nin Orta Doğu'daki yerini zamanla Çin'in alacağını düşünse de çoğunluk görüş Çin'in stratejik riskten korunma politikası ile ABD'yi tehdit etmeden olabildiğince bölgedeki ülkeler ile iş birliğini arttıracağı yönünde. Bu kapsamda bir gerilim oluşması Çin'in sadece ekonomi ile sınırlı kalıp kalmayacağına, ABD'nin bölgedeki hedeflerinin ne olduğuna ve tabii ki de bölge ülkelerinin dış politikalarına bağlı olacak.

Çin'in Orta Doğu ülkeleri ile ilişkisi ikili fayda içerisinde ilerlemektedir: Körfez ülkeleri hidrokarbon kaynaklarını ihraç etmek için uzun vadeli marketlere ihtiyaç duymaktadır, Çin ise büyüyen ekonomisini beslemek için daha uzun yıllar hidrokarbon enerji kaynaklarına ihtiyaç duyacaktır. Çin ile Körfez ülkeleri KYG içeriğinde birkaç alanda ilişkilerini derinleştirdiler. İlki Stratejik Partnerlikler şeklinde oldu. 2012'de

Çin Başbakanı Wen Jiabao'nun BAE ziyareti ve sonrasında imzalanan stratejik partnerlik anlaşması sonrası Bahreyn dışında tüm Körfez ülkeleri Çin ile bir partnerlik anlaşması imzaladılar. Çin ve Körfez başkanları bu zamanda birbirlerini en az bir kere ziyaret ettiler. Bu ziyaretler her zaman bir kontrat, Uzlaşı Belgesi ve güçlendirilmiş diplomatik ilişkiler ile sonuçlandı. Mesela Başkan Xi Jinping'in 2016 Riyad gezisi sonrasındaki iki yılda $135 milyar Uzlaşı Belgesi imzalandı. Bu monarşiler için, milli gelişim planları ve KYG arasındaki uyum paha biçilemez. Çin en yüksek partnerliği olan Kapsamlı Stratejik Partnerliği Suudi Arabistan ve İran ile 2016'da, BAE ile 2018'de imzaladı. Bir alt seviye olan Stratejik Partnerliği Katar ile 2014'de, Irak ile 2015'de, Oman ve Kuveyt ile 2018'de imzaladı. Bahreyn, Çin ile stratejik partnerliği olmayan tek Körfez ülkesi konumundadır. Kapsamlı stratejik partnerlik ile kast edilen her konuyu kapsayan, uzun süreli, eşit, karşılıklı kazanca dayanan bir birliktelik. Çin neden ittifaklar kurmuyor? Uzmanlar partnerliklerin ortak amaç uğruna oluşturulduğunu, ittifakların ise ortak tehditlere karşı oluşturulduğunu belirtiyor. Pekin tam olarak benimsemediği amaçlar için ittifak tuzağına düşmek istemiyor. ABD'nin Orta Doğu'da sağladığı güvenlik Çin'e eşsiz bir avantaj sağlıyor: bölgenin güvenliğine katkıda bulunmadan ilişkilerini sorunsuz bir şekilde geliştirebilmek. Tüm stratejik ortaklıkların KYG'nin açıklandığı 2016'dan sonra oluşturulması Çin'in bölgedeki ülkelere bu kapsamda ne kadar önem verdiğini gösteriyor.

KYG altında gelişen ilişkilerin bir diğer hali altyapı çalışmalarında iş birliğidir. Arap Baharı ve iç savaşlar sonrasında Körfez yöneticileri ülkelerinde ekonomik büyümeyi sağlamak ve korumak zorunda kaldılar. Bu kapsamda Çin'in son 40 yıldır başarmakta olduğu ekonomik büyüme ve gelişme tecrübesinden yararlanmak istiyorlar. KYG bu planlar için mükemmel fırsatı temsil ediyor. Körfez ülkeleri, orta-uzun vadeli planlar oluşturdular ve KYG aracılığı ile bu planlardaki ekonomik büyüme, güçlü altyapı, yenilenebilir enerjilere geçiş gibi projeleri gerçekleştirmeyi hedefliyorlar. Uzmanlara göre Körfez'deki en büyük KYG altyapı çalışmaları BAE-Suudi Arabistan-Oman arasındaki ulaşımı geliştirmek üzerine kurulduğunu belirtiyor. Oman'daki SEZAD petrol depolama alanı Orta Doğu'nun en büyük deposu olacak. Dukm'daki inşa edilen liman Avrupa-Orta Doğu-Asya'yı bağlayan bir konumda olacak. Projeyi üstlenen Oman Wanfang adlı Çinli Konsorsiyum $11 milyarlık bir yatırım gerekeceğini düşünüyor. BAE; geniş limanları, gelişmiş altyapısı ve konumu sayesinde KYG için

global bir ticaret alanı olmaya aday yerlerden biri. Abu Dabi'deki Halife Endüstriyel Parkı Çinli Jiangsu şirketine 50 yıllığına kiralandı ve $1 milyar yatırım hedefleniyor. Bir başka KYG yatırımı Suudi Arabistan'ın Cizan kentindeki Endüstriyel Park'ta yapılmakta. Körfez ülkelerinin uzun vadeli enerji çeşitlendirme projeleri kapsamında bu altyapı çalışmaları bölgedeki taşımacılık, iletişim ve bağlantı temellerini atıyor. Uzmanlar bu ilişkinin Körfez ülkeleri lehine olduğunu belirtiyor, hem hammaddelerini Çin'e devamlı olarak satabiliyorlar, hem de kendi ülkelerinde altyapı çalışmalarını uzman bir ülkeye teslim etmiş durumdalar.

KYG altında Körfez ülkelerinin Çin ile beraber çalıştığı başka bir alan finansal yatırımlar ve Serbest Ticaret Anlaşmasıdır. 2005 ile 2017 arasında Çin'in Körfez ülkelerine yaptığı Dış Direkt Yatırımı $60 milyarı geçmiş durumdadır. Çin'in en büyük dört bankası Dubai'de şubeler açmıştır. Katar ve BAE, Çin ile döviz takası anlaşması imzaladılar. Yatırımlarda görülen ortak çalışma stili kendini ortak yatırım fonlarında da göstermektedir. 2015'de BAE ile $5 milyar ortak yatırım fonu oluşturulmuş, daha sonra Katar aynı anlaşmayı $10 milyar için yapmış, Kuveyt kendi anlaşması için planlarını açıklamış, en son Suudi Arabistan $20 milyar ortak yatırım fonu oluşturulacağını belirtmiştir. Tüm bu işlemler sırasında bölgede hızla artan bir Renminbi (Çin ulusal parası) kullanımı görülmüştür. 2017'de imzalanan BAE-Çin döviz takas anlaşması sonrası, 2018 yılında $6.5 milyar RMB ile takas edilmiştir. 2015'de aktive edilen Katar döviz takas merkezi $86 milyarı bozdurmuştur. Zaman zaman petrol fiyatlarının düşmesinden kaynaklı, Suudi Arabistan RMB ağırlıklı tahviller kullanmayı da düşünmektedir. Iran ise 2012'den beri petrol ödemelerini RMB ile almaktadır ve 2018'de resmi döviz kuru raporlama platformunda ABD dolarını RMB ile değiştirmiştir. Çin Körfez'in enerji piyasasında daha da dahil oldukça dolar kullanmak masraflı hale gelmektedir. KYG ile tamamlanması mümkün olan bir diğer proje Serbest Ticaret Anlaşmasıdır (STA). 1996'da Çin ile KİK arasında imzalanan ekonomik ve politik uzlaşı mekanizması yerini 2004'de Ekonomi, Ticaret, Yatırım ve Teknoloji İş birliği Anlaşmasına dönüşmüştür. Bu anlaşma altında bir STA oluşturma planı açıklanmış ve bu tarihten itibaren bu amaçta çalışılmıştır. En son 2016'da STA anlaşmasını tamamlamak için görüşmelerin hızlandırılmasına karar verilmiştir. KYG'nin açıklanması ile STA'nın önemi artmıştır, ancak henüz bir anlaşma imzalanamamıştır. STA sayesinde Çin enerji güvenliğini garanti altına alabilecek,

ticari ilişkiler çok daha hızlı artacak, Çin devletine ait işletmeler çok daha kolay bir şekilde Körfez marketine giriş yapabilecektir. Çin dünya çapında STA'lar kovalamaktadır, halihazırda 13 tane imzaladığı anlaşma vardır, dokuz tane hazırlanmakta olan vardır ve sekiz tane hazırlanması planlanan STA'sı vardır.

KYG altında bir diğer iş birliği yenilenebilir enerjiler kapsamında olacaktır. Körfez'de inşa edilmiş yenilenebilir enerji miktarı 2011'de 56 megavatken 2020 yılına gelindiğinde bu miktar 3261 megavata çıkmıştır. Yenilenebilir enerji kaynakları dağılımı şu şekildedir: Güneş PV panelleri en yaygın kullanılan (%71), Konsantre Güneş Gücü (%23), biyokütle (%4), rüzgâr (%2). Yenilenebilir enerji sahiplenmede lider ülke BAE'dir, onu Suudi Arabistan ve Oman izlemektedir. Çin yenilenebilir enerjiler konusundaki uzmanlığı sayesinde Körfez ülkelerine hızlı bir giriş yapmıştır. Çin'in güneş panelleri oranı Oman'da %76, Katar'da %41, Suudi Arabistan'da %48, ve BAE'de %53 şeklindedir. Çin Körfez'de yenilenebilir enerji yatırımları konusunda lider olmaya istekli durumdadır.

Bu makalenin araştırma sorusu şuydu: "Enerji güvenliği, Pekin'in Körfez'le olan dış politikasına ilişkin alınan kararları nasıl etkiliyor?" ve "Özellikle KYG ilan edildikten sonra Çin-Körfez ilişkilerinde enerji güvenliğinin rolü nedir?" Çin'in iddialı ekonomisi büyümeye devam ederken, Körfez'in hidrokarbon kaynakları her zamanki gibi önemini koruyor, bu arada yenilenebilir enerji piyasasına yönelik daha fazla fırsat açılıyor. Pekin'in çeşitlendirilmiş ve güvenli enerji kaynakları arayışı, Körfez ile ilişkilerini yoğunlaştırdı. KYG'nin ilanından bu yana yeni enerji anlaşmaları ve altyapı projeleri bu ilişkinin temel taşı haline geldi. Yeni rafineriler veya sondaj sahaları gibi enerji üretim yatırımları, boru hattı ve lojistik merkezi inşaatları gibi enerji transit yatırımları, Çin'in bölgedeki enerji yatırımlarına olan güvenin arttığına işaret ediyor.

Körfez'de başlatılan ulaşım, iletişim ve altyapı projeleri, Çin'in Orta Doğu'yu Asya'ya bağlama konusundaki uzun vadeli isteğinin sinyalini veriyor. Çin, bölgeyi hem enerji ihtiyaçları hem de büyüyen tüketim pazarı malları için bir bağlantı merkezine dönüştürmeye kararlı görünüyor. Buna karşılık Körfez ülkeleri Çin'in enerji tüketim ihtiyaçlarının ve güvenli talep arzının öneminin farkına vardılar. Her iki taraf da bu simbiyotik ilişkiden tam anlamıyla yararlanmaya hazır. Çin ile Körfez arasındaki

Serbest Ticaret Anlaşmasının sonuçlandırılması ve duyurulması, aradaki ticari ilişkileri hızla artırabilir ve çok geçirgen bir ilişki yaratabilir.

KYG'nin 2013 yılında ilan edilmesinden bu yana Çin, beş kapsamlı stratejik ortaklık (Mısır, Cezayir, BAE, İran, Suudi Arabistan) ve sekiz stratejik ortaklık (Sudan, Irak, Fas, Katar, Ürdün, Cibuti, Kuveyt, Umman) kurmuştur. Orta Doğu. Bu ortaklıklar, ekonomik işbirliğini, altyapı gelişimini, kültürel alışverişi ve diplomatik işbirliğini içerdiğinden Çin'in bölgedeki çok yönlü diplomatik katılımının altını çiziyor. Pekin halihazırda altı Körfez ülkesinden üçüyle en üst düzeyde ortaklıklar kurarak bölgesel ve uluslararası etkinliklerde tam bir işbirliğinin sinyalini verdi. BRI ayrıca altyapı bağlantısını ve ekonomik entegrasyonu teşvik eder. Büyük ölçüde İslam'ın hakim olduğu bir bölgeden geçen KYG'nin aynı zamanda Çinlilerin Müslümanların gözündeki sosyal konumunu koruması ve Pekin'i Uygur nüfusunu idare etme biçimiyle ilgili uluslararası baskıdan kurtarması bekleniyor.

Orta Doğu'daki istikrarsız ortam ister istemez Çin'de endişelere yol açıyor. Çin'in bölgedeki nüfuzu arttıkça; ekonomik zorunlulukların bölgesel istikrarla veya ortaklıkların çeşitlendirilmesiyle dengelenmesi önemli bir zorluğu temsil etmektedir. Buna ek olarak, Çin ile ABD arasında yoğunlaşan rekabet, her iki devletin de bölgedeki stratejik çıkarlarını ve nüfuzunu korumaya çalışması nedeniyle değişen jeopolitik manzarayı yansıtıyor. Enerji güvenliği, ekonomik yatırımlar ve diplomatik angajmanlar bu rekabetin ana konuları haline geldi. ABD'nin ithal hidrokarbon kaynaklarına bağımlılığının azalması ve Asya'ya yönelme politikası, Orta Doğu'daki nüfuzunun azalmasına neden oldu. KYG ile birlikte Çin'in Ortadoğu'da artan nüfuzuyla, bunun aynı zamana denk gelmesi, bölgenin jeopolitiğinin temelden değişmesi nedeniyle tarihte eşsiz bir anı temsil ediyor.

Güneş ve rüzgâr kaynakları açısından zengin olan Körfez bölgesi, yenilenebilir enerji projelerinin geliştirilmesinde önemli iş birliği fırsatları sunuyor. Çin uzmanlığından ve teknolojisinden yararlanarak büyük ölçekli güneş enerjisi projelerinin geliştirilmesi için anlaşmalar yapıldı. Bu, Çin'in çevresel sürdürülebilirlik ve daha temiz enerji kaynaklarına küresel geçiş konusundaki kararlılığıyla uyumludur. Ancak Çin, ekonomik büyümeyi sürdürülebilirlik ile dengeleme konusunda önemli bir ikilemle

karşı karşıya olduğundan, küresel enerji dinamikleri ile sürdürülebilir büyüme arayışı arasında dengede kalabilmek için dinamik bir yol haritasına ihtiyaç duyulacaktır.

Çin'in enerji güvenliği arayışı aynı zamanda ülkenin Körfez bölgesinin istikrarı ve refahından çıkarı olan küresel bir oyuncu olarak gelişen rolünün de altını çiziyor. Çin'in Körfez'deki enerji güvenliği çabalarının başarısı, jeopolitik karmaşıklıkların üstesinden gelinmesine, sürdürülebilir ortaklıkların teşvik edilmesine ve uluslararası enerji ortamının gelişen dinamiklerine uyum sağlanmasına bağlıdır.

APPENDIX B: Thesis Permission Form / Tez İzin Formu

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English) : ÇİN'İN KÖRFEZ'DEKİ ENERJİ GÜVENLİĞİ / CHINA'S ENERGY SECURITY IN THE GULF

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: **Yüksek Lisans** / Master [X] **Doktora** / PhD [ ]

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