

## China in the Middle East: Objectives and opportunities

By

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### Abstract:

*The study examines the Chinese role in the region of Middle East. China's interests in the region are growing due to its increasing energy needs and geo-political objectives. The growing Chinese role in the region has sundry implications for the Middle East. It is evident from the history of its relations with the regional states that China have long been involve in the regional diplomatic affairs of the Middle East. China kept its interests and objectives in the Middle East in secret for a long time. However, it's increasing energy and geo-political objectives, China is now directly involved in the regional diplomatic affairs. China considers the Middle East vital for its growing energy needs. Presently. China's oil production is being consumed and in near future China will not have adequate oil production to meet its energy needs. China regards the region vital for its economic prosperity as the Middle East has the world's largest reservoirs of natural resources. The economic and geo-political potential of the Middle East gets attention of the world powers and China is among the most active player in the regional affairs. The Chinese huge investment in shape of One Belt and One Road Initiative and China Pakistan Economic Corridor reflects China's policy towards the region. China's wants safe trade routes towards the Middle East in order to ensure smooth running of its trade activities. These routes will enable China imports the regional oil and exports its products. These route would be a safer alternative as China feel the US and its ally's threats in South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca. Secondary source of data collection has been adopted for this study.*

**Keywords:** China, Middle East, CPEC, OIL, Geo-strategic.

### Introduction:

The Middle East has been central to China's foreign policy. Since the Establishment of new China in 1949 it has been in want to establish friendly diplomatic ties with the regional states. Initially, the regional states were reluctant in establishing ties with revolutionary China. However, the regional states started founding diplomatic relations with

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China. The new China. Which was in want to prosper its economy badly effected due to wars. This scenario turns Chinese attention towards the regional huge reservoirs of oil and gas. The growing Chinese role in the region has sundry implications for the Middle East. It is evident from the history of its relations with the regional states that China have long been involve in the regional diplomatic affairs of the region. China kept its interests and objectives in the Middle East in secret for a long time. However, it's increasing energy and geo-political objectives, China is now directly involved in the regional diplomatic affairs. China considers the Middle East vital for its growing energy needs. Presently. China's oil production is being consumed and in near future China will not have adequate oil production to meet its energy needs. China regards the region vital for its economic prosperity as the Middle East has the world's largest reservoirs of natural resources (Medeiros, 2009).

The economic and geo-political potential of the Middle East gets attention of the world powers and China is among the most active player in the regional affairs. The Chinese huge investment in shape of One Belt and One Road Initiative and China Pakistan Economic Corridor reflects China's policy towards the region. China's wants safe trade routes towards the Middle East in order to ensure smooth running of its trade activities (Zugui, 2014). These routes will enable China imports the regional oil and exports its products. These route would be a safer alternative as China feel the US and its ally's threats in South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca. Secondary source of data collection has been adopted for this study.

### **China's Interest in the Middle East:**

The Middle East holds great importance for China. The Middle East is regarded by China vital in order to meet its energy needs. Energy is vital for Chinese industrial system. The gradual consumption of Chinese oil production would make it more dependent on the huge oil and gas reservoirs of the Middle East. The Middle East has been central Chinese foreign policy. The last decade witnessed Chinese interest more growing in the region. It is evident from the present scenario, that China would be more dependent on the natural resources of the region in near future. Following are the Chinese objectives in the Middle East (Alterman, 2008).

### **Oil:**

Oil is vital for the smooth running of Chinese economic system. The Middle East has the world's largest oil and gas reservoirs. Presently, the region is the largest oil exporter to China. The export of oil is the main objective of China in the Middle East. China has been engage in developing ties with regional country countries in order to extend its trade. China is investing on One Road and One Belt project which aims at linking China with the Middle East and ensuring safe trade route. The gradual oil consumption of Chinese oil production and the security challenges in its present trade route; China has been looking for safe alternatives. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide China

safe and reliable trade route. Chinese involvement and investment in the Middle East have huge profits for China for its energy needs (Xinchun, 2014).

### **Geo-Political Opportunities:**

The Middle East hold great significance for China in order to gain geo-political objectives. In the beginning of revolutionary China in 1949, the regional states feared China and shown unwillingness to set up diplomatic ties. But, soon many regional states established diplomatic ties with China. The United States policies in the region have created sense of deprivation among the regional populace (Levine, 1984). The so-called war against terror have led to the genocide of innocent people in many regional countries. The United States and its allies in have threaten Chinese trade route. These threats are compelling China to play more active and pragmatic role in the region. The Chinese economic policies and expanding trade ties in the Middle East would ultimately enable China to gain its geo-political objectives (Naughton, 2004).

Moreover, China believes that the firm trade ties with regional states will enable it to ensure the support of these countries internationally. Presently, the two great powers of the region; the Saudi Kingdom and Iran enjoy friendly ties with Iran and regards their relations with China of a great importance to them. China have been successful to a great extent in gaining the support of some regional states at international level. Saudi Arabia is the largest in terms of oil export and enjoy high leverage in the Middle East. China gives major significance to its relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important US ally, but it also has firm and ties with China. The Chinese firm ties with the regional states of the Middle East signals its growing hegemony in the Middle East. This would be helpful for China in order to gain its geo-strategic objectives in the region (xijin, 2014).

### **China Challenges: US-Asia Influence:**

The United States recent cut of military aid to Pakistan has caught Pakistan in an evolving cold war between the United States and China-rivalry which has pushed many Asian countries to align with China. The United States blames Pakistan for its alleged support of extremist elements across the border. Pakistan denies the US allegations and declares US responsible for its failure in Afghanistan. The severing Pak-US relations; the growing Indian influences in Afghanistan and Chinese challenges in South China Sea and Indian Ocean is changing the dynamics of international politics (World Times, 2018). Presently, the United States enjoy its dominancy in the Middle East. But its failure to eradicate terrorism in the region and its volatile policies towards the region have created disappointments among the regional populace (Jacobs, 2014). For a long time, China kept its foreign policy objectives behind the scene. But the changing political scenario in international politics, China is now more obvious with its Middle East strategy. The hegemonic role of China will not be acceptable for the United States and its allies as the Chinese

ascendancy would replace it with the United States in the Middle East (Scobell, 2015).

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, it is evident from the findings of the study that the Middle East holds major significance for China in order to meet its increasing energy needs. Apart from energy interest, China has been in want to ensure its dominance in the region. The hegemony in the region will take China near to the position of super power. The economic and geo-strategic status of the Middle East holds great importance in the world. The US presence in the region is contradicting to China's foreign policy objectives. But, once China overcome the US challenge in the Middle East and around Chinese dominance would be ensured. And China, as a dominant player in the region, will be in position extent its economic ties and influence in the world. The growing Chinese role in the region has sundry implications for the Middle East. It is evident from the history of its relations with the regional states that China have long been involve in the regional diplomatic affairs of the region. China kept its interests and objectives in the Middle East in secret for a long time. However, it's increasing energy and geo-political objectives, China is now directly involved in the regional diplomatic affairs. China considers the Middle East vital for its growing energy needs.

The study reveals that China's oil production is being consumed and in near future China will not have adequate oil production to meet its energy needs. China regards the region vital for its economic prosperity as the Middle East has the world's largest reservoirs of natural resources. The economic and geo-political potential of the Middle East gets attention of the world powers and China is among the most active player in the regional affairs. The Chinese huge investment in shape of One Belt and One Road Initiative and China Pakistan Economic Corridor reflects China's policy towards the region. China's wants safe trade routes towards the Middle East in order to ensure smooth running of its trade activities. These routes will enable China imports the regional oil and exports its products. These route would be a safer alternative as China feel the US and its ally's threats in South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca.

### **Suggestions:**

- The Middle East has been a battle ground for world proxies. Which have deep and profound impacts on the peace and stability of the region. China should play positive role to promote peace and stability in the region.
- Presently, China is focusing its economic policies in order to ensure its oil import and extending its trade ties. China, being permanent member of the United Nation and influential state, should play its role to bring an end to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

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