

China through Arab Eyes: American Influence in the Middle East

CHRIS ZAMBELIS and BRANDON GENTRY

© 2008 *Chris Zambelis and Brandon Gentry*

The significance of Beijing's hosting of the second annual China-Arab Cooperation Forum—an event bringing together key envoys from 22 Arab nations under the auspices of the Arab League and their Chinese counterparts—went largely unnoticed in the western media. According to Chinese and Arab news reports, however, the conference, held in May and June 2006, was a success on many levels. As Chinese and Arab dignitaries agreed to greatly strengthen and expand economic, energy, and cultural ties to unprecedented levels over the course of the twenty-first century, Chinese President Hu Jintao, speaking warmly of the blossoming Sino-Arab relationship, stated, “China thanks the Arab states for supporting China in relation to Taiwan and human rights issues and will as always support the just cause of the Arab states and people.”¹ For his part, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa reaffirmed the League's support of the “One China” principle, declaring, “The world has but one China, and we only visit a China with Beijing as its capital.”²

Despite its lack of publicity, the forum represents another significant effort by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in recent years to strengthen its ties to the Arab world and the greater Middle East.³ Beijing is finding an array of potential partners in the region looking to harness China's economic

and political momentum for their own reasons. Incumbent autocratic regimes throughout the Middle East seek to bolster their respective positions and lessen their dependence on the United States through closer ties to Beijing. Middle Eastern business leaders are eager to reap the profits of lucrative partnerships with Chinese investors. And recent public opinion polls indicate that the people of the Middle East are desperate to see an end to what is widely perceived as a destructive US regional hegemony.

Consequently, as China's global influence increases, Beijing looks to the Middle East—where it historically has held a low profile—to establish a political, economic, and cultural foothold in the energy-rich and strategically central region. In so doing, the PRC poses a multifaceted challenge to the United States, whose presence and influence in the region have long been a cornerstone of American geopolitical strategy.⁴ Indeed, a growing Chinese presence in the Middle East may someday convince long-standing US allies in the region to reorient their strategic relationships away from Washington toward Beijing, dramatically transforming the strategic landscape in the process.

The most obvious motivation underpinning the PRC's new engagement strategy is the need to secure vital energy resources required to sustain China's dynamic economic growth amidst increasingly unstable international energy markets. Having ceased to be a net oil exporter in the early 1990s, China currently imports approximately 60 percent of its oil from the Middle East.⁵ Major Chinese state-owned oil concerns such as the China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) have made impressive inroads in recent years with key energy producers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) is busy in Sudan, while the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) has established itself in Algeria and elsewhere in the region. Moreover, China's unprecedented domestic growth over the last two decades has come at a high social and environmental cost; a reliance on coal has resulted in severe ecological damage and an alarming rise in respiratory diseases affecting those living in large cit-

Mr. Chris Zambelis is an associate with Helios Global, Inc., a political and security risk analysis firm. He is a graduate of New York University and has a master's in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

Mr. Brandon Gentry specializes in Middle East politics and political movements as an associate at Helios Global, Inc. He received his undergraduate degree in History from the College of William and Mary and his master's in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Texas at Austin.

ies and heavily industrialized areas, causing China to seek cleaner-burning energy sources such as petroleum and natural gas.⁶

China is also eager to gain access to untapped consumer markets for its exports and lucrative investment opportunities. The 2006 China-Arab Cooperation Forum included a commitment to expand and diversify trade volumes between China and the Arab countries to over \$100 billion within the next five years, up from the current figure of just over \$50 billion—approximately 40 percent of which is oil-related.⁷ Furthermore, then-Chinese Foreign Minister Li Xiaoxing and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa pledged to forge closer contacts in counterterrorism and security cooperation, technology and aid transfers, and cultural exchanges, expanding the dimensions of Sino-Arab cooperation beyond energy and business.

Apart from its economic dimension, Beijing's growing interest in the Middle East should also be considered in a geopolitical context. As an emerging diplomatic and military force on the international stage, China is intent on projecting power outside its immediate East Asian sphere of influence and matching its rival India's impressive efforts in the region.⁸ Cultivating strong relations with the Arab world and the greater Middle East constitutes a key pillar of this strategy, stabilizing China's global presence and enhancing its image as a major economic power. In addition to forging closer ties to the Arab world, Beijing is shoring up its position in Iran and Pakistan, as well as with the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.⁹ Given China's significant economic and energy interests in Iran, Beijing sees the international diplomatic controversy concerning the Iranian nuclear program as a crucial test of its global leverage, especially vis-à-vis the United States.¹⁰ Washington's preoccupation with the escalating violence and instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Iranian nuclear crisis—combined with widespread popular opposition to the United States—provide Beijing with a historic window of opportunity to enhance its position.

Arab Resentment and Chinese Opportunism

Much has been said about China's successful Middle East diplomacy. Beijing offers prospective partners many tangible benefits. In return for investment and development aid, China's profile in the region has grown significantly in recent years, most notably in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and others firmly entrenched in long-standing political, military, and economic alliances with the United States.

China's potential as a source of lucrative investment receives the most attention, as well as its willingness and ability to fund large-scale infrastructure and economic development programs in countries and regions that are considered too risky by other investors, or that have been deemed pariahs

by the international community due to human rights concerns, such as Sudan.¹¹ Many Arab countries look to China as a successful political and economic development model worthy of emulation. China is widely regarded in the Arab world as a developing country that has charted its own unique path toward economic development and modernization, a point frequently touted by Beijing.¹² This perception is attractive to societies where the legacy of harsh colonial governance and foreign interference in local and regional affairs by the West continues to shape recent memory and influence perceptions. Consequently, the Chinese system of state-led economic development provides an alternative to the US system, with its emphasis on the principles outlined by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (also known as the “Washington Consensus”) and its insistence on implementing strict neo-liberal free market formulas and related policy prescriptions.

An often overlooked aspect of Beijing’s success in projecting influence and power in the Arab world transcends economics and stems from the generally positive perceptions of China that prevail in the region—both at the state and grassroots levels. These positive perceptions are crucial to facilitating closer Sino-Arab bilateral and multilateral contacts and cooperation and cannot be underestimated. Indeed, rightly or wrongly, Arabs in varying degrees see China as a potential strategic partner able to counter the influence of an increasingly unpopular United States. Initial Arab hopes for the emergence of a credible check on American influence in the Middle East and across the globe in the shape of the European Union or a rejuvenated post-Soviet Russia have failed to materialize. In this context, China is widely perceived as the only credible alternative to US hegemony.¹³

Facilitating China’s emergence as a major power in the Middle East is the fact that American credibility in the region is currently at an abysmal low. Deep-seated opposition to the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—and, most recently, the widespread belief that Washington is preparing to attack Iran over its nuclear program—top the list of regional grievances. Arabs and Muslims also harbor deep resentment toward the United States for its unwavering support of Israel primarily due to Israel’s continued occupation of Palestinian land. Washington’s reluctance to jumpstart the long-dormant Middle East peace process bolsters regional perceptions that the United States will always side with Israel against the rest of the Middle East. The November 2007 talks at Annapolis, for example, were widely regarded in the Middle East as a photo-op for a lame-duck president in search of positive headlines amid the violence and instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, with no real progress being made on substantive issues aside from agreements between Israelis and Palestinians to hold regular talks.¹⁴ The United States then withdrew a UN Security Council resolution supporting efforts by the Israelis

and Palestinians to reach a final agreement by the end of 2008 after Israel voiced concerns about aspects of the resolution, further strengthening the perception that Washington unceasingly bends to the will of Israel.¹⁵

Continuing US diplomatic, military, and economic support for autocratic regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia—regimes which many Arabs believe to be oppressive, illegitimate, and incompetent—is also a major source of bitterness, especially given Washington’s stated commitments to supporting genuine political reform in the region. American criticism of the January 2006 elections in Palestine that elevated Hamas—elections which were widely regarded as free and fair by international observers—is also indicative of what Arabs see as hypocrisy. Additionally, most Arabs find messages emphasizing the virtues of democracy and freedom to be condescending and misguided, especially when US officials maintain highly publicized contacts with regional leaders known for their systematic repression of freedom of expression and dissent.¹⁶ Such diplomatic activity confirms the widespread belief that Washington is not serious about supporting genuine political reform and democracy in the region and is instead intent on maintaining the status quo.

Interestingly, China’s plans for expanded influence resonate among democratic reform-minded Islamist opposition groups, including the banned *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen* (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt, who see China’s rise as a possible check on unbridled US power. Despite being outlawed, the Muslim Brotherhood is on the forefront of democratic opposition politics in Egypt.¹⁷ It is against this background that China senses a historic opportunity to boost its position in a region firmly planted in the US strategic landscape.

Contrary to widespread opinions in US foreign policy, academic, and media circles, much of the negative Arab perceptions of the United States are not rooted in a popular Arab or Muslim aversion to American culture or society. On the contrary, public opinion polls demonstrate that Arabs hold American culture and values—especially those of individual freedom and democracy—in high-esteem. Arabs do, however, strongly oppose US foreign policy in the Middle East, and many wish to see US presence and influence in the region greatly reduced, at least in their current forms.¹⁸ Consequently, China represents a potential check on what Arabs see as an overbearing and destructive American influence.

Beijing has begun to skillfully exploit Arab dissatisfaction with US policies, at times aggressively criticizing American moves in the Middle East. For instance, in a statement appearing in the 1 February 2007 edition of *People’s Daily*, China’s Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, Minister Ye Xiaowen, issued a strong criticism of the Bush Administration’s conduct in the war on terrorism. Among other things, he specifically pointed to President George W. Bush’s use of the term “crusade” to character-

ize the upcoming “war on terror” following the 11 September 2001 attacks, and painted the President’s use of terms such as “Islamic fascism” as an attack against Islam.¹⁹

In its calculated criticism of American rhetoric and conduct in the war on terrorism, China seeks to portray itself to Arabs and Muslims as a friendly and positive alternative to US hegemony, essentially relying on “soft power” to plead its case.²⁰ White House rhetoric as described in the *People’s Daily* article evoked strong opposition to the United States in the Middle East, confirming in the minds of many Arabs and Muslims the perception that America was determined to exploit the 11 September attacks as a pretext to wage a war of imperial conquest against Muslim countries and Islam. China’s criticism of US rhetoric enhances its image as a friend to Arabs and Muslims, despite Beijing’s dismal record on human and religious rights regarding its own ethnic Uighur Muslim minority community.

Perceptions of China

Most Arab states see China as a potential strategic partner worth engaging beyond the traditional trade and business spheres. This is especially true in countries the United States considers vital strategic partners, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman. As is the case elsewhere in the world since the demise of the Soviet Union, many in the Middle East are concerned about the prevailing unipolar, US-dominated geopolitical landscape and welcome the emergence of a counterbalance to American power. The robust US military footprint in the region, first established during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, brings these issues to light for key regional allies who feel they have no other options but to rely on Washington for political, economic, and military support. This holds especially true for regional power-brokers such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Despite Cairo and Riyadh’s close strategic relations with Washington, both regimes resent US pressure to initiate political liberalization programs in the post-9/11 era, as well as American criticism of their domestic human rights records. The same applies for other authoritarian Arab regimes with close ties to Washington, such as Morocco and Jordan.²¹

Consequently, incumbent Arab autocrats find common ground and a useful ally in Beijing. China is more than willing to offer development funding and financial investment in return for preferential access to regional energy reserves and investment opportunities, and does so without making human rights or political reform demands. China’s extensive and controversial relationship with Sudan, despite international condemnation of Khartoum’s policies toward Darfur, is a case in point.²² Likewise, ruling autocratic regimes in the Middle East are eager to offer Beijing their full support regard-

ing Taiwan and the “One China” principle, as well as its position on Tibet and other domestic controversies. Given Beijing’s experience with US criticism of its own record on political freedom and human rights and its vocal stance against foreign interference in its internal affairs, it is clear why the convergence of interests on these issues helps facilitate close Sino-Arab contacts at the state level.

Regional leaders and intellectuals also point to China’s conservative approach to political and economic development and modernization as a model worth adopting and a viable alternative to US- and western-inspired reform models—models which are often perceived as instruments of western imperial control and exploitation. China is seen as a developing country that is succeeding while building its own independent path, not one dictated by Washington or by US-backed international institutions. Arab regimes, many of which are grounded in semisocialist models of economic policy and are accustomed to a much higher level of state-controlled economic policy than exists in the United States, chafe at perceived American efforts to impose an economic system, free-market capitalism, which many Arab leaders feel is ill-suited to Arab society at this stage. The fact that China is successfully pursuing an economic course driven by a highly centralized economic model is attractive to leaders throughout the Middle East.

Beijing’s effective public diplomacy also plays an important role in bringing China closer to governments in the Middle East. China often emphasizes the historic ties between the Arab world and Chinese civilization—ties stretching back to the Silk Road era—as well as the great contributions of both cultures to mankind. This kind of historical rhetoric resonates throughout the Middle East on both the state and local levels. For example, Beijing frequently highlights its relations with the region during the height of Arab nationalism and the Non-Aligned Movement in the early 1960s and regularly praises Arab states for being among the first to establish diplomatic relationships with the People’s Republic of China.²³

Regional governments must balance their staunch pro-US strategic orientation amidst popular discontent and deep-seated resentment toward American foreign policy against the background of growing domestic political opposition, including democratic reform-minded Islamist movements calling for revolutionary change. Arabs deeply resent long-standing US support for authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and US support for Israel. It is therefore in the interest of regional governments to court Beijing, an American rival and potential peer competitor, since closer Sino-Arab relations enhance public perceptions that Arab regimes are in fact acting on their own discretion and not as instruments of US foreign policy.

Grassroot Views of China

Currently, China enjoys generally positive perceptions all over the world. According to a recent BBC public opinion poll in which citizens of 27 countries were asked which nations had the most positive global influence, China ranked sixth behind Canada, Japan, the European Union, France, and Great Britain. Russia and the United States lagged behind, while Iran and Israel occupied the bottom two spots on the list.²⁴ The findings indicate that those countries most dependent on “soft power” as a means of leveraging influence tend to garner the most positive perceptions. Not surprisingly, soft power, in the form of economic aid, investment, and political support, is the cornerstone of China’s greater Middle East strategy.

Until fairly recently, China’s role as an active and constructive player in Middle East diplomacy had been peripheral at best. Despite this, surveys of Arab public opinion indicate that Arabs tend to view China in a very positive light. These sentiments stem in part from nostalgic feelings of solidarity dating back to the height of Arab nationalism and China’s preeminent role bolstering international Third World solidarity and anticolonial movements, which entailed support for popular Arab nationalist causes. In this context, local perceptions of China mirror those of the former Soviet Union based on the role it played in supporting Arab nationalism and other regional movements.

These sentiments prevail despite the fact that strategic concerns are driving Beijing’s regional policies and not ideological affinities, as might have been the case decades ago during the height of Soviet power and influence. At the same time, China’s vocal support for the Palestinian cause and willingness to challenge the United States on a host of regional issues provide Arabs with a sense of hope. For instance, Beijing’s refusal to bow to US pressure regarding the participation of Hamas representatives during the 2006 China-Arab Cooperation Forum is one example of China’s popular allure in the region.

Recent public opinion polls indicate that Arabs see the United States and Israel—perceived as a surrogate of US power—as the gravest threats to the region. In contrast, Arabs are not threatened by China. Instead, they see an emerging China as a potential opportunity and a welcomed force that should be harnessed to the fullest extent possible. A 2006 Arab public opinion poll conducted by Zogby International and the Brookings Institution showed that China, second only to France, is the country most Arabs would like to see emerge as a superpower. The United States placed fifth in the same poll, behind France, China, Pakistan, and Germany.²⁵ The Zogby-Brookings poll, however, indicates that Arabs would prefer to live in the United States instead

of the PRC, and also feel that America provides more freedom for its citizens. Arabs would also prefer to see their family members study in the United States.²⁶ Such responses bolster the notion that even though China would be a preferred superpower, owing to its perceived support of popular Arab and Muslim positions, its policy of noninterference in domestic affairs, and its lack of a colonial legacy in the region, Arabs still admire the American culture of personal and political freedom.

Despite China's lackluster record on human rights and civil liberties—to include systematic oppression of the minority ethnic Uighur Muslim community—Arabs would prefer to see a Chinese, as opposed to an American, hegemon. This suggests that popular perceptions of Beijing's potential as a positive force in the minds of Arabs transcend nostalgic sentiments and ideology and are rooted in calculated strategic thinking based on the premise that a strong China can rival the United States, thus benefiting the region as a whole. China's critical stance toward the war in Iraq, US efforts to curtail Iran's nuclear program, and the crisis in Sudan, coupled with its traditionally vocal support for the Palestinian struggle for an independent state, all enhance its stature in the region as a partner worth courting. This is the case despite the PRC's controversial defense ties with Israel.

Sino-Israeli Ties

The governments of China and Israel appear eager to see Sino-Israeli economic and cultural relations expand. China represents a highly lucrative market for Israel, while Israel is a source of high-technology goods and services for China.²⁷ Though Beijing is keen on enhancing its standing amongst the Arab states and Iran, the regime is also hesitant to alienate Israel, forcing the PRC to conduct a delicate diplomatic balancing act in the region.

Beijing's historic support for the Palestinian nationalist cause delayed the development of the Sino-Israel relationship for nearly half a century. As the Cold War drew to a close, however, diplomatic relations between Israel and the PRC were established in 1992, with Israel opening a consulate in Shanghai in 1994. Throughout the 1990s, China and Israel cultivated a diplomatic and economic relationship grounded in cultural and economic cooperation and exchange. Trade agreements were signed in October 1992. In 1993 the two powers signed an agricultural memorandum of understanding, resulting in the subsequent creation of Sino-Israeli cooperative agricultural institutions in China, and a cultural exchange agreement.²⁸

The Sino-Israeli economic relationship has flourished since the early 1990s. In 1992, annual trade between the two countries was approximately \$50 million. By 2005, annual trade had grown to nearly \$3 billion.²⁹

Today, China is Israel's largest Asian economic partner, with Sino-Israeli trade representing the world's sixth-largest bilateral trade relationship. In November 2006, China's charge d'affaires of the PRC's embassy to Israel, Zhang Xiao'an, announced at an economic conference held in Tel Aviv that "we expect the [Sino-Israeli trade] volume to reach \$5 billion by 2008."³⁰

The arms trade is a critical aspect of the Sino-Israeli relationship. Much has been written about the transfer of Israeli arms to China, which began in the early 1990s and continues today, despite significant pressure placed on Israel by the United States to cease the transfer of advanced defense platforms and technology to the Chinese military. Israel and the United States have clashed repeatedly over arms sales to China, based primarily on America's concerns that advanced Israeli platforms will contribute to China's military advantage over Taiwan and US forces operating in the Pacific. Given China's history of providing weapon systems to Iran and US rivals in the region and beyond, there is legitimate concern that advanced Israeli weapons and technology could, by way of Beijing, end up in the hands of America's opponents on the battlefield.

American disapproval has repeatedly failed to stop Israel's transfer of weapons to China. In 2000, the United States blocked the sale of the Phalcon early warning radar system.³¹ Following this incident, Israel promised to be more discerning in its sale of weapon systems to Beijing, but in 2004 the United States had to force Israel to abandon a deal in which China would receive spare parts for advanced Harpy Killer unmanned drones.³² Though Israel temporarily suspended its arms sales to China, in March 2006 Israel's Ministry of Defense announced that these sales had resumed.³³

It would appear that Israel is willing to risk angering the United States, as Beijing, flush with hard currency and eager to improve its military posture in East Asia and beyond, is willing to pay top dollar for advanced Israeli weapons. Beijing seems also willing to risk Arab disapproval. Meanwhile, Arab regimes are willing to overlook Sino-Israeli ties in return for closer economic and political relations with China. This is mainly due to the PRC's repeated rhetorical and diplomatic support for Palestine and the Middle East peace process, as well as the recognition by Arab nations that the Sino-Israeli relationship is grounded on little more than economics.

Hard Realities

Though regional governments are eager to facilitate China's emergence as an influential presence in the Middle East, these same regimes also understand Beijing's severe limitations in terms of its ability to act as a credible counterweight to the United States in the near future. Ruling autocrats are

well aware that their own strategic interests continue to be best served through close ties to America and understand that Beijing has a vital interest in friendly and constructive relations with Washington.³⁴ America is China's single largest trading partner, with annual trade estimated to reach \$300 billion by 2010. In fact, the PRC is nowhere near matching previous Soviet involvement in the region in the political and military spheres, and there is little evidence indicating that it intends to challenge the United States in this regard in the foreseeable future.

Given the current trajectory of Sino-Arab relations and the reality of Chinese intentions and capabilities, Arab hopes for reaping the benefits of a strategic partnership with China are as likely to bring disappointment as they are continued optimism. For instance, the PRC's efforts to expand its military capabilities, to include developing the ability to project power outside of its immediate East Asian sphere of influence in a sustained manner, are well-documented. Beijing is far from achieving the ability to challenge the United States in the Middle East, even in a limited capacity. Moreover, Chinese strategists are busy navigating the complex geopolitics of East Asia, namely Taiwan, Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and increasingly Central and South Asia, not to mention the robust US military presence in the Pacific.

Given this background, it is unlikely that China will redirect its military focus toward the Middle East in the foreseeable future. In reality, so long as energy and goods originating in the region continue to reach China, Beijing is likely to acquiesce to the US-dominated status quo. There is also evidence that the expansion of Beijing's influence in some developing countries is evoking resentment. For example, growing concerns are the influx of cheap Chinese consumer goods undermining local producers and sellers, questionable labor practices employed by many Chinese firms in their hiring practices, and poor treatment of local workers.³⁵ In recent years, Chinese workers in Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and elsewhere have increasingly been targeted by militant groups angered by the growing Chinese presence.

Nevertheless, Arab leaders continue to see the utility of cultivating closer relations with Beijing both for domestic and international consumption in the hope of facilitating greater Chinese inroads into the region. Increasingly, leaders throughout the Middle East are coming to realize that they can no longer depend solely on the United States as a patron—the political costs are getting higher as the American military presence in the region grows, and popular discontent is becoming more hazardous to the life of the regimes. In this context, closer ties to China provide a safety valve, a way for the regimes to positively address their images as American puppet states

while continuing to reap the benefits of political and economic support from a powerful regional actor.

Conclusion

The burgeoning Sino-Arab relationship is poised to develop and expand in the twenty-first century, providing tremendous benefits on many levels to all parties involved. More robust Chinese inroads into the Middle East are being encouraged by both state actors and local public opinion, thus facilitating stronger ties across social, political, economic, and cultural sectors. Although the United States is certain to retain its preeminent position in the region in the foreseeable future, Arabs are increasingly optimistic regarding the rise of China. Beijing will continue to harness this momentum to enhance its position in the Middle East and will be able to count on many willing partners eager for an alternative to the United States.

China will continue to rely on soft power to enhance its image and influence in the Middle East. As Beijing becomes more confident, it is also likely to leverage its growing influence in the form of more ambitious diplomatic objectives impacting the region, and ultimately the US presence. Though China's strategy does not pose a direct near-term threat to American hegemony, Washington cannot afford to ignore the unavoidable truth of the Arab world's growing interest in China's potential. As America's popularity and influence in the greater Middle East wane, Beijing watches and waits, eager and increasingly able to establish a greater presence in this vital region.

NOTES

1. Xinhua News Agency, "Hu Vows to Cement China-Arab Cooperation," 1 June 2006.
2. Xinhua News Agency, "Interview: AL Chief Hails Arab-Sino Relations," 27 May 2006.
3. The term "greater Middle East" generally refers to the countries of the Arab world, together with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, and Turkey.
4. Flynt Leverett and Jeffrey Bader, "Managing China-U.S. Energy Competition in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly*, 29 (Winter 2005-06), 187-201.
5. Julian Madsen, "China's Policy in the Gulf Region: From Neglect to Necessity," *Power and Interest News Report*, 27 October 2006.
6. For an overview of China's environmental crisis, see The World Bank, *Cost of Pollution in China: Economic Estimates of Physical Damages* (Washington: The World Bank, February 2007), <http://go.worldbank.org/FFCJVBTP40>.
7. Xinhua News Agency, "China, Arab States to Hold First Oil Meeting," 1 June 2006.
8. Although China's growing inroads into the greater Middle East attract the most attention, its rival India also seeks to enhance its position as an emerging global power by expanding its presence in the strategically vital region. See C. Christine Fair, "India and Iran: New Delhi's Balancing Act," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30 (Summer 2007), 145-59.
9. For more details on the development of China's relations with Iran, see J. Brandon Gentry, "The Dragon and the Magi: Burgeoning Sino-Iranian Relations in the 21st Century," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 3 (November 2005), 111-25. For an overview of China's strategic interests in Central Asia, see Xuanli Liao, "Central Asia and China's Energy Security," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4 (November 2006), 61-69.

10. Dingli Shen, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions Test China's Wisdom," *The Washington Quarterly*, 29 (Spring 2006), 55-66.
11. See 1 November 2006 "Appeal by Amnesty International to the Chinese Government on the Occasion of the China-Africa Summit for Development and Cooperation," <http://www.amnesty.org/en/report/info/AFR54/072/2006>.
12. Anouar Abdel-Malek, "China's Message to the Arabs," *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line* (Cairo), 708 (16-22 September 2004).
13. See report based on presentation by Dr. Mamoun Fandy, "Energy Security: Implications for U.S.-China-Middle East Relations, China vs. U.S.: A View from the Arab World" (Houston, Tex.: Rice University, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, 18 July 2005), http://www.rice.edu/energy/publications/docs/SIIS_MFANDY_ChinaUSArabWorld_071805.pdf.
14. See "Annapolis: Not-So-Great Expectations," *The Economist Online*, 28 November 2007, http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=10202105&fsrc=RSS.
15. Shlomo Shamir, "U.S. Withdraws UN Annapolis Resolution After Israel Objects," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), 3 December 2007.
16. Leon Hadar, "Innocent Abroad: Karen Hughes's Mission Impossible," *The American Conservative*, 19 December 2005.
17. Discussions with members and supporters of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood by Chris Zambelis, Cairo, Egypt, February and March 2006. In general, democratic reform-minded Islamist opposition groups such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood see China as a positive force based on its perceived potential to check US power in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.
18. See "Arab Attitudes Towards Political and Social Issues, Foreign Policy and the Media," public opinion poll conducted by Shibley Telhami and Zogby International, October 2005, <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/sadat/pub/unweighted.htm>.
19. "Islam as a Political Issue in China," *Asia Times Online*, 10 February 2007.
20. For more details on the central role of "soft power" in Chinese diplomacy, see Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2007).
21. Chris Zambelis, "The Strategic Implications of Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Middle East," *Parameters*, 35 (Autumn 2005), 87-102.
22. Yitzhak Shichor, "China's Darfur Policy," *China Brief* (Jamestown Foundation), 7 (5 April 2007).
23. Abdel-Malek.
24. "In total 28,389 citizens in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and the United States were interviewed between 3 November 2006 and 16 January 2007. Polling was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In 10 of the 27 countries, the sample was limited to major urban areas. Given that country ratings were given by half-samples, the margin of error per country ranges from +/- 3.1 to 4.9 percent." "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," BBC World Service poll, 6 March 2007, http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbcinterview/.
25. "2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey" (Washington: Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, 8 February 2007), <http://brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf>.
26. Ibid.
27. Yoram Evron, "Sino-Israeli Relations: Opportunities and Challenges," *Strategic Assessment*, 10 (August 2007).
28. See overview of Sino-Israeli relations on the official statement of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Israel.
29. Xinhua News Agency, "China and Israel – The Best is Yet to Come," 13 July 2006.
30. Xinhua News Agency, "China-Israel Trade Volume Ranks No. 1 Amongst Israel's Asian Trade Partners," 8 November 2006.
31. P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Israel-China Relations and the Falcon Controversy," *Middle East Policy*, 12 (Summer 2005), 93-103.
32. Miles A. Pomper, "U.S., Israel Seek to Cut Deal on China Arms Sales," *Arms Control Today*, July/August 2005, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_07-08/IsraelChina_ArmsSales.asp.
33. Alon Ben-David, "Israel to Resume Security Exports to China," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 March 2006.
34. Wang Jisi, "China's Search for Stability with America," *Foreign Affairs*, 84 (September/October 2005), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84504/wang-jisi/china-s-search-for-stability-with-america.html>.
35. James Traub, "China's African Adventure," *The New York Times Magazine*, 19 November 2006.