

MAJOR GEOPOLITICAL CHANGES IN THE PERSIAN GULF REGION: THE RISE OF CHINA

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Abstract

China has emerged as a dominant economic player in the Gulf region, demonstrating a proactive policy in the region. China's expanding economic and political involvement in the Gulf region indicates the successful application of Chinese soft power and the growing interest of the region's states towards Beijing. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have shown keen interest in China's long-term economic investments. Chinese investments entered the region when these countries aimed to diversify their economies as part of national development visions. The GCC countries have achieved significant progress within the framework of the "One Belt One Road Initiative".

Among the most pressing issues in the Persian Gulf are internal contradictions, rivalries and confrontations, which have long been typically manipulated and exploited by external actors. This reality has not been adequately evaluated from a political standpoint within the region, which can be devastating to the region. China is also attractive to the GCC countries due to its non-imposition of political prerequisites. China's long-term involvement in the region can be supplemented by additional tools, including mediation initiatives. Over time, China has become a balancing force for the region due to its "soft power" and economic capabilities.

Key words – GCC, China, Qatar, "soft power", geopolitics, security, international relations.

Introduction

With the expansion of its national and regional interests and the acquisition of global dimensions in its foreign policy and economic strategy, China has begun to assume responsibility for the fate of various regions, albeit with reservations¹. One of the effective tools for realizing China's foreign policy goals is "soft power", whose arsenal includes China's cultural values. For China, cultural "soft power" is essential for strengthening international and national influence².

¹ Bergsten 2022, 10.

² CPC Central Committee Bimonthly. Enhance China's Cultural Soft Power.

Beijing actively uses public diplomacy to project the influence of "soft power" on international platforms, form a positive image, and promote the realization of its interests and goals³. In the ideological and political propaganda of China's public diplomacy, the "Chinese Dream" put forward by Xi Jinping in 2012 is at the forefront, the main components of which are a solid and prosperous state, democracy, national revival, and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation⁴. Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" concept became the ideological basis for the "New Silk Road" or "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" initiative⁵. In 2016, the New Silk Road strategy was officially renamed "One Belt One Road" and enshrined in the PRC constitution⁶.

China's principle of non-interference is a crucial element of its national security policy. However, it should be noted that the Chinese principle of non-intervention policy, the rejection of foreign military presence and the development of mutually beneficial economic and trade relations as the main issues are no longer sufficient for China's security policy and vital interests⁷.

Many countries in the Middle East, whether US allies or not, see China as a counterbalance to Washington's influence in the region. They share with Beijing a common desire to limit US global dominance and Western influence in their domestic affairs.

On January 13, 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping published the first fundamental official document reflecting China's interests in the MENA, the "White Paper" or "1+2+3" Strategy⁸. "1" is the primary goal of energy cooperation, "2" is the construction of infrastructure, plus trade and investment facilitation, and "3" refers to the joint development of new technologies in the fields of atomic energy, renewable energy and satellite. It is thus clear that energy security is a key aspect of the Chinese approach to the Middle East, with infrastructure, trade and investment forming the "wings" of China's strategy⁹. Although the "1+2+3" policy is considered primarily a geoeconomic rather than a geopolitical strategy, China officially recognises that the region's infrastructure and economic development goals are intertwined with long-term political and security plans. As the first document outlining China's strategy for the Arab world, it states that achieving China's core objectives in the region requires greater engagement, reaffirming China's political will to establish peace and stability in the Middle

³ Sayama 2016, 9.

⁴ BBC News. What Does Xi Jinping's China Dream Mean?

⁵ Chaziza 2020, China-Bahrain, 71.

⁶ European Foundation for South Asian Studies 2019, 3.

⁷ Dorsey 2017, 1.

⁸ Haenle P. Xi's Vision for China's Belt and Road Initiative. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁹ Garlick, Havlová 2020, 88.

East¹⁰. Another element of China's "soft power" toolkit is mediation diplomacy. Beijing appears as a peacekeeper in managing conflicts, crises and other security events in the Middle East, offering "mediation for peace"¹¹. Economic direction is vital in China's "soft power" strategy and is carried out mainly through investment attraction. Unlike the US, China has promoted its investment programs worldwide without imposing political conditions, which has become a tool of Chinese "soft power" in modern times¹².

The Rise of China in the Gulf: Main Trends

China's relations with the GCC countries have expanded significantly in recent years, covering bilateral geopolitical, economic, trade, energy and security interests. China has become one of the most essential extra-regional economic partners of the region's countries. The intensifying China-US rivalry creates more opportunities for regional powers to maneuver politically. China engages in strategic hedging in the region, which allows it to take advantage of the US security umbrella in the region and the interests of regional countries to forge ties through trade and investment. It is a mistake to assume that this approach is neutral¹³. Of course, the GCC countries do not expect that China's foreign policy under Xi Jinping will soon become a struggle to overthrow the US from the position of the guarantor of the security of the Gulf. The rise of China and its growing economic and trade ties to the region could give the Gulf states greater leverage to pressure the US into a more substantial commitment to their security, regime stability, and regional agendas¹⁴.

In recent years, Chinese cultural "soft power" has become another important aspect of cooperation with the Gulf countries. Beijing has increasingly emphasised Chinese language instruction at the MENA, building dozens of Confucius institutions. In addition to the Confucius Centers, Beijing works to establish and expand Chinese language and culture departments at various universities, funds the establishment of Chinese cultural institutions, and sponsors multiple Chinese cultural events in these countries¹⁵.

Foreign investments are essential for realizing the GCC countries' national visions. There is a strong connection between these programs and the BRI. Many leaders in the Gulf openly create an economic system beyond Washing-

¹⁰ Almeida M. China's 'Marshall Plan' for the Arab World. Arab News.

¹¹ Sevilla 2017, 89.

¹² Fulton 2019, 7.

¹³ Fulton 2020, 493.

¹⁴ Fulton 2019, 13.

¹⁵ Бребдани 2022, 36-37.

ton's control¹⁶. An interconnected network of industrial parks and ports established by Chinese companies in some Gulf countries could challenge US dominance in the Gulf region¹⁷.

Although China and the US may agree on some basic regional principles, namely stability and free navigation in the region, competition between these powers will likely intensify, which is also due to the increase of GCC-China cooperation in the technological domain. The "Digital Silk Road" is vital to the Gulf countries. China's growing high-tech capabilities are deepening cooperation with GCC states, rapidly growing their digital governance platforms. For these states, technology-based enterprises, artificial intelligence and "smart cities" are the main attractions of China's expanding digital footprint¹⁸.

The GCC banking and financial system is integrated into the emerging Redback Zone, where banking and financial transactions are based on the Chinese yuan as the international currency. The yuan is already used to settle financing non-cash payments between some Gulf countries and China¹⁹. In April 2015, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China launched the Middle East's first center for clearing transactions in the Chinese yuan in Qatar²⁰.

On July 10, 2018, the 8th Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing, resulting in the "Declaration of Actions on China-Arab States Belt and Road Cooperation"²¹. During the meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted that for the progress of economic relations between China and Arab states, it is important to combine the construction and operation of four Chinese industrial parks in Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman with neighboring ports, including the Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi, the port of Djibouti and Port Said in Egypt to provide industrial park-port connectivity²².

Investment cooperation is one of the pillars of Chinese "soft power"²³. China invests heavily in projects critical to implementing the BRI in the Gulf region. A vivid example of this is the "Huawei Duqm" port development project, one of the joint projects of the BRI and "Oman Vision-2040"²⁴. Duqm port will be available for military use and logistical support. Chinese influence could extend

¹⁶ Chaziza 2020, China-Bahrain, 80.

¹⁷ Chaziza 2019, 52-53.

¹⁸ Ehteshami 2023, 8.

¹⁹ Saidi N. The Gulf Should Pivot East and Build the "New Silk Road", HuffPost.

²⁰ Hollingsworth J. Why Qatar Matters to China, in Spite of Gulf Isolation, South China Morning Post.

²¹ Fulton J. For China, the Belt and Road run through the Middle East. South China Morning Post.

²² Xinhua. Wang Yi: China and Arab States Should Jointly Forge the Cooperation Layout Featuring "Industrial Park-Port Interconnection, Two-Wheel and Two-Wing Approach.

²³ Fulton 2020, China in the Persian Gulf, 496.

²⁴ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Oman: Duqm Port Commercial Terminal and Operational Zone Development.

beyond the Gulf to East Africa and Pakistan through this port²⁵. The construction of the new business center "Silk City" or "Madinat al-Harir" in Kuwait is also being financed within the framework of the BRI. It will become a regional trade and finance hub, connecting the Gulf with Central Asia and Europe. As part of the Silk City development plans, Kuwait signed an agreement with Huawei in July 2018 to implement the intelligent cities strategy in Kuwait²⁶. The above projects are some of the many projects that China is financing in the Gulf.

In December 2022, the first China-GCC Summit was held in Riyadh. One of the first areas of cooperation discussed during the summit was approving a joint action plan for 2023-2027 to strengthen the existing strategic partnership between the Gulf countries and China in the economic, political and cultural fields. Xi Jinping has expressed his desire to establish a China-Gulf Forum on the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy. The other topics discussed during the summit were security and stability and the priority of restoring international peace through mutual respect and cooperation²⁷.

Sino-Qatari Relations: from Constructive Ties to Strategic Partnership

Sino-Qatari ties have strengthened significantly in recent years. China's perception of its relations with Qatar is delineated in its understanding of the regional order in the Middle East. It shows its assessment of the geopolitical factors in Gulf countries. The diplomatic and economic aspects of Qatar-China relations are well institutionalized. China considers Qatar an essential partner in promoting the BRI, especially its economic and geographical components, which are important in creating China-GCC free-trade zones. Relations between the two countries have experienced steady development in the political, economic, communication, trade and investment, energy, financial and cultural spheres²⁸. China is Qatar's largest trading partner. In 2021, the trade volume between the two countries reached more than 17 billion dollars²⁹.

The Qatar National Vision-2030 (QNV-2030) envisages development in four interrelated areas: human, social, economic and environmental³⁰. Beijing views Qatar as an essential partner in advancing the BRI project, emphasizing Qatar's economic and geopolitical power, which is vital in establishing the GCC Free Trade Area³¹. The two sides want to strengthen the connection between the BRI

²⁵ Chaziza 2019, 49-51.

²⁶ Chaziza 2020, China's Strategic Partnership, 510.

²⁷ Arab News. China and GCC Natural Partners for Cooperation. Chinese President Xi Jinping Tells Riyadh Summit'.

²⁸ Santhosh P. Qatar Seen Playing a Key Role in China's Belt and Road Plan. Gulf Times.

²⁹ The Observatory of Economic Complexity. China (CHN) and Qatar (QAT) Trade.

³⁰ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 83.

³¹ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 79.

and the QNV-2030 strategy in the following areas: energy, infrastructure, financial investment and high technology³². Only in June 2023, China's exports to Qatar amounted to 329 million dollars, and from Qatar to China - 1.39 billion dollars³³. The historic visit of Qatari Emir Tamim to China in November 2014 played a crucial role in establishing the Sino-Qatari strategic partnership. The visit ushered in a new era of cooperation between the two countries³⁴. China signed a strategic partnership agreement with Qatar in 2014³⁵. In the same year, Qatar signed an agreement to establish the "BRI Joint Investment Fund" with China³⁶.

As mentioned, the Middle East's first center for clearing transactions in the Chinese yuan was launched in Qatar. The center aims to provide local financial institutions access to the yuan, promote wider cross-border use, and expand opportunities for increased trade investment between Beijing, Doha and regional countries³⁷. When Qatar was chosen as the 2022-FIFA World Cup host, China Railway Construction won the contract to build Lusail Stadium³⁸. It is noteworthy that the Qatar crisis played an important role in the deepening of Sino-Qatari relations. China took advantage of the Qatar-Gulf crisis to improve its trade and economic position in Doha. Deep Sino-Chinese cooperation during the crisis helped to avoid diplomatic and economic isolation. In January 2017, Qatar launched the first regular direct connection between Hamad Port and Shanghai³⁹. In April of the same year, the "Qatar Chamber" and the "China Council for the Promotion of International Trade" signed an agreement to deepen cooperation between the two sides⁴⁰.

In September 2018, state-owned «Qatargas», the world's largest liquefied natural gas producer, signed a 22-year contract with «PetroChina International» to supply China with about 3.4 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas per year⁴¹.

The state visit of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to China in January 2019 drew a roadmap for developing the strategic partnership between the two countries in the political, economic, investment, energy, technology and security sectors⁴². Financial investments and cooperation in high technologies are new

³² Silk Road Briefing. China's Belt & Road Initiative and Qatar.

³³ The Observatory of Economic Complexity. China (CHN) and Qatar (QAT) Trade.

³⁴ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 83.

³⁵ Fulton 2019, 4.

³⁶ Reuters. Qatar's Wealth Fund to Launch \$10 Billion Investment Fund with China's CITIC.

³⁷ Hollingsworth J. Why Qatar Matters to China, in Spite of Gulf Isolation, South China Morning Post.

³⁸ Reuters. China Railway Construction Corp Wins Qatar World Cup Stadium Contract.

³⁹ Silk Road Briefing. China's Belt & Road Initiative and Qatar.

⁴⁰ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 84.

⁴¹ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 91.

⁴² Xinhua. China, Qatar Agree to Deepen Strategic Partnership.

growth points in Sino-Qatari relations. The "Qatar Free Zones Authority" is one of the promoters of implementing the BRI in Qatar, opening doors for investors in Qatar and China. In 2019, the "Qatar Free Zone Authority" signed four separate memorandums with the "China Council for the Promotion of International Trade", the "Xiamen Free Trade Zone", the "Shenzhen cross-border e-commerce association" and the "China Harbor Engineering Company" within the framework of the BRI⁴³. "Huawei" actively supports the development of ICT professionals, the prime example of this is Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" educational program in Qatar. Qatar's National Vision-2030 emphasizes digital transformation as an important pillar for a sustainable digital economy of the future⁴⁴.

The meeting of foreign ministers of the two countries on March 30, 2022, highlighted the continued support to ensure the synergy of the BRI and QNV-2030. The parties agreed to strengthen cooperation in energy, industry, culture, education, sports and other fields⁴⁵. The two countries' common economic and strategic interests drive the security partnership with Doha. In November 2022, "Sinopec" and IQatar Energy" signed a 27-year long-term LNG purchase and sale agreement. Earlier that year, Qatar Energy signed five deals for North Field East (NFE), including six LNG trains that will ramp up Qatar's liquefaction capacity to 126 million tons per year by 2027 from 77 million⁴⁶. This deal shows how China is becoming increasingly important in the global LNG market as it seeks to fuel its manufacturing base while transitioning away from more carbon-intensive fuel sources, such as coal. Moreover, at the same time, this deal demonstrates the growing role of Chinese energy companies in the Middle East. The LNG supply deal, which guarantees Chinese LNG imports until the 2050s, has moved Qatar closer to China. Its entry into the Gulf energy sector is part of a multifaceted engagement strategy to expand its economic and geopolitical footprint⁴⁷. In June 2023, CNPC and Qatar Energy signed a second major gas supply deal, under which China will purchase 4 million tons of LNG annually from Qatar. CNPC will also acquire a 1.25 per cent stake in Qatar's North Field East LNG project expansion⁴⁸.

Qatar has generally been agile in pursuing its competing geopolitical ambitions between East and West. Doha also manages its delicate position between

⁴³ Shoeb M. Belt & Road Initiative to Bring Qatar and Mideast Closer to the World: QFZA Chief. The Peninsula.

⁴⁴ Teletimes International. Huawei Opens a New State-of-the-Art Office in Qatar.

⁴⁵ Xinhua. Wang Yi Meets with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

⁴⁶ Reuters. Qatar seals 27-year LNG deal with China as competition heats up.

⁴⁷ Dargin J. What's at Stake in the Massive China-Qatar Gas Deal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴⁸ China Daily. CNPC inks 27-year deal with Qatar.

Iran and Saudi Arabia in a concerted effort not to antagonize either side unnecessarily⁴⁹. The relative decline of US hegemony and China's growing influence in the Gulf may affect the Sino-Qatari strategic partnership. Qatar firmly maintains its strategic alliance with the US but seeks to protect its country from regional crises or threats from power rivalry⁵⁰.

The vital factor in China-Qatari relations is maintaining a delicate balance in the complex major power competition and rivalries. Doha's welcome of China's rising impact in the Persian Gulf is also connected with Doha's inclination to assume a more significant role in the region to enhance its diplomatic maneuverability. Sino-Qatari relations are based on shared complementary economic and strategic interests, such as synergizing the implementation of BRI projects with the Qatar National Vision-2030.

China's Balancing Role between Saudi Arabia and Iran

In April 2016, Saudi Arabia announced its National Vision-2030 plan, officially presented at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, China⁵¹. At the first meeting of the China-Saudi Arabia High-Level Committee in Beijing on August 31, 2016, the Chinese and Saudi sides signed an agreement to establish a joint venture in Jizan Basic Industrial City⁵². The parties established a high-level joint committee to facilitate the alignment of the OBOR and the "National Vision-2030"⁵³. During the meeting of the Saudi Arabia and China leaders in March 2017, President Xi officially expressed his support for implementing Saudi Arabia's "National Vision-2030"⁵⁴. Among the well-known projects in this framework is the \$500 billion smart city, the Saudi metropolis of Neom on the Red Sea coast⁵⁵.

Saudi Arabia-China energy cooperation includes the plan to build nuclear reactors based on the Sino-Saudi agreement, which should be operational by 2032⁵⁶. One of China's naval maintenance facilities in the region is the port of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia⁵⁷. The Chinese Navy and the Royal Saudi Navy held the three-week Blue Sword naval exercise in November 2019 at the King Faisal Naval Base⁵⁸.

⁴⁹ Dargin J. What's at Stake in the Massive China-Qatar Gas Deal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁵⁰ Chaziza 2020, China-Qatar, 82-83.

⁵¹ Chen et al. 2018, 364.

⁵² The State Council of the PRC, China, Saudi Arabia Ink Cooperation Deals.

⁵³ Chen et al. 2018, 369.

⁵⁴ Chen et al. 2018, 367.

⁵⁵ Fulton 2020, China-Saudi Arabia, 522.

⁵⁶ Garlick, Havlovn 2020, 12.

⁵⁷ Sun D. China's Soft Military Presence in the Middle East. Middle East Institute.

⁵⁸ Liangxiang 2020, 14.

In 2022, at the first China-Gulf Summit held in December, Saudi Arabia and China signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement that includes a series of deals and memoranda of understanding. Xi Jinping's warm welcome starkly contrasted the chilly atmosphere surrounding US President Joe Biden's visit to the kingdom earlier this year⁵⁹.

As for relations with Iran, they are stable and based on the solid foundations of shared opposition to US hegemony in the Middle East, mutual economic interests and security cooperation. Tehran uses the "Look East" policy to promote its regional and military power to counter US power in the Gulf region⁶⁰.

The "China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" was approved by the administration of President Hassan Rouhani in June 2020⁶¹. The agreement includes plans to develop several ports in Iran within the framework of the BRI, such as "Bandar-e-Jask", where having a base would not only allow China to control the US Navy's Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain but together with ports in Djibouti and Gwadar, could increase China's position in Indo-Pacific region⁶².

The China-Iran 25-year cooperation agreement was signed in 2021, on March 27, during the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister to Tehran. The document's need was first discussed in 2016 during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Iran⁶³. From 2016 to the signing day, the document went through a whirlwind of long diplomatic work. The document's content was not published; only some clarifications were presented⁶⁴. A few months before the signing, a document appeared on the Internet, presented as a draft of a 25-year comprehensive cooperation program. After the publication of the project, it became known that China would establish free trade zones in Maku in northwestern Iran, Abadan, and Qeshm Island. The launch of the 5G system in Iran, deepening cooperation in non-oil sectors and other areas of bilateral cooperation are planned. The document also points to the deepening of military cooperation⁶⁵.

Sino-Iranian ties will undoubtedly transform the region's political landscape in favour of Iran and China, reducing the influence of the US relatively. The above agreement provides an excellent opportunity for the two countries to se-

⁵⁹ CNN. Saudi Arabia and China Will Align on Everything from Security to Oil, but Agree Not to Interfere on Domestic Issues.

⁶⁰ Foreign Policy. Iran's Pact with China is Bad News for the West.

⁶¹ Foreign Policy. China Won't Rescue Iran.

⁶² Al Jazeera. What the New Iran-China Partnership Means for the Region.

⁶³ The Diplomat. What's in the China-Iran Strategic Cooperation Agreement?

⁶⁴ The New York Times. China, with \$400 Billion Iran Deal, Could Deepen Influence in Mideast.

⁶⁵ Fassihi F., Myers L., Defying U.S. China and Iran Near Trade and Military Partnership. The New York Times.

cure their economic interests through cooperation. It offers strategic leverage to expand its influence in the Middle East region and out⁶⁶.

In July 2023, Iran became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. SCO members emphasized the need for a peaceful settlement of existing differences between countries and noted that unilateral economic sanctions are incompatible with international law. The organisation's countries called to increase the share of transactions in national currencies⁶⁷.

China's expanding presence in the Gulf has led to Beijing's determination to become more involved in regional security and politics. In 2022, during the first China-GCC summit, Xi Jinping urged the Gulf countries to join GSI to "maintain regional peace and stability through joint efforts"⁶⁸.

The next important step for China in establishing itself in the Gulf region is a mediation mission as a tool for GSI implementation, which will contribute to the growth of Beijing's influence in the Gulf. In this regard, regulating relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran was a turning point in the Gulf.

On March 10, 2023, Saudi Arabia and Iran issued a joint statement on the normalization of relations with the mediation of China, citing that an agreement had been reached between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The statement reflects the intentions of both countries to restore diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and representations, as well as to respect the sovereignty of states and not to interfere in the internal affairs of states. In addition, the two sides agreed to cooperate in economy, trade, investment, technology, science, culture, sports and youth⁶⁹. China presented itself as a "reliable friend of both countries", keeping an equal distance from both^{70 71}.

In this sense, the Saudi-Iranian deal sets a new precedent in China's foreign policy, with Beijing taking on the role of an international mediator. The China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal, equivalent to the US-led Abraham Accords to cement peace in the Middle East, is another manifestation of the rivalry between Beijing and Washington.

⁶⁶ Maqsood et al. 2023, 91.

⁶⁷ Lucente A. Iran's Membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization Further Aligns It with Russia, China. *Al-Monitor*.

⁶⁸ The Diplomat. The Global Security Initiative: China's New Security Architecture for the Gulf.

⁶⁹ Jash A. Saudi-Iran Deal: A Test Case of China's Role as an International Mediator. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*.

⁷⁰ Farouk Y. Riyadh's Motivations Behind the Saudi-Iran Deal. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

⁷¹ The two regional rivals have held talks in Oman and Iraq in the past two years. They could have chosen any country to achieve their ultimate goal but decided on China shortly after Xi Jinping's recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

Chinese mediation would give Beijing greater prestige as a global player that resolved a complex conflict in such a seething region. The deal is a diplomatic victory for China amid waning US influence in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of the Chinese "soft power", including China's increasing economic and political role in the Gulf region indicates the GCC countries growing interest towards Beijing. The GCC countries are interested in China's long-term economic investments. On the other hand, China has avoided the direct confrontation with the USA. Beijing realizes the US dominance in security and military spheres. Meanwhile, China has sought to fill other vacuums without causing tension, which is a testament to Beijing's prudence. The Chinese investments came when GCC countries were seeking to reduce their hydrocarbon dependency and diversify their economies as part of national development programs. The study shows that the GCC countries have progressing engagement in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Beijing still has to overcome many stages in the Persian Gulf region. The next one is the mediating mission. One of the most crucial problems in the Persian Gulf is internal contradictions, competition and confrontation, which, for a long time, as a rule, has been manipulated and used by external actors, including the United States. This reality has not been given an adequate political assessment in the region. It had a destructive role for the region, increasing the division. China is attractive to GCC countries because Beijing does not impose political preconditions. The most sensitive problem for the countries of the Gulf in recent decades has been the confrontation with Iran and the anti-Iranian attitude of the USA.

Looking ahead, we can say that while China is concerned about its interests in the region, it is likely to follow its gradual and cautious pace of engagement and avoid a major confrontation with the United States. All these developments point to the reshaping of the security architecture in the Persian Gulf, where China's influence is strong, based on multilateral cooperation. Beijing can become a competitive and viable but not dominant power in the region.

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ԱՇԽԱՐՀԱՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆ ԽՈՇՈՐ ՓՈՓՈԽՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ ՊԱՐՍԻՑ ԾՈՑԻ ՏԱՐԱԾԱՇՐՋԱՆՈՒՄ. ՉԻՆԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՎԵՐԵԼՔԸ

Քնարիկ Սարգսյան

Ամփոփում

Չինաստանը Պարսից ծոցի տարածաշրջանում դարձել է գերիշխող տնտեսական դերակատար՝ գործուն քաղաքականություն վարելով տարածաշրջանի երկրների հետ: Չինաստանի տնտեսական և քաղաքական հարաճուն դերը Ծոցի տարածաշրջանում վկայում է այս երկրներում չինական փափուկ ուժի հաջող կիրառման մասին, ինչպես նաև ի ցույց է դնում նրանց հետաքրքրությունը Պեկինի նկատմամբ: Ծոցի համագործակցության խորհրդի (ԾՀԽ) երկրները հետաքրքրված են Չինաստանի երկարաժամկետ տնտեսական ներդրումներով: Չինական ներդրումները եղան այն ժամանակ, երբ այս երկրները ձգտում էին դիվերսիֆիկացնել իրենց տնտեսությունը՝ որպես ազգային զարգացման ծրագրերի մաս: Նրանք գրանցել են մեծ առաջընթաց «Մեկ գոտի, մեկ ճանապարհ» նախաձեռնության շրջանակում:

Պարսից ծոցի երկրների ամենակնճռոտ խնդիրներից են ներքին հակասությունները, մրցակցությունն ու դիմակայությունը, որոնք երկար ժամանակ է, ինչ շահարկվում և օգտագործվում են արտաքին դերակատարների կողմից: Այս իրողությունը համարժեքորեն չի գնահատվել տարածաշրջանի քաղաքականության տեսանկյունից, և դա կարող է կործանարար լինել ԾՀԽ-ի համար: Չինաստանը գրավիչ է նրանց համար նաև այն առումով, որ այն քաղաքական նախապայմաններ չի պարտադրում: Չինաստանի երկարաժամկետ ներգրավվածությունը այստեղ կարող է համալրվել այլ գործիքակազմով՝ ներառյալ միջնորդական նախաձեռնությունները: Ժամանակի ընթացքում Չինաստանը դարձել է տարածաշրջանի համար հավասարակշռող ուժ՝ շնորհիվ իր «փափուկ ուժի» կիրառման և տնտեսական հնարավորությունների:

Բանալի բառեր՝ ԾՀԽ, Չինաստան, Կատար, փափուկ ուժ, աշխարհաքաղաքականություն, անվտանգություն, միջազգային հարաբերություններ:

КРУПНЫЕ ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В РЕГИОНЕ ПЕРСИДСКОГО ЗАЛИВА: ПОДЪЕМ КИТАЯ

Кнарик Саргсян

Резюме

Китай стал доминирующим экономическим игроком в регионе Персидского залива, демонстрируя проактивную политику в регионе. Расширяющееся экономическое и политическое участие Китая в регионе Персидского залива указывает на успешное применение китайской «мягкой силы» в регионе и растущий интерес государств региона к Пекину. Страны Совета сотрудничества арабских государств Персидского залива (ССАГПЗ) проявили большой интерес к долгосрочным экономическим инвестициям Китая. Китайские инвестиции стали поступать в регион, когда эти страны стремились диверсифицировать свою экономику в рамках концепции национального развития. Страны Персидского залива добились значительного прогресса в рамках инициативы «Один пояс, один путь».

Среди наиболее острых проблем в Персидском заливе следует отметить внутренние противоречия, соперничество и конфронтацию, которыми уже давно манипулируют и эксплуатируют внешние игроки. Эта реальность не получила адекватной оценки с политической точки зрения внутри региона, что может иметь разрушительные последствия для региона. Китай привлекателен для стран Персидского залива еще и тем, что не навязывает политических предпосылок. Долгосрочное участие Китая в регионе может быть расширено дополнительными инструментами, включая посреднические инициативы. Со временем Китай превратился в балансирующую силу для региона благодаря своей «мягкой силе» и экономическим возможностям.

Ключевые слова – ССАГПЗ, Китай, Катар, мягкая сила, геополитика, безопасность, международные отношения.