

Examining the Dynamics of China-Syria Relations Amid Global Changes



AGHAVNI A. HARUTYUNYAN

Ph.D. in History, Leading Research Fellow of the
Department of International Relations at the Institute of Oriental Studies
National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Yerevan (Armenia)
aghavni.harutyunyan1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. *In an era marked by rapid geopolitical transformations, the relationship between China and Syria stands out as an important case study in the evolving dynamics of international relations. The paper delves into Syria's significance as a pivotal political and trading partner for China in the Middle East, serving as a critical nexus for access to the Mediterranean. It underscores the current relevance of the topic by exploring Syria's integral role in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its position as a vital logistical hub.*

Additionally, it considers how Syria can facilitate the expansion of the Chinese economy while promoting its economic revitalization, particularly in sectors like infrastructure, telecommunications, and energy, aligning with both nations' strategic policies of 'Look East' (Syria) and 'Look West' (China) within Syria's broader four seas strategy.

The research investigates China's involvement in the Syrian crisis of 2011, its mediation efforts, provision of humanitarian aid to Damascus, and aspirations to contribute to the country's reconstruction under the BRI, it delineates the dynamics of China-Syria political and economic engagements, highlighting also difficulties arising from BRI implementation.

This article comprehensively analyzes the diplomatic, economic, and strategic interactions between Beijing and Damascus, exploring the factors influencing their bilateral ties. It examines the historical development, current status, and future prospects of these relations in the context of global changes. The study aims to provide general insights into the evolving nature of China-Syria relations by considering the interplay of domestic politics, regional developments, and international dynamics.

KEYWORDS: *China, Syria, Syrian civil war, Belt and Road Initiative, trade connectivity*

INTRODUCTION

China's emergence as a global power and its strategic actions in regions traditionally dominated by the West, such as the Middle East (ME), are altering geopolitical dynamics, impacting alliances, conflicts, and global governance. In the context of a shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order, with rapidly evolving alliances,

economic interdependence, and changing power structures, it is crucial to examine the dynamics and characteristics of China-Syria relations. These relations influence not just Middle Eastern politics but also global political landscapes.

The relationship between China and Syria encompasses political, economic, and military collaboration, along with security issues and diplomatic support in international forums, emphasizing sovereignty and non-interference. Studying China's engagement with Syria offers insights into the changing dynamics of global and regional power competition. As a global player challenging Western dominance, China's growing influence in the strategically crucial ME impacts regional stability and efforts to resolve conflicts. China's approach to humanitarian aid and conflict resolution in Syria reflects its stance on global governance and its readiness (or reluctance) to participate in multilateral solutions to complex crises.

China's economic investments and its establishment of a presence in the ME through the BRI significantly influence regional development and the expansion of communications. This article explores the sectors in Syria targeted by Chinese investments, including energy, infrastructure, and telecommunications. It details China's execution of major infrastructure projects in Syria, such as building highways, railways, and energy facilities.

The research also aimed to demonstrate that China's involvement in Syria is part of its larger strategy to extend its influence in the ME, while Syria aims to utilize Chinese support for its reconstruction and development needs. The study observes how Damascus, amidst various geopolitical struggles such as the Syrian civil war and regional power competition, is striving to advance its interests. The article highlights the cooperation between Syria and China, driven by a mutual desire to strengthen strategic partnerships and economic ties, and it discusses the potential benefits and challenges of their collaboration.

FORGING BONDS THROUGH TIME: TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA-SYRIA RELATIONS

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR) established diplomatic relations in 1956, formalizing their ties by signing the Trade Promotion Agreement. Beijing advocates for a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Middle East (ME) through political negotiations, emphasizing adherence to United Nations (UN) resolutions regarding "land for peace" (Harutyunyan, 2012; China to boost cooperation with Arabs, 2009). China supports Syria and Palestine's right to self-determination and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria. Beijing also advocates for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Golan Heights and the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab world (Daher, 2009). Syria supported China by endorsing the PRC's reinstatement to the UN (Xi, Assad jointly announce China-Syria strategic partnership, 2023) and adhering to the "One China" policy (Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative, 2022).

In 1969, Damascus and Beijing signed a military agreement to develop Syria's missile program, facilitated by the Soviet Union's refusal to expand long-range missiles. China sought to fill the arms market gap in Syria and the ME (Haddad, 1965). Between 2000-2020, Beijing sold US\$76 million worth of weapons to Syria (Yellinek, 2020), with 30% of arms deals belonging to China and North Korea, and 50% to Russia (Evron, 2013).

China and Syria have strengthened their political and military ties, increasing trade and economic cooperation (Antipov, 2012). In 1982, a long-term trade agreement was signed (Zreik & Zhao, 2023), and in 1999, a Friendship Association was established between the Syrian Parliament and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Akil & Shaar, 2021). In 2004, the visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to China catalyzed strengthening relations between Beijing and Damascus (China and Syria are steadily developing relations of friendship and cooperation, 2008), fostering heightened political and strategic dialogues and facilitating China's expanded involvement in Syria (Lin, 2010). Damascus was influenced by Chinese socialist market economy reforms, which balanced the state's strict role with economic liberalization (Delattre, 2010). Syria, a developing country, considered the Chinese model of economic modernization as a viable alternative to the West's free market (Zambelis, 2008). In the 2000s, Syria adopted the Chinese model of limited privatization and liberalization, launching a five-year development plan in 2006 (China and Syria are steadily developing relations of friendship and cooperation, 2008). In 2007, Syria officially recognized China's market economy status, its compliance with World Trade Organization standards, and the reduction of government funding or restrictions on monopolies in China (Syria: Befriending Beijing, 2007).

Since the Syrian crisis began in 2011, Beijing has argued against Assad's power relinquishing at the West's request (Harutyunyan, 2013). Beijing and Moscow have vetoed UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and condemned force against Syrian citizens, reducing international pressure on Assad (O'Connor, 2018). Meanwhile, China acknowledges the UNSC as the primary mediator in the conflict settlement and supports a political resolution upholding Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Urging Extension of Resolution on Cross-Border Humanitarian Assistance into Syria, Secretary-General Tells Security Council 'Our Aid is Reaching People in Need', 2022), as well as the principle that the country's future should be determined by its people (China calls for political solution to Syrian crisis, 2016).

China has criticized United States (US), Israeli, and Turkish military interventions in Syria (Cafiero, 2023), urging the US to end its illegal presence and respect other states' sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity (China called on the US to end its illegal military presence in Syria, 2023). In October 2019, Beijing called on Ankara to show restraint following Operation Peace Spring, the Turkish military invasion of northern Syria (Cafiero, 2020). In July 2021, the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized the collective West's plan to overthrow the Assad regime and warned against inciting

inter-ethnic discord under the guise of terrorism (Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative, 2022).

China has opposed coercive measures, sanctions, censorship blocking, ceasefire demands, and Criminal Court referrals. It has participated in numerous peace conferences, including Geneva I (2012), II (2014), and Vienna (2015), and welcomed the Astana Peace Process in 2017 initiated by Russia, Iran, and Turkey. At the UN, China has aimed to mediate regional stakeholders and promote political reconciliation (Calabrese, 2019). In 2016, after the liberation of Palmyra and Aleppo, China established the position of Special Representative for Syria (Moshkin, 2018).

Beijing's approach to the Syrian conflict differed from Russia's, opting for neutrality and not taking sides, instead of getting involved militarily (Didenko, 2017). In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping invited the Syrian Foreign Minister and Syrian National Coalition (SNC) opposition leader to Beijing summits to promote peace (Luft, 2016). China's diplomatic connections in Damascus could have influenced prioritizing Chinese investment in Syria's post-war economic and infrastructure reconstruction programs (Kozhemyakin, 2018).

Beijing's commendable support for the Syrian government during the civil war led to strengthened ties between China and Damascus following the conflict. Particularly noteworthy was the establishment of strategic cooperation between the leaders of both countries during the 26th Asian Games in September 2023 (al-Allouni & Qreima, 2023). Additionally, Syria expressed its support for President Xi's Global Development, Security, and Civilization Initiatives, underscoring the depth of the bilateral relationship and mutual commitment to cooperation and development (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Syrian Arab Republic on the Establishment of Strategic Partnership (full text), 2023).

CHINA'S ROLE IN THE SYRIAN ECONOMY¹

Between 2010 and 2019, the Syrian civil war severely impacted the country's economy and population² (Reid, 2024), resulting in a decline in GDP and a significant currency depreciation. The war caused a 33-fold spike in food and essential goods prices (Nikolaicheva, 2022), and by 2023, the currency had fallen to record lows, generating hyperinflation and leaving 90% of the population in poverty (Cafiero, Assad in China: Syria's new economic and diplomatic ally?, 2023).

¹ Before the 2011 Chinese exports to Syria valued at US\$4.2 billion. In 2019, Chinese investments totaled US\$135.7 billion. In 2019, exports were US\$1.32 billion, followed by US\$482.35 million in 2021, and US\$424.51 million in 2022. Syria's total exports to China in 2023 were US\$0.255 million.

See at 'Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative', Silk Road Briefing, (16 January 2022), 'China exports to Syria', Trading Economics, (2021, 2024); 'Syria total exports to China 2014 – 2023', CEIC Data.

² The Syrian war has caused over 600,000 casualties, internal displacement of 7 million, and emigration of 6 million. Cities and infrastructure have been destroyed, with a 70% GDP drop and a 50% unemployment rate. The government's budget decreased from US\$16.4 billion in 2010 to US\$1.122 billion in 2017, with the UN estimating a reconstruction cost of US\$400 billion.

Since 2017, Syria has aimed to invest over US\$4.7 billion in infrastructure rebuilding and expanding its railway and highway network (Juma, 2017). The Syrian government has invited foreign investments from the US, European Union (EU), Turkey, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (Calabrese, 2019). However, Western nations are skeptical about the legitimacy of the 2021 presidential elections and refuse to work with a leader accused of war crimes. The West demands political reforms from Assad in exchange for support (Phillips, 2022).

Damascus has sought support from nations that have recognized the election results like Russia, Iran, Belarus, and China to rebuild its economy. Despite constant military presence and aid from Russia and Iran worth US \$7 billion and US \$23 billion, respectively, the country's economy has not been stimulated enough (Burton, Lyall, & Pauley, 2021). A reliable partner, such as China, with its state-owned and private companies, can help in rebuilding infrastructure and power plants, providing a competitive edge over Russia and Iran (Sharma, 2022). Chinese companies have a unique opportunity to invest in Syria's reconstruction efforts, despite competition from Syrian, Russian, and Iranian interests. With sanctions on Russia and Iran, China can offer financing, technology (Matveev I. A., 2022), and global projects like the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)³, helping President Assad break out of diplomatic isolation and provide essential support for Syria's reconstruction efforts (Burton, Lyall, & Pauley, 2021).

China has shown its commitment to the welfare of the Syrian people by providing substantial humanitarian aid and investments in the country. In 2017, Beijing provided over US\$40 million worth of aid to Damascus, including food, security, healthcare, medical equipment for military hospitals, and aid for refugees (Media: China will provide assistance to Syria as part of the One Belt, One Road initiative, 2017; Kāzemi & Chen, 2014; Chinese embassy donates medical equipment to Syrian hospital, 2017; Morris, 2018). Additionally, in 2018, as part of the "1+2+3" cooperation model between China and 22 Arab countries, Beijing announced a US\$20 billion loan package and financial support of around US\$106 million, with US\$91 million going to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen (Akl et al, 2019; Harutyunyan, 2019). China provided a COVID-19 vaccine and a US\$40,000 grant to the organization 'Syria Trust for Development' in 2022 (Sharma, 2022), and after an earthquake in 2023, provided US\$4.38 million in humanitarian aid (China-aided emergency assistance supplies to Syria handed over in Damascus, 2023).

In 2017, the Chinese government pledged to invest US\$2 billion in a centralized industrial park in Syria, involving 150 companies. China gifted 800 power generators

³The BRI (Belt and Road/B&R) launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013, consists of four land-based and two sea-based corridors - the Economic Belt of the Silk Road (EBSR) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR). It aims to connect Asia and Europe via the ME, Africa, and Central Asia through transcontinental railways, pipelines, ports, airports, and infrastructure projects with up to US\$1 trillion of Chinese investment. The BRI will be primarily implemented by the China-led Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and the BRICS New Development Bank. It can be utilized to implement national concepts like the "Digital Silk Road", "China Dream", and "Made in China-2025".

to Latakia, Syria's largest port, and signed agreements with state-owned Chinese companies for power plants, automobile production, and hospitals. Chinese Huawei committed to rebuilding Syria's telecommunications system by 2020 (Lyll, 2019) but was accused of violating US sanctions (Dorsey, Syria lures but will China bite?, 2020).

China's involvement in Syria's reconstruction is linked to its energy imports from Syria, the largest producer of crude oil in the Mediterranean region and with vast gas reserves. After the European embargo on Syrian crude oil in 2011, the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) took control of the country's oil and gas sector⁴ (Evron, 2013). However, the ongoing conflict in Syria has caused significant damage to the country's oilfields, impacting production. Two of the 35 oilfields operated by "Al Furat", "Al-Taimi" and "Al-Ward" came under Damascus control, while other major fields were taken over by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in 2015-2016 (Akil & Shaar, 2021).

Sinochem, a Chinese company, has been operating the Yousefieh oil field since 2003, with 50% ownership with Dijla. In 2008, Sinopec acquired three oil fields in northeast Syria, Sheikh Mansour, Audeh/Rimelan, and Tishrin. This acquisition granted Sinopec and Canadian Tanganyika 1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Lerner, 2017). Since 2010, Sinopec has been partnering with Oudeh Petroleum on the Tishrin and Sheikh Mansour oil fields in Hasakah, owning 50% of the oil produced, almost 20,000 barrels per day in 2010 (Akil & Shaar, 2021).

China has made significant investments in the Northern Syrian Federation (TEV-DEM) following the Syrian civil war, controlling most of Syria's energy infrastructure. Sinopec invested in rebuilding the infrastructure and exporting oil through Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey. However, TEV-DEM rejected Sinopec's request to return assets and confirm pre-war ownership of three fields - Sheikh Mansour, Audeh, and Tishrin⁵ (Lerner, 2017). As of 2020, discussions about Chinese reinvestment in Syria's oil sector have been ongoing (Al-Ghadhawi, 2020).

SYRIA JOINS BRI AMID CHINA-MIDEAST EXCHANGES

China is interested in integrating Syria's Mediterranean ports as part of its Maritime Silk Road strategy. It is particularly driven by Chinese investment in ports, logistics facilities, and industrial parks related to maritime infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and other countries (Dorsey, 2020). In turn, Syria's strategic partnership with the BRI aims to strengthen its economic ties with China, unlocking new trade and investment opportunities. In 2019, Syria expressed interest in joining six

⁴CNPC, along with state-owned "Al Furat" and Syrian-Chinese "Al Kawakeb" companies, produced 104,000 barrels daily before 2011. As of 2017, Syria holds 8.50 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, ranking 42nd globally and accounting for 0.123% of the world's total natural gas reserves. In 2016, Syria held 2,500, 000,000 barrels of proven oil reserves, ranking 31st globally.

⁵The official Kurdish is name Federasyona Bakurê Sûriyê and is operated by its administrative division TEV-DEM (an abbreviated form of the Kurdish name of Tevger Chiwak Democratic).

reconstruction projects (China in Syria: Aid and Trade Now, Influence and Industry Later?, 2022) and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2022 to facilitate post-war reconstruction and socio-economic development (Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative, 2022).

Still, in 2017, President Assad introduced a "Look East" policy, aimed at reinforcing relations with Russia, China, Iraq, and other nations (Zhang & Dai, 2020). China has welcomed Syria's "Look East" strategy and has shown readiness to engage in Syria's economic recovery efforts (Yellinek, 2020). The synergy of China's "Look West" policy and Syria's "Look East" development strategy aligns with Beijing's desire to use Syria as a gateway to the European market, especially in light of the EU's protectionist policies. Beijing plans to establish a strong position in the EU market by investing in infrastructure projects in the Mediterranean Union of Balkan and Levant countries (Lin, 2010; Lin, 2020). Syria's seaports can supplement its stockpiles in Greek ports and other areas, providing a "back door" to access the West. With the US administration's focus shifting to the Pacific and military presence weakening in Syria, Turkey, Iran, Russia, and China are poised to gain significant influence in the region (Battaglia, 2018; Morozov, 2022).

Syria's strategic location is crucial for the B&R, with President al-Assad's "Five Seas" strategy aiming to transform the country into an energy transportation and trade hub. This plan, disrupted by the Arab Spring, can be realized through the B&R ⁶(Ehret, 2020). The Syrian coast can connect the Arabian Sea to Pakistan's Gwadar port, and the Red and Mediterranean seas to ports in the Persian Gulf, Egypt, Israel, and Djibouti, boosting trade and regional stability, with Djibouti serving as China's first military outpost (Al-Ghadhawi, 2020; Ehret, 2020).

The Caspian-Black Sea-Mediterranean Corridor, connected to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), is a crucial global trade hub. The Caspian Sea ports serve Central Asian (CA) countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia ⁷(Devonshire-Ellis, 2021). The planned communication line between China and EU countries passes through Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Iraq before entering Syria. The main transport links in Syria are Damascus, Homs, Tartus, Palmyra, Raqqa, and Dura Europos (Tsaturyan, 2016).

It is worth noting that the Manich Ship Canal, which connects the Bosphorus Straits, and the Istanbul Canal, which connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara and

⁶In 2004, in an effort to turn Syria into a crossroads for international investment, transport, and others, President al-Assad announced the "Four Seas" Strategy, which included the Mediterranean, Black, Arabian, and Caspian seas, to which the Red Sea was later added. In 2010, 7 countries joined the project to connect all four major water systems (Mediterranean, Caspian, Black Sea, and Persian Gulf) with rail and infrastructure corridors.

⁷The INSTC is a freight route connecting India, Russia, Iran, Europe, and CA. It connects the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf ports to the Caspian Sea, Russia, St. Petersburg, and Northern Europe. It reduces the time needed for goods from Mumbai to Moscow by 20 days compared to the Suez Canal and has an estimated capacity of 20-30 million tons per year.

flows into the Mediterranean Sea, will provide routes for Syrian Tartus and Latakia, allowing Syrian oil and gas to be available to CA and access regional markets. Syria has expressed interest in joining the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), with some EAEU member states directly interested in the "Five Seas" routes. Syria has also applied for observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Furthermore, Damascus has double taxation agreements with China, India, Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, and free trade agreements with Iran and Turkey ⁸(Devonshire-Ellis, 2021).

China is interested in the ports of Lebanon, particularly Tripoli, as it could meet the annual cargo demand of 30 million tons needed for Syria's reconstruction since the main ports of Tartus and Latakia have a limited capacity of 10-15 million tons. Tripoli could also serve as a transit hub in the Eastern Mediterranean and a terminal on the B&R route from East Asia to Europe (Issa, 2017). China could also contribute to Syria's reconstruction by including it in the planned special economic zone near Tripoli, making it a useful hub for Syria. Before the Syrian war, Lebanese ports were used for shipping to Syria and Iraq, bypassing the Suez Canal and the Arabian Peninsula Sea route (Lin, 2017). China is considering investing in Iraq's reconstruction by restoring the Lebanese national railway network (Crowe, 2020), which connects Beirut and Tripoli to Damascus (Comair-Obeid & Obeid, 2020), and the Tripoli-Homs railway network, which is part of the Eurasian infrastructure (Lin, 2017).

Latakia and Tripoli provide access to the Red Sea via the Suez Canal, allowing ships to reach Port Said, where Russia has established free trade facilities and is building a high-speed railway from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean for Egypt. Once completed, ships can enter the Persian Gulf, deliver goods to Iran, and complete a "Five Seas" loop through the INSTC back to the Caspian Sea via Chabahar in Iran, then sail to Pakistan, India, and China (Devonshire-Ellis, 2021). In other words, Latakia and Tripoli are perfectly positioned to facilitate Chinese goods exports, investment, infrastructure, telecommunications, and energy initiatives, thanks to their strategic gateways to Europe, CA, and MENA (Issa, 2017; Harutyunyan, 2020).

Furthermore, Syria's seaports serve as Jordan's gateway to the Mediterranean Sea and a connecting point between Turkey and Jordan (Evron, 2020), supporting Beijing's supplies in the Israeli ports of Haifa and Ashdod (Dorsey, 2020). While a more secure route to Europe is through northwestern Iran and Turkey, bypassing Iraq makes the Syrian section of the B&R towards Jordan and Israel meaningless. After mediated relations between China and Russia, Iran and Iraq agreed to build a cross-border railway through the Basra/Shalamchek corridor, connecting Iran's southern ports in the Persian Gulf and to the INSTC (Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative, 2022).

⁸The Manich Canal, an international transport system connecting the Eurasian Canal and the Black, Azov, and Caspian Seas, is set to undergo an 18-billion-dollar reconstruction, reducing ship travel distance from over 1,000 km to 680-850 km. Russia has a base in Tartus and a trade office in Damascus, while Iran has leased Latakia and a preferential trade agreement with Syria.

In March 2023, thanks to China's mediation efforts Saudi Arabia and Iran reached an agreement, ending the regional conflict and restoring diplomatic relations. The agreement was based on significant investments made by China and Saudi Arabia in Iran, bringing prosperity to the region. Saudi Arabia also announced the restoration of diplomatic relations with Damascus (Alam, 2023), marking the end of Syria's regional isolation and its return to the League of Arab States, supported by Beijing (China and Syria announce the establishment of a strategic partnership, 2023). Earlier in 2018, Assad visited Oman and UAE, and Bahrain and Syria's foreign ministers held a warm meeting at the UN, marking a historic agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has brought hope for stability in the ME (Alam, 2023).

In addition, China and Iran signed a 25-year strategic cooperation agreement in March 2021, aiming to establish a network of alliances across Asia and the ME. This collaboration, alongside Russia's engagements with Syria and Iran, aims to establish a coordinated stance against Western policies. It includes economic ties, political support, and strategic partnerships to strengthen collective bargaining power on the global stage (Rossidis, 2021).

CHALLENGES TO COOPERATION ALONG THE B&R

Currently, Syria's situation remains unstable primarily due to a weakened economy, factional politics, religious and ethnic conflicts, fear of financial institution blacklisting, competition from regional and global players, and serious threats of international terrorism. Issues include governance crisis, corruption, infrastructure collapse, energy shortages, brain drain, security issues, and foreign military presence beyond Assad's control (Cafiero, 2023). The international sanctions negatively affected the attractiveness of the investment environment. The "Caesar Act" imposed by the US has negatively impacted Syria's foreign economic activity, particularly in neighboring countries like Lebanon and Jordan (Nikolaicheva, 2022). The sanctions could deprive Lebanon of reconstruction benefits and prevent Chinese investment in Tripoli, potentially hindering Syria's recovery and affecting its economic prospects (Vohra, 2020; Matveev I., 2020; Ohanes, 2020).⁹

Hong Kong banks' reluctance to invest until sanctions are lifted significantly restricts China's involvement in Syria's reconstruction. Instead, Chinese and Lebanese banks have formed reserve channels, using Lebanon as an intermediary or logistics hub for Chinese investments in the peaceful reconstruction of Syria, provided the internal crisis is overcome. China faces competition in the Syrian economic reconstruction if sanctions weaken and the consensus is formed, particularly with alternative collective investment projects from GCC countries, EU, India, Japan, and "Asian tigers" ¹⁰(Matveev

⁹The "Caesar Act" is a Syrian civil defense law imposed on foreign nationals due to cooperation with Damascus in oil, gas, aviation, defense, and construction sectors, including President Assad, his wife, and siblings, on June 17, 2020.

¹⁰The Four Asian Tigers are Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan.

I. A., 2022). Egypt and Turkey also aim to participate in post-crisis reconstruction if sanctions are eased (Nikolaicheva, 2022).

It is also known that Syria has become a hub for terrorist groups, with Afghanistan and CA first joining and later involving Islamic State (IS or ISIS - Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) groups in the Syrian military operations, due to which Beijing views Afghanistan and Syria as a "terrorist front" (Calabrese, 2019). Since May 2012, Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) fighters from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have joined al-Qaeda in Syria ¹¹(Uyghurs fighting in Syria, 2012), while hundreds of Uyghurs in Syria and Iraq have joined IS (Clarke, 2016; Zenn, 2019). By May 2017, nearly 5,000 Chinese fighters were fighting alongside al-Qaeda and the IS in Syria (O'Connor, 2018). Chinese fighters may have been part of other rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (Zenn, 2019). TIP militants have been involved in Jabhat al-Nusra-led battles in Aleppo suburbs ¹²(Bibikova, 2019) and were also observed in Damascus' countryside (Chinese Night Tigers Special Forces Arrive in Syria, 2017).

The war in Syria has led to a growing threat of transnational jihad, Islamic extremism, and separatism from ME to CA and Xinjiang, potentially threatening the PRC's western borders and peace in South Asia (Larin, 2018), particularly in Iranian Kurdistan and Baluchistan (Tsaturyan, 2016). Uyghurs may join jihadist groups in Syria through human smuggling networks in CA or Southeast Asia (Clarke, 2016). Militant groups in Syria and Iraq have used anti-Chinese propaganda and combat experience to raise the TIP profile among jihadists (Zenn, 2019). Some IS leaders call for loyalty to Chinese Muslims and extreme religious propaganda in the region (Liu & Hu, 2018).

Terrorist forces supporting Uyghur separatism may exploit Xinjiang's infrastructure (China's Interests in Syria and the Middle East – by Dr. Christina Lin, 2016) and economy through the BRI land-based corridor, EBSR, which relies on overland energy supplies from the ME and CA, including gas pipelines from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia (Bibikova, 2019). It's no coincidence that in 2013, Xi Jinping emphasized the Syrian issue at the SCO summit (Zenn, 2013). Beijing sought to join the 2015-established Center for the Exchange of Security Information between Iran, Russia, Iraq, and Syria to combat terrorism and extremism (Kitaj hocet prisoeidinit'sja k Chetyrehstoronnemu centru obmena informaciej o bezopasnosti v Bagdade [China wants to join the Quadrilateral Center exchange of information on security in Baghdad], 2019; Harutyunyan, 2020). China has tightened security measures against Uyghur separatists in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Baluchistan province, aiming to sever ties between Uyghurs and their diaspora in CA (Dorsey, 2018; Harutyunyan, 2019). Beijing has been providing intelligence to Syria (Chinese Night Tigers Special Forces Arrive in Syria, 2017; Expert: Beijing without a doubt took the side of Bashar al-Assad, 2016; Kitaj gotov povoevat" v sirijskoj provincii Idlib [China is ready to fight in the Syrian

¹¹ Beijing has accused the TIP, formerly known as the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), of inciting separatism, terrorism, and violence.

¹² Al-Qaeda Levant, now Hayat Tahrir Ash-Sham/HTS.

province of Idlib], 2018) and sending military advisers since mid-2016 to assist the Syrian government. These advisers are supposed to work with Syrian intelligence agencies to prevent Uyghur militants from infiltrating China and carrying out terrorist attacks (Mulhem, 2018). China has also been selling weapons to Syrian forces (Sheng, 2016). However, in 2018, the Chinese Ambassador to Syria denied the presence of Chinese military advisers or special Chinese forces in Syria (China says willing to team with Syria's Assad in push to retake territory, 2018).

CONCLUSION

China and Syria share a robust diplomatic relationship characterized by frequent high-level visits, discussions, and exchanges spanning politics, economics, and the military. China's consistent backing of Syria stems from its principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states and its dedication to preserving regional stability through diplomatic means, a stance it maintained steadfastly during the Syrian civil war. By aligning itself with Russia within the framework of the UNSC, Beijing has taken an active role in negotiations among conflicting parties, driven by its geostrategic interests.

The relationship between China and Syria has notably advanced, especially in the context of the Syrian civil war and subsequent efforts towards reconstruction, technical cooperation, economic investment, and humanitarian aid. China has positioned itself as a responsible global participant, engaging in competition with Russia and Iran concerning foreign policy objectives and interests in the region. While there exists competition rooted in military, political, and economic motives, common interests also bind them together. The alliance forged among Syria, Russia, Iran, and China is founded on shared interests aimed at countering Western influence and reshaping regional dynamics. By investing in Syria's reconstruction, these nations stand to gain individually while bolstering their collective strategic position. Additionally, such investment could yield political backing, enhanced economic cooperation, and collaborative endeavors in combating terrorism.

Syria's participation in the BRI can significantly aid post-war reconstruction and infrastructure restoration. The BRI aims to establish a modern Silk Road linking Asia, Africa, and Europe via land and sea routes. This collaboration aligns with Syria's "Go East" strategy and China's "Go West" vision, while also implementing the "Five Seas" strategy, positioning Syria as a vital hub for energy transportation and trade. The integration of Lebanese ports, Tartus, Latakia, and Damascus into the BRI and the establishment of a new corridor linking Iran to Syria through Iraq will play a crucial role in Syria's economic revitalization plans. This will also enhance China's economic influence in the Eastern and Mediterranean Levant, providing an alternative route to the Suez Canal and facilitating connections between China, Europe, and the MENA regions. The Middle East Corridor, with Syria actively participating in the BRI, will link Iran to Syria via Iraq, enhancing the international INSTC corridor.

China's involvement in Syria, however, faces challenges due to the complex geopolitical landscape, ongoing conflict, Syria's inability to restore security, international sanctions, and the opposition of Chinese investment companies and banks. China's support for the Bashar al-Assad regime, citing concerns about transnational terrorism and Uighur militant involvement in the Syrian conflict, serves as a barrier against Islamic extremism. However, given that the main condition for Chinese business investment in Syria is political stability and a favorable investment environment in the country, it is possible that in the background of ongoing instability and terrorist threats in Syria, the Chinese will continue to exercise prudence and caution to ensure greater involvement in the Syrian economy. China's modest economic presence in Syria is also due to its lack of priority in the region, compared to Russia, Iran, and some Western actors. This is facilitated by the decrease in Chinese foreign investments due to deteriorating relations with Washington and the fact that Syria remains a risk zone for Chinese investments.

Chinese investment may increase in the context of the Beijing-mediated settlement of Saudi-Iranian relations and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Damascus and Riyadh, especially in the context of Washington's declining influence in the region and the implementation of China's long-term ambitious strategy, such as the BRI. Moreover, China's stabilizing role in Syria could attract investment, especially among Gulf states seeking to rebuild their pre-war networks in Syria. At the same time, based on the geopolitical interests of filling the vacuum created after Washington in the ME, countering the American hegemony, and strengthening its influence in the region, Beijing promotes the weakening of Western sanctions against Syria.

Despite these challenges, China is committed to strengthening its strategic partnership with Syria, supporting its reconstruction efforts, and enhancing bilateral cooperation within the BRI. China's focus will be on shared strategic and economic interests, rather than humanitarian reconstruction, as Syria is not an attractive location for Chinese foreign investment. Chinese companies may become heavily involved in the Syrian economy, particularly in infrastructure projects aligning with BRI. This involvement will enable Beijing to advance its economic and geopolitical interests and present itself as a responsible stakeholder in the vital ME region. The success of such cooperation depends on various factors, including the economic and security situation, political stability, and broader geopolitical shifts.

REFERENCES:

- Akil, S., & Shaar, K. (2021, March 24). The Red Dragon in the Land of Jasmine: An overview of China's role in the Syrian conflict. Retrieved from Operations and Policy Center (OPC): <https://opc.center/an-overview-of-chinas-role-in-the-syrian-conflict/>
- Akl, Z., Cherif, Y., Hartwell, C., Milosevich, M., & Ambrosetti, E. T. (2019). The role of Russia in the Middle East and North Africa region. Strategy or Opportunism? (V. Talbot, & C. Lovotti, Eds.) IEMed. European Institute of the Mediterranean.
- al-Allouni, R., & Qreima, S. (2023, September 25). President al-Assad meets Li Qiang: Heading east is a political, cultural and economic guarantee for Syria. Retrieved from SANA: <https://sana.sy/en/?p=317423>
- Alam, K. (2023, March 29). Syria war: After Iran-Saudi deal, could China be the key to peace? Retrieved from Middle East Eye: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/syria-china-key-peace-could>
- Al-Ghadhawi, A. (2020, March 20). China's policy in Syria. Retrieved from Chatham House: <https://kalam.chathamhouse.org/articles/chinas-policy-in-syria/>
- Antipov, K. (2012). Kitaj v mirovoj i regional'noj politike. Istorija i sovremennost' [China's Middle East policy in the context of the Syrian crisis]. *Blizhnevostochnaja politika Kitaja v kontekste sirijskogo krizisa [China in World and Regional Politics. History and Modernity]*(17), 204-226.
- Assad travels to China in first visit since beginning of war in Syria. (2024, June 11). Retrieved from Le Monde: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/09/21/assad-travels-to-china-in-first-visit-since-beginning-of-war-in-syria_6138267_4.html
- Battaglia, M. (2018, December 2). BRI, The Chinese bid for Syria's Reconstruction. Retrieved from Mediterranean Affairs: <https://www.mediterraneanaffairs.com/bri-china-syria-reconstruction/>
- Bibikova, O. (2019). Uyghur jihad in China and Syria. *Russia and the Muslim World: Scientific Information Bulletin*, 4(310), 67-77.
- Burton, G., Lyall, N., & Pauley, L. (2021, June 3). The Limits on China's Role in Syria. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/the-limits-on-chinas-role-in-syria/>
- Cafiero, G. (2020, February 10). China plays the long game on Syria. Retrieved from Middle East Institute: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/china-plays-long-game-syria>
- Cafiero, G. (2023, September 25). Assad in China: Syria's new economic and diplomatic ally? Retrieved from The New Arab: <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/assad-china-syrias-new-economic-and-diplomatic-ally>
- Calabrese, J. (2019, July 9). China and Syria: In War and Reconstruction. Retrieved from Middle East Institute: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/china-and-syria-war-and-reconstruction>
- China and Syria announce the establishment of a strategic partnership. (2023, September 26). Retrieved from Friends of Socialist China: <https://socialistchina.org/2023/09/26/china-and-syria-announce-establishment-of-a-strategic-partnership/>
- China and Syria are steadily developing relations of friendship and cooperation. (2008, April 2). Retrieved from Zhenmin Zhibao.
- China called on the US to end its illegal military presence in Syria. (2023, March 10). Retrieved from RIA Novosti.
- China calls for political solution to Syrian crisis. (2016, October 10). Retrieved from Xinhua.
- China exports to Syria. (2021). Retrieved from Trading Economics: <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/exports-to-syria>
- China exports to Syria. (2024). Retrieved from Trading Economics: <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/exports/syria>
- China in Syria: Aid and Trade Now, Influence and Industry Later? (2022, July 11). Retrieved from COAR: <https://coar-global.org/2022/07/11/china-in-syria-aid-and-trade-now-influence-and-industry-later/>
- China says willing to team with Syria's Assad in push to retake territory. (2018, August 3). Retrieved from Asia Times: <https://asiatimes.com/2018/08/china-says-willing-to-team-with-syrias-assad-in-push-to-retake-territory/>
- China to boost cooperation with Arabs. (2009, January 13). Retrieved from Xinhua News Agency.
- China's Interests in Syria and the Middle East – by Dr. Christina Lin. (2016, November 13). Retrieved from Syria Comment: <https://www.joshualandis.com/blog/chinas-interests-syria-middle-east-dr-christina-lin/>
- China-aided emergency assistance supplies to Syria handed over in Damascus. (2023, February 16). Retrieved from CIDCA: http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2023-02/16/c_859193.htm
- Chinese embassy donates medical equipment to Syrian hospital. (2017, March 23). Retrieved from Xinhua.

- Chinese Foreign Ministry urges US authorities to stop illegal military presence in Syria. (2023, March 10). Retrieved from Top War: <https://en.topwar.ru/212562-v-mid-kitaja-prizvali-vlasti-ssha-prekratit-nezakonnoe-voennoe-prisutstvie-na-territorii-sirii.html>
- Chinese Night Tigers Special Forces Arrive in Syria. (2017, December 16). Retrieved from Syria News: <https://syrianews.cc/chinese-night-tigers-special-forces-arrive-syria/>
- Clarke, M. (2016, February 4). Uyghur Militants in Syria: The Turkish Connection. *Terrorism Monitor*, 14(3), 8-11. Retrieved from https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/February_4__2016_TM_03.pdf
- Comair-Obeid, N., & Obeid, Z. (2020). *Jurisdiction: Lebanon*. Obeid Law Firm, LexisNexis Mergers and Acquisitions Law Guide, 4. Retrieved from Obeid Law Firm, LexisNexis Mergers and Acquisitions Law Guide.
- Crowe, P. (2020, August 19). Will China Change Its Lebanon Strategy? Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/will-china-change-its-lebanon-strategy/>
- Daher, M. (2009). China and the Middle East: Establishing a New Partnership. *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 18-26. doi:10.1080/19370679.2009.12023120
- Delattre, V. (2010, April). Syria on the Edge of a new Cooperation Era? Retrieved from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/07456.pdf>
- Devonshire-Ellis, C. (2021, July 21). Can China & Russia Reposition Syria With The 'Five Seas' Strategy? Retrieved from Middle East Briefing: <https://www.middleeastbriefing.com/news/can-china-russia-reposition-syria-with-the-five-seas-strategy/>
- Didenko, Y. (2017, September 7). Ob oficial'noj pozicii KNR po sirijskomu konfliktu [On the official position of the PRC on the Syrian conflict]. Retrieved from Institut Blizhnego Vostoka [Middle East Institute]: <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=37494>
- Dorsey, J. (2018, August 24). Securing Xinjiang: China adds security component to Belt and Road initiative. Retrieved from LobeLog.
- Dorsey, J. (2020, June 8). Syria lures but will China bite? Retrieved from Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP): <https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/syria-lures-will-china-bite>
- Ehret, M. (2020, August 16). Lebanon: Pearl on the New Silk Road or zone of dark age chaos. Retrieved from Sign of the Times: <https://www.sott.net/article/439952-Lebanon-Pearl-on-the-New-Silk-Road-or-zone-of-Dark-Age-chaos>
- Evron, Y. (2013, October). Chinese Involvement in the Middle East: The Libyan and Syrian Crises. *Strategic Assessment*, 16(3), 79-91.
- Evron, Y. (2020, March 20). China's involvement in the Levant: It's the economy after all. Retrieved from The Asia Dialogue: <https://theasiadialogue.com/2020/03/20/chinas-involvement-in-the-levant-its-the-economy-after-all/>
- Expert: Beijing without a doubt took the side of Bashar al-Assad. (2016, August 19). Retrieved from Pravda.Ru.
- Haddad, G. (1965). *Revolutions and Military Rule in the Middle East: The Arab states pt. I: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (Vol. 2)*. New York: R.Speller.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2012). New manifestations in the Sino-Syrian cooperation. *Contemporary Eurasia*. Arab World, 1(2), 140-155.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2013). China's position towards Syria's crisis: Condition and tendencies of development of the situation in the Middle East. *Russia's Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS)*, 108-119.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2014). The Arab Spring as a new challenge and a new opportunity for China's Middle East policy. *Armenian Political Science Journal*, 1(1), 93-121.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2019). Chinese 'Belt and Road' Initiative in the Middle East and North Africa. In 'Feng' (Ed.), *Russia - China: History and Culture, A collection of articles and reports of participants of the XII International Scientific and Practical Conference* (pp. 29-37). Kazan: Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2019). On some obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the Chinese Initiative One Belt, One Road. *Езиков свят - Orbis Linguarum*, 17(2), 143-156.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2020). China's Soft Power policy in the Middle East and North Africa. *The Silk Road'. Collection of Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Chinese Studies*, (pp. 153-163). Sofia. Retrieved May 30-31, 2019
- Harutyunyan, A. (2020). Middle East and North Africa as a part of Chinese String of Pearls strategy. *Езиков свят - Orbis Linguarum*, 18(3), 60-71.

- Issa, P. (2017, August 17). Lebanon prepares for Syria's post-war construction windfall. Retrieved from Associated Press.
- Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Syrian Arab Republic on the Establishment of Strategic Partnership (full text). (2023, September 22). Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China: fmprc.gov.cn
- Juma, A. (2017, September 11). Abbas Juma: "Silk Road" will be incomplete without Syria. Retrieved from IA Realist: <https://realtribune.ru/news-world-520/>
- Kāzemi, A., & Chen, X. (2014, February 28). China and the Middle East: More an oil. Retrieved from The European Financial Review: <https://www.europeanfinancialreview.com/china-middle-east-oil/>
- Kitaj gotov povoevat" v sirijskoj provincii Idlib [China is ready to fight in the Syrian province of Idlib]. (2018, August 3). Retrieved from IA REX: <https://iarex.ru/articles/59167.html>
- Kitaj hocet prisoeidinit'sja k Chetyrehstoronnemu centru obmena informaciej o bezopasnosti v Bagdade [China wants to join the Quadrilateral Center exchange of information on security in Baghdad]. (2019, June 3). Retrieved from IRAN.ru: https://www.iran.ru/news/politics/113125/Kitaj_hocet_prisoeidinit'sya_k_Chetyrehstoronnemu_centru_obmena_informaciej_o_bezopasnosti_v_Bagdade
- Kozhemyakin, S. (2018, August 20). The Middle East: Dragon vs Eagle. Retrieved from KPRF.
- Larin, V. (2018, February 23). The Great Game: Beijing's interests in the Middle East. Retrieved from International Discussion Club "Valdai".
- Lerner, G. (2017, February 14). Why China Can't Ignore Syria's Rebel Factions. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/02/why-china-cant-ignore-syrias-rebel-factions/>
- Lin, C. (2010). Syria in China's New Silk Road Strategy. China Brief, 10(8), 3-5.
- Lin, C. (2017). The Belt and Road and China's Long-term Visions in the Middle East. ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security(517), 1-10.
- Lin, C. (2020, August). China's Silk Road meets Syria's Four Seas Strategy. ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security(716), 1-5.
- Liu, S., & Hu, X. (2018, February 1). The Middle East makes America very anxious: How China can seize the opportunity to gain time. Retrieved from guancha.cn.
- Luft, G. (2016, January 26). China's New Grand Strategy for the Middle East. Retrieved from Foreign Policy: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/26/chinas-new-middle-east-grand-strategy-iran-saudi-arabia-oil-xi-jinping/>
- Lyll, N. (2019, March 11). China in Postwar Syria. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/china-in-postwar-syria/>
- Matveev, I. (2020, August 10). The Caesar Act: A New Challenge for Syria? Retrieved from Russian International Affairs Council: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/the-caesar-act-a-new-challenge-for-syria/>
- Matveev, I. A. (2022). Political economic model for resolving the situation in Syria in the context of the Ukrainian conflict. (E. Karpinskaya, I. Bocharova, & I. Tsymbal, Eds.) Workbook, p. 46.
- Media: China will provide assistance to Syria as part of the One Belt, One Road initiative. (2017, May 16). Retrieved from TASS.
- Morozov, Y. (2022). Strategicheskii treugol'nik SShA-KNR-RF: vyzovy i perspektivy bezopasnosti Rossii [The US-China-Russia Strategic Triangle: Challenges and Prospects for Russia's Security]. Moscow: Institut Kitaia i Sovremennoi Azii RAN (IKSA RAN).
- Morris, H. (2018, February 10). China extends helping hands to rebuild Syria. Retrieved from China Daily: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/10/WS5a7e4f48a3106e7dce13bee2.html>
- Moshkin, M. (2018, October 1). Will Russia and China become competitors in post-war Syria. Retrieved from Vzglyad: <https://vz.ru/>
- Mulhem, S. (2018, August 3). China Willing to Assist Syrian Army in Idlib Offensive – Ambassador to Syria. Retrieved from Sputnik International: <https://sputnikglobe.com/20180803/china-syria-military-assistance-1066920850.html>
- Nikolaicheva, T. (2022). The Caesar Act": American sanctions against Syria. Eastern Almanac(6), 87-99.
- O'Connor, T. (2018, January 19). China May Be the Biggest Winner of All If Assad Takes Over Syria. Retrieved from Newsweek: <https://www.newsweek.com/china-did-not-fight-syria-won-war-754644>
- O'Connor, T. (2018, April 11). China Says U.S. Should Give Syria's Assad 'an Opportunity to Explain' Before Trump Attacks. Retrieved from Newsweek: <https://www.newsweek.com/china-says-us-should-give-syria-assad-opportunity-explain-trump-attacks-882445>

- Ohanes, G. (2020, July 3). 'Pivoting East': Will China come to Lebanon's rescue? Retrieved from The New Arab: <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/pivoting-east-will-china-come-lebanons-rescue>
- Phillips, C. (2022, February 4). Syria: Joining China's Belt and Road will not bring in billions for Assad. Retrieved from Middle East Eye: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/syria-china-assad-financial-rescue-unlikely>
- Reid, K. (2024, February 16). Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help. Retrieved from World Vision: <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>
- Rossidis, Z. (2021, August 27). China, Iran, and Russia in the Middle East and the S.E. Mediterranean. Retrieved from Hoover Institution: <https://www.hoover.org/research/china-iran-and-russia-middle-east-and-se-mediterranean>
- Sharma, V. (2022, February 4). Syria Joins China's Belt and Road Initiative. Retrieved from The Diplomatist: <https://diplomatist.com/2022/02/04/syria-joins-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative/>
- Sheng, Y. (2016, August 18). China boosts Syria support. Retrieved from Global Times: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201608/1001150.shtml>
- Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative. (2022, January 16). Retrieved from Silk Road Briefing.
- Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative. (2022, January 21). Retrieved from Military-Political Analytics.
- Syria joins China's Belt and Road Initiative. (2022, January 13). Retrieved from english.news.cn.
- Syria reaches out to join China's Belt and Road Initiative. (2019, December 17). Retrieved from Silk Road Briefing.
- Syria total exports to China 2014 – 2023. (2023). Retrieved from CEIC Data: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/syria/total-exports-to-china>
- Syria: Befriending Beijing. (2007, July 2). Retrieved from Oxford Business Group.
- Tsaturyan, S. (2016, August 22). «Shelkovyj put'»: Kitaj probiraetsja v Evrosojuz cherez tureckij Hatay ["Silk Road": China makes its way to the EU through Turkey's Hatay]. Retrieved from IA Regnum: <https://regnum.ru/article/2169563>
- Urging Extension of Resolution on Cross-Border Humanitarian Assistance into Syria, Secretary-General Tells Security Council 'Our Aid is Reaching People in Need'. (2022, June 20). Retrieved from United Nations: <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14937.doc.htm>
- Use of force not solution to Syrian crisis: Chinese envoy. (2011, April 29). Retrieved from Xinhua News.
- Uyghurs fighting in Syria. (2012, October 29). Retrieved from Al-Manar.
- Vohra, A. (2020, July 9). China Wants to Be Lebanon's Savior. Retrieved from Foreign Policy: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/09/china-wants-to-be-lebanons-savior/>
- Xi, Assad jointly announce China-Syria strategic partnership. (2023, September 22). Retrieved from Xinhua.
- Xi, Assad jointly announce China-Syria strategic partnership. (2023, September 22). Retrieved from Xinhua.
- Yellinek, R. (2020, April 1). Will China Rebuild Syria? BESA Center Perspectives Paper, 1(514), pp. 1-4. Retrieved from <https://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1514-China-and-the-Question-of-Rebuilding-Syria-Yellinek-final.pdf>
- Zambelis, C. (2008, November 5). China tests its mettle in Syria. Retrieved from China Digital Times: <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/11/china-tests-its-mettle-in-syria/>
- Zenn, J. (2013). China and the SCO: Dead wood but a good platform. *China Brief*, 13(20), pp. 8-10. Retrieved from https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/China_Brief_Vol_13_Issue_14.pdf
- Zenn, J. (2019). An Overview of Chinese Fighters and Anti-Chinese Militant Groups in Syria and Iraq. *China Brief*, 14(19), pp. 7-10. Retrieved from The Jamestown Foundation: https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/China_Brief_Vol_14_Issue_19_4.pdf
- Zhang, X., & Dai, J. (2020). China's Involvement in Syria's Postwar Reconstruction. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 6(3), 267-285. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740020500165>
- Zongze, R. (2012). Responsible Protection: Building a Safer World. *Political Science, Environmental Science*.
- Zreik, M., & Zhao, C. (2023). Chinese Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean: Evidence from Syria. *BRIQ Belt & Road Initiative Quarterly*, 4(1), 72-89.