

The Evolution of Chinese–Zionist Relations: Historical Roots and Strategic Implications, 1949–2025

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Abstract:

This article addresses the problem of how China reconciles its rhetorical and diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause with the construction of growing strategic relations with the Zionist entity in the context of global geopolitical transformations. It traces the historical roots of Sino–Zionist relations since 1949, highlighting their transition from ideological hostility during the Cold War to an economic and technological partnership after 1992, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The article focuses on several core ideas, most notably: the pragmatism of Chinese foreign policy; the rise of economic and technological cooperation with Israel; the corresponding decline in practical support for the Palestinian cause; and Beijing’s adoption of a policy of “biased neutrality,” which combines pro-Palestinian political discourse with economic practices that benefit Israel. The article concludes that, despite China’s efforts to present itself as a balanced and influential international power in the Middle East, it prioritizes its strategic and economic interests over exerting real pressure in favor of Palestinian rights, which limits the effectiveness of its role as a neutral mediator in the conflict.

Keywords: China, Israel, biased neutrality, Palestine, pragmatism, interdependence

1. Introduction:

This paper is neither a detailed historical reading nor a strategic political analysis, but rather an attempt to understand and discuss a phenomenon that has been steadily growing and casting its shadow over the reality of the Arab world, namely the nature of Sino–Zionist relations and the trajectory of their development amid the events of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation and its repercussions. The importance of the topic is heightened by two main factors: first, China is



the most prominent rising global power; second, there is a sharp divergence among researchers and observers regarding China's position on the Palestinian cause, which represents the mirror reflecting the Zionist project and its narratives. Consequently, any relationship with it is inevitably subject to the indicators of the intense conflict in Palestine.

In the context of global geopolitical transformations after World War II, the world witnessed the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 as an embodiment of the Zionist movement, followed months later by the establishment of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong. These historical moments marked the starting point of a complex and multidimensional relationship between Zionism as a Jewish national project seeking security and expansion, and communist China as an emerging power searching for a foothold in the world after the "Century of Humiliation."

Israel quickly expressed early recognition of China in January 1950, becoming the first Middle Eastern entity to do so, although Beijing did not reciprocate with official recognition until 24 February 1992. However, the roots of the relationship extend to earlier decades, as the Chinese leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) supported the Zionist movement in the 1930s, considering Palestine a "Chinese Promised Land" as a symbol of national revival. This support even evolved into secret cooperation in the 1970s between Israeli and Chinese intelligence services following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960. Gradually, the relationship shifted from ideological hostility—such as China's support for UN Resolution 3379 of 1975 equating Zionism with racism—to an economic and military strategic partnership driven by the Belt and Road Initiative launched in 2013 (see note 1), as well as Chinese investments in Israeli technology and ports such as Haifa.

Accordingly, in order to understand the development of this relationship and its trajectory, the central issue raised concerns how China reconciles its formal and diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause—as reflected in its voting in favor of UN resolutions against occupation—with maintaining strong relations with Israel, especially in light of increasing U.S. pressure following the 2018 Congress law restricting technological cooperation, and the events of the Al-Aqsa Flood on 7 October 2023, which revived tensions.

This contradiction raises questions about the outcomes and future of the relationship and its repercussions. Bilateral trade reached USD 24.6 billion in 2024, with Israeli exports of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity technologies in exchange for Chinese infrastructure investments amounting to USD 15 billion.



The article aims to achieve several objectives, foremost among them tracing the historical roots of Sino–Zionist relations, then analyzing the strategic evolution of this relationship in order to assess the geopolitical and economic challenges it faces and to anticipate its impacts on the various parties.

The importance of the study lies in several dimensions: first, revealing how Israel has become “China’s bridge to the Middle East,” thereby enhancing Beijing’s influence in the face of U.S. hegemony; second, understanding China’s shift from “Third World” principles to blunt economic pragmatism, especially with the decline in support for Palestine after 2023; third, providing an analytical framework for Arab states to confront Sino-Israeli rapprochement; and fourth, filling a gap in Arabic literature on this topic, as most studies focus on U.S.–Israeli relations.

During our review of the subject literature, we identified previous studies that addressed Sino-Israeli relations from certain angles, including Yong Fang’s 2009 book *China and Israel: From the Secret to the Open*, which focuses on secret military cooperation between China and Israel during the 1970s; Zhang Chang’s 2015 study *Sino-Israeli Relations: Opportunities and Challenges*, which analyzes the paths of economic normalization after 1992; and P. R. Kumaraswamy’s 2018 book *China and the Middle East: The Quest for Influence*, which discusses general trends in China’s relations with both Palestine and Israel and China’s concern with balancing its relations and practicing a form of neutrality. The most recent of these studies is an article on Al Jazeera Net entitled “The Dragon and Israel: From the Chinese Promised Land to the Era of Al-Aqsa Flood,” which focuses on the effects resulting from the relationship between the two parties since 2023. The article is distinguished by comprehensive coverage of many related events up to 2025, with a focus on strategic outcomes (aljazeera.net, 2024).

Methodologically, the article adopts a historical-analytical approach, drawing on facts, studies, and reports dealing with China’s relations with both Israel and Palestine.

As for the structure of the article, it is divided into four main sections: the first addresses the historical roots of Sino-Zionist relations (1949–1992); the second examines the manifestations of China’s relations with Israel and their key expressions reflecting strategic development (1992–2025); the third discusses transformations in Chinese policy toward the Palestinian cause; and finally, the implications of this relationship for the future of the Palestinian cause.

The reader will note our use of the term “Sino-Zionist relations” rather than “Sino-Israeli relations,” solely to emphasize the civilizational dimension of these relations, which goes beyond the formal manifestations of diplomatic relations between states to the construction of



a pragmatic alliance that serves the interests of both parties and transcends all forms of religious, cultural, ideological, and even political disagreement.

2. Historical Roots of Sino-Zionist Relations (1949–1992):

The roots of Sino-Zionist relations date back to the early twentieth century, when small Jewish communities in China formed an initial bridge for informal cooperation. These ties were driven by the sympathy of the Chinese Nationalist regime (Kuomintang) with the idea of building a national homeland, especially under Japanese pressure on China during the 1930s. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, these relations evolved from informal support into a broad diplomatic and economic partnership by the 1990s, despite China's official commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause (Song Jian, 2014). This evolution reflects Beijing's political pragmatism, which balances economic and geopolitical interests amid global tensions. Despite official support for Palestine during the 1960s, China gradually shifted toward economic and military partnerships with Israel, particularly in technology and weapons (Alexander V. Krulov, 2024, p. 27). Accordingly, Sino-Israeli relations represent a model of economic diplomacy amid geopolitical tensions, having evolved from ideological stagnation into a strategic partnership driven by technology and trade up to 2025 (INSS, 2019). These relations passed through key historical stages shaped by Chinese reforms, U.S. pressure, and regional conflicts, with a focus on secret military cooperation followed by commercial prosperity (Jewish Virtual Library, 2025).

Informal ties between the two parties began during the 1930s and 1940s, when Chinese Jews contributed to financing Zionism, within a Chinese nationalist system that viewed it as a successful model of nationalism. After the Nakba of 1948, China established trade and intelligence relations with Israel prior to the official declaration of the state, including agreements on arms deals driven by China's urgent need for Western military technology. In this context, some historians refer to what they call a "Chinese Balfour Declaration," reflecting early support for Zionism prior to normalization (palquest, 2025).

On the other hand, the early stages of the relationship were marked by sharp divergence. With Israel's recognition of China, it became the first Middle Eastern state to do so, based on shared visions of nationalism and development (Jewish Virtual Library, 2025). Relations soon froze due to the Cold War, as China supported Arabs and Palestinians at the Bandung Conference in 1955 and barred Israelis from entry, while Israel focused on Taiwan as a diplomatic alternative and, at the same time, a provocation to China (Innovated in China, 2017). These tensions

continued until the 1970s, with limited exchanges, particularly Israeli medical aid to China during the Cultural Revolution, which largely reflected deep ideological disagreement (Jacobin, 2023), soon diminished under pressure from mutual economic interests. With Deng Xiaoping's rise to power and the launch of reforms that ended the Cultural Revolution, a phase of secret rapprochement began in the 1980s amid China's need for Western military technology (Factually, 2024). These measures paved the way for the opening of an Israeli consulate in Hong Kong in 1986 and pushed trade exchanges to around USD 50 million by 1990, along with academic cooperation in agriculture and irrigation. The Tiananmen Square crisis in 1989 further reinforced reliance on Israel as an alternative to the West (INSS, 2019). As a result of the development of relations, China refrained from repealing the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism during the 1990s, paving the way for full diplomatic relations in 1992 and a massive increase in trade. China supported the Oslo Accords and halted its military support for the Palestinian resistance, citing a preference for negotiations and peace—a policy it maintained and developed until the Sino-Israeli partnership came to include Chinese companies and investments in Israeli settlements, despite official statements rejecting settlement activity (Arman A. Mikaelian & Vladimir M. Morozov, 2021, p. 341). Despite this rapprochement, relations remained largely contingent on the U.S. position, particularly in light of American pressure on its ally Israel to restrict technological cooperation with China, and Beijing's stance on the Gaza war, which did not condemn the attacks of 7 October. This produced a Chinese position that was economically biased in favor of Israel, coupled with rhetorical support for Palestine without armed assistance. This balance reflects Beijing's pragmatism in confronting geopolitical interests (Issam Abdelghafour Abdelrazzaq, 2020, p. 3153). The relationship witnessed prosperity with the Comprehensive Innovation Partnership Agreement in 2017, after which China became Israel's largest source in 2021–2022. In 2018, China established facilities at the port of Haifa and increased investments in infrastructure projects such as railways. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu visited China in 2013 and 2017, signing trade agreements worth USD 400 million (The China Project, 2022). With the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023, China aligned with the Palestinian narrative at the United Nations, refusing to condemn Hamas and accusing Israel of “genocide,” which led to a deterioration of trust and the suspension of Chinese shipments to the Israeli army (INSS, 2025).

In 2025, a Chinese envoy visited Israel in January to support a ceasefire, but China criticized Israeli attacks on Iran and issued indirect warnings through its embassy regarding visits by Israeli officials to Taiwan, reflecting China's attempt to balance its relations with both Iran and Israel (MFA China, 2025; Be Horizon, 2025).

Despite the repercussions of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation on China's relations and positions toward Israel, and the tension in Sino-American relations resulting from the trade war launched by Donald Trump after assuming the U.S. presidency, this period witnessed the peak of Sino-Zionist cooperation with the elevation of the relationship to an "innovative comprehensive strategic partnership" in 2017 during Netanyahu's visit to Beijing. China invested USD 15 billion in 300 Israeli companies, particularly in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and electric vehicles, bringing trade volume to USD 18.6 billion in 2021 (GTAIC, 2025). Infrastructure projects such as the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem railway increased, while Chinese exports to Israel reached USD 13 billion (INSS, 2025). Earlier, Chinese President Xi Jinping had visited Israel in 2013, during which investment agreements worth USD 400 million were signed, despite U.S. intervention aimed at limiting military cooperation between the two sides (The China Project, 2022).

3. Manifestations of Sino-Zionist Relations:

Since 1949, Sino-Zionist relations have been characterized by a gradual transformation from ideological tension to a strategic economic and military partnership, driven by mutual interests despite official Chinese rhetoric supportive of Palestine (Al-Mounadila, 2023). They began as an unequal relationship during the Cold War, then flourished in technology and trade, with continued diplomatic balancing until recent tensions arising from Israeli aggression against Gaza (Al-Zaytouna Centre, 2019). Israel recognized the People's Republic of China in 1950, but China responded only with formal thanks, freezing relations due to Israel's alliance with the West during the Cold War and the Korean War, when China described Israel as an "instrument of imperialism" (Al-Mounadila, 2023). With Deng Xiaoping's reforms, unofficial relations began in the 1980s to confront the Soviet Union, manifested in Israel supplying China with military technology and upgrading diplomatic representation, culminating in the establishment of full diplomatic relations on 24 February 1992. However, the Gaza crisis and Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank, in clear violation of international law, have placed China's position under a real test regarding its credibility and its balance between statements made to Palestinians and actions undertaken with Israelis.

3.1 Zionist Penetration within China

One of the most prominent manifestations of Sino-Israeli relations is Zionist penetration within the Chinese entity, which reflects growing Israeli influence in key sectors of the Chinese economy, technology, and security. This influence is manifested through investments and strategic partnerships aimed at transferring advanced knowledge, raising security concerns both inside and outside China (INSS, 2025). Zionist penetration focuses on vital sectors such as high technology and ports, driven by mutual economic interests, but it raises questions about dependency and espionage, particularly given Israel's loyalty to the United States. This penetration can be observed through the following manifestations:

3.1.1 Economic and Investment Penetration

The most prominent manifestations in the economic field appear through large Chinese investments in Israeli companies. By 2022, China had invested more than USD 15 billion in 300 Israeli companies, particularly in artificial intelligence and biotechnology, enabling Israel to transfer advanced technology to the Chinese market (GTAIC, 2025). The Chinese company SIPG won a 25-year contract to operate the port of Haifa in 2018, while Israel, in return, was granted strategic influence over Chinese trade routes within the framework of the Belt and Road project. This includes deals such as the purchase of 56% of the Israeli company Tnuva for USD 2.5 billion, which controls 70% of the dairy market (Al-Zaytouna Centre, 2019). These investments extended to infrastructure, strengthening interdependence and opening avenues for Israeli influence over the Chinese economy (Jewish Virtual Library, 2025).

3.1.2 Technological and Military Penetration

In the technological field, Israel transferred advanced military technologies to China since the 1980s, particularly in aircraft technology, Python-3 missiles, and the development of Type-59 tanks, contributing to strengthening the Chinese army's capabilities despite secrecy to avoid U.S. sanctions (Factually, 2024; *Los Angeles Times*, 1990). In the civilian sector, partnerships in cybersecurity and electric vehicles enabled Israel to access sensitive Chinese data through sensor-equipped devices, while Israeli experts warned of data transfers to Beijing (China Global South, 2025). Reports also indicate Chinese counter-espionage operations against Israeli companies to steal joint U.S.–Israeli technology, reflecting a dynamic of mutual penetration (INSS, 2025).

3.1.3 Cultural and Social Penetration

Culturally, the Jewish community in China—estimated at around 2,500 people in Beijing and Shanghai—has contributed to strengthening Israeli influence since diplomatic recognition in

1992 through cultural and commercial exchanges (Anadolu Agency, 2020).

Israel launched “soft power” campaigns in China through media and universities, increasing awareness of Israeli innovation and boosting tourism and joint studies, but raising concerns about influencing Chinese public opinion regarding the Palestinian cause (The Tower, 2019). Academic evidence of Zionist influence within Chinese institutions includes Israel’s success in significantly penetrating the Chinese academic environment, as confirmed by several indicators, including the funding of research centers at major universities such as Peking University and Tsinghua University, and the appointment of pro-Israel academics. This led to a reshaping of Chinese perceptions of Israel away from traditional support for Palestinians (Al-Zaytouna Centre, 2019). Studies revealed funding by American Jewish organizations such as the Diane, Glazer, Skirball foundations, and the Rothschild family for Chinese academics like Xu Xin, who established infrastructure for Israel studies in China with the aim of influencing Chinese policy-making toward the Middle East (Jadaliyya, 2014).

Reports such as the “Higher Education Register 2005” highlighted that these efforts sought to counter “pro-Palestinian propaganda” by allocating funds for hiring professors and establishing centers, leading to Israel studies programs in major Beijing universities. The Schusterman and Klarman foundations also supported organizations such as the “Global Network and Chinese Israeli Academic Leadership,” part of Israeli-American cooperative efforts to promote a pro-Israel academic framework (Jadaliyya, 2014).

In the same context, Peking University and Renmin University received support from the Global Network and Chinese Israeli Academic Leadership. At Nanjing University, the “Institute of Jewish Studies” (later renamed the Diane and Guilford Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies in 2006) was established, funded by American Jewish donations for workshops and research on Judaism and Israel, with a specialized Jewish library (Jadaliyya, 2014). Tsinghua University entered into a partnership with Tel Aviv University in 2014 with an investment of USD 300 million to establish the Xin Center for Research, designed to conduct research in technology and innovation, reflecting direct Israeli funding of vital Chinese research institutions (Hodhodpal, 2022). Shandong University also hosted Schusterman workshops on Israeli culture as part of a broader campaign to establish 11 Israel studies programs by 2013 (Jadaliyya, 2014).

These centers increased the number of programs linked to Chinese academic institutions in social sciences and strategic studies, demonstrating the growing Zionist academic influence that directly affects Chinese policies (Jadaliyya, 2014). It should be noted that there are no



public diplomatic documents revealing direct coordination of academic exchange programs between China and Israel. Most partnerships rely on bilateral agreements that are not entirely secret but whose details are not disclosed in available records and documents. Diplomatic agreements focus on general frameworks for educational cooperation, such as memoranda of understanding between ministries and universities, which paved the way for projects like the Tsinghua–Tel Aviv Center without any publication documenting the nature and reality of Israeli activity within Chinese research institutions.

This influence has led to a shift in the orientations of the Chinese academic milieu, as many Chinese universities welcomed study programs favorable to Israel despite Beijing’s sensitivity toward the West, which it knows well that Israel is part of. This has caused this influence to face several constraints, including the deterioration of Sino–American relations, as well as the Chinese government’s fear of the formation of internal pressure groups working in favor of Israel (Jadaliyya, 2014). Nevertheless, despite these concerns, reports confirm the continuation of Zionist influence in China through technological partnerships, as universities in both countries have contributed to the exchange of sensitive technologies, thereby strengthening influence within military research institutions (INSS, 2019) in both countries, which the United States monitors from a distance.

In this regard as well, the Chinese Ministry of Education and the Israeli Council for Higher Education signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014 to enhance academic exchange, which included research grants for more than 1,000 Chinese students in Israel, coordinated through the embassies in both Beijing and Tel Aviv. An agreement was also announced during Netanyahu’s visit to Beijing in 2017 concerning the establishment of a “Joint Committee for Higher Education,” the same committee that organized exchanges of 500 students annually in the fields of artificial intelligence and medicine (Bokra, n.d.).

On the other hand, it should be noted that Israel’s policy of penetration within China, while contributing to enhancing Chinese technological capabilities, has raised internal security concerns regarding reliance on Israeli technology containing “backdoors” for espionage in favor of the West. Naturally, this Israeli penetration is subject to American oversight, which has led the latter to intervene several times to limit it (Washington Institute, 2022), out of fear of the leakage of American military secrets through Israel (INSS, 2025).

In the diplomatic and governmental sphere, studies indicate Israeli state intervention in China through its diplomatic apparatus, which opened channels of communication with influential American organizations prior to full diplomatic recognition in 1992, and allowed for the



“production of knowledge” locally favorable to Israel amid the scarcity of Chinese funding (Jadaliyya, 2014). In a strategic assessment by the Al-Zaytouna Centre, this influence is shown to extend to governmental institutions through Chinese investments in “Israel,” such as Beijing’s condition for accepting Netanyahu’s visit in 2013 upon resolving certain issues, reflecting mutual influence within the Chinese administrative apparatus (Al-Zaytouna Centre, 2019). This penetration helped internationalize Chinese research, as Chinese researchers played a role in establishing Jewish–Israeli centers, supported by links with Israeli universities and institutions such as Hudson and the American Project (Jadaliyya, 2014).

3-2 Biased Neutrality in Chinese Policy toward Israel

3-2-1 The Concept of Biased Neutrality:

Biased neutrality is defined as a diplomatic stance that claims non-alignment with any party to a conflict, yet in practice leans toward a particular side through economic or strategic action, while maintaining an appearance of balance in official discourse (Arab-Encyclopedia, 2007). It differs from traditional positive neutrality, which entails active support for just causes without bias, as it becomes “biased” when practices contradict declarations (Mukarbat, 2021). In the context of China with Palestine and Israel, this principle is applied as an indicator to measure the degree of balance between China’s rhetorical support for Palestine and its pursuit of developing economic partnerships with Israel in order to safeguard its strategic interests.

The concept of biased neutrality emerged through the evolution of the notion of “positive neutrality,” in whose crystallization the Non-Aligned Movement, since 1961, played a major role. Developing countries rejected alignment with Cold War blocs while adopting positive positions supporting liberation and development, as defined by the Hague Convention of 1907 as abstention from assistance with freedom of national action (Arab-Encyclopedia, 2007). It becomes “biased” when it turns into a justification for covert alignment, such as silence regarding violations by one party while supporting another, making it a political rather than purely legal instrument (Hewarat, 2025).

True neutrality, by contrast, means not inclining toward any party to a dispute, and is applied legally in wars through non-intervention or support, with freedom of national action without violation. It obliges neutral states to neutrality in media and economic matters, as in the case of Switzerland, which maintains complete non-alignment to preserve trust (Hewarat, 2025). Neutrality in its true sense is complete abstention from taking any verbal or practical stance, and the difficulty of this is evident in the context of globalization. Biased neutrality, however,

means claiming neutrality while acting otherwise, differing in terms of contradiction of positions, where a state claims neutrality but practically leans toward one side. In the case of China, which supports Palestine rhetorically at the United Nations while simultaneously maintaining trade relations exceeding USD 19 billion with Israel, this constitutes economically biased neutrality (Raya.ps, 2025). This, in turn, arises initially from “positive neutrality” but transforms into a justification for covert bias when discourse becomes a cover for interests and an attempt to conceal practical positions.

3-2-2 Neutrality in Chinese Foreign Policy toward the Parties to the Middle East Conflict:

China’s claim of practicing neutrality in its relations with Palestine and Israel constitutes a recurring official discourse since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, aiming to balance political support for the Palestinian cause with economic interests with Israel (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 2025). However, this neutrality is described as “biased toward Palestine” in discourse or “biased toward Israel” in practice, as trade continues at USD 19 billion despite China’s criticism of Israel over the Gaza war (Al Jazeera, 2025).

While China repeatedly affirms its commitment to the two-state solution and a ceasefire in Gaza, as in the statements of spokesperson Lin Jian in 2025 expressing “deep concern” over Israeli operations and calling for the application of international law, considering Gaza “an integral part of Palestinian territory” (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 2025), China hosted Fatah–Hammas reconciliation in July 2024, rejected Trump’s proposal to displace Gaza’s population, and called for “Palestinians governing Palestine,” opposing the American veto at the Security Council (Palquest, 2024). This discourse reflects “pro-Palestinian neutrality” aimed at enhancing Beijing’s international role against Washington (Alkhanadeq, 2023). However, in practice China exercises bias toward Israel, as Sino–Israeli trade reached USD 19.1 billion in 2024, with investments in the Port of Haifa and technology, indicating neutrality “biased toward Israel” in practice, despite China’s refusal to explicitly condemn Hamas after October 7, 2023 (Al Jazeera, 2025). This led to Israeli protests against China’s support for Hamas, considering it a threat to its role as a “responsible actor,” while educational and military partnerships continued as previously noted (Palquest, 2024; Raya.ps, 2025).

China thus moved from revolutionary solidarity in the 1960s to rhetorical support after 1992, abandoning hostility toward Zionism in favor of the two-state solution, driven by energy interests in the Middle East and competition with the United States, making neutrality a tool for global leadership (Al Jazeera, 2025; MECouncil, 2024). It is viewed as “biased neutrality,”

whereby Palestinian discourse is used to pressure the West while economic cooperation with Israel continues (Raya.ps, 2025).

Diplomatic evidence of China's bias toward Israel includes the contradiction between its verbal votes in favor of Palestine at the United Nations and its practical actions that strengthen economic and technological ties with Israel, which is interpreted in practice as biased neutrality in favor of Tel Aviv despite official discourse supporting Palestinian rights. This evidence also includes China's abstention from voting in favor of Palestine on strategic issues, the continuation of partnership with Israel despite escalating conflict following the Al-Aqsa Flood operation and Israel's war on Gaza with its massive casualties, and the refusal to take strict punitive measures against the Hebrew state, while maintaining increasing levels of trade and investment.

3-2-3 The Impact of Biased Neutrality on Diplomatic Relations:

There is no doubt that the stance known as biased neutrality affects diplomatic relations by enhancing short-term strategic flexibility while undermining trust in the long term. It allows a state to preserve its economic or political interests without strict commitment, generating doubts and tensions (Mukarbat, 2021). In China's case, it can support Palestine rhetorically while maintaining economic cooperation with Israel, but this behavior provokes Israeli protests and American suspicions regarding technology transfer, in addition to the loss of trust of the Palestinian side, which hears noise but sees no flour.

China's policy of biased neutrality in its relations with Zionism and Palestine represents a clear pragmatic model of multipolar diplomacy, whereby Beijing claims official neutrality by supporting the two-state solution while maintaining deep economic and military partnerships with Israel, reflecting a concern for balancing pro-Palestinian political discourse with strategic interests (Al Jazeera, 2025). This policy practically hinders progress on the Palestinian cause by favoring economic interests with Israel over effective political pressure, reducing international support for Palestine and enhancing the legitimacy of the occupation (Alestiklal, 2025). It has reduced the prospects for fundamental solutions such as the right of return, as China focuses on the "two-state solution" without confronting settlement activity, while investing millions of dollars in Israeli settlements (Palestine Forum, 2022).

As a result, China's policy weakened the Palestinian position at the United Nations by refusing to use the term "genocide" in Gaza, preferring "humanitarian catastrophes" despite the killing of tens of thousands, allowing Israel to avoid international sanctions and causing Palestine to lose diplomatic momentum (Democraticac, 2019).

4- Transformations in Chinese Policy toward the Palestinian Cause:

Through reviewing Chinese positions toward the Palestinian cause and their evolution since the Nakba in 1948, it can be concluded that these positions have undergone transformations dictated by China's geopolitical and strategic circumstances more than any other factor. Thus, China's positions evolved from enthusiastic revolutionary solidarity during the Cold War to pragmatic rhetorical support aligned with increasing economic interests with Israel, reflecting a shift from ideology to multipolar diplomacy by 2025. These transformations initially featured strong military and political support for Palestinians against "imperialist Zionism," which later declined with Deng Xiaoping's reforms in favor of balancing relations with Israel, while maintaining pro-Palestinian rhetoric without practical pressure (Alestiklal, 2025).

Chronologically, Chinese policy toward the Palestinian–Israeli conflict can be divided into the following phases:

The revolutionary phase (1949–1979), marked by full ideological solidarity with liberation causes, including the Palestinian cause. During this phase, China supported Palestinians as part of its policy of supporting the struggle of "oppressed peoples," sending weapons to Egypt and Syria during the 1967 war, describing Israel as the "imperialist Zionist entity" at the Bandung Conference in 1955, training Palestinian fighters in Chinese camps, and supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization at the United Nations (Palquest, 2024). This policy was part of Mao Zedong's ideology linking the Palestinian cause to liberation causes China championed due to its leftist ideology.

The phase of pragmatic rapprochement with Israel (1989–2000), following Deng Xiaoping's rise to power and his adoption of an open-door policy and reforms. Military support for Palestine declined in favor of secret cooperation with Israel, particularly in military technology China needed after the Tiananmen events of 1989. After the Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israel, China fully recognized Israel, adopting the "two-state solution" discourse without rejecting Israel's continued existence as a fait accompli and occupying power in Palestine (MECouncil, 2024). Rhetorical support for Palestine continued without military support or sanctions against Israel, leading Palestinians to criticize China for abandoning the revolution and its principles (Democraticac, 2019).

The phase of economic partnership with Israel and rhetorical support for Palestinians (2001–2022), during which China's support for Palestine manifested in voting in favor of resolutions condemning settlements, while practically focusing on expanding trade and partnerships with Israel, with bilateral trade reaching USD 18.6 billion in 2021 and relations upgraded to a

“comprehensive partnership” in 2017, amid ignoring Palestinian demands such as the right of return and lack of support in international forums (Palestine Forum, 2022). In 2017, President Xi Jinping announced the “four points” to support the Palestinian people on a humanitarian basis without pressuring Israel (Palestine Forum, 2022). During the Gaza war, China reiterated its initiative to project itself as an active Middle Eastern actor without implementing measures on the ground similar to those of the United States.

The fourth and current phase coincided with developments following the Al-Aqsa Flood operation in 2023 and the resulting polarization. China sought to enhance its role amid rising tensions by hosting Fatah–Hammas reconciliation in 2024 and condemning “Israeli bombardment” at the United Nations, while trade relations remained at their highest levels, raising Palestinian doubts about the sincerity of China’s position, especially after its refusal to support the resistance militarily as it had previously done (Alestiklal, 2025). In this context, a Chinese envoy visited Israel in January 2025 to call for a “peaceful solution,” reaffirming the balance in China’s stance toward both parties (PRC, 2024).

Regarding the prospects of transformations in Chinese policy toward the Palestinian cause, indicators from various studies suggest a deepening of biased neutrality in favor of Israel, with Beijing continuing rhetorical support for Palestine to gain influence in the Arab region while enhancing technological and economic partnerships with Tel Aviv through 2030, driven by the Belt and Road Initiative and competition with the United States (Ruyaa, 2025). Geopolitical tensions, particularly the Israeli–Iranian conflict peaking in 2025, affected China’s stance due to its alliance with Iran, causing some cooling in relations with Israel, yet mutual dependence preserved China’s general orientation toward Israel, with economic partnership as its core.

Many studies conclude that China will deepen its investments in Israel, planning approximately USD 23 billion by 2030, particularly in artificial intelligence and cloud computing, despite Israeli and American security concerns over “Chinese penetration” (Ruyaa, 2025). This will inevitably affect the degree and nature of Chinese support for Palestine, which will receive rhetorical backing at the United Nations while basic rights—especially the right of return and halting settlement activity in the West Bank—are ignored. China focuses on the “two-state solution” to win Arab states without confronting Israel, thereby weakening the Palestinian position internationally (Alestiklal, 2025). Chinese investments in West Bank settlements will continue under the Belt and Road Initiative, encouraging Zionist expansion in Palestinian territories and obstructing the establishment of a Palestinian state under Israel’s policy of fait accompli (Palestine Forum, 2022).

5- Implications of Chinese Policy for the Palestinian–Zionist Conflict:

Based on the foregoing, several implications of Chinese policy toward the main parties to the Middle East conflict can be identified. The general trend of Chinese policy reflects its desire to strengthen its presence and role in the region and increase its influence over the parties to the conflict through pragmatic balancing, which enhances Beijing’s regional influence at the expense of the Palestinian cause in practice due to the retreat of ideology in favor of economics and technology. This will reduce Palestinian support from substantive to symbolic. China’s refusal to adopt sanctions against settlement policy despite international condemnations indirectly encourages Israeli right-wing policies through investment in settlements, contrary to international law, delaying and negatively affecting the two-state solution and weakening the Palestinian position (Alestiklal, 2025). The Palestinian side will increasingly rely on China as a “rhetorical ally” without tangible pressure (Palestine Forum, 2022).

In this context, Sino–Zionist relations will be strengthened by their economic engine despite rising tensions, as China increasingly needs Western technology provided by Israel to meet its military and economic ambitions. Conversely, the growing Chinese commercial and economic influence within Israel—especially through ports and settlements—will relegate the occupation issue to a secondary political concern. This behavior will politically and economically strengthen Israel, enhancing its independence from traditional allies in Europe and America, aligning with Zionist aspirations to secure a powerful future ally similar to the United States.

6- Conclusion:

In conclusion, Chinese policy toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict represents a model of pragmatic diplomacy in a world experiencing historic polarization. Beijing has gradually transformed its historical revolutionary solidarity with Palestine into a form of biased neutrality in favor of Israel through economic interests, justifying this shift by the imperatives of the Belt and Road Initiative, which it claims will benefit Arab states, and by competition with the United States. While this policy has enhanced China’s influence in the Middle East and the Gulf, it has coincided with a marked decline in support for the Palestinian cause, marginalizing it in Chinese foreign policy priorities and negatively affecting opposition to settlement activity, weakening the two-state principle and the right to armed resistance. China will continue rhetorical support for Palestine while weakening its role as an equidistant mediator, exposing itself to accusations of complicity in the future.

Accordingly, strengthening Arab and Islamic pressure on China to translate its support for the Palestinian cause into concrete actions—based on shared interests reinforced by substantial Chinese investments in Arab and Islamic countries—is a vital necessity given China’s growing global stature, which Israel clearly understands, to prevent further marginalization of the Palestinian cause. Indicators suggest a growing Chinese trend toward increased economic and diplomatic dominance in the Middle East under the pretext of stability and the success of the Belt and Road Initiative, even at the expense of any just solution to the Palestinian cause.

7- Notes :

Note 1: The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative is the name given to a strategic process launched by China in 2013 to revive the world’s oldest trade network, the “ancient Silk Road,” as part of a global development policy aimed at enhancing economic connectivity, infrastructure, and trade cooperation among Asia, Europe, and Africa. Its goals include facilitating trade, achieving financial integration through major infrastructure projects such as railways, seaports, and economic zones, and ultimately reducing American dominance while enhancing China’s global influence (Belt and Road Initiative, 2019).

Note 2: The Four Points Proposed by President Xi Jinping

The four points proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping to establish peace in Palestine are primarily humanitarian, aiming to achieve political, humanitarian, and strategic objectives that consider China’s interests with Israel while attempting to support the Palestinian Authority within the two-state solution framework. They are as follows:

1. Calling for an immediate ceasefire and protection of civilians.
2. Ensuring humanitarian support and lifting restrictions on aid access.
3. Promoting negotiations and dialogue as the primary path to a political solution.
4. Encouraging the international community to play a positive role by implementing UN resolutions and strengthening long-term diplomatic solutions (eu.china, 2024).

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