

The Belt-Road Initiative and prospects, Iraq as a model -Strategic Vision-[∇]

Muneam Khmees Mukhlif *

Ibtihal Mohammed Ridha Dawood**

College of Agricultural Sciences, University of Baghdad, Baghdad-Iraq

Abstract

The Chinese Belt and Road initiative is a revival of the idea of the ancient Silk Road, which dates back to the second century BC, and was a network of roads traveled by caravans to transport commercial goods between China, Central Asia, Persia, the Arabs, and Europe, and silk was one of the most important goods that China exported. China believes that this road serves most of humanity and is based on the development of a large number of regions. It is not limited to 68 countries through which roads and sea lines pass, but rather it will revive global trade and raise growth rates.

The importance of Iraq and the Arab region, in general, emerged in the Chinese strategic perception as a source of energy. Historical studies indicate that China's relationship with the Arab region dates back to 2000 BC. The location of the Arab region in an important global strategic region near Asia and North Africa and its enjoyment of a long history, honorable civilization, and abundant natural resources, created exchanges between both the Arab-Chinese sides in various fields through what was called (the Silk Road and the Perfume Road by land and sea). China has sought to regard Iraq as a starting point for it in the Arab world and in the Asian continent, which can serve its strategic objectives in the African continent as well and express its prestige as a great Asian power. And since Iraq is a producer and exporter of oil, therefore China views it as a country of strategic importance, and Iraq can establish a foreign policy with diverse relations and reduce the status or level of its relations with Washington and focus on increasing its cooperation with China, which does not show more interest in political affairs than in economic affairs. In addition, Iraq's relationship with China does not harm the United States of America.

China seeks to gain Iraq as a strategic ally in the region on the one hand and to preserve the source of oil supplies and investment projects on the other hand. The Chinese project ((The Belt and Road)) provides Iraq with a strategic opportunity to achieve its national interests in terms of economic and trade (transit through Iraq) towards the continent of Europe and the Levant region and vice versa, as Iraq needs to diversify the sources of national income and thus strengthen the Iraqi economy in addition to selling imports oil. Therefore, Iraq is supposed to adopt a strategic approach based on seizing the opportunities available in the international strategic environment and employing the Chinese interest in it to benefit from the initiative.

تاريخ النشر: 2023/9/31

تاريخ القبول: 2023/8/22

تاريخ التقديم: 2023/7/23 [∇]

muneam.mukhlif@coagri.uobaghdad.edu.iq

ibtihal.mohammed@coagri.uobaghdad.edu.iq

*

**

Especially since China has become a center of attraction in the environment of international alliances and alliances. security, including Iraq.

Keywords: Iraq model, Strategic vision, Ancient Silk Road, Belt and road, Chinese strategic perception.

Introduction

It is no secret to everyone that China has become an emerging and influential force in the international system, and that China has adopted its approach in the course of its international relations and its vision of international relations as it is based on what can be called the developmental peace approach in exchange for the existence of some kind of structural differences in the structure of the international system. The economic impact and importance are clear in that Chinese approach, and China presented the Belt and Road Initiative as a strategic vision to search for the missing and desired role in China at the same time. With a relative decline of other competitors, led by the United States of America.

The importance of Iraq and the Middle East region, in general, emerged in the Chinese strategic perception as a source of energy, and although the initiative (the Belt and Road Initiative) is economic in its basis, it has political and security dimensions on Iraq in general. The importance of the research emerged because of the impact of this initiative on the future of Iraq in a large way, just as Iraq has an impact, albeit relatively, on the initiative. The research highlights the possibility of clarifying an integrated picture of the initiative by the possibility of rationalizing the political decision of Iraq. Therefore, the research problem arises mainly around questions, the most prominent of which is what is the Belt and Road Initiative? What are its paths?

And the challenges it faces? How will Iraq affect them? What are the chances of influencing it? Will Iraq be part of it?

Accordingly, we assume that the more the international strategic environment and the initiative are clear to the Iraqi decision-maker, the more rational his choices will be, and that Iraq will have an anxious balance between its relationship with the United States of America on the one hand and China on the other.

Accordingly, the research was divided into four sections:

The first topic: an overview of the Belt and Road Initiative

The second topic: the objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative

The third topic: the Chinese orientation toward Iraq

The fourth topic: Iraq and the Belt and Road Initiative (future vision)

The first topic

An overview of the Belt and Road Initiative:

The Chinese Belt and Road initiative is a revival of the idea of the ancient Silk Road, which dates back to the second century BC, and was a network of roads traveled by caravans to transport commercial goods between China, Central Asia, Persia, the Arabs, and Europe, and silk was one of the most important goods that China exported⁽¹⁾.

The Silk Road had a great influence on the prosperity of many ancient civilizations, such as the Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, etc., and the societies living along these roads witnessed an exchange and spread of science, arts, literature, and religions, but these roads gradually disappeared for several factors, including the policy of isolation and closure that was applied in China during the era of (Ming Dynasty), and the opening of other sea routes after the geographical discoveries⁽²⁾.

Chinese President Xi Jinping revived the idea of the ancient Silk Road. During his visit to Kazakhstan on September 7, 2013, he announced the establishment of a new economic belt. A month later, during his visit to Indonesia, he approved the establishment of the "Maritime Silk Road for the twenty-first century."

The two projects together will be called the "One Belt and One Road Initiative," so this name will be changed to the "Chinese Belt and Road Initiative"⁽³⁾. The name was changed because it gave the impression that China was moving towards the American way of conducting international life affairs, and this was the subject of criticism at the beginning, and China soon realized that and worked to change the name, since China, in its approach to the international system and the form of international relations, is based on the developmental peace approach.

The "Belt and Road" initiative takes policy coordination, the interdependence of facilities, business continuity, and money circulation as main contents, and adheres to the simultaneous construction of the economic belt of the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road in the twenty-first century. The economic belt of the Silk Road includes the direction from China to Europe (the Baltic Sea), passing through Central Asia and Russia, the direction from China to the Gulf region and the Mediterranean Sea, passing through Central and Western Asia, and the direction from China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean. While the Maritime Silk Road for the twenty-first century focuses on the direction from the coastal ports of China to the Indian

⁽¹⁾ Shanaz Bin Qana, The Strategic Stakes of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The World Economic Century Project, Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, Berlin, Germany, 2019, p. 103.

⁽²⁾ The same source, p. 103

⁽³⁾ The same source, p. 103

Ocean, passing through the South China Sea, and extending to Europe, and the direction from the coastal ports of China to the South Pacific Ocean⁽¹⁾.

The land directions of the "Belt and Road" are based on the major international corridors, and the central cities along the Belt and Road are taken as pillars, and the main economic, trade, and industrial zones as platforms for cooperation, to jointly build the corridors of international economic cooperation, including the new bridge of the Eurasian continent, the China Corridor _ Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia Corridor, West Asia, and Indochina Peninsula, while taking the "Belt and Road" maritime directions from major ports as points, to jointly build major transportation corridors that are smooth, safe and highly efficient⁽²⁾. The project is based on the construction of a network of roads, railways, oil and gas transport pipelines, electric power transmission lines, and various marine and land infrastructures to enhance international connectivity and support trade. The countries located along the line vary in their resources and advantages in a way that has a large space for economic integration and great potential for cooperation on it, and then this project covers countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa by finding bases for industrial cities and economic exchange stations spread throughout these regions, and then provides areas new economic growth in the countries of these continents⁽³⁾. China relies on the integration of the Chinese economy into the global economic system and is based on the mixed approach between capitalism and socialism. China is an important player in influencing the structure of the global economy and focusing on issues of technology, growth, and scientific innovation. The program of successive modernizations carried out by the Chinese economy and embarking on the pace of reform of the Chinese economy will influence the next direction of the Belt and Road Initiative⁽⁴⁾.

Therefore, we see China's interest in infrastructure projects, development services, and modernization policies, as the economic aspect was supported and a fundamental pillar in the initiative, and China was offering a new path and a new path in international relations and their conduct.

Countries along the "Belt and Road" have made positive responses to the joint construction of the "Belt and Road". Until January 2017, more than 100 countries and international organizations around the world participated in it, and cooperation agreements were signed between China and more than 40 countries and international organizations, forming broad common views on international cooperation, at the same time, the Chinese side is working positively to build a cooperation mechanism Bilateral joint, improve and complement the increasingly existing bilateral cooperation mechanisms, which include the Joint Committee, the Steering Committee, the Administrative Committee, and others, and push forward the implementation of cooperation projects in a coordinated manner, and until January 2017,

(1) Liu Wei, *The Old and New Silk Road, Creating an Interconnected World Between East and West*, Arab Science Publishers House, Beirut, 2018, p. 57.

(2) Liu Wei, previous source, p. 58

(3) Ibrahim Hardan Matar, *The Belt and Road New China Project, Motivations and Determinants*, Journal of Political and Strategic Studies, Issue 39, House of Wisdom, Baghdad, 2019, p. 130.

(4) Daniel H. Rosen, *China's economic reckoning, foreign affairs*, vol 100, no4, july-august, 2021, pp20-22

treaties on the free trade area were signed in Asia, Latin America, Europe, Oceania, and others. More than 50 countries along the "Belt and Road" have signed bilateral investment agreements with China. China has established 7 major pilot areas for development and opening up in important coastal areas, 17 border economic cooperation areas, 6 areas for transcontinental cooperation, and 11 areas for transcontinental economic cooperation that are still under construction. Which pushes trade and investment cooperation in the "Belt and Road" strongly⁽¹⁾.

China believes that this road serves most of humanity and is based on the development of many regions. It is not limited to 68 countries through which roads and sea lines pass, but rather it will revive global trade and raise growth rates⁽²⁾.

This is what countries are striving for, as today the techno-economic factor is leading the world and setting trends, as economic interest has become the basis and technology is at the service of the economy and the improvement of people's lives.

Chinese President Xi Jinping promised to "allocate \$124 billion for the project. Chinese investment includes \$9 billion in aid to developing countries and international institutions that are part of the Belt and Road project"⁽³⁾.

This is evidence of China's search for an active political role through investments, proliferation, and commercial and economic companies, which will allow China to reach the international political hierarchy of power or to share the summit with another power or power.

However, this project is not without concern among some competing countries who are afraid of the rapid rise of China, which believes that the (New Silk Road Initiative) will drown countries with Chinese debts, which every country that passes through it will have to pay the cost of infrastructure for the part built on its soil, but the Chinese government It says that accurate feasibility studies.

For the project, she stressed that the benefits that countries will reap far outweigh any expenses, and that the Chinese government and banks will take care not to burden any country⁽⁴⁾.

It is worth noting that many of the countries that joined the initiative had previously joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which China proposed to establish in 2013. Beijing said in 2015, "More than \$160 billion in investments are under study, funded by the Bank"⁽⁵⁾.

The Bank focuses on the development of infrastructure and productive sectors, including energy, electricity, transportation, communications, rural infrastructure, agricultural development, water supply, and sanitation, environmental protection, urban development, and

⁽¹⁾ Liu Wei, previous source, p. 80

⁽²⁾ Zainab Abdullah, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The World Economic Century Project, Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, Berlin - Germany, 2019, p. 18.

⁽³⁾ Wathiq Ali Al-Musawi, The Belt and Road Initiative between Impacts and Challenges, Part 2, Dar Al-Ayyam for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2019, p. 25.

⁽⁴⁾ Zainab Abdullah, previous source, p. 13.

⁽⁵⁾ Wathiq Ali Al-Musawi, previous source, p. 231.

logistics services, etc. in Asia, and it also cooperates with other international banks to achieve the requirements of infrastructure needs. Within the scope of the Asian continent, the Bank welcomes all regional and non-regional, developing, and developed countries seeking to contribute to the development of Asian infrastructure and regional connectivity with a capital of up to \$100 billion⁽¹⁾.

The establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, as well as the establishment of the (Silk Road Fund), for which China allocated 50 billion dollars, will weaken the influence of Western financial institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) on the global economy, and then establish new financial dealing rules far from the impact of these institutions that are often employed by the United States of America. As China aims to use Chinese industry, wealth, and knowledge create a new type of globalization that will stop the control of financial institutions that are dominated by Western countries⁽²⁾.

That is, working to end American hegemony and start the emergence of a new pattern of the international political system through international multipolarity or bipolarity in the form of axes, one of which is led by China. The Belt and Road Initiative is the largest Chinese initiative concerning foreign policy until the present time, but it is not the Marshall Plan. Beijing does not do so out of altruism or its desire to achieve stability in the countries that lend it. So why, then, does China spend these huge sums on its neighbors⁽³⁾.

One of the most important reasons is: China relies heavily on its eastern coast and the Strait of Malacca near Singapore to pass goods to and from its vast lands. For example, more than 80% of Chinese oil passes through this strait, so building trade routes that pass-through Pakistan and Central Asia seems to be an issue. Logically, the other reason lies in the fact that the "Belt and Road" initiative will help China invest its huge reserves of currency and introduce many of its idle companies into the workforce. The initiative also has a positive impact on Beijing concerning competition with the United States of America, which illustrates China's desire to. It makes many smaller countries feel economically grateful to China⁽⁴⁾.

The second topic

Objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative

The most important goals that China seeks to achieve from the Belt and Road Initiative are as follows:

- Strengthening the Chinese presence in the Eurasia region: Analysts believe that China aims, through its project, to strengthen its presence in the Eurasia region, which is of great

⁽¹⁾ Baher Mardan Meskher, The Chinese Belt and Road Strategy for the Twenty-First Century, Journal of International Studies, Issue 67, Center for Strategic and International Studies, University of Baghdad, 2016, p. 215.

⁽²⁾ Ibrahim Hardan Matar, The Belt and Road New China Project, Motivations and Determinants, Journal of Political and Strategic Studies, Issue 39, House of Wisdom, Baghdad, 2019, p. 136.

⁽³⁾ Wathiq Ali Al-Musawi, previous source, p. 115.

⁽⁴⁾ The same source, p. 116

geostrategic importance. Halford John Mackinder put in a lecture entitled: The geographical fulcrum of history in 1904 the theory of the "heart of the earth", which sees that the heart of the world is represented in the Eurasia region, as it enjoys natural protection from various sides against external invasion, in addition to its large area estimated at 5 million square miles and its huge economic potential because of its richness in natural resources, which made Mackinder call it the "heart of the earth"⁽¹⁾.

- Providing external security: The initiative includes countries suffering from internal conflicts and turmoil, which requires the provision of protection for the huge projects that were established within the framework of the initiative, and this require the provision of military forces to protect them. Security companies have begun to work on this, such as securing Chinese naval ships and oil tankers that pass near the Somali coast to protect them from piracy. Dewey Security Company Ltd. has also established protection for Chinese companies that work in building roads in Kenya⁽²⁾.

- Strengthening the status of the Chinese yuan globally: China seeks to continue the process of internationalizing its local currency, the yuan, to make it the main currency for global trade exchange, especially after the yuan was able in 2016 to join the "Special Drawing Rights basket" of the "The International Monetary Fund", along with the four listed currencies, which are the US dollar, the euro, the "Japanese yen", and the pound sterling, the use of the "yuan" in settling Chinese commercial dealings with member states of the "Belt and Road Initiative" is a major step that China seeks to internationalize its currency⁽³⁾. China is well aware that the internationalization of its currency and making international transactions pass through it will lead to more financial strength and will push for there to be a kind of pivoting around its currency by many emerging economic powers as well as the traditional ones, especially those looking for an economic foothold and financial support for it.

- Ensuring the stability of energy supplies: China seeks to avoid a severe crisis that would impede access to energy supplies, which threatens the stability of the Chinese economy.

These concerns are growing, given that 80% of Beijing's energy needs pass through the Malacca Strait⁽⁴⁾.

This corridor may be closed in the event of any disputes, which makes China vulnerable to strategic exploitation. China's energy security is also at risk due to piracy spreading in this region⁽⁵⁾.

In 2003, Chinese President Hu Jintao expressed these concerns, stressing the need to alleviate what he called the "Malacca dilemma." Therefore, China aims, through the "Belt and Road"

⁽¹⁾ Amira Ahmed Herzli, The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: Background - Objectives - Gains, in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The World Economic Century Project, Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, Berlin - Germany, 2019, p. 79 .

⁽²⁾ Amira Ahmed Herzli, previous source, p. 80 .

⁽³⁾ The Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, Future Report, Issue 26, Abu Dhabi, 2018, p. 3 .

⁽⁴⁾ The same source, p. 5 .

⁽⁵⁾ Muhammed Mutawa, The New Silk Road in Chinese Strategy, Major Objectives, Strategic Weight and Challenges, Siyasat Arabiya Magazine, Issue 46, 2020, p. 34 .

project, to develop several alternative trade corridors to the strait, such as the oil pipeline between China and Myanmar, as well as the "Pakistani-Chinese Economic Corridor", which aims to link the port of "Gwadar" in southern Pakistan with the "Xinjiang" region in the northwest. China, through a group of roads, railways, and oil pipelines. With the completion of the project, it is expected that the corridor will be used to import its energy needs from the Arab Gulf region⁽¹⁾.

- Fear of increasing gross domestic production: The Chinese economy is currently suffering from excess production capacity in many sectors, especially iron, cement, and heavy machinery.

It encourages the continuation of production even when the market reaches saturation, such imbalances, similar to those experienced in Japan during the economic boom of the 1980s, could cause real GDP to lag behind official GDP, while depressing demand (and thus prices) for Chinese goods until the industries involved are unable to support themselves. This, in turn, could lead to inflated bad debts and recession (as in Japan) or outright economic collapse⁽²⁾

Through the initiative, the government will buy time for its industries, as well as improve local economic conditions so that people who live in these areas are allowed to buy consumer goods produced from China, that is, by building internal consumption, which is one of the main pillars of China's economic policy in light of Former President (Hu Jintao), and current Chinese President Jin Xin Ping continues in this direction⁽³⁾.

- Developing the Chinese economy: The Chinese government sought to adopt many initiatives to develop the western regions of the country, which suffer from economic weakness, and launched a campaign in this context in 2000, under the slogan "Going West" to stimulate economic growth there and invested billions of dollars in oil exploration. natural gas in these areas.

The Belt and Road Initiative will contribute Specifically, the wild belt in the economic development of Xinjiang and Gansu provinces, and other western regions, and then the initiative represents in part an attempt to create a balance in economic development between different regions of the country⁽⁴⁾.

One of the special interpretations of the initiative put forward by external observers instead of direct Chinese sources believes that it is - at least - a means of mutual economic development, and at most a means to achieve the goals of Chinese foreign policy. This interpretation - which was taken based on a traditional realistic view of foreign policy analysis - assumes that by engaging in the development of foreign infrastructure and investment projects, China will secure its access to raw materials and build a strong and soft influence along its perimeter to become a great power in itself capable of to compete with other great powers such as the United

(1) The Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, previous source, p. 5 .

(2) Watheq Ali Al-Musawi, The Road Belt Initiative between Concept and Politics, Part 1, Dar Al-Ayyam for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2019, p. 51 .

(3) Adnan Khalaf Hamid and Hind Ziyad Nafeh, The Belt and Road Initiative: Objectives and Challenges, Tikrit Journal of Political Science, Issue 19, Iraq, 2020, p. 178. Research published on the link <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/>.

(4) The Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, previous source, p. 3 .

States of America for regional and global influence⁽¹⁾. This is the real path, as China is a country that has ambitions for global leadership and leadership, but it does not announce this at present, but all indications strongly point to a leading political and economic role in the international system that it will enjoy. to China.

These interpretations of the initiative are related to China's general behavior of engaging in infrastructure investment and development projects that it leads in resource-rich countries without any conditions. This model - which he called the "Beijing Consensus" - was considered a direct contradiction to the development model led by the West, the Washington Consensus, which linked investment to conditions such as establishing democracy, improving human rights, adhering to environmental standards, or combating corruption⁽²⁾.

-Developing economic and trade relations and building regional economic integration: One of the ideas driving the initiative is interdependence, which stresses that the initiative is not a strategic decision based solely on China's national interests, but rather a proposal that takes the overall interests of regional cooperation as a starting point for decision-making. This also requires that the countries on the line implement comprehensive cooperation based on mutual benefit and profit for all⁽³⁾.

- Reducing the period of transporting goods: Railway networks are an important logistical alternative for transporting Chinese products to European and Asian markets, which prompted the Chinese government to move towards establishing and developing railways, as a major feature of the new economic development strategy. By train to Western Europe, about 16 days, while sea transport requires about 5 weeks, with many delays that may occur in many cases and the high cost until it reaches about 7 thousand US dollars, which is approximately three and a half times the cost compared to the cost of land transport. Although the cost of transporting goods by air is lower compared to road transport, transportation by rail contributes to the transportation of large, perishable, and high-value goods, which may be difficult to transport by air because of their size or weight⁽⁴⁾.

- Strengthening the status of Chinese telecom technology companies: The Chinese government seeks to encourage its telecom technology companies to take advantage of the initiative, to play a vital role in establishing the infrastructure for the information and communication technology sector in a large number of initiative countries, thus contributing to enhancing the activity of Chinese companies, especially Huawei, as well as increasing its market share in global electronic commerce⁽⁵⁾.

Securing from terrorism, separatism, and extremism: This goal encouraged the launch of the initiative, especially in the autonomous region of Xinjiang in the west of the country, and its

⁽¹⁾ Wathiq Ali Al-Musawi, The Belt and Road Initiative between Concept and Politics, previous source, p. 54 .

⁽²⁾ The same source, p. 54 .

⁽³⁾ Wang Yiwei, translated by Oleg Awki, The Belt and Road Initiative, What China Will Offer to the World in Its Rise, Arab Science Publishers House, Beirut, 2017, p. 70 .

⁽⁴⁾ Muhammad Mutawa, previous source, p. 32 .

⁽⁵⁾ Amira Ahmed Herzli, previous source, p. 80

concern about the Uyghur movement present there, as well as their ethnic extension in regional neighboring countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and this is through improving conditions. The economic zone of Xinjiang region and fortify itself from the Uyghur movement through what it refers to as the three threats (terrorism, separatism, and extremism). Therefore, the importance of western China appears through what was stated in the statement issued in 2010 by General Liu Yazhou in the leadership of the People's Liberation Army: " West China is a vast area, so we must have our strategic direction to the west with an excellent geographical location from the center of the world (meaning east China).

The western region can provide us with the impetus to build up our strength with the impetus to build up our strength, Western China should be regarded as an internal depth, not a border area"⁽¹⁾.

China can play an important role in building peace and post-conflict societies by presenting its development model based on addressing the problems of extremism and terrorism, which it believes have social and economic roots in the first place, and the sense of injustice is what drives terrorism and extremism, as well as separation. Therefore, it works to activate the diplomacy of the second track and popular diplomacy very clearly in the conduct of its international relations.

- The Chinese desire for economic and diplomatic influence in the world in general, and in Asia in particular: The absence of the United States of America as a strategic power in the Eurasia region has led to the promotion of Chinese opportunities to expand and strengthen its diplomatic and economic power in the region. These goals include Beijing's desire to maintain its economic growth rate by implementing new tools for international economic cooperation with new partners, increasing the degree of Chinese influence in the international system, and contributing to the global economic structure⁽²⁾.

This goal carries with it a Chinese fear of the possibility of a possible trade conflict, in the framework of the United States' withdrawal from the "Trans-Pacific Partnership" agreement in January 2017, which reduced the possibility of concluding a partnership for trade and investment across the Atlantic to a large extent. Accordingly

The road will face less pressure in balancing competing trade initiatives, and if a trade dispute arises between China and the United States of America, China expects the Silk Road countries to support it, especially its European partners⁽³⁾.

As it intends to link the elements of the economies of those countries with it and believes that the economic model in international relations is the basis and as long as it succeeds in creating advanced economic and financial partnerships, those countries will defend their interests and

⁽¹⁾ Adnan Khalaf Hamid and Hind Ziyad Nafeh, previous source, p. 179 .

⁽²⁾ Muhammad Mutawa, previous source, p. 45 .

⁽³⁾ Muhammad Mutawa, previous source, p. 46 .

then the Chinese interest in the outcome. These countries will serve as defense lines for China against the United States of America.

The third topic

Chinese orientation towards Iraq

China views Iraq with vital importance, for ideological reasons or because it feels the urgent need for energy resources and raw materials. China's interest in the Persian Gulf region and Iraq goes back centuries, when (Jang Qian), the emperor's envoy, visited Iraq in the second century B.C. to collect information about the trade routes there and the surrounding areas⁽¹⁾.

Historical studies indicate that China's relationship with the Arab region dates back to 2000 BC. The location of the Arab region in an important global strategic region near Asia and North Africa and its enjoyment of a long history, honorable civilization, and abundant natural resources, created between both the Arab Chinese sides exchanges in various fields through what was called (the Silk Road and the Perfume Road by land and sea)⁽²⁾.

China has sought to regard Iraq as its starting point in the Arab world and in the Asian continent, which can serve its strategic objectives in the African continent as well and express its prestige as a great Asian power⁽³⁾. The importance of Iraq's geostrategic location, its enormous economic potential, and its oil and gas reserves, as well as being an important corridor for air navigation and the land route to Europe and African countries, and the Iraqi people's aversion to Western powers in general.

China's activity has increased to expand its influence in different regions of the world to secure its supplies of natural resources and confront Western political and economic influence and expand its influence on the global level at the same time. Since China is one of the active economic forces in the international arena after the decade of the nineties, its influence began to expand in all regions and countries of the world, as the Chinese economic advancement contributed to pushing it to go outside its national borders in search of raw and primary materials, especially energy sources (oil and gas) that it needs its advanced industry, and for China to maintain an economic pace, it will need to have secure sources of energy in addition to other basic resources and sources⁽⁴⁾. Today, China is the second largest consumer of oil after the United States of America, with (8.9) million barrels per day in 2011, and it is expected that China's oil consumption will rise to (6.19) million barrels in 2035⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad al-Hajj Hammoud, Iraq's foreign policy since 2003, House of Wisdom, Baghdad, 2018, p. 135 .

⁽²⁾ Omar Hashim Thanoun Al-Hayali, Chinese foreign policy towards Iraq since 2003 and its future prospects, Academicians for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2016, p. 15 .

⁽³⁾ The same source, p. 17 .

⁽⁴⁾ Baida Mahmoud Ahmed, Iraqi-Chinese relations and prospects for cooperation after 2003, research accepted for publication, Journal of Strategic and International Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, University of Baghdad, p. 8 .

⁽⁵⁾ Omar Hashem Dhanoun Al-Hayali, previous source, p. 122 .

China was ranked first before 2003 among the countries that buy Iraqi oil in exchange for food, as its imports from Iraq amounted to about (400) thousand tons of crude oil. After 2003 and the accompanying events represented by the occupation of Iraq,

The United States of America was able to control the third largest country containing oil reserves of up to (260) billion barrels, while China did not strongly oppose the US occupation of Iraq, it was rather ready to sacrifice Iraqi oil in exchange for obtaining other benefits and interests from the United States of America, especially on the political level, such as the United States assurances that it will not attack North Korea's nuclear facilities⁽¹⁾.

This means that the interests come in first place in terms of influencing the Chinese strategy towards Iraq⁽²⁾.

China can play an active role in the international equation through a giant network of interactions that China weaves with calm and flexible diplomacy, and it is a strategic competitor to the United States of America with its enormous capabilities according to the Chinese strategy. Influence towards a new equation in international relations⁽³⁾.

China tends in its policy towards Iraq to take a middle position that gives it many benefits. The first is to maintain a degree of understanding and stability in its relations with the United States of America, and on the other hand, it guarantees the stability of its interests with Iraq, and thus it was able to invest the international environment variables in its favor through its endeavor to strengthen its position.

In international politics, as it has a special vision of the international system and its role in shaping international political interactions and the new balances of power by highlighting the independence of its political decision and the adoption of international positions that could represent a departure from the international consensus, but this did not provide sufficient motivation for the Chinese policy to adopt strategic decisions towards Iraq to the extent that its foreign policy towards Iraq can be described as effective despite the presence of reinforcement trends. Iraq and the entire Arab region, it is dominated by the economic character⁽⁴⁾. According to the developmental peace strategy or approach.

After the US occupation of Iraq, China sought to develop its relationship with it significantly, starting with China opening its embassy in Baghdad in 2004, supporting the new political regime in Iraq, providing material and technical assistance, and inviting Iraqi officials to visit China, as former Iraqi President Jalal Talabani visited China in In 2003, when he was a member

⁽¹⁾ Amer Hashim Awwad, Mechanisms for Activating Cooperation in Iraqi-Chinese Relations, Journal of the College of Law for Science . Legal and Political, Volume 11, Issue 40, University of Kirkuk, 2022, p. 54 .

⁽²⁾ Nagham Nazir Shukr, The Chinese Strategy Towards Iraq After 2003, Journal of Political and Strategic Studies, Issue 36, House of Wisdom, Baghdad, 2018, p. 153 .

⁽³⁾ Jude Balanchtte, the race to consolidate power and stave off disaster, foreign affairs, vol 100, no4. July-August 2021, p12

⁽⁴⁾ Omar Hashem Dhanoun Al-Hayali, previous source, p. 137 .

of the Governing Council, in 2007 after assuming the presidency, and his visit resulted in the signing of five agreements, which included⁽¹⁾:

- 1-Solving problems related to oil contracts between Chinese oil companies and the Iraqi government during the era of the former regime.
 - 2-China canceling the debts of the Iraqi government amounting to 8.5 billion dollars owed by Iraq by 100 percent and reducing the debts of private Chinese companies by 80 percent over a period of 17 years, starting from 2010.
 - 3- Enhancing cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of China and Iraq.
 - 4- Enhancing cooperation in the economic and technical fields.
 - 5- Providing training programs for Iraqi cadres, followed by the establishment of a political consultation mechanism between the two parties. Its first meeting was held in January 2008. The visit of former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in 2011 came as another step towards deepening Iraqi Chinese relations, as this visit resulted in Iraq inviting the Chinese side to increase Its investments in the oil sector, the establishment of a fund for the reconstruction of Iraq, and the provision of low-interest loans in the Iraqi transportation sector⁽²⁾.
- In this context, the Iraqi economic analyst Hilal Al-Tahan describes ((the Iraqi government's move towards China as the right step, which is expected to contribute to the implementation of reconstruction projects in the country. China is expected to become the largest economic partner for Iraq, especially in the field of oil during the next few years))⁽³⁾.

Oil cooperation between Iraq and China extends to various aspects, the most prominent of which are⁽⁴⁾:

- Exporting oil: Iraq is among the top five oil exporters to China, as its exports of crude to the Chinese market amounted to about 1.2 million barrels per day in 2020, an increase of 16.1% compared to 2019, despite the Corona pandemic, which reduced the demand for consumer activities in China products.

Refined petroleum. However, the growth of Iraqi exports to China reflects the desire of Chinese oil refineries to import additional quantities of Iraqi crude and store them considering the low prices in 2018-2019.

- Extensive oil investments: Chinese oil companies sought to fill the vacuum that the Iraqi oil sector was exposed to, following the withdrawal of many Western companies from it following the security and political tensions in the country since 2003. And Chinese companies such as the China Offshore Oil Corporation, the China National Petroleum Corporation, and ((PetroChina)) have acquired many oil assets in Iraq in the past years. Its role will likely continue to rise with the desire of more American and European companies to get out of Iraq. According to various assumptions, the China National Petroleum Corporation and the China

⁽¹⁾ Youssef Qahtan, Nima Al-Sahhaf, Iraqi foreign policy towards economic cooperation with China, Arab Democratic Center, 2021, p. 5

⁽²⁾ Youssef Qahtan, Nima Al-Sahhaf, previous source, p. 6 .

⁽³⁾ Quoted from: Nagham Nazir Shukr, previous source, p. 152 .

⁽⁴⁾ The Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, how did oil relations develop between Iraq and China, Baghdad, 2021, p. 2, published on the link :<https://futureuae.com/ar-AE/Mainpage/Item/0806/>

National Offshore Oil Corporation are in the process of acquiring the remaining US share (Exxon Mobil) in the West Qurna-1 field, amounting to 32.7%.

- Oil-for-reconstruction program: Baghdad and Beijing launched a bilateral mechanism aimed at enhancing the participation of Chinese companies in the operations of returning Iraq, known as ((oil for reconstruction)), and it was reached on the sidelines of the visit of former Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi to Beijing in September 2019, and it is Another similar deal was concluded between the two sides in 2015 during the government of Haider al-Abadi, and it involved the implementation of Chinese companies about 100 infrastructure projects in Iraq in exchange for oil supplies, but it did not enter into force.

- Advance payment for oil: The Iraqi government chose the Chinese company ((Xinhua Oil)) within the framework of a bid that included many Western and Asian companies, to provide it with an advance payment of funds of no less than two billion dollars, in return for supplying it with about 48 million barrels of crude between The first of July 2021 and June 2022, provided that supplies extend for another four years. It should be noted that the Chinese company has many foreign oil projects, and previously participated in the marketing of Iraqi oil⁽¹⁾.

And since Iraq is a producer and exporter of oil, therefore China views it as a country of strategic importance, and Iraq can establish a foreign policy with diverse relations and reduce the status or level of its relations with Washington and focus on increasing its cooperation with China, which does not show more interest in political affairs than in economic affairs. In addition, Iraq's relationship with China does not constitute harm to the United States of America⁽²⁾.

The relations between the two parties witnessed remarkable developments, as China affirmed its support for the Iraqi government and its support in international and regional issues and the fight against terrorism. China seeks to gain Iraq as a strategic ally in the region on the one hand and to preserve the source of oil supplies and investment projects on the other hand⁽³⁾. As well as the lack of a history of occupation or invasion or the like for China among the Iraqi people, China enjoys with great acceptability among the Iraqis, in addition to the fact that cheap Chinese technology has provided Iraq with wide breakthroughs, as well as the Chinese cultural aspect and social values converging with many Iraqi customs and traditions.

The fourth topic

Iraq and the Belt and Road Initiative (future vision)

The Iraqi Chinese relations are going through an advanced stage of cooperation and friendly relations, and China contributes to many investment projects and rebuilding the areas affected because of the war against ISIS⁽⁴⁾. After the visit of former Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi to China in 2015, which resulted in the announcement of a joint statement of the establishment of

⁽¹⁾ The Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, how did oil relations develop between Iraq and China, previous source, p. 2 .

⁽²⁾ Youssef Qahtan, Nima Al-Sahhaf, previous source, p. 8 .

⁽³⁾ Ahed Muslim Suleiman Al-Mashaqbeh, Arab-Chinese Relations, Reality and Ambition, in the Symposium on Arab-Chinese Relations, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2017, p. 261 .

⁽⁴⁾ Amer Hashem Awwad, previous source, p. 21.

the strategic partnership between the two countries and the signing of several memorandums of understanding and

agreements⁽¹⁾. The visit of former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to China in 2011 also boosted much of China's trade and investment exchange with Iraq.

The Iraqi Prime Minister stressed that the doors of the Iraqi economy are open to China to invest in all fields such as electricity, housing, and others, which is a first step to achieving a strategic partnership between the two countries. Noting that the Iraqi government has prepared adequate legislation to enhance confidence in the Iraqi economy by protecting foreign investments in Iraq. This was also confirmed by former Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in 2011 in the text of the interview he conducted with the Chinese Central Television (CCTVA)⁽²⁾.

(CCTVA). 750 million dollars, and a production capacity of (1320) megawatts, with a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, and it was agreed to expedite the implementation of this station⁽³⁾.

The Iraqi government plans to expand the oil industry as well as diversify oil products in the long term, and it aspires to get China's support for these efforts. Iraq ranks fourth in oil exports to China in 2018 after Russia, Angola, and Saudi Arabia, and this country needs funds China is developing critical infrastructure, and this aid could have far-reaching ramifications for the country. China has granted Iraq low-interest lines of credit, huge investments in local infrastructure, and in some cases billions of dollars in loans⁽⁴⁾.

In 2010, China paid about 80% of Iraq's debts. China buys the equivalent of half of Iraq's oil production. The Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (NOC) was a pioneer in investing in local energy companies in the Middle East. In Iraq, these Chinese companies own large shares in the fields of Al-Ahdab, Halfaya, and Rumaila. On the other hand, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed his desire to develop his country's relations with Iraq, Iraq sees a strategic and essential partner in the Middle East and has expressed his country's desire to invest in Iraq to develop and revitalize local industries, new oil fields, build modern cities, ports, railways, and dams, and establish a fifth-generation communications network⁽⁵⁾.

Since 2009, China has been the largest investor in the world in energy and electricity generation companies and the second largest investor in the world in raw materials, as its investments in these resources represented two-thirds of its foreign deals, Western companies are still among the most attractive companies for China to invest in for reasons due to the natural resources these companies possess and the expertise that can be gained through their acquisition⁽⁶⁾.

The Chinese rise and its approach to international relations and international interactions, which is based on the so-called third debate, presented what could be called the blind spot in the process of Chinese ascension in the hierarchy of international powers, and therefore it may

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad al-Hajj Hammoud, previous source, p. 137 .

⁽²⁾ Omar Hashem Dhanoun Al-Hayali, previous source, p. 128

⁽³⁾ The same source, p. 128.

⁽⁴⁾ Zahra Sharifzadeh, A Wide Leap in Iraqi-Chinese Relations, Al-Bayan Center for Studies and Planning, 4/2021, p. 1, published on the link : <https://www.bayancenter.org/.2021/1/6563/>

⁽⁵⁾ The same source, p. 2.

⁽⁶⁾ Omar Hashem Dhanoun Al-Hayali, previous source, p. 129 .

present new developments and approaches in China's visions of the international system in general, as the Chinese rise Such a complex and evolving phenomenon in many aspects⁽¹⁾.

We must refer to the Maritime Silk Road project. The Chinese Foreign Minister had already discussed this project with the Iraqi Foreign Minister during his visit to Baghdad on 23/2/2014 and explained to him that China plans for the Maritime Silk Road to pass through the port of Faw and Iraqi territory to Europe, this project China calls it (Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century).

The Chinese minister expressed his country's readiness to contribute to the construction of the port of Faw and the land road and railways across Iraq⁽²⁾.

The port of Al-Faw is of particular importance for the future of Iraq and the need to develop its economy, which depends mainly on oil imports, which experts estimate will inevitably lead to depletion in the future. And upon completion of the construction of the port, it will be of important strategic value in the international maritime transport network, not only for Iraq but for the international transport economy in general. With the dry channel, it will form a basic link between the continents of Asia and Africa on the one hand, and Europe on the other. As it will save 35%-45% of the transportation cost and 35%-40% of the transportation time, which makes it preferred by transportation companies and institutions⁽³⁾.

The Chinese project ((The Belt and Road)) provides Iraq with a strategic opportunity to achieve its national interests in terms of economic and trade (transit through Iraq) towards the continent of Europe and the Levant region and vice versa, as Iraq needs to diversify the sources of national income and thus strengthen the Iraqi economy in addition to selling imports oil⁽⁴⁾.

In this regard, Ambassador Dr. Muhammad al-Haj Hammoud, the former Iraqi Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, believes that "the need for Iraqi politics to pay attention to this strategic project and invest in its good relations with China to proceed with its construction for the benefit of the Iraqis. Certainly, the idea begins with the project of building the great port of Faw, whose construction was delayed." Years ago, due to rampant corruption in state institutions and due to pressure from some countries in the region, fearing the future effects of this project on their ports, land, and sea routes.

As for the idea of linking the Silk Road overland through Iran and to Iraq, it is an idea that does not serve the future of the Iraqi economy and kills the economic and strategic importance of the great port of Faw. In conclusion, Iraqi foreign policy should be concerned with developing and developing relations with China at all levels, for what is good for Iraq and what enables it in the future to be liberated from Western hegemony with colonial thought. The experience of Iraq in recent years is only proof of that.

The development of the relationship with China includes a diversification of Iraq's foreign relations and sure support for the Iraqi economy, which was destroyed by the events of the

(1) Pan chengxin and kavalsk, emillon, thearoning chinas rise in and beyond international relations, international relations of asia_pacific, vol 18, no3, 2018.p289 .

(2) Muhammad al-Hajj Hammoud, previous source, p. 138 .

(3) Muhammad al-Hajj Hammoud, The Great Port of Faw and the Future of Iraq, Journal of Political and Strategic Studies, Issue 40, House of Wisdom, Baghdad, 2020, p. 22 .

(4) Baher Mardan Meskher, previous source, p. 216 .

previous regime and the destruction caused by the foreign occupation in its economic, social, scientific, and moral structures⁽¹⁾.

While others believe that (Iraq at present is not a party to the One Belt - One Road initiative, and there is no intention to include it in the initiative. In its current form, the main goal of the initiative is to connect China with its main suppliers and buyers around the world, and the fact that Iraq is an important resource, but it is not essential for oil and not being an access point to Western Europe, so its annexation would represent an unnecessary turn in the context of this initiative.

Iraq is located in an ideal place as it is a neighbor of three parties to the initiative, namely Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi government will be in a position to benefit by carrying out bilateral projects with these countries to link its infrastructure with those in these countries, to gain access to the Belt and Road without being officially a party to the initiative. Even the Chinese authorities themselves created this initiative intending to be flexible and saw that some non-participating countries represent a natural extension of the initiative, which proves that this is a profitable option⁽²⁾.

Accordingly, China can be an active economic partner and supportive of Iraq in rebuilding it without interfering in internal affairs, and this is what Iraq has sought. Iraq can benefit from China and the countries on the path of the initiative to exchange benefits with them, as well as the possibility of Chinese companies reviving the Iraqi desert through the Musataha policy.

Conclusions

- The initiative, despite its strategic importance, still lacks a comprehensive vision, and there is concern among some countries for fear of joining it and falling into a debt trap, in addition to its financial burdens.
- The difference in the economic approach and economic philosophy of the participating countries is a challenge to the initiative.
 - The returns expected from them are far-reaching, and accordingly, some countries that rush to harvest the fruits may affect them in one way or another.
 - This initiative may restore the shape and structure of the international political system, and the world may be bipolar according to the system of axes or multipolarity. Although China does not present itself, now or in the future, explicitly as an international pole.
- The initiative emphasized the importance of the economic variable and economic interests as the basis for future international dealings.
- Iraq must adopt a strategic approach based on seizing the opportunities in the international strategic environment and employing the Chinese interest in it to benefit from the initiative.
- The United States of America will not abandon China, and therefore the course of cooperation will be inevitable, whether in their interests, the stability of the regional system, or the

⁽¹⁾ Quoting: Muhammad al-Hajj Hammoud, Iraq's foreign policy since 2003, previous source, p. 139 .

⁽²⁾ Quoting: Wathiq Ali Al-Musawi, The Belt and Road Initiative between Impacts and Challenges, previous source, p. 68 .

development of the global economy. The option of strategic partnership will also be the most likely.

- China, by adopting the developmental peace approach, is a center of attraction in the environment of international alliances and alliances, and this is what can be employed strategically for the forces aspiring towards change in its economic and service structures and to enhance its security, including Iraq.

- The Middle East region in general and Iraq, in particular, will constitute a focus of Chinese attention due to the high levels of production of energy sources, as well as its global and growing reserves.

- One of the most important reasons for China's success in Iraq is its smart diplomacy, which is based on courage and risk, as well as flexibility.

- China was not at one time an occupying country of Iraq or part of the aggressions against it, and this leads to the possibility of finding a real partnership, in addition to the fact that Chinese culture is not exclusivity in general.