

favourable position.”⁹⁴ China's other move has been to diversify its supply sources by entrusting other oil-rich regions of the world such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South America. Although more costly, it could provide an interesting alternative to unstable oil markets and allow China for more control over its energy investments.

VIII. CONCLUSION

China's energy policy in the MENA follows the agenda of the Beijing Consensus and has mostly been prudent, yet far-reaching. As a major growing economy, China needs concrete energy strategy to fuel its continuous growth. To ensure stable and steady oil supply, China did not hesitate to diversify its sources in MENA, sometimes even challenging economic sanctions in the case of Sudan and Iran. But China has also been a loyal partner to Saudi Arabia and both states have found common interests, strengthening their relationship overtime. China promised to be a secure oil importer and Saudi Arabia proved eager to become a regular oil-exporter. The Beijing Consensus has been especially appealing to Saudi Arabia and Iran because both states are increasingly displeased by the American approach, which is often seen as too intrusive. However, Sino-Saudi Arabia and Sino-Iranian relations are not all that simple. Although Saudi Arabia and Iran have proven to be perennial rivals, their expectation regarding their relationship with China is quite similar: they both wish to escape from, or at least balance, Western influence. Saudi Arabia has felt the growing tensions with the United States on the issue of global terror while Iran had been under international sanctions until last year. Similarly, Sudan was completely isolated after

the American government forbade American companies to invest in the area. In all cases, China has been a convenient alternative: Sudan developed its oil industry and obtained arms from China, Saudi Arabia diversified its exports by bringing in a new dependent client, and Iran was able to export its oil during the sanctions. Consequently, there has been a gradual shift from the West and diversification has been the primary focus of both suppliers and demanders.

As a relatively 'new' player in the game, China has had the opportunity to develop a prudent strategy, which could succeed in ensuring the country with a steady flow of oil without destabilizing its relationship with other powers in the international arena. While the United States certainly disagrees with China's equity sharing policy, it is not yet fully convinced that China represents a threat to its national interests in the region⁹⁵. In fact, although Washington opted for alternate energy sources such as shale gas and renewable energy, the United States remains reliant on Middle Eastern oil supplies. Accordingly, the United States still prioritizes political stability in the Middle East for the sake of its own national security. The United States has historically been vigorously active in protecting its energy security in the region, resulting in plenty of military interventions in the past. China has opted to maintain its non-interference foreign policy strategy to date, aware that the United States is as involved, but the feasibility of maintaining this approach into the future is questionable.

Furthermore, findings reveal that while the United States is a significant player in the oil arena, China's rise could slowly narrow the sphere of American influence in favour of multilateral relationships between developing states. However, China does not

⁹⁴ Olimat Muhammad S., *China and the Middle East: From Silk Road to Arab Spring*, Reprint Edition, New York, Routledge, 2015. Pp. 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Pp. 62