

Monthly Essays Observations Editors' Picks Subjects About Us

Don't Read Too Much into China's Rhetorical Shift on Israel

Nov. 19 2024

"Since October 7, 2023," writes **Galia Lavi**, "China has adopted a clearly pro-Palestinian stance, largely ignoring Hamas's attack in Israel's western Negev and additional attacks on Israel from other fronts, while condemning Israel's retaliatory actions." This stance, as detailed by Lavi, could fairly be called pro-Hamas and pro-Hizballah. But last month something changed:

In October 2024, it appeared that China was slightly softening its tone toward Israel, with its statements becoming somewhat less adversarial. For instance, on October 8, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson responded to a journalist's question by stating that "the reasonable security concerns of Israel need to be paid attention to." On October 14, Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke with [his Israeli counterpart] Israel Katz, then Israel's foreign minister, calling, among other things, "to release all hostages," using a term that had so far been absent from previous Chinese official statements; . . . the use of the correct Chinese term for "hostages" for the first time—instead of "detainees"—is indeed a significant and welcome change.

While there has been a lot of speculation about the motives of the Chinese Communist party, which certainly chose its words deliberately, Lavi cautions against reading too much into this small shift:

As of the time of writing, the change in Chinese rhetoric is purely cosmetic and holds no substantial policy implications for Israel. In general, the main issue is not what China says, but what it does not say. As long as Beijing ignores the actions of the other side—Hamas, Hizballah, Iran—there is no reason to celebrate, even if it does not directly condemn Israel.

[Read more at *Institute for National Security Studies*](#)

<https://mosaicmagazine.com/picks/israel-zionism/2024/11/dont-read-too-much-into-chinas-rhetorical-shift-on-israel/>