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China–Egypt Relations: An Expanding and Deepening Chinese Presence, Without Dominance (For Now)

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This article examines the expansion and deepening of China–Egypt relations since the establishment of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries in 2014. It focuses on political, economic, technological, and security developments, as well as the outcomes of the Chinese president's visit to Egypt in September 2026. The article presents China's efforts to establish its standing in Egypt as a key long-term partner, with the aim of expanding Beijing's influence in the Middle East and Africa and leveraging Egypt as a base for economy and trade in the region. China is pursuing this primarily through trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, and institutional cooperation, while refraining from assuming responsibility for regional security. Conversely, Egypt is using China's growing involvement to diversify its international partnerships, strengthen its economic and technological capabilities, and expand its strategic room for maneuver, without replacing one dependency with another. The article highlights the gap between the deepening relationship and the limits of China's influence, and examines the implications for Israel, including the risks and opportunities arising from the growing Chinese presence in Egypt.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Egypt in early September 2026, his first to the country in a decade, took place as the two countries mark 70 years since establishing diplomatic relations. The visit came amid turbulent global geopolitics, ranging from the ongoing war with Iran and its repercussions, through new regional alliances alongside escalating tensions, to the strategic competition between China and the United States. The roots of relations between the People's Republic and modern Egypt ("two ancient civilizations" in official discourse) date back to the meeting between Zhou Enlai and Gamal Abdel Nasser at the 1955 Bandung Conference. In May 1956, Egypt became the first Arab and African country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic. Both presidents addressed these milestones during their latest meeting.

Today, the starting point for understanding relations between the two countries is 2014, when Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi visited Beijing roughly six months after taking office, and the two countries elevated their ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership." This move was part of a broader Egyptian policy. Following the political upheaval of 2011–2013 (the "Arab Spring") and tensions with the Obama administration, Cairo sought to expand its room for maneuver and reduce its dependence on any single external partner. Russia, Europe, and the Gulf states played a major role in this effort, alongside China. Rapprochement with Beijing was therefore not intended to replace the United States,

but rather to add options, signal to Washington that Egypt has alternatives, and thereby strengthen its position in its dealings with the United States.

Twelve years later, the scale of the transformation is clear. The Chinese presence has expanded into numerous fields, and in several of them has deepened significantly: from trade to manufacturing and export projects; from the sale of telecommunications equipment to cloud servers, data centers, and artificial intelligence; from the purchase of satellites to the development of local space infrastructure and capabilities; and from a longstanding yet weak defense relationship to complex joint aerial exercises. Cooperation in education and scientific research has also expanded rapidly.[1]

Yet deeper ties do not amount to dominance. In almost every one of these fields, Egypt continues to work with other partners, and in some, the United States and Europe remain far more important than China. Herein lies the core tension in the relationship: while Chinese discourse presents the goal of a "community with a shared future/destiny," the joint statement issued during the 2026 visit explicitly praises the principle of "strategic balance" pursued by Egypt. The relationship's evolution can be understood in the space between these two concepts: China's presence is expanding and deepening within an Egyptian policy that seeks to preserve a diverse range of partners. This comes as Egypt's relations with the United States and Russia, Cairo's two longer-standing strategic partners, have repeatedly been tested during this period.

From a Diplomatic Framework to a Multidimensional Relationship

Since 2014, a denser institutional framework has developed around the China–Egypt Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. During Xi's 2016 visit to Cairo, the two countries signed their first five-year plan for implementing the partnership, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation under China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI). In January 2024, they signed another implementation plan, covering 2024–2028. In July 2025, they added a separate framework—the first of its kind between the two countries: the China–Egypt Development Cooperation Strategy for 2025–2029, which links Egypt's development priorities with its cooperation with China. One theme emphasized over the years, and particularly of late, is the synergy between China's "BRI" and "Egypt Vision 2030," suggesting that the two countries' interests and potential implementation mechanisms are well aligned. China attaches great importance to Egypt's strategic location, both geographically—as a meeting point of continents and seas, home to the Suez Canal, and close to Europe—and politically, as part of the Middle East, the Arab world, and Africa. From Egypt's perspective, the ability to turn this importance to its advantage in its dealings with China is seen as essential, for example, in promoting maritime security in the Red Sea and reducing disruptions to traffic through the Suez Canal, in its international relations, and, of course, on economic issues.

At the same time, the overlap among multilateral frameworks has expanded considerably. Egypt has participated in the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the China–Arab States Cooperation

[1] This article is accompanied by an infographic page featuring comprehensive data on the development of relations and the types of ties between China and Egypt.

Forum (CASCF) since their establishment, in 2000 and 2004, respectively. It is a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a China-initiated bank established in 2015 to finance infrastructure projects, mainly in Asia, and has been a member since 2023 of the New Development Bank (NDB), a multilateral development bank established at the initiative of the BRICS countries. Egypt also takes part formally in the BRI, under a 2016 MoU; is a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 2022; and is a full member of BRICS, having joined in 2024. This makes Egypt the only country that belongs to all of these institutions at the same time. While this does not create a "Chinese bloc," it vastly increases the number of arenas in which Cairo and Beijing meet and can coordinate positions and cooperate. This is especially relevant when some aspects of their partnership are also framed in terms of the “Global South,” which China claims to lead and in which it sees Egypt as a key partner. Egypt, for its part, has repeatedly voiced support for shaping a multipolar world order less dominated by the West—a position that aligns closely with China’s outlook.

Diplomatic closeness does not require China and Egypt to fully align, but it is significant for both sides. For example, Egypt has taken a different position from China at the United Nations on the war in Ukraine, while consistently supporting Beijing’s positions on issues China defines as central to its sovereignty, including Taiwan. In this sense, the September 2026 joint statement issued by Xi and el-Sisi during the Chinese president's visit to Cairo is particularly interesting. Under a clause in which the leaders express their "unwavering mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests and primary concerns," Egypt reiterated its acceptance of the "One China principle" and its opposition to interference in China’s internal affairs. China, for its part, recognized the importance of the Nile to Egypt and its right to protect its water, food, and development security. China’s acknowledgment is particularly noteworthy because, until now, its formal language has appeared more cautious and balanced, both in statements with Egypt and in statements with Ethiopia. The wording is now somewhat sharper and more explicit in Egypt’s favor. China may still claim neutrality, since neither Ethiopia itself nor the disputed dam—the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam—was mentioned at all, but Egypt can leverage the statement to its advantage.

In fact, el-Sisi had already done so in an article he published in Chinese in *People’s Daily* before Xi’s visit. He devoted an entire section to the Nile and took care to thank China for its position in support of Egypt, though he too stopped short of describing it as explicit opposition to Ethiopia. Just ten days before the visit, the United States and Ethiopia agreed to establish “strategic cooperation in defense and security,” an agreement interpreted in Egypt as a sign of American unreliability, and almost as a betrayal of Egyptian interests. This made China’s statements on the issue all the more significant.

In addition, for the first time, a joint statement issued by China and Egypt stipulated that governance and security in the Red Sea are the responsibility of the littoral states, and that their will must be fully respected. This wording goes beyond China’s customary calls to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, calls also made in bilateral statements with countries throughout the region, and largely reflects Egypt’s preference for a regional security architecture led by the Red Sea states themselves. Taken together, these two issues—the Nile and the Red Sea—point to another dimension in the deepening of relations since 2014: Beijing’s growing willingness to endorse key Egyptian interests in joint policy statements, without explicitly departing from the broader principles of Chinese foreign policy.

On the Palestinian issue, by contrast, the statement does not signal a change in either side's position, but gives the matter pronounced attention. It reiterates familiar principles: a two-state solution, the 1967 borders, and East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state. Furthermore, it devotes particular detail to the ceasefire in Gaza, opposition to the displacement of Palestinians (a critical issue for Egypt, especially in light of the prospect of the transfer of Palestinians into Egypt, which some in Israel's political system have sought to advance), the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, opposition to settlements and settler violence, and support for UNRWA. In this respect, the wording mainly reflects a convergence of existing Chinese and Egyptian positions rather than a new turn. Nevertheless, this level of detail is new in these joint statements, particularly against the backdrop of the previous joint statement, issued after the two leaders met in 2024. That statement, like the current one, addressed the deepening of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, yet did not mention the Palestinian issue, Gaza, or Israel even once. Here again, Egypt's view of the American position on the issue, as either unclear or blindly following Israel's lead, underscores the importance of synchronization with China.

Trade, Investment, and Manufacturing: Growing Chinese Presence, but Also Growing Asymmetry

China was a major trading partner of Egypt even before 2014, but trade between the two countries has since grown from about $11.6 billion in 2014 to about $20.8 billion in 2025. Almost all of that growth has been in one direction: in 2025, China exported roughly $20 billion in goods to Egypt, while Chinese imports from Egypt totaled only about $820 million.

Even when services are included—in which Egypt actually has a small surplus with China—the imbalance remains stark. The composition of trade in services is important for understanding the figures. In 2024, about $1.05 billion of the roughly $1.23 billion in Egyptian services exports to China was recorded under travel, mainly tourism and visits by Chinese travelers, with about $133 million recorded under transportation. Some of these exports also reflect Egypt's role as a hub between China and other markets: Suez Canal services purchased by a Chinese company, for example, may be recorded as exports to China even when the cargo is bound for another country. In the opposite direction, of the roughly $913 million in Chinese services exports to Egypt, about $535 million was in transportation services, alongside significant business and construction services. The disparity is also evident in the overall scope of relations: in 2024, Egypt exported goods and services to China worth roughly $1.63 billion and imported from it about $16.63 billion, compared to $4.70 billion and $9.20 billion, respectively, in trade with the United States, and $26.85 billion and $35.28 billion with the EU27 and the United Kingdom combined.

Beyond trade in goods and services, transportation infrastructure plays an important role in Chinese involvement in Egypt and in its development as a regional manufacturing and logistics platform. Chinese companies and financing played a central role in building the Light Rail Transit (LRT) connecting Cairo and the New Administrative Capital, and their involvement is continuing in the line's next stages. At the same time, China's presence in ports and shipping has expanded. The new container terminal at Ain Sokhna Port, which began commercial operations in 2026, is operated by a consortium that includes China's COSCO Shipping, international company Hutchison Ports, and France's CMA CGM. Egypt's policy of diversification is evident here as well: the new 2,000-kilometer high-speed rail network is being built under the leadership of Germany's Siemens, while Emirati companies, including DP World and AD Ports, are also active in Egyptian ports. AD Ports' new terminal in Safaga is even equipped with port cranes

made by China's ZPMC. The picture, then, is one of competition among foreign partners, but also, at times, of Chinese, European, and regional companies working within the same infrastructure.

Alongside the expansion of trade and infrastructure, another important shift has been underway in recent years: Chinese companies are gradually transitioning from selling products to Egypt to manufacturing them there. The China–Egypt TEDA zone in Ain Sokhna—part of the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), which began operating even before 2014—currently encompasses more than 200 companies and, according to official Egyptian sources, over $4 billion in investments and projects. In recent years, new projects have included Haier home-appliance factories, local production of Geely automobiles, and projects in tires, textiles, solar energy, and industrial equipment.

Some factories are designed from the outset to export most of their output to third-country markets. In addition, the growing discussion, both in China-led international forums and between the two countries, of using local currencies instead of the US dollar adds an economic dimension to reshaping the global order, although this remains a distant prospect. Another potential channel to third-country markets is the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) arrangement between Egypt, Israel, and the United States. It allows products manufactured in designated zones in Egypt duty-free entry into the US market, subject to rules of origin and an Israeli input of 10.5 percent. This is not a marginal channel: in 2025, QIZ exports reached roughly $1.4 billion, accounting for about half of all Egyptian merchandise exports to the United States. This route may be particularly relevant for expanding Chinese investments in the textile and apparel sectors, as well as for efforts to bypass US tariffs, and there are already instances of Chinese investments explicitly designed to integrate into the QIZ framework.

Nevertheless, high visibility should not be confused with investment dominance. According to the Central Bank of Egypt, while Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) has grown substantially from a low base, even at its peak it remains far below investment from the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom.

The key question for the coming decade, then, is not how many Chinese factories are established, but how much of the value they generate remains in Egypt: what share of production is locally sourced, how many Egyptian suppliers and jobs are created, whether technology is transferred, and how much of the output is exported. As Chinese manufacturing in Egypt expands, the bilateral trade deficit could continue to grow through the import of machinery and components from China, while simultaneously contributing to Egyptian production and exports.

From Technology and Space to Local Infrastructure

The digital sector particularly illustrates the significance of China's deepening presence in Egypt. For instance, Huawei has been operating in Egypt since 2000, but China's presence now includes not only communications equipment, but also local production of fiber-optic cables and equipment, international cables, data centers, cloud services, AI, and workforce training. In May 2024, Huawei opened a public cloud region in Cairo and announced an investment of approximately $300 million over five years. Huawei technology is also used in Egypt's government cloud infrastructure. This is just one example: several international Chinese companies are already operating in Egypt in various capacities, and the projects they are involved in span a range of areas, including telecommunications cables, for which Egypt's geographic location holds immense importance.

This, too, does not amount to a Chinese takeover. Egypt's communications infrastructure has multiple suppliers, including Nokia and Ericsson. But China's growing presence across multiple layers—equipment, manufacturing, connectivity, cloud services, AI, and training—makes it more significant than technology sales alone.

The change is even clearer in the space sector. After Ukraine and Russia played major roles in earlier generations of Egyptian observation satellites, China became Egypt's primary partner in building local capacity. The Assembly, Integration, and Test (AIT) center at the "Egyptian Space City" (the name for the complex in the New Administrative Capital that houses both the Egyptian Space Agency and the African Space Agency), completed with Chinese assistance in 2023, enables Egypt to assemble, integrate, and test satellites on its own soil. MisrSat-2, launched from China in December 2023, was developed with the participation of Egyptian engineers and was assembled and tested in Egypt, with China also involved in establishing the associated command and control stations.

Cooperation has also expanded to the BeiDou satellite navigation network, as well as coordination of satellite networks and lunar exploration. Here, we can see a clear shift from a single project to a system of infrastructure, knowledge, training, and capabilities—perhaps the clearest example of China's deepening presence. Cooperation in the nuclear field has also expanded to some degree, although in a different form. Although China attempted to integrate into Egypt's nuclear program as early as the middle of the previous decade, it was Russia that won the key strategic project—constructing the reactors at El Dabaa. More recently, in July 2026, the Egyptian Atomic Energy Authority and the Institute of Geology and Geophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in research, training, technology transfer, civilian applications of nuclear energy, and radioactive waste management. These issues—science, technology, telecommunications, and space—also carry potential military and security dimensions, where change has been evident over the past decade.

Security: Deepening Cooperation, Yet China Is Still Not Egypt's Primary Partner

Military ties between the two countries long predate 2014. China supplied Egypt with aircraft, submarines, and radars as early as the 1970s and 1980s, and later participated in the local production of K-8E trainer aircraft. Over the past decade, Chinese UAVs, counter-terrorism consultation mechanisms, naval visits, and joint exercises have been added to the relationship.

The most notable development came in 2025 with the first joint aerial exercise, *Eagles of Civilization*. The exercise was held again in August 2026 at a more complex level and clearly illustrated Egypt's diversification policy: Chinese aircraft trained alongside Egyptian platforms of French and Russian origin, while the United States continues to maintain a separate and far more extensive system of training and defense cooperation with Egypt.

China is still not a major supplier of Egypt's principal weapons systems. In recent years, the lion's share of Egyptian procurement has come from the United States, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. For now, this means that China's military ties with Egypt are deepening mainly through a wider range of contacts—exercises, dialogue, naval activity, and technology—rather than by replacing the country's main arms suppliers.

Another dimension of defense cooperation is the shift from procurement to local manufacturing and technology transfer. Egypt has prior experience with licensed production of Chinese K-8E trainer aircraft and ASN-209 UAVs, and in December 2025, AOI and NORINCO signed another agreement for the localization and joint production of military systems, likely also in the field of armed UAVs (such as the Hamza-2). In July 2026, a contract was also signed with CETC for the local production of defense communications equipment. This trend is not unique to China: Egypt is advancing the local production of an advanced trainer aircraft with South Korea's KAI, aimed, among other things, at export to Arab and African countries. This is part of a broader policy to transform Egypt's defense industrial base from a platform for procurement and assembly into a center for defense production, technology transfer, and export.

Emerging potential for expanding localization can be seen in the naval domain, as well. The 2026 joint statement explicitly included shipbuilding among the sectors in which both sides encourage Chinese companies to consider local manufacturing in Egypt. The statement contains no reference to the production of military vessels, yet Egypt already has significant capability in this area: between 2016 and 2021, three corvettes were built at the Alexandria Shipyard with the transfer of French technology, and since 2025, a program to build ten military patrol vessels has also been underway there in cooperation with Germany's NVL. Shipbuilding, whether civilian or military, is therefore another area in which Egypt's model of localization and technology transfer could eventually be extended to cooperation with China.

People and Knowledge

The deepening of relations is also evident in less tangible areas. Chinese language studies have expanded across universities and schools in Egypt, and the number of Egyptians studying in China has grown significantly. The interest here is mutual: both countries seek to strengthen what is known as "people-to-people" ties, of which language study is an integral part for both sides. President Xi's visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum, which officially opened last year, also points in this direction. The visit emphasized the connection between the ancient civilizations of China and Egypt, a theme Xi also highlighted in an article published in the Egyptian press on the day of his arrival in Cairo.

Of all these developments, the most striking change has been in research. According to Scopus data presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of joint publications by researchers from Chinese and Egyptian institutions rose from 261 in 2013 to 3,104 in 2023. China is still not Egypt's largest research partner, yet the pace of growth has made it one of the most important.

The significance of this cooperation is growing because it focuses partly on sectors where economic and technological activity is also expanding: ICT, advanced manufacturing, energy, water, agriculture, and health. This adds a layer of human capital training and knowledge production to the Chinese presence, one that could prove more enduring than any single infrastructure project.

The 2026 Visit: Furthering the Same Trend

Xi's visit in September 2026 did not alter the trajectory of relations, but rather reinforced and expanded patterns already in place. The two sides initially reported more than twenty, and later more than thirty, cooperation documents covering various fields, including the digital economy, science and technology, education, and transportation. Xi and el-Sisi also attended signings in areas including the Belt and Road

Initiative, AI, the economy, trade, and cooperation in industrial and supply chains, including sensitive fields such as rare earth minerals.

The joint statement expands the agenda to include local manufacturing, renewable energy, the digital economy, transportation, cloud and data centers, advanced technologies, space, and other fields. The two sides also agreed to encourage the use of local currencies in trade and investment (to the tune of 30 billion yuan) and to work toward increasing Egyptian exports to China. It is important to distinguish between signed agreements, areas included in the joint work plan, and commercial projects that are still under review or in the planning stages.

During the talks, Xi also presented four proposals for a "new security architecture" in the Middle East, and el-Sisi expressed readiness to discuss regional architecture with China. At this stage, this is primarily a statement of Beijing's aspiration to play a role in the discourse on the regional order, rather than a practical framework capable of creating a new security architecture on its own. Still, the rhetoric of cooperation across a range of fields also enables Beijing to show how its four global initiatives (to date)—the Global Development Initiative (2021, GDI), the Global Security Initiative (2022, GSI), the Global Civilization Initiative (2023, GCI), and the Global Governance Initiative (2025, GGI)—alongside the older Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are taking shape.

At the conceptual level, and as part of the global rhetoric China has sought to advance over the years, the two sides declared their intention to promote a China–Egypt “community with a shared future”—a foundational concept in China’s broader foreign-policy discourse, particularly in President Xi’s efforts to reshape the global order. China immediately followed this with praise for Egypt’s policy of “strategic balance.” The two ideas together capture both the potential and the limits of the relationship.

Conclusion

Since 2014, China–Egypt relations have expanded, but more importantly, they have deepened. China is not merely selling more products to Egypt: Chinese companies are manufacturing there, taking part in its digital infrastructure, operating cloud services, helping build space capabilities, collaborating on research, and conducting increasingly complex exercises with the Egyptian military. These areas are also beginning to connect: manufacturing links to export chains; communications to cloud services and AI; and research and training to economic and technological activity.

Thus, an Egyptian localization of the Chinese production and value chain is beginning to emerge, complete with significant export ambitions. From the Egyptian perspective, this localization may simultaneously upgrade society, the economy, and international relations; from the Chinese perspective, it allows for strengthening the Chinese anchor in Egypt, a country of strategic importance because of its location and standing. Furthermore, Egypt’s emergence as a manufacturing and export base for Chinese companies—which is neither unique nor the first instance of this Chinese strategy—also serves a range of Chinese interests: taking advantage of Egypt’s geographic proximity to target markets, mitigating supply-chain instability, and lowering production costs. Likewise, such a manufacturing and export base could also help China contend with tariff and import mechanisms perceived as "anti-Chinese" (for instance, in Europe), potentially enabling China to benefit from trade arrangements that reduce tariffs on Egyptian exports and serve as a partial solution to China's domestic consumption problem.

However, a broader and deeper presence is not equivalent to dominance, much less to replacing the West. Europe and the United Kingdom combined remain far larger economic partners than China when trade in goods and services are included. China is not the largest source of FDI; it is still not Egypt's top research partner; and in defense, the United States remains Egypt's primary partner. Even in telecommunications, Chinese companies operate within a multi-vendor system.

The best way to understand this process from Egypt's perspective is through Cairo's policy of diversification. For Egypt, deepening ties with China is a means of expanding its sources of financing, technology, knowledge, and security cooperation—and of strengthening its autonomy. Moreover, as criticism of the United States grows in Cairo and concerns about relying on it become more pronounced, China is becoming an increasingly important pillar in Egyptian strategic planning. For Beijing, Egypt offers an unusual combination: a large market; an industrial base that could also serve as an export hub to three continents; access to the Suez Canal; a transcontinental communications crossroads; African and Arab standing; and diplomatic and cultural influence. Moreover, China views Egypt as a country long dependent on the United States that Beijing can portray as "moving over to its side" (and perhaps even gain insight into Western military knowledge in the process), even if that is not currently the case.

The central challenge in the coming decade, then, will not be the expansion of the Chinese presence in Egypt, but how Cairo manages its deepening. The test of Egypt's policy of "strategic balance" will be whether it can use China to expand its options and build local capabilities without turning diversification—intended to reduce dependence—into a new source of dependence.

Implications for Israel and Recommendations

From Israel's perspective, the deepening Chinese presence in Egypt is not inherently a negative development. In certain areas, it may even contribute to the economic stability of a country whose stability is clearly in Israel's strategic interest. China's presence in Egypt is also a source of opportunities. Chinese companies are already operating there alongside firms from third countries, including the Gulf states, in joint ventures combining investment, manufacturing, and Egyptian entities. Over the medium to long term, similar models could be explored with Israeli participation, in fields that do not create security or technological exposure or run counter to US sensitivities. Agriculture—particularly desert agriculture, irrigation, water efficiency, and food technologies—as well as certain civilian sectors in medicine, energy, and the environment, are especially suited to combining Israeli knowledge and technology with Chinese financing, manufacturing, and supply chain capabilities, integrated with the Egyptian market, workforce, and geographic location. Beyond economic benefit, such projects could provide an additional channel for deepening civilian ties with Egypt while creating a positive dimension in Israel–China relations, in close coordination with the United States. The expansion of Chinese manufacturing in Egypt may also create more direct opportunities for Israel under the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) arrangement, since some QIZ areas are near locations where Chinese economic activity is set to expand, especially around the Suez Canal. This could also help broaden the range of products manufactured under the QIZ framework.

Israeli policy, therefore, should not aim to block China–Egypt relations, a goal that is neither practical nor feasible and could even diminish Israel's ability to exert influence where it has tangible interests. Instead, Israel should establish a systematic, inter-ministerial mechanism for monitoring and mapping the Chinese presence, with a focus on ports and the Suez Canal, sub-marine cables and

telecommunications infrastructure, cloud computing and data centers, space, dual-use systems, and military cooperation. Such a mechanism could identify risks, of course, but it could also reveal opportunities. At the same time, Israel should make the issue part of its regular security dialogue with Cairo and Washington, while minimizing public noise around it.

As the Chinese presence expands from trade and investment into the fields of telecommunications, AI, space, and military cooperation, its direct relevance to Israel also grows. Egypt is a peace partner and neighbor with which Israel maintains significant security cooperation. It also controls the Suez Canal and important infrastructure and communications routes for Israel and the West. The aerial exercises of 2025 and 2026, the integration of advanced Chinese systems, and the expansion of space cooperation do not indicate that Egypt is moving into China's camp, but they do give China deeper familiarity with a military and technological environment close to Israel. It is therefore important to monitor not only the scope of the Chinese presence, but also its nature: which systems are embedded in sensitive infrastructure, to what extent they connect to governmental and defense networks, and what new capabilities are being created.

At the same time, Israel should distinguish between a growing Chinese presence and Egyptian dependence on China, and between individual instances of cooperation and a real shift in the balance of Cairo's partnerships. In this regard, one of the most important points for Israel is the relationship between Egypt and the United States: any damage to or weakening of US standing in Egypt carries implications for Israel as well; Israel should monitor any potential trend of Chinese strengthening at the expense of the United States. It should maintain a dialogue with Washington to ensure that its capacity to serve as a guarantor of diplomatic agreements and security coordination in the region, certainly in the context of peace with Egypt, is preserved.

Israel's objective should therefore be twofold: to manage risks at sensitive interfaces, while simultaneously identifying where the emerging multi-partner structure in Egypt can also serve Israeli interests. Egypt is not, at this stage, replacing one partner with another, but rather expanding its room for maneuver. An effective Israeli policy should recognize this and focus on where the risks—or the opportunities—are tangible.

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