For more than 25 years, China and Israel have developed a broad ranging bilateral relationship that has expanded considerably, particularly in the second decade of the 21st Century. The ever-growing encounters and exchanges between China and Israel – at breathtaking pace – match with China’s rising interests and engagement in the Middle East as outlined in China’s Arab Policy Paper, published in January. On the one hand, China’s policies in the Middle East do not always coincide with Israel’s strategic and political interests. On the other, both governments have resolved to devote time and resources to facilitate and expand the flowering economic and scientific relations.

From an Israeli perspective, the government has ranked expanding economic and scientific ties with China as major priority. A clear indication of this priority was the Israeli decision to become one of the fifty Prospective Founding Members of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank despite American reservations.

Undoubtedly, the time has come to look at the drivers and trends that will shape this relationship in the decade to come. One major driver of China’s interests in the Middle East will be the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (Belt and Road). The envisaged pan-continental set of land and maritime routes that includes the option of passing through Israel is but one area of the Belt & Road that bears new potential areas of cooperation. A second important shaper of the China-Israel relationship will be the nexus between economic and R&D cooperation and exchanges and Israeli and Chinese respective political and strategic interests. Clearly, as relations expand and assume growing importance for both parties, it is time for Israel to consider its broad priorities vis-à-vis China.

On the initiative of SIGNAL (Sino-Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership) that focuses on China-Israel relations since 2011, we are holding this inaugural conference on Israel’s China policy to contribute to Israeli thinking on the future of Israel’s relations with China. The Conference deliberations will consider the emerging new interests, the impact of the ongoing Middle East turmoil, and how Israel can advance and achieve its interest. To that end, SIGNAL and IPS will convene a one-day international conference with experts and practitioners from China, Israel, the United States, and Europe. The Conference will include three plenary sessions – incorporating moderated discussions, presentations, and keynote addresses. The conference will follow a one-day off-the-record roundtable session involving some of the international and Israeli speakers of the conference and several Israeli participants (by invitation only).
SESSIONS:

**First Session:**

**Israel, the Belt, and the Road: Economic and Political Implications of China’s Silk Road Initiative**

The highly qualified research team of IPS, in cooperation with renowned think-tanks, scholars and practitioners, lead a series of in-depth projects on the strategic trends in the Middle East and the Muslim World based on a profound understanding of political and religious culture of the countries and actors in the Middle East. These policy-oriented projects focus on radical Islam, the regional strategy of Iran, nuclear proliferation, regional stability, and social-political stability of key Middle East countries.

**Second Session:**

**From Flourishing Economic and R&D Cooperation to the Realities of Chinese-Israeli Geopolitics**

By fostering active leadership networks of common interest and cooperation, IPS works with government agencies, international organizations, think-tanks and prominent individuals from Israel and around the world to advance Israel’s foreign relations and international standing and to promote an informed debated on Israel’s foreign policy catalyzing the formation of a smart power-based grand strategy for Israel. To that end, the Institute’s Diplomacy and Security Simulations’ Unit holds regular simulation sessions on topical issues, such as the nuclearization of Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, with the participation of senior Israeli and international decision-makers, practitioners, and experts. In addition, IPS carries out a specialized course for diplomats serving in Israel.

**Third Session:**

**The Future of China-Israel Relations: Defining and Achieving Israel’s Interests**

The IPS Methodology Program consists of a series of path-breaking and unique approaches developed by the IPS to allow for a comparative assessment of strategic risks, national security and foreign relations. The current focus of IPS work in this field is the application of risk assessment and management methodologies to the study of strategic trends in and across the Middle East.
Dr. Ye Hailin serves as Director of the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Concurrently, he serves as the Director of the Center for International Strategic Studies at the Research Institute for Indian Ocean Economies, at Yunnan University of Finance and Economics (YUFE). Since 2014, Dr. Ye has held the Asian Portfolio for the Belt & Road initiative, conducting due diligence on modalities of cooperation. An expert on international affairs, Islam, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and South Asia and Middle East regional affairs, Dr. Ye is a commentator on international affairs for China Central Television (CCTV), China National Radio, Xinhua News Agency, the International Herald Leader, and the Oriental Morning Post. Having completing his studies at Peking University’s School of International Studies, Dr. Ye joined China’s diplomatic service. In 2006, Dr. Ye left the diplomatic service to join CASS. Dr. Ye was elected as Standing Member of Chinese Council for South Asia Studies in 2010 and he formerly headed the Center for Regional Security Studies at the School of Advanced International and Area Studies at East China Normal University (ECNU).

Dr. Zhou Qi is the Executive Director of the National Strategy Institute (NSI) at Tsinghua University. Founded in 2012, NSI aims to promote national strategic studies in China, carrying out research around the global strategic situation and China’s major strategic issues, holding high-level strategic dialogues, fostering top strategic talents and exploring the opportunities to establish National Strategic Studies through integrated and multidisciplinary approach. Dr. Zhou attained her degrees at Fudan University and Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and has lectured at Harvard University. Before joining the NSI, Dr. Zhou was a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Under Dr. Zhou’s leadership, NSI produces white papers for the Central Committee on regional and national issues. Her research interests are international relations, international politics, political system, political thoughts and political party.

Dr. Francesco Sisci is an Italian sinologist, journalist, and policy expert who lives and works in Beijing. Currently, he is a Research Fellow at Renmin University and the contributor for Il Sole 24ore and for Asia Times with the column Sinograph, and a frequent commentator on international affairs for CCTV and Phoenix TV. In 1988, he became the first foreigner who was admitted to the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). He obtained his PhD in Chinese Classical Philology and Philosophy. Dr. Sisci began his career as the correspondent of the Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA) in Beijing and later he contributed to Asia Times as Greater China correspondent. He worked as a correspondent for several major Italian newspapers and was the Asia Editor of La Stampa from 2005 to 2010. He has been a senior consultant for the Italian Ministry of Environment in China since 1999, creating the framework of Environmental cooperation with China. Dr. Sisci also held the position of the director of the Italian Institute of Culture in China for two years. He initiated and has been the coordinator of the largest cooperation program between Italy and The Central Party School since 2004. In 2005, Dr. Sisci was appointed Commander in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. CASS granted Dr. Sisci an Honorary Professorship in Classical Chinese Studies in 2006.

Dr. Niklas Swanström is Director and Co-Founder of the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP). Concurrently, he is a Research Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and Non-resident Professor at Sichuan University. His main areas of expertise are conflict prevention, conflict management and regional cooperation; Chinese foreign policy and security in Northeast Asia; traditional and non-traditional security threats and its effect on regional and national security as well as negotiations. His focus is mainly on Northeast Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. Dr. Swanström has authored, co-authored or edited a number of books dealing with Eurasian energy and geopolitics, Sino-Japanese relations, regional cooperation and conflict management in the Pacific Rim, and China’s foreign policy towards Southeast Asia.

Dr. Swanström holds a Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Studies from Uppsala University. He also holds a Licentiate degree from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research. He holds MA degrees from Uppsala University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has also been a student at Beijing Languages Institute, Beijing University and Dalian Languages University.

Dr. Cui Shoujun is Associate Professor and Assistant Dean at the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China (RUC), where he also heads the Center for Middle East and African Studies (CMEAS) established by SIGNAL. He graduated from China Foreign Affairs University in 2006 where he received his PhD degree, and then joined the faculty of the Foreign Affairs Department at Renmin University’s School of International Studies. His research focuses on energy studies, China’s foreign policy, geopolitics, and developing countries (Middle East, Africa and Latin America). Dr. Cui was a EU Marie Curie scholar to several European Universities and a visiting scholar with the “International Visitor Leadership Program” (IVLP) to the U.S. Department of the State. He has published several books, numerous academic articles, and op-ed articles in both Chinese and English.
CONVENING INSTITUTIONS

>> SIGNAL

SIGNAL (中以学术 交流促进协会) is an action-oriented China-Israel relations institute established to enhance geo-strategic cooperation between the nations by forging long-term alliances among Israel’s’ and China’s current and future thought leaders and decision-makers. Through a scholar-based framework, SIGNAL strengthens strategic, diplomatic, cultural and economic ties.

SIGNAL works directly with scholars and research institutes, diplomats, Party and government officials in China responsible for policy development in areas related to Israel and the Middle East and with their counterparts in Israel, holding seminars, briefings, workshops and dialogues in both countries. SIGNAL’s China-based programs include co-founding the Center for Middle East and Africa Studies (CMEAS) with the School of International Studies at Renmin University where SIGNAL supervises joint China-Israel research. SIGNAL’s university work includes forming the first Israel Studies Programs (ISP) at a Chinese university in 2011. With eleven ISPs across China, SIGNAL established its Faculty Training Program (FTP) in Israel to instruct Chinese university faculty from the ISPs in teaching Israel Studies. SIGNAL’s Israel Resource Center - sino-israel.org is a Chinese language source of introductory as well as scholarly materials on Israel and its people. Founded in 2011, SIGNAL is based in Israel.

>> The Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS)

As a leading think tank on Middle East risk assessment, the primary mission of the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) at IDC Herzliya is to contribute to Israel’s national policy and to the upgrading of its strategic decision-making process.

Established in 2000, the range of IPS projects encompasses a variety of issues crucial to Israel. Concentrating on Middle East politics and Israel’s foreign affairs, IPS also invests in innovative methodologies and policy analysis focusing on political/strategic risk assessment and management.

IPS cultivates close working relations with governments, public institutions, think-tanks and research institutes around the world. Drawing on its range of networks and convening power, IPS fosters informed dialogue and policy debate also through high-level summity. These debates impact national policy by producing pragmatic responses that tangibly advance the national interests of Israel. IPS is action-oriented in the sense that it also supports and follows the implementation of the strategic directions and policy solutions devised under its auspices. The Annual Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel’s National Security is the flagship of IPS activities.