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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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Fascinating.

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2012 04:19 PM
To: NEWS-China; NEWS-NEA
Subject: Netanyahu sees expansion of ties with China (Reuters)

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday he envisaged a dramatic expansion of Israel's diplomatic ties with China, including a possible role for Beijing in Middle East diplomacy.

Speaking in Tel Aviv at a celebration marking 20 years since the two nations forged relations, Netanyahu said: "I think we've barely scratched the surface of Israeli-Chinese relations. I have no doubt that in the coming years we'll see a dramatic expansion of these ties.

Israeli government figures estimate bilateral trade as having totalled some \$8 billion in 2011, up from \$6.7 billion in 2010.

Netanyahu also saw Beijing as playing a role in European and U.S.-mediated diplomacy between Israel and the Palestinians.

Under Communist rule, China was a main backer of Palestinian struggle for statehood but later lowered its profile on the conflict after forging ties with the Jewish state in the early 1990s.

"I think we can also work together to address the challenges of securing Middle East peace," Netanyahu said at the gathering attended by Chinese and Israeli diplomats.

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