**China and the Muslim World**

[Muhammad Asif Noor](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/muhammad-asif-noor/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Muhammad%20Asif%20Noor)

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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Pakistan to attend the 48th meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Pakistan. For the first time, China was invited to the crucial high-level meeting of OIC, where Foreign Minister Wang Yi delivered a keynote speech. During his visit to his “second home,” the Chinese Foreign Minister met Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, President, Chief of Army Staff and Foreign Minister of Pakistan apart from meeting other high-level dignitaries of the OIC.

China’s presence in Pakistan and at the OIC summit is a significant step towards building a strong and lasting partnership with China and the Muslim world. Especially with China’s growing support and development initiatives through BRI in many OIC countries, including Pakistan, it has made a significant contribution to the states’ development landscape.

In the effort of support and cooperation at the advent of the pandemic, China has shared 1.3 billion COVID-19 doses to the 50 Islamic countries. Apart from that, China has signed BRI Cooperation with 54 Islamic countries and launched 600 large scale projects worth 400 million USD. True deliverables to the people of China and the Islamic world.

Islamic and Chinese civilisations are ancient yet thriving civilisations. Both of these important civilisations have a profound impact on the socio-political life of their respective people. Peace, justice, accountability, and public welfare are civilisations’ hallmarks, offering a unique bridge to integrate both worlds with distinct features or the common good.

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China’s presence at the OIC summit with having a theme of “Partnership for Unity, Justice, and Development,” has a meaningful message and meaning where China’s goal of win-win cooperation aligns with the objective of OIC. China has worked closely with the Muslim world to advocate principles of multilateralism, uphold the Charter of the UN, and walk hand in hand through thick and thin of the international system.

China is a significant energy consumer of the world, while the Muslim world is the primary petrochemicals. There is a potential for both partners to become participants for solidarity, sovereignty, development, and revitalisation. Recently, China and Saudi Arabia are close to trading oil in local Chinese currency, Yuan, instead of dollars, which presents a significant shift in global oil trade as a quarter of Saudi oil exports made their way to China. The cooperation can further open the avenues of health partnership to build a line of defence against global pandemics, especially coronavirus.

China looks forward to deepening its cooperation with the Muslim world on the Belt and Road Initiative and implementing the Global Development Initiative to kick start sustainable development in the global South. Security and stability is another prospective dimension of close cooperation where joint efforts can be concentrated on Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, Muslim neighbourhoods.

Wang Yi further supported the issue of Islamophobia and stressed the need for mutual peace in major religions and civilisations of the world because politics has already caused many wars. All the stakeholders must be able to hold the principles of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom while denying the space for separatism, extremism, and terrorism for the greater good.

Chinese Foreign Minister acknowledged the deepening of commercial and diplomatic ties of China with the Muslim world. As China enjoys warm relations with leaders of the Muslim world, he called for the need to build a partnership for unity, prosperity, and justice. Since the world is passing through profound changes on the political and economic front, it is necessary to cooperate for the common good of people to absorb the impacts of wars and conflicts.

Nevertheless, China has supported Muslim countries at a bilateral level to combat trends of imperialism, foreign intervention, and independence since the end of the Cold War. The cooperation in Science and Technology is another major trade between the Muslim World and China, which can be further streamlined through the platform of OIC.

China has strong relations with Pakistan, one of the leaders in the Muslim world with significant impact and authority amongst the groupings. With the CPEC thriving at the heart of the relationship, Pakistan and China consider each other iron brothers and term the relationship as ironclad.

The presence of Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Islamabad during the OIC summit has substantially contributed to the discussion towards enhancing the bilateral ties and achieving the objective of togetherness where win-win cooperation is the critical factor. This cooperation is translating into another neighbouring Muslim country, Afghanistan, where there is a desire from China and Pakistan to extend the CPEC to share the fruits of development and cooperation.

*The writer is Founder (Friends of BRI Forum).*