**China and the future OIC**

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Nothing significant came out of the two-day long conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that concluded last Wednesday in Islamabad. Wastage of huge resources of 57 countries including most of Pakistan’s. The capital city, Islamabad remained closed to the public for about a week. The general public had to bear the brunt of preparations for the Pakistan Day military parade. Undoubtedly, a very significant annual event to show off to enemies the country’s military might, but at the cost of the public exchequer. What about the inconvenience to millions of people for days? Do we need to spend billions to create a military might and its showcasing, public inconvenience if we have friendly neighbourhoods?

This year, it was doubled because of the preparations for the OIC CFM summit. All preparation had been extremely well and fool-proof, and to match the dignity and honour of the delegates. Great. Fair enough. The public at large in the OIC countries, especially every Pakistani, would happily spare even the last penny in his pocket for the grace and dignity of the Muslim world. But, will they do it for a lame 70-point conference declaration? No, certainly, they shall say no.

While going through the 48th OIC CFM conference “Islamabad Declaration”, I could find nothing important and significant that would shape a glorious Muslim world. If we exclude the presence of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, there was nothing in it but the same stereotype statements and commitments. Yes, well media-hyped too. Airtime worth billions were wasted too. The US and EU delegations were also present.

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The OIC Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha had a meeting with the State Councilor and Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, Wang Yi on March 22 in Islamabad. It is being considered an important sideline event of the 48th CFM conference. A general statement from the meeting mentioned that the two sides valued the long-standing and deep-rooted historical relations between China and the Muslim world during the meeting. They reviewed the range of relations between the OIC and China and its prospects and discussed ways to promote bilateral dialogue and cooperation in political, economic, cultural, education, health and challenges to inter-civilizational dialogue. Post-Covid 19 pandemic cooperation between China and the Muslim world was also in focus. A set of regional and international issues of mutual concerns were also discussed.

The China-OIC has reached the historic high peak of cordial and generous mutual respect, honour, cooperation and collaboration with the participation of the Chinese Foreign Minister as a ‘special guest’ and addressing the recent CFM conference. Future OIC and the Muslim world is expected to be more China-friendly and vice versa. China is already investing over $400 billion in nearly 600 projects across the Muslim world under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi claimed in his speech at the conference last Tuesday.

China is firm to continue to stand by the side of the Palestinian people. Also, support the early convening of a more authoritative and representative international peace conference based on the two-state solution so as to promote a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian issue. China has also been supporting the Kashmir issue at every forum. China has always been supporting preventive measures to avoid humanitarian disasters and their spillover. In recent history, the economic empowerment of its people and friends have been the top agenda of the Chinese government. Having been into military crises for decades, China has learnt to go for non-military interventions such as infrastructure and socio-economic development. Its investments in the BRI initiatives have been crucial for economic networks – ruling the world through economic supremacy. A great lesson to learn from China. Hope the resource-rich Arab world will follow the Chinese footprint for economic collaboration for development before the ‘oil-wells’ go dry.

The Chinese model of development has shown miracles. Especially President Xi Jinping’s strategies that have uplifted millions of Chinese people from the poverty line to self-sufficient earnings in about a decade. The BRI is expected to bring about a Chinese economic regime world over and strengthen the livelihood of billions. The OIC can learn a lot from it.

No military-intervention policy and measures taken to curb the faith-based extremism could also be a lighthouse for the Muslim world where several extremist factions exist despite many engagements with them for peace. Now, OIC shall take a firm stance against all those faith-based extremists wherever they are. No harm if the OIC asks China to have an impartial, rational and all-inclusive review of the Uygurs’ concerns though China has reflected upon the issue many times. This review will pave a path for joint action against the extremist elements there.

Reconstruction and development of Afghanistan is another big challenge for the OIC that China has assured of support in achieving inclusive government and steady governance to open a new chapter of peace and reconstruction. The OIC, particularly in Pakistan, can facilitate the Taliban to rethink their approach and methodology for a prosperous state of their own. Flexibility is the key.

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