

Analysis on the Potential of Strategic Cooperation between China and OIC under the “Silk Road Strategy” Framework

MA Lirong & HOU Yuxiang^①

(Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University; Department of Arabic, Beijing International Studies University)

Abstract: *The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has a unique influence in the global governance, such as Middle East issues and International Islamic development, and has become the most active international multilateral platform for Islam. Based on the context of the establishment of the organization and its development process, particularly, the agenda items and resolutions of the organization since 2000, this study clarifies the path of the OIC to advance agenda items and exert political influence on Islamic countries; this study also tracks the history of both official and civil exchanges between*

^① Dr. MA Lirong, professor and vice director of Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University and deputy editor-in-chief of *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*; HOU Yuxiang, Ph.D. candidate of Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, lecturer and vice director of Department of Arabic, Beijing International Studies University. This study is supported by the MOE National Social Science Fund Project (11BGJ033), Humanities and Social Sciences Key Research Base of major projects (10JJJDGJW021), Shanghai Leading Academic Discipline (B702), Shanghai International Studies University “211 Project”, Shanghai Universities First class discipline of political science and Shanghai Middle East think tank, as well as Project (ASC2015YB01) of the Arab Research Center, Beijing International Studies University, National and Regional Research Base, Ministry of Education.

China and the OIC, proposes to seize the historic opportunity of the "Silk Road strategy", and build a model of cooperation between China and the Arab-Islamic countries as the "natural partners of the Silk Road" and the "Silk Road Community".

Key Words: *Silk Road Strategy; Organization of the Islamic Cooperation; China and the Middle East*

I

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (now renamed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, referred to as the OIC) is a product of pan-Islamism, which resulted from the failed third "Middle East war" in June 1967 and the decline of pan-Arab nationalism. "Before it, the struggle between Arabs and Israel was regarded only as a regional political struggle. The fall of the eastern part of Jerusalem has led to a turning point for the development of new pan-Islamism. This struggle has been endowed with a religious significance-to retake the holy city, which has become a concern of political religious struggle. This struggle is no longer limited to the Arab and Palestinian people, and it spread throughout the Islamic world." In this context, the OIC, which was established in 1969, has become a political intergovernmental and international pan-Islamic organization, headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It has 57 member states and 12 observer countries and organizations. Its organizational purpose is to promote solidarity among member states to strengthen their cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, scientific and other fields; strive to eliminate racial segregation and racial discrimination, and fight against all forms of colonialism; support for the Palestinian people to recover their national rights and the struggles to return to

their homes; and, support for all Muslims' struggle to protect their dignity, independence and national rights. Its agencies include: the highest authority - the Islamic Summit Conference, Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the Secretariat, the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Solidarity Fund, Islamic News Agency and the Islamic Education Center of the world, Jerusalem Committee, Islamic Peace Committee, standing committees such as the Islamic economy, trade, science and technology cooperation Committee, the Islamic courts and the Islamic Development Foundation. The Islamic Summit Conference is held every three years which sometimes also convenes a special summit to address major emergencies of concern and vital interest to the Muslims. Up to now, a total of 12 summits and four special summits have been held. Since the fourth summit at the beginning of 1984, the topics are "gradually increasing and becoming more complex", but the "Middle East peace" and "Islam national cooperation" constitute the core issues (see Table 1).

Table 1. Issues/Topics of the Islamic Summit Conferences or special summit (since 2000)

Month /Year	Meeting	Issues for Discussion	Agenda Items
DEC 2000	9th Summit	"Peace and Development and the Al-Aqsa intifada" as the theme; negotiations and consultations among countries on the political, economic, social and cultural challenges the Islamic countries were	Peace in the Middle East; Challenges faced by the Islamic countries; Middle East

Analysis on the Potential of Strategic Cooperation between China and OIC under the
“Silk Road Strategy” Framework

		<p>facing, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the issue of Iraq, and to strengthen solidarity and resolve differences among the Islamic countries; published “Doha Declaration” “Al-Aqsa intifada statement” and the “final communiqué”; passed the 47 specific recommendations submitted by the foreign ministers’ meeting.</p>	<p>hot issues; Islamic solidarity and equality; Islamic Economic Development</p>
OCT 2003	10 th Summit	<p>Adopted the “Putrajaya Declaration” and a series of resolutions on the relevant political, economic, social, cultural and religious issues faced by the Islamic countries; elaborated Islamic countries’ positions on major international issues; expressed determination of Islamic countries to accelerate development pace.</p>	<p>Peace in the Middle East; Challenges faced by the Islamic countries; Major regional and international issues; Islamic countries collaboration; The development of Islamic countries</p>

<p>MAR 2008</p>	<p>11th Summit</p>	<p>“The challenges Islamic world is facing in the 21st century” as the theme, focused on economic partnership, technology and other knowledge-sharing and modification of the Charter of the OIC; adopted the new OIC Charter, reflecting the Muslims’ needs for education, work opportunity, and livelihood; published the “Dakar Declaration”, which expressed continued support for the struggle of the Palestinian people, condemning all forms of terrorism and dogmatism, to assist Member States to deal with the challenges of globalization.</p>	<p>The challenges faced by the Islamic world; Reform of the OIC; Peace in the Middle East; Anti-terrorism; Response to globalization</p>
<p>FEB 2013</p>	<p>12th Summit</p>	<p>“The role of the Islamic World: New Challenges and Opportunities” as the them; held depth discussion around the Islamic country’s basic political, economic and social situation; adopted a declaration on financial</p>	<p>Palestine Issue; Development of Islamic countries; Anti-terrorism; Nuclear issue; Human rights issues;</p>

*Analysis on the Potential of Strategic Cooperation between China and OIC under the
“Silk Road Strategy” Framework*

		cooperation; agreed to held senior officials and foreign ministers meetings and related preparatory meetings; also adopted the “Cairo Declaration”.	Economic and cultural cooperation
MAR 2003	2nd Special Summit	Proposed the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1441 based on the “grim situation in Iraq”; opposed the Islamic countries to participate in violent force against Iraq, and other initiatives; on the “grim situation in Palestine”, reiterated support to the founding of the Palestinian National Authority; condemned Israel for its atrocities on the poor.	Iraq issues Palestine issues
DEC 2005	3rd Special Summit	Issued a “final statement”; emphasized strengthening national unity of the Islamic states to meet the challenges in political, economic, security, social, ideological, cultural and science and technology areas; emphasized on strengthening international cooperation in antiterrorism and	Challenges the Islamic world is facing; Counter-terrorism cooperation; Anti-extremism; Advocating peaceful and

		distinguished between terrorism and legitimate right to resist foreign occupation; opposed extremist Islam and promoted tolerance, dialogue and diversity of values; addressed concerns on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the situation in Iraq; adopted the “Program of Action for the next 10 years” and “Mecca Declaration”, etc.	fair value; Peace in the Middle East; Middle East hot issues; Islamic Economic Development
AUG 2012	4 TH Special Summit	Issued a “final statement” designed to strengthen cooperation in order to meet the new challenges of Islam; adopted the “Mecca Charter”, and adopted a resolution on Palestine, Syria, and Myanmar Muslim groups, as well as Mali and other issues; determined to establish a permanent Committee on Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC), in order to establish the interrelated OIC.	Palestine Issues; Mali issues; Myanmar Muslim ethnic issue; Organizational reform; Anti-extremis m; Civilized dialogue; Economic and social affairs issues

From the recent agenda items of the Islamic Summit Conference or

special summit, it is noticeable that their attention has developed from political issues to economic, security and cultural areas, and from declaring the position to making specific actions plans, especially in the face of the 9/11 Incidents and globalization challenges, reform of the organization itself has become imperative. They have taken two main initiatives: First, the Amendment of the charter. On March 14, 2008, the 11th Islamic Summit Conference adopted a revised draft of a new charter and issued the "Dakar Declaration". Analysts believe that the two documents reflect the determination of Islamic countries to deal with "challenges faced by the Islamic world in the 21st century", but also pave the way for the organization's reforms. The successful modification of the Charter will become a milestone in the organization's history (Wei, X., 2008: March 15). The second is the renaming of the organization. On June 28, 2011, the 38th OIC foreign ministerial meeting decided that the organization would be renamed "Organization of Islamic Cooperation", designed to implement the "Decade Action Plan" and to "deepen cooperation in Islamic countries and the economic and social fields, and enhance the international influence of the organization" (Wang, D., 2011: June 28).

The development process of the OIC indicates that the "functions of international organizations are mainly in political, economic, cultural, social areas, etc. In terms of a political function, the international organization is an important place to provide political consultation, dialogue and negotiation" (Zhang, G., 2004: 292). As a pan-Islamic international organization, the OIC mainly affects Islamic states' politics by advancing certain agenda items directly:

(1) The burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 was the trigger of the establishment of the organization; accordingly, the Middle East peace has thus become the core issue of the organization. Therefore,

promoting the Palestinian state is not only the “common ambition” in the Islamic world, but also a major concern of the OIC.

(2) As the non-governmental advisory member of United Nations agencies as well as member of the UNESCO and UNICEF, and the guardian of the Islamic Conference, the OIC can express and defend the aspirations and interests of the 1.3 billion to 1.5 billion Muslims in the world on the international stage at different levels.

(3) In dealing with the political, security, economic and civil challenges, such as globalization, some specific measures of the organization have achieved some significant results.

(4) The organization changed its name from the “Organization of Islamic Conference” to the “Organization of Islamic Cooperation”, indicating that the OIC is being transformed in order “to deepen cooperation of Islamic countries in the economic and social fields and to enhance the organization’s international status.” For example, the Foreign Ministers’ meeting held in December 2011 called on the Syrian Government to implement the resolutions of the Arab League to reach a peaceful solution to resolve the crisis; the seventh meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in January 2012 stressed that “the Islamic parliamentary Union is fully capable to assist in promoting or implementing the international financial and economic cooperation resolutions, thereby defuse cultural conflicts caused by economic instability.”^① The third national think-tank forum of the OIC was held in March 2012. Its agenda items included the “Islamic socioeconomic and political dynamics,” “peace mission and reconciliation of Islamic countries”, etc. The purpose was to make recommendations for policy adjustments of the Islamic nation’s domestic and foreign policy in the

^① “Seventh OIC cooperation council meeting held in Indonesia”, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqgj/jryw/2012-01-31/content_5046633.html

new situation, and to strengthen intellectual potential of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Summit held in August 2012 agreed to establish a Standing Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation (COMCEC) in order to establish a closely linked Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

(5) the agenda issues have become increasingly more specific and thorough, indicating that the organization’s focus is shifting from the “Islamic state affairs” to “Global Islamic career”, not only concerned about the development and cooperation among Islamic countries, but also began to focus on the development of Muslim in non-Muslim countries. For example, the meeting of the Special Summit in August 2012 adopted a resolution on “ethnic minority issues of Myanmar Muslims”, etc.

II

The Chinese government has always attached great importance to the role and influence of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In February 1974, then Premier Zhou Enlai sent a congratulatory message to the Second Summit of the OIC, initiating the history of official level friendly exchanges between China and the OIC, and starting to carry out follow-up contacts with the OIC, to expand consensus and enhance mutual trust via the main channel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Table 2):

Table 2: Official Contact Memorabilia of China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (1974 to 2014) ^①

^① Gathered from the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and other relevant information.

Year/Month	The main content of the exchange and cooperation
FEB 1974	The second Islamic Summit Conference was held. Then Premier Zhou Enlai sent a congratulatory message to the General Assembly.
JAN 1981	The third Islamic Summit Conference was held; then Premier Zhao Ziyang sent a congratulatory message.
JAN 1987 DEC 1991	The 5th and 6th Islamic Summit Conferences were held; then Premier Zhao Ziyang sent congratulatory messages.
MAR 1993	President of Senegal and the OIC Executive Chairman Abou Diouf wrote to President Yang Shangkun, stating the organization's position on the expulsion of the Palestinians in Israel and trying to seek China's support.
AUG 1993	The OIC ministerial delegation led by Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar visited China; its members explained the Islamic countries' positions on the Bosnia and Herzegovina issue.
DEC 1993	President of Senegal and the OIC Executive Chairman Diouf called President Jiang Zemin regarding the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ask for China's support for Islamic countries and their stance on this issue as well as to put pressure

	on Serbians.
JUL 1995	The delegation from the Organization of the Islamic Conference composed of Hima, the Director General for Multilateral Relations Cooperation Division, Moroccan Foreign Ministry, Huck, Pakistan's ambassador to Turkey, and Muta, representative of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Morocco, visited China. They reiterated the position of the Islamic States on Bosnia and Herzegovina conflicts. Chinese Deputy Minister Dai Bingguo met with the delegation.
FEB 1997	Laraki Secretary-General called President Jiang Zemin, and expressed condolences on the death of Deng Xiaoping.
DEC 1997	The 8th Islamic Summit Conference was held; then Premier Li Peng sent a congratulatory message.
NOV 2000	The 9 th Islamic Summit Conference was held; Premier Zhu Rongji sent a congratulatory message.
May 23, 2001	The OIC Secretary General Balekaziz sent a letter to Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, calling on China, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, to provide international protection to the Palestinian people.
May 31, 2001	Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan replied to the OIC

	<p>Secretary-General Balekaziz, reiterated China's consistent position on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, saying that China is willing to strengthen cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and to contribute to achieving peace and stability in the region.</p>
Oct 9, 2001	<p>Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan called Chairman of the Islamic Conference Organization and Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad to clarify China's position on anti-terrorism issues, and said China is willing to strengthen cooperation and consultation with the majority of Islamic countries on this issue.</p>
Oct 29, 2008	<p>Organization of the Islamic Conference issued a statement, strongly condemning the violence in western Sudan and the kidnapping and killing of Chinese oil company employees. Secretary General of the organization Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said in the statement that atrocities committed by the kidnapers were a flagrant violation of international humanitarian norms, and had become the common enemy of development and progress in Sudan. He insisted that the Sudanese government should bring them to justice as soon as possible. He called on all the Sudanese people to act to avoid similar violence against innocent civilians which was contrary to the creeds of Islam, and urged the kidnapers to immediately release other</p>

	Chinese hostages.
AUG 2009	The Delegation of the OIC, which was led by Sayyed Kassem Missouri, the advisor of the Secretary-General of OIC, visited China in response to Chinese invitation. The deputy director of Policy and Regulation Department, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Zhang Ruopu, met with the delegation, and introduced the basic situation of China’s ethnic minorities and minority areas. He highlighted the regional autonomy policy on ethnic minorities as well as Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region’s economic and social development and education issues, and answered related questions. In addition, the delegation also visited Xinjiang. They condemned the 7/5 event planned by separatists led by Rebiya Kadeer, and expressed friendship and support through this visit to the Xinjiang People.
APR 2010	The OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu sent a condolence letter to quake-hit areas in Qinghai, China, expressed his condolences to the Chinese government, and praised the actions taken by the Chinese government in response to the earthquake.
APR 2010	The OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu sent a condolence letter about the floods in South China, and expressed his condolences to the

	<p>Chinese government, and spoke highly of the Chinese government's quick response and the effective measures in response to the disaster.</p>
JUN 2010	<p>The OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu paid a visit to China in response to the invitation by the Chinese government. The NPC Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun, director of the State Council Religious Affairs Office Wang Zuoan met with him. He also visited the Ningxia and Xinjiang. Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu expressed high appreciation for Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang and thanked the Chinese government for the warm reception and hospitality.</p>
JUN 2010	<p>Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Organization of the Islamic Conference issued a joint press release, saying that both sides should "explore many ways for China and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to strengthen consultation and cooperation, especially in the political, economic, trade and cultural fields;" "emphasize issues of common concern and provide mutual support", "oppose any form of terrorism, separatism and extremism," and, "through cooperation, promote the traditional friendship and increase exchanges and cooperation between the two sides."</p>

DEC 2010	<p>The Chinese government delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun paid the first visit to the headquarters of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and held talks with Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Zhai said China attached great importance to developing friendly relations with the Islamic world, appreciated and valued the positive role of the OIC in promoting national unity and cooperation with the Islamic states and addressing common challenges. China was willing to make joint efforts with the OIC to improve the level of mutual trust, promote further development of friendly relations and cooperation of the two sides. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said that the friendly relations between China and the Islamic world were of strategic significance. They had broad prospects for bilateral cooperation. The OIC would play an active role in promoting China’s friendly cooperation with the Islamic world.</p>
DEC 2011	<p>Chinese Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Li Chengwen met with the Secretary General of OIC Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Ambassador Li stressed that China attached great importance to the developing relations with the OIC in recent years; both sides, he said, experienced increasing exchanges and contacts, and deepening understanding and trust. China is willing to continue to strengthen communication and coordination with the OIC</p>

	<p>Secretariat to promote greater development of bilateral relations. Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said, OIC also attached great importance to developing relations with China and was willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with China in culture, religion and other areas, continuing to work to promote the further development of bilateral friendly cooperative relations forward.</p>
JAN 2012	<p>Premier Wen Jiabao met with Secretary-General of the OIC Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu at the Riyadh meeting. He said, "China attaches great importance to the role and influence of Islamic Cooperation Organization and is willing to enhance mutual political trust, strengthen coordination on major issues, and promote friendship with the Islamic world by exchanges and cooperation to achieve new progress." "China and the Organization of Islamic cooperation have common interests in maintaining peace and stability in the West Asia and North Africa region". He hoped and believed that the OIC "can play an important role in this." Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said, "Organization of Islamic Cooperation emphasizes on coordination and communication with China from a strategic perspective, and is willing to promote the Islamic countries to strengthen friendly and cooperative relations with China."</p>

JUN 2012	Chinese Special Envoy to the Middle East Wu Sike met with the US special envoy to the OIC Hussein SCO and briefed the Chinese ethnic and religious policies and relations with the Islamic countries upon request. The two sides also discussed issues related to the hot WANA region and exchanged views.
JUN 2012	Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun met with Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu who came to attend the “China and the Islamic seminar civilization”. Zhai said China had long maintained friendly relations with the Islamic world. Their relationship is a model of cooperation between different civilizations. Under the new situation, both sides are facing accelerated development and have achieved the historic mission of rejuvenation, facing important opportunities for cooperation. He suggested that both sides should deepen political mutual trust and promote pragmatic cooperation, strengthen cultural exchanges, promote the sustainable development of their relationship. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said the OIC cherished the traditional friendship with China and attached great importance to promoting the development of relations between the Islamic world and China, and was willing to further strengthen the strategic relationship with China in various fields.
JUN 2012	CPPCC Chairman Jia Qinglin met with OIC

	<p>Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and his staff in Beijing; they came to China to attend the “Seminar on China and the Islamic civilization”. Jia Qinglin delivered congratulatory remarks for that the “China and the Islamic civilization Seminar” was successfully held. He appreciated the positive efforts of the OIC to consolidate the traditional friendship between China and the Islamic world, and promote the development of friendship between China and the Islamic countries, emphasizing China and Islamic countries are mutually supportive political partnership and mutually beneficial economic partnership, humanities exchanges and mutual learning partnership. Friendly relation between China and the Islamic world has become a model of equality and cooperation and harmony among different civilizations. Jia Qinglin expressed appreciation on the Islamic states’ support in Taiwan issue, Xinjiang issue, Tibet issue and other issues of China’s core interests. He hoped China and the Islamic countries would follow the main trend of cooperation, strengthen communication and coordination, promote dialogue among civilizations, exclude external interference, and deepen bilateral relations on a broader platform in long-term vision. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said that Islamic countries attached great importance to developing relations</p>
--	---

	<p>with China and that the OIC was willing to strengthen communication and cooperation, and promote friendly cooperation between the Islamic world and China to a higher level as well as broader areas of development.</p>
OCT 2013	<p>The UN Security Council held a meeting on “the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations to cooperate in maintaining international peace and security”, and issued a press release on strengthening cooperation with the OIC. Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations Liu Jieyi said at the meeting that China appreciated the important role of the OIC in promoting world unity and cooperation as well as promoting dialogue among civilizations. China supports the UN and the UN Security Council in continuing to deepen cooperation with the OIC to jointly maintain international peace and promote common development.</p>
JAN 2014	<p>Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi sent a congratulatory letter to the newly-elected Secretary-General of the OIC Iyad.</p>
MAR 2014	<p>OIC Secretary-General Iyad strongly condemned 3/1 violent terrorist attacks kunming, stressing that the OIC opposed all forms of terrorism, and expressed sincere condolences to the Chinese government.</p>

MAY 2014	OIC Secretary-General Iyad strongly condemned the 5/22 violent terrorist attacks in China and reiterated the fact that the OIC opposed all forms of terrorism. He hoped the Chinese government would take all measures to investigate the incident, and expressed sincere condolences to the Chinese government.
MAY 2014	The OIC Special Envoy of Secretary-General and the Director General of the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Center, Savaş Alpay attended the Fourth Summit Conference in Beijing on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia.
SEP 2014	When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Iyad, the OIC Secretary General during the UN General Assembly session, he said, Islamic countries are an important strategic force and have played a unique role in human civilization, progress and development. The OIC is an important bridge pushing forward friendship and cooperation between China and Islamic world. For 40 years, China and the Islamic world have forged mutual trust, mutual benefits and cooperation, tolerance and mutual learning, and the relationship has become a model of harmony between different civilizations. The two sides should strengthen political exchanges, deepen mutual understanding

	<p>and support on issues concerning each other’s core interests and major concerns, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and enhance people’s friendship, strengthen communication and coordination in international and regional affairs to promote a political settlement of hot issues. Iyad said that OIC member states attached importance to China’s position and role in international affairs; they are committed to be China’s friend, enhancing mutual understanding and trust and close relationship with China to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.</p>
--	---

Compared to the official exchanges, civil (non-governmental) exchanges between China and the OIC began in May 1986, and the Islamic Association of China was the main channel to carry out exchanges and cooperation. In social, trade and security, and other areas, they have great potential to further strengthen cooperation (see Table 3).

Table 3: Memorabilia of Civil Exchanges between China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (1986 to 2013)^①

Year/Month	Main content of cooperation and exchanges
MAY 1986	The Islamic Development Bank decided to grant \$4,060,000 to China.

^① According to the official website of China Islamic Association, and “Chinese Muslims’ magazine and other relevant information.

NOV 1994	At the invitation of Chinese Islamic Association, the Deputy Secretary-General of the OIC, Mohamed Mohsin visited China, and exchanged views on enhancing mutual understanding and the development of bilateral relations. He also brought a letter from the OIC Secretary-General Iyad to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and visited Xi'an, Shenzhen and some other places. Mohsin spoke highly of China's ethnic equality and religious freedom policy, and expressed willingness to provide help for Muslim pilgrimage, hoping the OIC Member States to enhance the friendly relations with China.
APR 1995	Deputy Secretary General of the OIC Mohsin met with the head of China Hajj Mission and vice president of China Islamic Association Ma Xian
MAY 2007	Vice president of the China Islamic Association Yu Zhengui met with the head of Islamic Development Bank Ahmed Ali in Shanghai when Ali attended the 2007 African Development Bank Group Annual Meetings. Yu, vice president of China Islamic Association, thanked on behalf of the China Islamic Association on the aid to the Islamic culture and Muslim vocational education training programs provided by the Islamic Development Bank. He hoped that the Islamic Development Bank would continue to cooperate with the China Islamic Association to provide more help for Islamic education, vocational

	<p>training and ethnic Muslim school projects. President Ali highly praised the Chinese government policy of religious freedom and expressed sincere admiration to the rapid development of Chinese society and the economy, and said that although the education aid for Chinese Muslim was very limited, it represented friendship between 57 member countries and Muslim peoples, and the Chinese people and the Muslims. The Islamic Development Bank would deepen cooperation with China Islamic Association in the future.</p>
<p>OCT 2009</p>	<p>Chinese Islamic Association vice president Yang Zhibo met with the OIC Deputy Secretary-General Abdullah Ibn Ali and Southeast Asia pilgrimage institutions. He also held specific consultations on the Hajj with the president of the institution Zuhaier Sida as well as director in charge of China pilgrimage personnel issues Achmed Daer.</p>
<p>APR 2012</p>	<p>Hosted by the Chinese Islamic Association, Director of the non-member Organization Affairs and Department of Special Aid of the Islamic Development Bank, Dr. Awad Salem Al-Osaimea, visited China with Abdukerim, an engineer responsible for aid project in China. They visited Benxi (Liaoning), Qingdao (Shandong), Wuzhong (Ningxia), Haiyuan (Ningxia), etc, where the Islamic Development Bank had aided in education, vocational training and other projects, and conducted a site visit to Ningxia, Gansu and other arid</p>

	<p>regions where the Islamic Development Bank planned to cooperate with China Islamic Association on the wells projects. During their visit to Beijing, Yang Zhibo, vice president of China Islamic Association, met with the delegation, and held talks with the delegation in conjunction with some Anhui and Jiamusi (Heilongjiang) companies, which received financial aid from the Islamic Development Bank.</p>
APR 2013	<p>The Director of the Office of the Special Assistance of the Islamic Development Bank, Mohammed Issam visited China Islamic Association, and was welcomed by the head of China Islamic Association, Chen Guangyuan, and vice president Yang Zhibo. President Chen welcomed the arrival of the guests and thanked the Islamic Development Bank's support and assistance to the development of Islam in China over the years, especially grateful for the assistance in economic and cultural development of the Muslim areas in China. After the meeting, vice president Yang Zhiqing held a working meeting with the guests on the progress of the aid projects in China; they exchanged views on solving problem in some of the uncompleted projects and discussed new areas of cooperation and negotiation. Director Issam said, the Islamic Development Bank attached great importance to the cooperation with China Islamic Association, and would continue to provide assistance to the Chinese Muslim education vocational training programs.</p>

APR 2013	Vice president of the Chinese Islamic Association Adilijiang Ajikelimu led the delegation’s visit to the Islamic Development Bank.
----------	--

Table 2 and Table 3 show that the development of friendly relations between China and the OIC has the following characteristics: 1) The Chinese government attaches great importance to developing friendly relations with the OIC; starting from the second Summit, Chinese Premier expressed kindness and concern through congratulatory letters and staffs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Bureau of Religious Affairs and other government officials have become advocates and practitioners to deepen bilateral relations; 2) the government and the people both contribute to developing multi-level relationships. China develops relations with the OIC at the two levels: both government and civil non-governmental level. Multilateral and cultural exchanges and cooperation are mainly initiated by the Asian and African Departments of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the State Bureau of Religious Affairs, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the China International Exchange Division and other Islamic Association and NGO agencies; 3) the common interests of both sides are widening. In addition to the mutual support on core concerns of the parties (e.g., Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan-related issues, the erection of a Palestinian state, etc.), they “share common interests in safeguarding regional peace and stability in West Asia and North Africa” and the basis of public opinion and political mutual trust is stable; 4) the development of bilateral relations has entered a new historical stage. On June 22, 2010, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a joint press release with the

OIC, marking the China-OIC relations have entered a new historical stage. The 7/5 incident, upheavals in the Middle East and other events have occurred, prompting both sides to further strengthen interaction, to expand consensus, and to face the challenges together; 5) Civil cooperation is pragmatic and feasible. As a specialized financial institution of the OIC, the Islamic Development Bank has since 1985 provided funds for cultural and economic development in the Muslim regions, such as Xinjiang and Ningxia, as well as vocational training and other aid projects in Liaoning and Shandong and other places. It also intends on digging water wells and implementing cooperative projects with the Chinese Islamic Association in Ningxia, Gansu and other arid regions, suggesting that the civil level of cooperation is increasingly pragmatic and feasible.

III

The OIC was established in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, aimed at strengthening solidarity among Islamic countries and to coordinate their positions in international affairs, that is, “speaking with one voice to the outside world”. Resolutions adopted by the organization in most of the cases tend to follow the UN Charter and universally-recognized norms of international law. Under the premise of the consultation and the “seek common ground while reserving differences” approach, the Islamic countries reach some kind of consensus on international issues of common concern. The Foreign Ministers’ Meeting is the most important mechanism and channel to coordinate positions of member states on major international issues. In international affairs, especially in the Middle East peace issues and in safeguarding the common interests of Islamic countries, mediating

internal disputes and other aspects, the OIC has played an important role and have a great impact on the Member States' foreign policy (Wu, Y., 2010). Therefore, the OIC has unique advantages in international cooperation, including: 1) 57 member countries cover the main target of the country's regional and international conflicts, such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, so the OIC has a certain right to speak on Arab-and Muslim world issues; 2) The OIC also has four observer states, such as Russia, it not only has a certain influence in the Muslim community in Central Asia, but also has an important voice on international issues because of infiltration of the Great Powers; 3) the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1967 led to the establishment of the OIC, so that it has the unique right to speak on the issue of the Middle East peace, and has a wide range of religious - political influence because of the moral resource; 4) in addition to the permanent secretariat, the OIC also sets up many entities, including the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic solidarity Fund, the Islamic News Agency and the Islamic Education Center of the world, Jerusalem Committee, Islamic Peace Committee, the Standing Committee of the Islamic economic, trade, scientific and technological cooperation, the Islamic courts and the Islamic development Foundation, which have a clear division of work to facilitate the cooperation in political, financial, trade, education, science and technology and legal aspects. This provides a practical platform for cooperation of Islamic countries and to enhance the will and ability to deal with challenges of globalization; 5) The OIC not only has a powerful appeal and mobilization to seek the unity and cooperation among Islamic countries, but also has the financial means for international cooperation and institutional support because of the effective functioning of the Islamic Development Bank. Summit

meetings and foreign ministers conferences held by the OIC are more likely to achieve some substantive results, in particular, the 38th ministerial meeting held on June 18, 2011 decided to rename the OIC: the “cooperation” as an important means of “promotion organization’s international status”, indicating that its major concerns has shifted from “a Palestinian state” to “deepen the cooperation of Islamic countries in the economic and social fields”, and exchanges and cooperation with non-Islamic countries on Islamic affairs, etc. This will help promote the OIC “to carry out extensive and in-depth international cooperation on peace and development”. The OIC has unique resources and advantages to carry out international cooperation, which has become an important potential for strategic cooperation between China and the OIC.

In 2013, China put forward the “Silk Road Strategy” concept. The establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund in 2014 have marked the start of “the implementation period” of the “Silk Road Strategy”, and also provide new opportunities for China to deepen cooperation with the OIC. To this end, China should focus on the following aspects:

First, China has always attached importance to the important role of the OIC in unity and cooperation among Islamic countries. The Foreign Ministry and the China Islamic Association are the main channels to carry out two-track diplomacy, showing a basic situation of “joint effort of government and private sectors with stronger role of the government with assistance of civil connection”. On June 22, 2010, Chinese Foreign Ministry and the OIC issued a joint press communiqué, saying that “the two sides are determined to deepen bilateral relations in all fields of common interest through continued cooperation”. They explored “many ways for China and the

Organization of the Islamic Cooperation to strengthen consultation and cooperation, especially in the political, economic, trade and cultural fields", intending to "promote the traditional friendship and increase bilateral exchanges and cooperation through cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China). Since the July 5th Incident, especially when the Middle East upheavals triggered a global surge of Islamic extremism, the field of security has become a new direction for multilateral cooperation between China and the OIC. In the future, China should continue to innovate in content and form. It is necessary to strengthen non-governmental exchanges and cooperation in efforts to coordinate public diplomacy and strengthen mechanisms in important areas such as economy, trade, security, cultural and other exchanges and cooperation. The OIC can act as a platform to establish the new modes of cooperation between China and Arab organizations/the Islamic State--the "natural partner of the Silk Road".

Second, since 2005, the OIC has begun a 10-year plan to promote cooperation among member states at all levels in political, economic, technological, and cultural fields. In recent years, economic and trade cooperation among OIC member states continue to advance; trade volume increased year by year, account for nearly 20% of the total trade of Member States (Hu, Y., 2013: February 8). Some Islamic economists predict that in 2020 the volume of trade between OIC member states will grow by 10.4%. This is because the Islamic world has accounted for 73% of the world's oil reserves; they are rich in mineral resources. Moreover, Islamic banks are playing an increasingly active role in interstate financing (Liu, Y., 2011: April 14). Over the next decade, China-Arab trade volume is expected to grow from \$240 billion in 2013 to \$600 billion; China's non-financial investment in the Arab world is expected to increase from \$10 billion to over \$60 billion

(Xin, J. & Liu, H., 2014: June 5). In the future, as the world's second largest economy, China should use the OIC as a platform to advance energy cooperation, infrastructure, and financial and trade cooperation with the Islamic countries along the Silk Road scheme, so that China and the Islamic world together can make greater contributions to global economic integration.

Third, the "Silk Road Strategy" greatly enhances the strategic position of China's cultural diplomacy, so that it is committed to the new strategic mission of cultivating "anti-terrorist consensus", in addition to the task of "communicate values and enhance mutual trust". In the future, China can take advantage of this platform to tell a good "Xinjiang Story" and fix China's national image. Moreover, since "Terrorism is the common enemy of human society as well as a threat to the international community", "the international community can not defeat ISIS by virtue of existing international relations model", and "the international community should strengthen cooperation and coordination of action in the field of security and counter-terrorism to achieve the goal of curbing spillovers of terrorism" (Chen, X., 2015: January 14). Thus, China can promote "consensus on antiterrorism" and initiate comprehensive and multi-channel cultural exchanges with the Islamic countries along the Silk Road, and strive to maintain cooperation and safeguard interests of "Silk Road community" in the nonaligned and non-confrontational strategy, and thus deepen the strategic cooperation between China and the OIC.

References

Chen, X. (2015: January 14). Under the existing model of international relations, who will defeat the "Islamic State", *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*.

- Hu, Y. (2013: February 8). Islamic countries are facing new opportunity, *Economic Daily*.
- Liu, Y. (2011: April 14). Experts predict inter-OIC trade will grow 10 percent in 2020, Retrieved April 1, 2014 from http://intl.ce.cn/specials/zxgjzh/201104/14/t20110414_22363476.shtml.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. *Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Organization of the Islamic Conference issued a joint press release*, Retrieved May 1, 2014 from <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/1179/t710753.htm>.
- Xin, J. & Liu, H. (2014: June 5). Xinhua commentary: Writing A new chapter of China-Arab cooperation, *Xinhua News Agency*.
- Wang, D. (2011: June 28). Organization of the Islamic Conference renamed Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Retrieved June 1, 2014 from <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2011/06/28/5311s3290630.htm>.
- Wei, X. (2008: March 15). International aspect: the Islamic Summit Conference adopted a new charter, Retrieved March 1, 2014 from <http://gb.cri.cn/19224/2008/03/15/3285@1979230.htm>.
- Wu, Y. (2010). Influence of Islam on contemporary Islamic country's foreign policy, *World Religion and Culture*, No.3.
- Zhang, G. (2004). *International Relations and International Organizations*, Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press.