

*Assessing the OIC Member States' Engagement in China's Belt and Road Initiative:
Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications*

Tajwar Ali, Zhengzhou University, China
Haseena Sultan, Zhengzhou University, China

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Abstract

The remarkable demonstration of substantial collaboration between fifty-seven member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and China's Belt and Road Initiative exemplifies a significant milestone in contemporary international cooperation. This article assesses the involvement of member states of the OIC in China's BRI since 2013. The BRI is a large infrastructure development project aimed at connecting China with other parts of Asia, Europe, and Africa via a network of roads, railroads, ports, and other mega projects. This study examines the geopolitical implications of the BRI on member states of the OIC, China, and other significant global powers. Additionally, it explores the potential consequences of the BRI on regional and global governance. This study's data collection and analysis were based on firsthand accounts from specialists, senior officials of OIC member states, and Muslim World diplomats. The use of the in-depth interview approach and newspaper content analysis method would provide researcher with access to the primary data pertaining to this significant collaboration in the OIC countries. This study offers a thorough and nuanced explanation of the OIC member states' position in the BRI and its broader complications for international affairs in the Muslim World. There are numerous concerns regarding the involvement of OIC member states in a substantial undertaking spearheaded by a communist nation such as China, especially in light of the fact that the majority of Muslim countries uphold capitalist principles.

Keywords: Muslim World, Islam, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Belt and Road initiative (BRI), China and Muslim World Economic Corridor (CMWEC)

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Introduction

The establishment of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in recent decades has been widely recognized as a project with revolutionary potential. Its primary objectives include the promotion of regional cooperation, infrastructural development, and economic integration across several continents. Due to its strategic importance, several nations have tried to capitalize on the benefits it offers. Included in this group are the member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which comprises a heterogeneous assortment of countries characterized by distinct economic, political, and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, despite the seeming prospects for these governments to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), there are also intrinsic obstacles and enduring consequences that need comprehensive understanding. The present research aims to investigate the level of involvement of member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in China's Belt and Road Initiative. What possibilities are being used by the parties involved, what obstacles are they encountering, and what are the wider consequences of their participation for both their respective nations and the overall membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the domains of geopolitics and economics?

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) implemented by China is a substantial and far-reaching endeavor in infrastructure development, with the objective of establishing connectivity between China and other areas throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. This initiative includes the construction of an extensive network of roads, railways, ports, and other infrastructure projects. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has garnered significant attention from individuals worldwide, particularly those affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), because to its status as a monumental international development endeavor. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is a diverse entity consisting of 57 states with Muslim-majority populations. These nations exhibit significant disparities in terms of economic development rates, geopolitical ambitions, and foreign policies. Due to the strategic positioning of some nations along the anticipated routes of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has shown heightened interest in certain countries and has made substantial investments in them (Cai, 2017).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was introduced by China in 2013, representing a significant turning point in the nation's diplomatic engagements. The comprehensive agenda has had a significant effect on the foreign policies of several governments, particularly those in the Muslim world that are affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). As a consequence of this, a total of 48 members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) entered into memorandums of understanding with China. The initiative, including the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, has garnered support from more than 142 states worldwide. The construction of the Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor (SMWEC) was undertaken as a means to showcase China's expanding diplomatic and economic ties with the Muslim world. China has been a reliable partner for many low-income countries under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), establishing notable alliances such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and engaging in cooperative efforts with ASEAN nations like Malaysia and Indonesia (HUSSAIN, 2021).

China's engagement with the Muslim world extends over several continents, including Arab nations via the China-Arab nations Cooperation Forum, as well as members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, South America, and Europe. The presence of a notable connection is underscored by

substantial endeavors in South Asia, exemplified by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Moreover, Iran, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan serve as exemplars of China's significant impact and unwavering commitment. Indonesia and Malaysia are major actors within the ASEAN region, contributing substantially to the overall population of the ASEAN community. The growing collaboration between China and the Muslim world has led to the creation of the Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor, which has proven advantageous for China's economic ascendance. In order to establish a genuinely symbiotic alliance, it is essential for states within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to optimize their export capabilities while concurrently avoiding any parasitic economic inclinations.¹

This Research plays a crucial role in facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the geopolitical and economic landscape's dynamic shifts. Through the establishment of ties between China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which represents a significant portion of the Muslim world, this study provides insightful perspectives on forthcoming shifts in global alliances, trade routes, and investment dynamics. Moreover, this active participation has the potential to profoundly transform the process of infrastructure construction, to influence the stability of the region, and to promote cultural exchanges between the involved governments. The research endeavor has the potential to provide valuable guidance for policy decision-making, thereby facilitating the member states' attainment of optimal benefits and mitigation of risks. In addition, it provides unique interdisciplinary perspectives that can contribute to the academic community's understanding of the area of study (Ali & Khan, 2023).

The primary objective of this study is to assess and classify the various degrees and types of engagement shown by Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states in China's Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, the primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive conception of the economic, geopolitical, and sociocultural benefits that Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states hope to achieve through their participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It also examines and assess the numerous economic, political, cultural, and strategic obstacles and challenges encountered by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states while participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Research Methodology

The present study used a qualitative research methodology. A comprehensive series of in-depth interviews were conducted with experts and authorities from the Muslim world in order to get primary information pertaining to the subject matter. It was imperative to establish communication and conduct research on the official archives of the Belt and Road project authorities, which are operational in several countries, including Pakistan. Relevant data was obtained via reaching out to the foreign ministry of Pakistan, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan, and the office of the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) in Pakistan. Furthermore, the study used a selection of esteemed scholarly articles as primary sources, while also conducting an extensive analysis of prominent authors within the area to get a full understanding of the current state of research. The trade statistics and other statistical data of globally recognized and esteemed organizations were obtained from authoritative sources such as the CIA fact book and World

¹ Links, Stacey. "Ascertaining Agency: Africa and the Belt and Road Initiative." In *Global Perspectives on China's Belt and Road Initiative: Asserting Agency through Regional Connectivity*, edited by Florian Schneider, 113–40. Amsterdam University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1dc9k7j.8>.

Bank records. The primary sources used in this study included the electronic and print media statements made by politicians involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, experts hailing from the Muslim world, and officials affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Understanding BRI in the Context of Sino-Muslim World Relations

The establishment of the Belt and Road Initiative is China's most significant economic and diplomatic innovation in the 21st century. The BRI results from President Xi Jinping's foreign policy initiatives in China (Zhao, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) consists of two major elements, namely the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the twenty-first-century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). The Southern Rail and Economic Belt (SREB) encompasses a collection of terrestrial initiatives including as trains, pipelines, highways, and economic zones. In contrast, the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) primarily focuses on the establishment of ports and coastal improvements.² The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) implemented by China has garnered significant interest from contemporary political experts. The phenomenon encompasses a vast expanse of more than eighty countries, representing a demographic majority of almost two-thirds of the global population. The potential outcome of this megaproject might include a Chinese expenditure above \$1 trillion, a figure that is sevenfold more than the amount spent by the United States for the Marshall Plan in the first stages of the Cold War. China has expressed its intention to enhance its infrastructure by constructing new roads, railways, and soft infrastructure, which encompasses trade and transit agreements, cultural ties, university scholarships, and people-to-people contacts.³

President Xi Jinping proposed a Silk Road Economic Belt in September 2013 in Kazakhstan, which should link China and the Central Asian republics, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, to Iran, Turkey, Russia, and Europe.⁴ Chinese President Xi proposed a 21st-century maritime silk road linking ASEAN and China at the ASEAN forum in Indonesia. The Belt and Road Initiative of China⁵ is no doubt a mega project of the 21st century. Still, it is not a surprise from the Chinese Side because It had initiated Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, which are also the biggest regional blocs.⁶

During the advisory council meeting of the Belt and Road forum in 2021, Mr. Wang Yi expressed his observation that the Belt and Road Cooperation has transitioned into a new phase characterized by high-quality growth. Our approach will include aggressively conforming to internationally recognized laws and standards, executing a greater number of projects of superior quality, establishing further exemplary methods, and guaranteeing the

² Xinhua. 2017. 'Full Text: Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative', 20 June, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/20/c_136380414.htm (accessed on 14 December 2019).

³ Jonathan Hillman, 'How Big is China's Belt and Road?'. *CSIS Commentary*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-big-chinas-belt-and-road> and Enda Curran, 'China's Marshall Plan'. Bloomberg, August 7, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-07/china-s-marshall-plan> (accessed 20 April 2021).

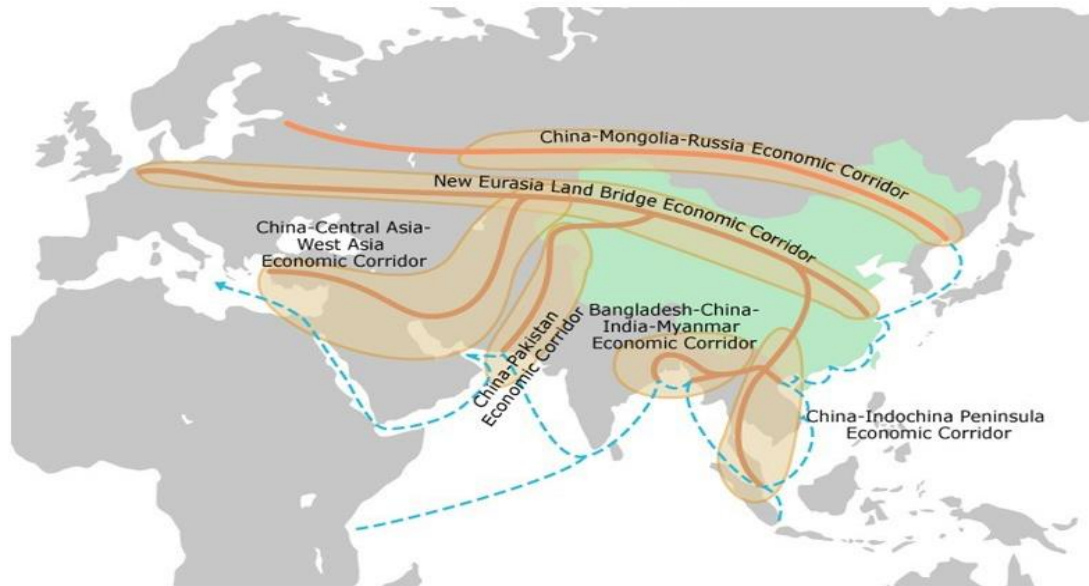
⁴ Xinhua. (2013, September 7). Xi suggests China, C. Asia build Silk Road economic belt. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-09/07/c_132700695.htm

⁵ Wu, J., & Zhang, Y. (2013, October 4). Xi in call for building of "maritime Silk Road". China Daily USA. Retrieved from http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-10/04/content_17008940.htm

⁶ Michael Kugelmann *GREAT POTENTIAL, MANY PITFALLS: UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE*, *Asian Affairs*, (2019) 50:2, 180-186, DOI: 10.1080/03068374.2019.1602383

economic, fiscal, financial, and environmental sustainability of these initiatives” (Kugelman, 2019). Figure 1. shows the Belt and Road Initiative program of China.

Figure 1. The Belt and Road Initiative: Six Economic Corridors Spanning Asia, Europe and Africa



Source: Council of Foreign Affairs

The Muslim world became united under the Umbrella of OIC in 1969 and became the second-largest organization after the UNO. The Muslim world and OIC are interconnected in the current era; fifty-seven OIC members view world politics through the prism of Muslim Ummah. The OIC stresses their member countries to have good relations with the PRC. China’s Peaceful development policy and non-interference appeal to the Muslim states.⁷ Islam is the second most prominent and geographically widespread religion worldwide. In 2010, the Pew Research Centre reported that there were over 1.6 billion individuals adhering to the Islamic faith residing across 190 different countries. There are a total of seventy-two states in Asia, located near the People’s Republic of China, where the population of Muslims exceeds one million individuals.⁸

As of December 2021, nearly 142 nations had signed memoranda of understanding with PRC to become part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).⁹ The number of countries that are part of BRI has been shown in table 1 according to the division of different continents. This table also shows the number of OIC countries participating in China’s Belt and Road initiative.

⁷ Official Contact Memorabilia of China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (1974 to 2014) Gathered from the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and other relevant information.

⁸ The Pew Research Center, *The Future Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010–2030* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, January 2011), p. 11, p. 67, available at: http://pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_

⁹ <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/dsjym.htm>

Table 1. No of all participating Countries and the OIC States in different continents			
	Continents	Number of Participating Countries	Number of OIC Countries
1	Sub-Sahara Africa	42	18 Countries
2	Europe& Central Asia	34 Countries	8 Countries
3	East Asia & Pacific	24	2 Countries
4	Middle East & North Africa	17 Countries	15 Countries
5	Latin America and Caribbean	19 Countries	1 Country
6	South East Asia & South Asia	12 Countries	4 Countries
	Total Countries	142	48 OIC states

Source: Green Finance and Development Center

BRI has six major economic corridors, and these corridors refer to the New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB), the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), The China and Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC), the China Indo-China Peninsula Economic Corridor, (CIPEC), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC).¹⁰ There are total of 23 countries that are participating in these six major projects. Out of 23 participating countries ten Muslim OIC countries and these countries are directly participating in six major projects. Table 2 shows the participation of 23 OIC states in the BRI's six major projects.

China is doing CPEC project with Pakistan, a leading Muslim country and a pioneer of OIC (Tajwar Ali, 2023). In Bangladesh -China-India Myanmar Corridor Bangladesh is a Muslim country. In the China and Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC), seven OIC members, like, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey, cooperate with the PRC. Malaysia is a founding member of OIC, which participates in the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CIPEC) and the New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB). In almost all the mega projects of BRI, OIC countries are participating, which

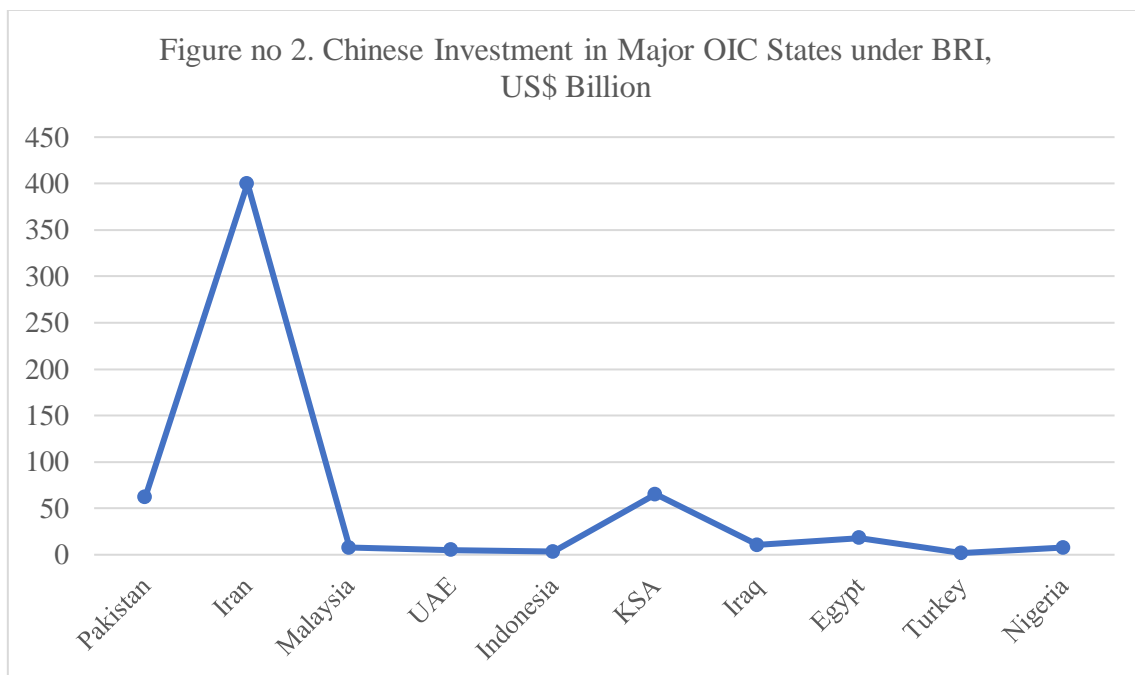
¹⁰ Xinhua Silk Road Database, Explain China's Silk Road Economic Belt, March 18, 2021, <https://en.imsilkroad.com/p/312941.html>

depicts the indispensable role of the Muslim World in the Belt and Road Initiative.¹¹ The fact that China is concentrating its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) efforts on the Muslim world provides more evidence that China intends to establish a Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor.

Table 2. Six major Projects under BRI and 23 participating states					
CPEC	BCIMEC	CCWAEC	CIPEC	CMREC	NELB
PAKISTAN	BANGLADESH	IRAN	COMBODIA	MANGILIA	BELARUS
	INDIA	KAZAKHSTAN	LAOS	RUSSIA	CZECH REPUBLIC
	MYANMAR	KYRGZYSTAN	MALAYSIA		KAZAKHSTAN
		TAJIKISTAN	MYANMAR		POLAND
		TURKEY	THAILAND		RUSSIA
		TURKMENISTAN	VIETNAM		GERMANY
		UZBEKISTAN			

Source: Council of the Foreign Affairs

It shows the investment of China in the significant OIC countries under BRI, which clearly indicates that China is preparing something big in these countries.



Source: Authors' calculation from China's Global Investment Tracker

¹¹ Interview with a Senior official at the Standing Committee of OIC for Science and Technology (COMSTECH) Islamabad Pakistan on May 12, 2022.

Similarly, OIC countries play an essential role in the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road passes through 23 states and regions. These states include the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, India, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Pakistan, UAE, Egypt, Italy, Greece, Tanzania, Kenya, and Turkey.¹² The 21st-century Maritime Silk Road is actively participated in by eight member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). China has implemented several port development efforts along the Maritime Silk Road with the aim of augmenting the economic feasibility of this trade route for its export activities. China has committed a significant sum over US\$400 billion to finance more than 600 projects across the Islamic World, as an integral component of its Belt and Road Initiative.¹³ During the Belt and Road Initiative event, President Xi reiterated the establishment of Silk Road scholarships by local governments in the People's Republic of China, with the aim of enhancing cultural and educational interactions. The initiatives promoting people-to-people cooperation, such as the Silk Road cultural year, art festival, tourist year, TV project, film, seminar, and think tank discourse, are seeing significant growth. These interactions have fostered a greater sense of unity among their respective populations.¹⁴

Political Factors That Have Influenced the Oic Member States' Participation in the Bri

The potential economic advantages of the project are a significant driving force behind the involvement of member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Belt and Road project (BRI) (Sultan, 2023). A significant number of nations have economies that rely extensively on natural resources and are actively pursuing new avenues for expansion and progress. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) encompasses a diverse array of infrastructure projects that have the potential to facilitate the establishment of novel trade routes, attract investments, and provide these nations entry into Chinese markets. Certain member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) see their involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a means to enhance their bilateral ties with China and align themselves with the expanding global power of Beijing. China has shown a growing level of assertiveness in the global sphere, prompting some nations to see the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a means to counterbalance the influence wielded by the United States and other Western powers (Currier, 2009).

China's Rising Economic Ties with the OIC States Under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

A total of 142 states have formally expressed their commitment to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative, with 48 of these nations being active members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Muslim countries actively contribute to the development of the Belt and Road

¹² Xinhua Silk Roud Database, Explain the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, March 22, 2021, https://en.imsilkroad.com/p/312466.html?gclid=Cj0KCQiAoY-PBhCNARIsABcz773-GVTzzqswgbIOi-ocRkZ1RIRCz5yhs8MSTi4IVCtvp-WSapHQdNYaAtVzEALw_wcB

¹³ The Free Press journal, China Foreign Minister Wang Yi makes surprise visit to meet Taliban in Afghanistan, March 24, 2022, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/world/china-foreign-minister-wang-yi-makes-surprise-visit-to-meet-taliban-in-afghanistan>

¹⁴ Full text of President Xi's speech at opening of Belt and Road forum2017-05-15 14:10, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201705/t20170527_678618.html

Initiative. Pakistan, Indonesia, and Iran are among the Muslim countries that own strategically significant locations in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).¹⁵

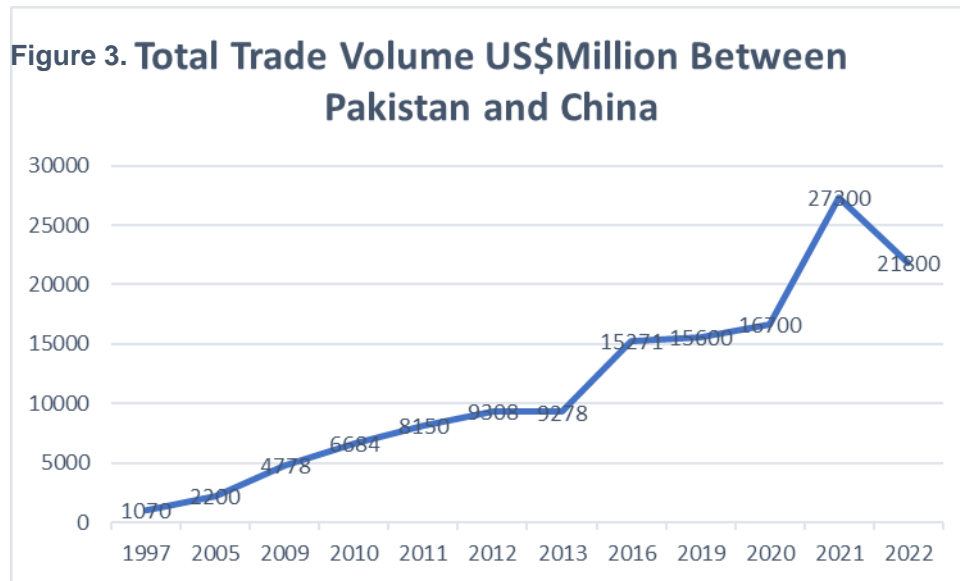


Table 4 shows the trade Cooperation of China with the Major Muslim countries of the Middle Eastern Region.

	OIC States	AIIB membership	Trade Volume with PRC (US\$ Billion 2019)	Major BRI Project
1	IRAN	YES	23.02	Oil Refinery and railway project
2	KSA	YES	72.3	Energy Sector, trade Cooperation
3	QATAR	YES	13.2	Financial and Commercial
4	BAHRAIN	YES	1.48b+170m	Trade and investment
5	KUWAIT	YES	1.86	Silk City
6	JORDON	YES	3.79b+ 453m	Sino-Jordanian University
7	UAE	YES	50.2	Financial and Commercial

¹⁵ Interview with a Senior official at China Pakistan Economic Corridor Center for Excellence, Islamabad, May 2022.

8	DJIBOUTI	YES	2.21b+19.2m	Free trade Zone
9	IRAQ	YES	30.57	Trade and Infrastructure
10	OMAN	YES	20.32	Industrial zone
11	Egypt	YES	12.5b+733m	Sino-Egypt Suez Economic & trade Zone

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC)

Table 5. Shows China's import of oil from different countries in the world. This table clearly shows that China imports oil from many OIC countries in the Middle East.

Table 5. Percentage of China's Oil Imports from Major Oil-Producing OIC States and Others									
KSA	Iraq	Oman	Iran	Kuwait	UAE	Brazil	Angola	Russia	Others
13%	9%	8%	7%	4%	3%	6%	14%	15%	21%

Sources: Wood Mackenzie

Table 6 shows the trade volume of China and Central Asian Muslim states after the commencement of CPEC.

Table 6. Sino-Central Asian trade volume from 2015 to 2019 in US\$ millions and Growth Rate							
OIC Countries CARs	Trade volume 2015 in US\$M	Trade volume 2016 US\$M	Trade volume 2017 US\$M	Trade volume 2018 US\$M	Trade volume 2019 US\$M	The growth rate of Import from PRC in 5 years	The growth rate of Export from PRC in 5 year
Kazakhstan	14290	13097	17934	19857	22066	52%	58%
Kyrgyzstan	4341	5676	5424	5601	6378	47%	13%
Tajikistan	1847	1751	1348	1501	1696	-10%	62%
Turkmenistan	8643	5901	6943	8436	9117	-47%	11%
Uzbekistan	3496	3614	4220	6266	7226	126%	72%

Source: UN Com trade Database (<http://comtrade.un.org/data/>)

Table 7. Shows the infrastructural work in African countries under BRI.

Table 7. Selected Infrastructure through BRI in the OIC Countries of Africa			
Nation of OIC State	Major Project	Explanation	Investment
Chad	China Sudan Railway	1344 km railway is made in 3phases which connect Cameroon and other two countries.	\$5.6 billion
Mozambique	Mphanda Nkuwa Dam and Hydroelectric station project	Offer 1500 MW of power to national electric city grid and construction of Moamba Dam	\$3.1 Billion
Nigeria	Coastal Railways	1402 km railway to connect Lagos with Calabar through 10 states connecting	\$12 billion
Sudan	Port Sudan Khartoum Railway	Project completed in 2012, it connects port Sudan to Khartoum in 762km of railways	\$1.38 billion

Source: Guardian and Mail 2015

Analyzing the Geopolitical Implications of the BRI for the OIC Member States

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has considerable geopolitical ramifications for the member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The primary objective of this program is to enhance connectivity and foster economic integration among China and other nations throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. Its implementation has the capacity to have a substantial influence on the geopolitical dynamics of the area (Cau, 2020).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significant geopolitical implications for member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), particularly in terms of the possible escalation of economic reliance on China. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) encompasses substantial Chinese investment and money, potentially rendering member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) more susceptible to Chinese influence and control. This phenomenon has the potential to induce a significant alteration in

the distribution of power within the area, possibly diminishing the influence of conventional Western powers (Rana, 2021).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may potentially have significant ramifications for the security and stability of the area. Certain member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have expressed apprehensions over the potential of the initiative to intensify regional disputes and instability. This issue is especially relevant in countries where the projects can be seen as provocative or have the potential to worsen pre-existing tensions. Moreover, the possibility of heightened economic rivalry and the exploitation of resources may result in escalated geopolitical conflicts among nations within the area (Faisal, 2018).

Potential Benefits and Risks Associated with the Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor

The Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor (SMWEC) denotes the increased economic collaboration between China and the member nations of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation subsequent to the year 2013. The China-Muslim World Economic Corridor, functioning within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), stands out as a prominent economic corridor within the Muslim world that engages in collaboration with China. The bulk of member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) are situated in developing regions, sometimes referred to as the third world. These countries exhibit economic systems that are not notably evolved. Several economies within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have little potential for achieving significant economic development despite their overall strength. The member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) exhibit some of the most challenging economic conditions globally, and are situated among the nations with the lowest levels of development¹⁶ (Selmier, 2018).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers a prominent advantage to members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the form of much-needed infrastructural development. This requirement is prevalent throughout a majority of OIC nations. Chinese investment is expected to have a transformative impact on several aspects of infrastructure, including road infrastructure, port infrastructure, and other related projects. Enhanced and expanded infrastructure throughout the Muslim world is expected to provide accelerated economic development. The rapid expansion of the economy after the initiation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been seen in several Muslim nations (Lindley, 2022).

The potential adverse impact on the economic development of OIC nations due to the prevalence of Chinese exports in their markets may be attributed to China's technical advancement. The OIC nations with less economic resources would rely heavily on China's exports, so jeopardizing their own manufacturing capabilities. Several nations that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) located in South Africa have challenges in manufacturing basic everyday commodities. If these nations rely on China for every little commodity, they will assume a parasitic relationship with China, and their industrial development will remain nothing more than an illusory aspiration (M., 2021).

China has developed a notable expertise in the construction of roads and other forms of infrastructure on a global scale. China is engaged in the construction of transport

¹⁶ W. Travis Selmier II (2018) The Belt and Road Initiative and the influence of Islamic economies, *Economic and Political Studies*, 6:3, 257277, DOI:10.1080/20954816.2018.1498989

infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and ports, throughout the member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese corporations use their workforce in many endeavors. If the OIC nations only rely on Chinese forums for the building of roads and bridges, they may become dependent on China for their construction needs, thereby limiting their ability to undertake independent contracting projects. The lack of education in building work among the population of China may hinder the development of excellent work habits. The training of local labor by China in the context of infrastructure development would have advantageous outcomes for the host nation (Pradhan, 2017).

Conclusion

The collaboration between China and the Muslim member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) effectively demonstrates the establishment of a Sino-Muslim World Economic Corridor via the Belt and Road Initiative. The China-Arab Nations Cooperation Forum facilitated a strengthened relationship between China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member nations in the Arab world. China engaged in a collaborative partnership with the African Union inside the African continent, while states affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) shown a favorable disposition towards China. Muslim regimes in South Asia and other regions have forged amicable relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Belt and Road Initiative was initiated by the People's Republic of China in 2013, under the guidance of President Xi Jinping. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) received widespread acclaim from Muslim countries, with almost all of them entering into memorandums of understanding with China as a crucial component of this substantial undertaking. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), being one of the most expansive megaprojects in human history, has the potential to foster comprehensive development throughout the Muslim world. China aims to enhance infrastructure and other vital areas in order to equip developing countries for forthcoming economic endeavors, as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Ali T. &., 2020).

The nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) serve as intrinsic collaborators in the Belt and Road Initiative, assuming a substantial position within this enormous endeavor. Inside the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), there are two member states that are part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Additionally, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) places significance on five OIC countries inside Central Asia. The Middle East region has 22 OIC nations, while the African Union consists of 18 member states that are affiliated with the OIC. Muslim-majority nations in Europe and South America maintain favorable diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. The countries in the Arab world that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) engage in substantial cooperation with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The People's Republic of China has the distinction of being the biggest importer of oil from Arab nations and Iran. Several South Asian countries are actively involved in several Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) megaprojects, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which entails a partnership between China and Pakistan.¹⁷ Central Asia was the hub of the Old Silk Road, and this region has five OIC countries with solid cooperation with China under BRI. The trade volume of these five OIC countries with the PRC after the

¹⁷ PRADHAN, RAMAKRUSHNA. "China's Rise In Central Asia: THE NEW SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 21, no. 3 (2017): 50–61. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48531352>.

Initiation of BRI has grown rapidly¹⁸. OIC countries from ASEAN, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, are active players in BRI and the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century. Malaysia is one of the original members of China's Belt and Road Initiative. These two nations are crucial for China in the ASEAN (Tagotra, 2016).

¹⁸ PRADHAN, RAMAKRUSHNA. "China's Rise In Central Asia: THE NEW SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 21, no. 3 (2017): 50–61. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48531352>.

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Contact emails: tajooformanite@yahoo.com
hasina_sultan@yahoo.com