

Understanding China

Young-Chan Kim *Editor*

# China's Engagement with the Islamic Nations

A Clash or Collaboration of  
Modern Civilisation?

 Springer



# Understanding China



The series will provide you with in-depth information on China's social, cultural and economic aspects. It covers a broad variety of topics, from economics and history to law, philosophy, cultural geography and regional politics, and offers a wealth of materials for researchers, doctoral students, and experienced practitioners.



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Editor

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# China, the Arab World, and Silk Road Diplomacy: Towards a New World Order



Ramakrushna Pradhan

**Abstract** The relationship between China and the Arab world is age-old. China and the Arabian nations have been linked with each other by both land and the maritime Silk Road since the last 2000 years. The long history of friendship, cooperation, peace, and openness has enabled the People's Republic of China to establish cordial friendships and diplomatic ties with at least 22 Arab states. Nearly 75 years of diplomatic and political relations have further deepened China-Arab relations in other areas of cooperation also. Beijing has set up a strategic dialogue mechanism with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through its comprehensive strategic partnership with eight of the central Arab countries. Today, China is the biggest importer of crude oil from the Arab region and is the 7th biggest overall trading partner. China's recent Belt and Road Initiative also known as the One Belt, One Road (OBOR), was presented as one of the most ambitious economic and foreign policy efforts of President Xi Jinping. It promised a vast network of infrastructure building, economic development, and constructions of connectivity facilities throughout China's neighbourhood running from Beijing to Asia, Europe, and Africa, with the Arab world at the centre. In the process of pursuing the Silk Road in the Arab world, China has proposed an initiative of establishing a "1 + 2 + 3" cooperation pattern with the Arab countries by taking energy cooperation as the core, infrastructure construction, and trade and investment facilitation as the two wings, and three high and new technology fields of nuclear energy, space satellite capabilities and new forms of energy generation as the three breakthroughs, and industrial capacity cooperation serving as the foundation. Undoubtedly, the transcontinental and transoceanic Silk Road networks of China are steadily reshaping the world's political and economic landscape by promoting each other's advantages and potentials, trade and investment to achieve common progress and development. In lieu of this, the larger question which this chapter would like to focus on is how the Arab world is seeing this Silk Road Project of China which many claim to be Beijing's plan to redesign the underlying geopolitical structure. Whether China is likely to respond to the people's needs and their cultural aspirations will also be called into question, with the chapter concluding

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with an examination of whether this will merely be an extension of the existing drive towards globalisation.

**Keywords** China • The Arab world • Silk road • New world order

## Introduction

The One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative of China is one of the most ambitious foreign and economic policies in recent times which parallels that of the Marshal Plan of the post-world war world order. This project is close to President Xi Jinping's heart and aims to strengthen Beijing's economic leadership through a vast programme of infrastructure building throughout China's neighbouring regions and beyond. This project has been touted as the transcontinental multi-mode connectivity network that aims to foster economic cooperation and has also been well supported by several analysts as the New Silk Road Economic diplomacy of China to carry out trade and transportation across the globe.

Also known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), OBOR is an umbrella project initiated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. Etymologically, the term "BRI" has been derived from the Chinese *Yi dai Yi lu* which means One Belt, One Road (Magiri 2017; Escobar 2017). It is a commitment to easing bottlenecks to Eurasian trade by improving and building networks of connectivity across Central, Western, and Southern Asia, but also to reach out to the Middle East as well as East and North Africa. Through collective and collaborative efforts, it aims to build a network of road and high-speed rail connectivity, pipelines, ports, fibre optic cables, and state-of-the-art telecom, which link China to the rest of the world. The building of a Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is collectively referred to be known as the Belt and Road Initiative (Frankopan 2015; Amighini 2017). The major objective behind this project was to create trade routes between China and other countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific. China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) is arguably one of the largest development plan projects in modern history. China is using One Belt, One Road to assert its regional leadership through a vast programme of economic integration. Apart from leading to a network of infrastructure projects One Belt and One Road project will promote cooperation in trade, and investment and include cultural as well as people-to-people contacts. More than 60 countries participate in the One Belt, One Road initiative (The Economic Times 2017; Pantucci 2017). The One Belt, One Road project, in reality, is likely to be a flexible alignment and may be adjusted, and expanded as required based on agreements and understandings with partner countries. The One Belt, One Road project has two components, the first one is Belt and the second one is Road:

# **STATE POLITICS IN ODISHA**

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