

The Impact of the Concept “a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity” on Middle Eastern Geopolitics

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Abstract. The Middle East region, located at the junction of the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, enjoys a unique strategic position and economic importance. Recently, with the deepening of the Ukrainian crisis and the intensification of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the geopolitical landscape of the region is undergoing significant changes, especially in the context of intense competition among major powers. The concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind advocated by China is the core of its global governance vision, aimed at promoting harmony and common development among nations. Under this framework, the "the Belt and Road" initiative, as a link between China and countries in the Middle East, is committed to win-win cooperation and has won widespread recognition among countries in the Middle East. China's efforts to facilitate reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia are a typical example of practicing the concept of a community of shared future in regional governance under the guidance of global development, security, and civilization initiatives, demonstrating the positive role of this concept in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. China relies on the cooperation framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, adheres to the direction of building a community with a shared future for mankind, actively promotes the agenda of mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, and helps the Middle East region move from turmoil to order, from conflict and confrontation to a development path of peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Middle East geopolitics, a community with a shared future of mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative, Isha reconciliation.

1. Introduction

The Middle East region, due to its significant geographical and strategic significance, abundant hydrocarbon energy, and complex religious and ethnic composition, has been a strategic location contested by foreign powers since ancient times. After the end of World War II, the United States relied on its superpower status, especially its dominant position in the US dollar and oil fields as leverage, to gain dominance in the region and strive to contain the expansion of Soviet influence. Its implementation path includes the following points: first, establish Israel as the core alliance, absorb Türkiye into NATO, and shape Saudi Arabia, Iran and other countries as strategic support points; Secondly, by establishing a multilateral security cooperation mechanism to construct a regional security network, and taking strong measures such as regime change and military conquest to deal with anti-American or pro Soviet countries; Furthermore, utilizing financial diplomacy strategies to consolidate bilateral contacts with countries in the region through large-scale aid; Finally, leveraging its dominant international media discourse power, it promotes American culture to enhance its soft power penetration.

With China's increasingly prominent role in governance in the Middle East, the geopolitical landscape of the region is showing a new trend. Under the promotion of the Belt and Road initiative, the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind” has profoundly affected the geopolitical stability and the transformation of social order in the Middle East from turbulence to harmony, prompting countries in the region to pay more attention to the trend of independence and strategic self-determination. The current literature mostly discusses the internal relationship between the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road initiative in isolation, or the logical relationship between the idea and Middle East governance, but rarely interweaves the three. At the same time, while emphasizing the impact of the Belt and Road on China itself, it often

ignores its deep impact on the geopolitical pattern of the Middle East. Therefore, this study aims to integrate existing research findings and fill this gap, providing a more comprehensive analytical perspective.

2. The Concept of “a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” and the Belt and Road Strategy

2.1. A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

In March 2013, President Xi Jinping first proposed the concept of a “community with a shared future for mankind”, which was included in three important resolutions of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in November 2022 [1]. This concept advocates that while pursuing their own interests, countries should also consider the reasonable needs of other countries, striving to drive global progress in the process of promoting their own economic growth. The theoretical foundation of the community with a shared future for mankind is not only deeply rooted in the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, but also integrates the core essence of Marxist materialism. It is a major theoretical innovation explored by the CPC in the course of national development, contains profound meaning of the times, and opens up new ideas for the coordinated progress of all countries in the world.

The implementation path can be summarized into four aspects: firstly, building a bilateral community of shared future between China and specific countries, such as the China Pakistan community of shared future; Secondly, it is necessary to form a community of shared future with organizations in the regions where China is located, such as the China Arab States and China Africa community of shared future; Moreover, it is a community of shared future in professional fields such as the ocean and cyberspace, jointly built by China and the international community; Finally, it is necessary to follow the principles of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, and practice the concept of a community with a shared future in regional governance affairs. Given that all countries on Earth share the same blue sky and live in the same global village, it is particularly important to promote the consensus of establishing a community with a shared future for mankind [2].

2.2. The Belt and Road Initiatives

The “Belt and Road” is the abbreviation of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”. The “Silk Road Economic Belt” refers to the land trade route through East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe opened by the ancient caravans traveling between the East and the West. The “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” is a sea trade channel through the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, which is further expanded by China in the 21st century on the basis of Zheng He’s voyages to the West in the Ming Dynasty [3]. It is a strategic concept proposed by China to establish a multi-party cooperation platform and promote mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

First of all, it should be clear that the “Belt and Road” is not an entity and mechanism, but a concept and initiative of cooperative development. It is an effective regional cooperation platform that relies on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and relevant countries and is built on existing or based on the needs of both parties. It inherits and uses the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, holds high the banner of peaceful development, and is a manifestation of China’s proactive development of economic cooperation partnerships with countries along the route. The strategic vision is to negotiate cooperation within an equal cultural identity framework, and jointly build a community of shared interests, destiny, and responsibility characterized by political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural inclusiveness. It also provides a practical platform for the implementation of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind.

The idea of China and countries along the Belt and Road to jointly build a “Belt and Road” cooperation platform is not empty talk but has already been put into practice. As a landmark project of jointly building the “Belt and Road”, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor was launched in 2013. In 2015, President Xi Jinping emphasized the leading role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in driving pragmatic cooperation between the two countries. This resulted in the establishment of a “1+4” cooperation framework centered on the construction of the corridor, with a focus on Gwadar Port, energy, infrastructure development, and industrial cooperation. Gwadar Port, seizing this historic opportunity, has embarked on a rapid development trajectory, gradually transforming from a once-remote fishing village into a significant regional logistics hub and industrial base [4].

3. The Position and Role of the Middle East in the “Belt and Road” Strategy

3.1. The Importance of Middle East Countries for the Development of the “Belt and Road”

The Middle East region is located at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa, occupying an important strategic position, geographical advantage, and economic status. The Middle East region itself is experiencing significant changes in its geopolitical environment, particularly in the context of the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis and the intensification of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The power struggle among major powers is becoming increasingly fierce, and the position of the Middle East in the competition among major powers is rising. Middle Eastern countries have increased their room for maneuver, and their sense of autonomy among major regional powers has strengthened, making them the target of multi-party efforts to seek support.

As a major manufacturing country, China has a huge demand for oil and other industrial raw materials, of which more than half of the industrial crude oil supply is imported. From a regional perspective, the Middle East is undoubtedly China’s main crude oil supply place, as well as the strategic fulcrum and cooperation area for the construction of the “Belt and Road”.

3.2. Attitudes and Actions of Middle East Countries towards the “Belt and Road” Initiative

Faced with the increasing strategic demand from the United States and Europe for the Middle East and their efforts to prevent other forces from interfering in the Middle East and attempting to build it into their own “backyard”, major Middle Eastern countries are seeking more strategic autonomy. The announcement of oil production cuts by OPEC in 2022, despite strong opposition from the United States, shows a more obvious trend of Middle Eastern countries seeking strategic autonomy. This visit is the largest and highest-level diplomatic action taken by China towards the Arab world since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. It has become a milestone of epoch-making significance in the development history of China Arab relations, demonstrating a strong signal that both sides have elevated their strategic partnership to a new height.

The “Belt and Road” strategy is widely recognized by the Middle East countries as a bridge for China and the Middle East to work together for common development. Gulf countries stand out and actively participate in the cooperation of the “Belt and Road” construction project, which has a positive demonstration effect on the entire Arab world and become the “engine” driving regional development.

In addition, driven by high-level visits and multi-party consultations and exchanges, China and Gulf countries have established a series of bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms. For example, in 2016, China and Saudi Arabia established a “high-level joint committee”, which consists of six sub committees: Political Diplomacy, the Belt and Road, Major Investment Cooperation Projects and Energy, Trade and Investment, Culture, Science and Technology, and Tourism [5]. They supported the development of the “Belt and Road” with practical actions.

4. The Impact of the Concept on the Development of the Middle East

4.1. The Spread of the Concept in the Middle East

Promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind is a concentrated embodiment of China's global governance concept. In the face of the Middle East, which is one of the regions with the most serious global security, development, and governance deficit, China advocates for building a community with a shared future for mankind. It uses the Belt and Road as a mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation platform and the Global Security Initiative as a strategic program. By endorsing the principles of "partnership without alliance" and "cooperation without confrontation", China actively promotes peace and dialogues, an approach widely welcomed by Middle Eastern countries.

4.2. The Internal Conflicts among Arab Countries in the Middle East

The Middle East region is dominated by Islamic countries. Among the conflicts between Arab countries in the Middle East, the confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the most representative. Although Iran and Saudi Arabia have a history of less than a century as modern countries, their ethnic and religious conflicts have lasted for nearly 1400 years. In the 3rd century AD, the Persians established the Sassanid dynasty, which was destroyed by the rising Arab Empire in the 7th century AD [6]. The two were respectively the predecessors of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Since the 1940s, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran had experienced ups and downs, with constant conflicts. The two have broken off and resumed diplomatic relations three times.

The contradictions and conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia have not only led to intense confrontations in other Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, but also affected Islamic countries and Muslim gathering places in Central Asia and Africa, with a wide impact. From this, it can be seen that the standoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia is one of the important reasons for political turmoil in the Middle East.

4.3. A New Round of Reconciliation in Isha Guided by the Concept

Guided by the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, on March 10, 2023, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran issued the "Beijing Statement" on the reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which helped to warm up the long-standing and strained Iran Saudi relationship. Since then, Iran and Saudi Arabia have frequently interacted to restore diplomatic relations as soon as possible, and their spillover and extension effects are injecting strong impetus into the easing of international relations in the Middle East region. Regional parties, especially Iran's relations with the Gulf countries and the Arab world as a whole, and Turkey's relations with Egypt have been easing at an accelerated pace, and Yemen's civil war affected by Saudi Arabia and Iran has also significantly cooled down [7].

The successful mediation of the reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia by China is the best proof of China's practice of the concept of a community with a shared future in regional governance under the guidance of the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative. It is also a vivid manifestation of how the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind can promote peace and stable development in the Middle East region.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the strategy of jointly building the "Belt and Road", this paper expounds the impact of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by China on the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, including the meaning of the Belt and Road and the community with a shared future for mankind, the current situation of conflicts and development in the Middle East, and its attitude towards the concept of jointly building the Belt and Road and the community with a shared future for mankind.

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by China provides important theoretical support for developing countries and regions to resolve differences, seek security through cooperation, and promote peace through development. The challenges of security governance in the Middle East provide an opportunity to put into practice the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind. From the demonstration, it can be concluded that China, taking the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” as the cooperation platform and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind as the guiding direction, actively promotes mutually beneficial and win-win actions and peaceful coexistence, which can help countries in the Middle East develop from chaos to governance and from confrontation to peaceful coexistence.

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