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Abstract

Trends of Development in the Arab-Chinese relations

This book is the outcome of a symposium and two discussion groups held by the Middle East Studies Center in Jordan during the past three years (2017 – 2019). The book deals with various aspects of Arab-Chinese relations by Chinese and Jordanian experts and politicians. The book presents two important studies: The first presented in the Arab-Chinese forum held periodically in Beijing and other Arab capitals. The book offers a number of visions and thoughts on Arab-Chinese relations and its development, the Road and Belt Initiative, Arab-Chinese relations in general and Jordanian-Chinese relations in particular. It also discusses the Chinese political role in the Middle East through the Syrian crisis with two discussion sessions in 2017 and 2018 with the participation of the Chinese special envoy to Syria.

The Preliminary Chapter summarizes the history of Arab-Chinese relations since the mid-1950s until the establishment of the Arab-Chinese Forum in 2016 and the interactions between Arab countries and China till now and offers updated information on Arab-Chinese in the political, economic and military fields.

Chapter one on “Arab-Chinese Relations: Towards a More Dynamic Relations” offers readers a point of view on motives to develop and construct, highlighting Arab interests and expecting China to support these and encouraging social and economic development, developing the Arab role in formulating the future of the Middle East, supporting the Arab-Palestinian situation through pressurizing Israel to respond to the rights and benefiting from Chinese military expertise. It also deals with Chinese interests that include economic cooperation, opening up Arab markets and applying mutual custom exemptions with China and China’s benefit from Arab oil and gas to counterweight the huge power of the G8 of industrial states. This chapter concludes by offering recommendations to develop Arab-Chinese relations such as widening cultural exchange increase and develop commercial economic exchange, grants and franchise, establishment of free trade zones between China and Arab countries and giving more freedoms to Muslims in China.

Chapter two titled “Arab-Chinese Relations” which is the result of a symposium held by MESC on 20/10/2018 and attended by academics, diplomats and experts from China and Jordan and includes three sections, the first titled “The Road and the Belt Initiative in Jordan-China Relations”. This section is a summary of a speech of Chinese Ambassador Mr. Li Chengwen at the Arab- Chinese cooperation forum. This chapter underlines the most important pillars of the Road and Belt Initiative including policy coordination, linking of roads, dealing and movement of currencies and securities and understanding mentalities and focusing on results with Arab countries and Jordan.

Section two is “Arab-Chinese Economic Relations Between Reality and Hope”. It points to the fact that establishing strategic and rooted relations with China is something very important, because of her economic and political weight in the international arena. The section deals with efforts to develop political and economic relations to the highest levels by focusing on commercial and investment relations in a most effective manner.

Section three, “Hopes and Aspiration in Arab-Chinese Relations” warns Chinese intellectuals and scholars from depending on western publications regarding the Middle East, stipulating orientalist and western researchers have distorted life in the region, especially in Arab countries; stressing Chinese scholars should study the situation in the Arab world by living in it and forging scientific cooperation between Chinese and Arab scientific institutions.

Under the title the “Chinese Role in the Syrian Crisis”, Chapter three summarizes two discussion sessions held by the Middle East Study Center in Amman in the presence of the Chinese Special Envoy to Syrian Mr. Xie Xiaoyan in 2017 and 2019. One of the experts in the center presented a research paper on the Syrian Crisis in China. The chapter has three sections with the first on “Developments of the Syrian Crisis: Chinese-Jordanian Perspectives (1)”. The most important part is the speech of the special Chinese envoy for the Syrian Crisis, pointing to the setbacks since 2011 and which has seen no solution the internal level because of regional and international reasons. He said the atmosphere in Syria is charged with positive and negative factors through the Geneva process and the Astana path. The negative factors include the limited consequences of efforts by the UN in Syria with the continued dangerous humanitarian situation and the absence of a solution to the refugee problem or delivering aide to them.

Section two, “Towards an Effective Chinese Role in the Syrian Crisis”, focuses on the fact that direct and indirect parties in the Syrian crisis failed to put an end to the armed conflict and bloodshed since 2011, despite the diplomatic efforts and various military and security interventions. The section points to the possibility that China could play a role in the Syrian crisis through its diplomacy or soft power, clarifying the success of the Chinese role requires that Russia and the United States shouldn’t impose a political solution that serves their political interests only. China should take an independent stand that springs from the reality of the solution and the potential to adopt a role that adds a quality role to that offered by the US, European or some regional countries, to enable China to benefit from a political solution in Syria either in the rebuilding of the country or by building positive relations with the Arab world.

Section three, “Developments in the Syrian Crisis: Jordan-China Perspectives (2)”, is a summary of another discussion session attended by the special Chinese envoy to the Syrian crisis on the Chinese vision to the situation in Syria and in finding a political solution attempts in 2019. However, turning these attempts into reality is still far away. It sees that the political solution is the only realistic exit from the Syrian crisis, in a framework of respecting the sovereignty and independence of Syria with the Syrian people having the right to decide their future and their leadership of the political process, with the UN being the main channel of mediation with employing other mechanisms that serve as a supporting role, like the Astana and Sushi path.