

The Impact of Islamic Hajj on PRC-Saudi Relations

Haccın Çin-Suud İlişkilerine Etkisi

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ABSTRACT Islamic Hajj is not only the religious obligation of Muslims all over the world, but also a significant factor that has impacted on bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and other countries where Muslims live. This paper chooses the bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Saudi Arabia as the research object, and takes the Hajj as the breakthrough point to study the influence of Hajj on PRC-Saudi Arabia relations. This paper holds the review that PRC-Saudi Arabia relations have undergone a process from alienation to reconciliation. Hajj had played a positive role in several important time nodes of PRC-Saudi Arabia relations, turning the relationship between the two countries from passive to active, and promoting the development of this relationship.

Keywords: Hajj; PRC-Saudi Arabia relations; Zhou Enlai; Deng Xiaoping; Xi Jinping;
comprehensive strategic partnership

ÖZ Hac ibadeti sadece dünyanın her yerindeki Müslümanlar için bir yükümlülük değil, aynı zamanda Suudi Arabistan ile Müslümanların yaşadığı diğer ülkeler arasındaki ikili ilişkileri de etkileyen önemli bir faktördür. Bu makale, Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti (ÇHC) ile Suudi Arabistan arasındaki ikili ilişkileri araştırma konusu olarak seçmekte ve Hac ibadetinin ÇHC-Suudi Arabistan ilişkileri üzerindeki etkilerini incelemek için bir atılım noktası olarak değerlendirmektedir. Bu makalede, ÇHC-Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerinin yabancılaşmadan uzlaşmaya doğru giden bir süreçten geçtiği görülmektedir. Hac, ÇHC-Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerinin birkaç önemli zaman noktasında olumlu bir rol oynamış, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkiyi pasiflikten aktif hale getirmiş ve bu ilişkinin gelişmesini desteklemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hac; ÇHC-Suudi Arabistan ilişkileri; Zhou Enlai; Deng Xiaoping; Xi Jinping;
kapsamlı stratejik ortaklık

From the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949 to the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia in 1990, although the development of Sino-Saudi relations experienced ups and downs, it eventually broke through many obstacles and established normal bilateral relations.

In the historical process from hostility to reconciliation, from strangeness to familiarity between PRC and Saudi Arabia, Hajj had played an important role in different special historical nodes. Generally speaking, the "ice-breaking" and normalization of PRC-Saudi Arabia relations have gone through three historical stages: the first stage begins with the attendance of Premier Zhou Enlai in the Bandung Conference in 1955,

which clearly conveyed the religious policy of PRC government and the voice of mainland China Islamic community through the international arena and started direct conversation with the high-level personages of the countries that had not established diplomatic relations with the PRC, including Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia. In other words, active and effective consultations on specific religious issues were conducted. Thanks to the frank exchanges between Premier Zhou Enlai and Prince Faisal and the active promotion of Egyptian political and religious circles, mainland China was able to send the first Hajj mission to Saudi Arabia to complete pilgrimage obligation and received great courtesy. Until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, China interrupted sending Hajj missions. In this stage, because of the context of the cold war, the alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and the close relationship between the Taipei authorities and Saudi Arabia, the contacts between PRC and Saudi Arabia mainly concentrated in the area of Hajj; the Hajj played a unique “lifeline” role in this stage of Sino-Saudi Arabia relations. The beginning of second stage starts from 1979, when Deng Xiaoping took advantage of his visit to the United States to conduct all-round exchanges with President Carter concerning bilateral relations and the global situation. The topics of dialogue between Deng Xiaoping and Carter included religious areas, especially Sino-Israeli relations and Sino-Saudi Arabia relations. Deng Xiaoping was full of expectations for the further development of Sino-Saudi Arabia relations and hinted that he hoped to resume sending Hajj missions. It was the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and the United States in 1979 and the outbreak of the Iranian Islamic Revolution that made it possible for PRC and Saudi Arabia to resume exchanges in the field of Hajj and gradually expand bilateral relations to economic, trade and military cooperation in the 1980s. The Hajj played a key role in this stage of Sino-Saudi Arabia relations, but it no longer played the only influential role. The starting point of the third stage is the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia in 1990. Especially since the mid-1990s, the scale of Hajj in China has been expanding day by day. Consensus has been gradually formed between China and Saudi Arabia on Hajj issues. Active cooperation has been launched in combating “illegal Hajj”, and the China Plan on Hajj management has been paid more and more attention by Saudi Arabia. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia, the bilateral relations has stepped into the “fast track”, and the Hajj, as a religious activity of great importance and special significance to Saudi Arabia, has played a special role as a “lubricant” in Sino-Saudi relations.

Generally speaking, although the proportion of Hajj in the specific areas of cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia has been greatly reduced, its special religious and political significance makes Hajj play a significant role in Sino-Saudi relations. The Hajj has played a positive role in the three historical nodes of “ice breaking”, “restoration” and establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia. Hajj has increasingly returned to the essence of religion in the bilateral relations after the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia, and even become an important area of cooperation to promote the comprehensive strategic partnership between PRC and Saudi Arabia and promote the docking of “Belt and Road” initiative as well as the “Vision 2030”.

ZHOU ENLAI, BANDUNG CONFERENCE IN 1955, AND THE PRELIMINARY CONTACTS BETWEEN PRC AND SAUDI ARABIA BASED ON HAJJ

After the WWII, the two camps of the United States and the Soviet Union gradually entered the cold war stage. The founding of PRC broke the division of sphere of influence between the United States

and the Soviet Union over East Asia. Mao Zedong put forward three diplomatic principles, namely “start all over again”, “entertain guests after cleaning up the rooms” and “one-sided”, as the diplomatic principles in the early days of the founding of the PRC. In 1950, PRC and the Soviet Union signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. PRC became one-sided to socialist countries in diplomacy and mainly established extensive diplomatic relations with them. In the early 1950s, no Arab country recognized the PRC and established diplomatic relations or trade with it.

In the early days of the founding of the PRC, Saudi Arabia adopted a hostile policy towards the “communist” China, especially under the background of Sino-Soviet alliance. Saudi Arabia believed that “this new Communist regime represented an atheistic and oppressive government that had occupied the Chinese mainland illegally, by force.”¹ Saudi Arabia, on the grounds that atheism and communist ideology were different from Islamic belief in Allah, regarded the PRC as the enemy of Islam, and refused to recognize the PRC. Consequently, the Saudi government since 1950 kept a persistent abstention in the United Nations (UN) votes regarding the question of PRC representation.² Therefore, the Hajj activities of mainland China Muslims were also shelved because of the hostility and isolation between PRC and Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Saudi Arabia’s “diplomatic” relations with the Taipei authorities had been developing steadily. It had set up “embassy” in Taiwan and sent diplomatic envoys. In May 1957, Saudi Arabia upgraded its “diplomatic” relations to ambassadorial level with the Taipei authorities, continuing to recognize the Taipei authorities as the legitimate government representing the whole China.

The PRC protects the rights of all ethnic groups in mainland China, encourages and helps Muslims to exercise their religious rights and fulfill their religious obligations. As early as 1952, well-known Muslims of all ethnic groups in China initiated to establish the Preparatory Committee of the China Islamic Association to promote the development of Islam affairs in China. Hajj is one of the five pillars of all Muslims and the religious obligation of Muslims who meet the religious requirements. In August 1952, the Preparatory Committee of the China Islamic Association organized a 16-member Hajj mission. They arrived in Pakistan via Hong Kong and India. Saudi Arabia believed that the purpose of the PRC Hajj mission was to use Hajj to promote communism, and that the political purpose went beyond the Hajj itself. Therefore, Saudi Arabia refused to issue Hajj visas to them. This had attracted the attention of Chinese leaders, who regarded the Hajj as a breakthrough to realize PRC’s contacts with Saudi Arabia, which could not only guarantee the completion of Hajj obligations for mainland China Muslims, but also improved PRC’s national image in the Arab world from the Hajj area. In May 1953, PRC formally established the China Islamic Association to deal with Muslim affairs in China and assist the government in implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief. Due to the lack of effective contact channels between PRC and Saudi Arabia, Hajj missions dispatched by mainland of China failed and returned several times until the Bandung Conference in 1955, which led to a turning point in PRC-Saudi Arabia relations with the Hajj as the core.

In 1955, Myanmar, Ceylon (nowadays Sri Lanka), India, Indonesia and Pakistan, planned to hold the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, which would be the first conference without the participation of colonial countries. PRC regarded the Asia-Africa Conference as an important platform

¹ Yitzhak Shichor, *East Wind over Arabia: Origins and Implications of the Sino-Saudi Missile Deal*, Regents of the University of California Press, Berkeley 1989, p.1.

² عبد الله الأشعل: الإطار القانوني والسياسي لمجلس التعاون الخليجي. الرياض. 1983. ص194.

for improving its relations with Asian and African countries, and had done a lot of preparatory work for it. Among them, the Hajj affair of mainland China Muslims was one of the problems that PRC needed to solve during the Asian-African Conference.

In a report prepared for the Bandung Conference in 1955 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC put forward the “List of Problems between China and Other Asian-African Countries”. Among the countries in the “Near East and Africa”, the problems to be solved by China for Egypt, Syria and other Arab countries were “establishment of diplomatic relations and trade between these countries”, and the objectives and tasks for Saudi Arabia were as follows: “Negotiations between China and Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage and carrying out religious activities between China and the Arab countries.”³ In addition, although the ideology of China and Saudi Arabia were different, PRC’s attitude towards Saudi Arabia was still moderate and respectful. A report entitled “Some Existing Issues in and Suggestions for the Asia-Africa Conference” by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a chapter of “Relations between China and the Other Participating Countries”, in which China ranked India, Burma, Indonesia and Afghanistan as the first category of “peaceful and neutral” countries. And Saudi Arabia was listed as the second category of countries “close to peaceful and neutral” countries together with Egypt, Sudan, Nepal, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, the Golden Coast, Cambodia, Laos, Ceylon and Pakistan; while Japan, South Vietnam, Libya, Liberia, Iran and Abyssinia were listed as the third category of countries “close to anti-peace and anti-neutrality” countries. Thailand, Philippines and Turkey were listed as the fourth category of “anti-peace and anti-neutrality” countries. “Under the general line of expanding the united front of peace, it seems that we should unite the countries of the first category, win over the second, influence the third and isolate the fourth in the conference”, the report wrote.⁴ Accordingly, in China’s eyes, Saudi Arabia was close to peaceful and neutral. China did not focus on ideological opposition as Saudi Arabia did. In addition, “outside the conference, we should select some key countries from each category as our work target and solve some specific issues. Besides Colombo Countries⁵, Egypt and Japan are the other key countries.”⁶ In the description of Egypt and other countries, it said, “Try to establish diplomatic or work (for example, set up commercial institutions in each other’s country) relations with Egypt and Syria”, and “solve the issue of pilgrimage with Saudi Arabia.”⁷ In the archives, PRC had repeatedly mentioned the need to solve the Hajj affairs of Muslims in China, which showed the urgency and importance of the Hajj to China. A good solution to the Hajj issue would promote the improvement of relations between PRC and Arab countries.

In addition to bringing Hajj affairs into the consultation process, the PRC delegation had also made preparations in press. It published relevant books and made adequate preparations for introducing Muslim life in mainland China to relevant countries. In the working paper “Plan (Draft) for

³ “Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, ‘List of Problems between China and Other Asian-African Countries’,” 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00073-01. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Yang Shanhou. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114718>.

³ “Report by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, ‘Some Existing Issues in and Suggestions for the Asia-Africa Conference’,” 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00004-06, 59- 62. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Yang Shanhou. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113179>.

⁴ “Report by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, ‘Some Existing Issues in and Suggestions for the Asia-Africa Conference’,” 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00004-06, 59- 62. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Yang Shanhou. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113179>.

⁵ Refers to the member states of the Colombo Plan.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Compilation, Translation and Publication in Cooperation for the Propaganda in the Asian-African Conference” dated January 17, 1955, it was mentioned that distributing *Muslims in China (Album of separate pictures in English, French and Indonesian)*⁸ to introduce life of Muslims in China to the attendance. During the conference, the PRC delegation presented Saudi Arabia with an Arabic version of the “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China”, *Chinese Muslims’ Lives*, *Chinese Muslims* and two copies of the Quran (Chinese edition).⁹ Thus, through the paper media, PRC let Islamic-Arab countries understand its religious policies and the life of Muslims in mainland China.

In addition to the consultation process and the dissemination of publications, China had carefully planned the participants of the PRC delegation. In order to deal with Hajj affairs and better communicate with the participating Islamic-Arab countries, on January 16, 1955, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed in a “Draft of the Tentative Working Plan for Participating in the Asian-African Conference” that “an Islamic leader” should be added to the participants in the organizational structure.¹⁰ On March 25, 1955, the PRC ambassador to Indonesia wrote to the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that, “After research, we believe it would be better to include one Muslim member in the delegation attending the Asian-African conference. This is because there are many Muslim countries attending this conference; in addition, Indonesia itself is a country with a lot of Muslim sects and parties. Please consider whether or not this is appropriate.”¹¹ On March 31, in the list of “Draft of the Formation of the Delegation for Participating in the Asian-African Conference”, it was written that “Representative of Islamism: 1 person with 1 staff member”.¹² On April 1, PRC confirmed that in the list of the members of the delegation to the Asia-Africa Conference, among the members of the Advisory Panel, Imam Da Pusheng was included.

The decision of PRC to include Muslim representatives to the conference was highly appreciated by the Soviet Union. On April 12, Soviet Ambassador to Indonesia Zhukov met with PRC ambassador to Indonesia Huang Zhen. The two sides talked about the relationship between PRC and Arab countries. On the issue of delegates, Zhukov wrote, “The delegation will include...as well as the Vice Chairman of the Muslim Congress (I cannot recall his name)—24 people in all.” “I noted that, in my opinion, the inclusion of a prominent Muslim official in the delegation is of great significance.”¹³ It can be seen from this that PRC’s attention to minority affairs and respect for participating countries have been affirmed by its friendly countries.

⁸ “Plan (Draft) for Compilation, Translation and Publication in Cooperation for the Propaganda in the Asian-African Conference,” 17 January 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00020-01. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Shanhou Yang, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114632>.

⁹ Hui Liu, *Biography of Liu Linrui: A Professor’s Real Life in Peking University*, World Knowledge Publishing House, Beijing 2008, p. 160.

¹⁰ “Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, ‘Draft of the Tentative Working Plan for Participating in the Asian-African Conference’,” 16 January 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00004-03, 22-25. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Shanhou Yang, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113189>.

¹¹ “Cable from Huang Zhen, ‘It Would Be Best if the Delegation Attending the Asian-African Conference has a Muslim Member’,” 23 March 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00064-13, 23. Translated by Jeffrey Wang, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113278>.

¹² “Draft of the Formation of the Delegation for Participating in the Asian-African Conference,” 31 March 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, PRC FMA 207-00004-11, 78-79. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Shanhou Yang, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121306>.

¹³ “Journal Entry of Ambassador Zhukov: Visit of Huang Zhen,” 12 April 1955, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*, Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF), fond 091, opis 11, portfel 4, papka 8, listy 121-123. Obtained for CWIHP by James Hershberg and translated for CWIHP by Daniel Rozas. Included in CWIHP e-Dossier No.26, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110278>.

On April 18, Premier Zhou Enlai led a delegation to attend the Bandung Conference. Deputy Director of the China Islamic Association, Imam Da Pusheng, served as Premier Zhou Enlai's religious affairs adviser. Liu Linrui, a journalist of *World Knowledge* and later a professor of Peking University, accompanied as an Arabic translator. During the Bandung Conference, Premier Zhou Enlai "attended the gatherings organized by the heads of the Saudi Arabian delegation and the Libyan delegation respectively, and made extensive contacts with representatives of various countries at the reception."¹⁴ In addition to the widespread concern of the Arab world over the Palestinian issue, the PRC delegation had worked hard to resolve the problem in mainland Chinese Muslims' Hajj activities. Premier Zhou Enlai hosted banquets for guests from all over the world and also took the opportunity to introduce Imam Da Pusheng. Imam Da Pusheng, when meeting with Saudi Arabian representative Ali Radar, offered to ask him about the Hajj issue of mainland Chinese Muslims, hoping to get a visa from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Ali Radar did not respond but asked some questions, such as "How many Muslims are there in China?" "Where do they live?" "How many people perform Hajj?" "Are they going by sea or by air?" Imam Da answered one by one. Then Ali Radar said, "Well, I'll convey your wishes to my government." Imam Da said, "Many Chinese Muslims have asked me to fulfill their Hajj aspirations, so please help us." Ali Radar said, "Pray for Allah to make your wishes come true."¹⁵ Meanwhile, during the conference, Premier Zhou Enlai conveyed to Prince Faisal, then Saudi Foreign Minister, the wishes of Chinese Muslims to go to Mecca for Hajj. According to the report of Imam Da after he returned home, "... non-conference activities during the Bandung Conference focused on contacts with some members of the delegations of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Archbishop Amin al-Husseini of Jerusalem."¹⁶

In addition, PRC also asked Egypt for help on the Hajj issue. According to the memoir of Liu Linrui's daughter (Liu Linrui was a professor of the Arabic Department of Peking University who participated in the Bandung Conference as an Arabic translator), "Through my father's translation, Imam Da Pusheng asked Mr. Ahmad Hasan al-Baquri¹⁷ whether he could help solve the problem. Mr. Baquri readily promised to help. Under his good mediation, Premier Zhou, President Nasser and (future) King Faisal of Saudi Arabia jointly discussed the Hajj issue of Chinese Muslims to Mecca. King Faisal welcomed it and immediately decided to invite the Chinese Muslim Hajj mission to Mecca in July of that year."¹⁸

Imam Da Pusheng's answers to the development of Islam in China and the living conditions of Muslims in China, as well as the conveyance of Premier Zhou's opinions, changed Saudi Arabia's attitude towards China: it was no longer as rigid as usual, and Saudi Arabia decided to issue Hajj visas to Chinese Muslims after the conference. After the Asia-Africa Conference, from July 19 to August 16, 1955, Imam Da Pusheng led a Chinese Hajj mission to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and then visited Egypt. The mission first arrived in Jeddah and sent a letter to the King and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia.

¹⁴ Hui Liu, *Biography of Liu Linrui: A Professor's Real Life in Peking University*, Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House, 2008, p.155.

¹⁵ Yunfu Ma, "On-the-spot Records of Chinese Muslim Hajj after the Founding of the PRC", *The Chinese Hui Nationality Studies*, Volume 3, 2008, p. 5.

¹⁶ Hui Liu, *Biography of Liu Linrui: A Professor's Real Life in Peking University*, Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House, 2008, p. 160.

¹⁷ Baquri, then the Minister of Awqaf of Egypt.

¹⁸ Hui Liu, *Biography of Liu Linrui: A Professor's Real Life in Peking University*, Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House, 2008, p. 160.

The cable to the king was as follows.

His Majesty King of Saudi Arabia:

Thanks to Allah for his assistance. The Chinese Hajj mission has arrived in Jeddah this morning. On behalf of all the members of the Hajj mission, I would like to pay high tribute to you, and then to pay a formal visit to His Majesty when we arrive in Mecca the next day.

Head of PRC Hajj Mission

Al-hajj Nur Mohammed Da Pusheng

The cable to the Prime Minister was as follows.

His Highness the Prime Minister:

Thanks to Allah for his blessing. The Chinese Hajj mission has arrived in Jeddah safely this morning. With the assistance in all aspects during the journey of your Government and His Highness, we were able to finish the task of Hajj visas. On behalf of all the members of the Hajj mission, I would like to pay high tribute to His Highness, and then to pay a formal visit to His Highness when we arrive in Mecca.

Head of PRC Hajj Mission

Al-hajj Nur Mohammed Da Pusheng

Calls to the minister of the Royal Palace and prime minister were quickly answered.

The response of the Minister of the Royal Palace was as follows:

Mr. Nur Mohammed Da Pusheng:

My King has ordered me to convey to you and your brothers, Hajis from China. His Majesty thanks you for your kindness to him and wishes you all a festive hajj.

Minister of the Royal Palace

The Prime Minister's reply was as follows:

Mr. Nur Mohammed Da Pusheng:

Thank you and your companions for your kind words when you arrived in Jeddah. Thank Allah for your safe arrival.

Faisal¹⁹

On the second day, the PRC Hajj mission was invited to Mecca to attend the king's dinner and was specially received by the king. Gong Qingzhi, a Muslim who participated in the first Hajj of the PRC and the editor-in-chief of the *Majallah al-Muslim al-Sini*, wrote in his travel notes to Mecca, "In accordance with the usual practice, the head and deputy head of our Hajj mission also congratulates the King of Saudi Arabia on the festival.....The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia met all the members of the Hajj mission at the palace.....The Prime Minister is King's younger brother, attended the Asian-

¹⁹ Yunfu Ma, "On-the-spot Records of Chinese Muslim Hajj after the Founding of the PRC", *The Chinese Hui Nationality Studies*, 2008, Volume 3, p. 6.

African Conference held in Bandung last year as the representative of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....He was very interested in the gift given to him by the Hajj mission and asked about the tea that was given to him..... That very evening, our whole Hajj mission were invited to a grand banquet held by the king in the palace. The next day, the king personally received the whole of the Hajj mission in the palace. In addition, the king and the prime minister presented gifts to the Hajj mission, including wool-bound Arab costumes with gilded edges and the *Kaaba* silk curtains embroidered with classical scripts. These noble gifts, in our view, is a kind of friendly gesture to tens of millions of Muslims in China and the whole Chinese people... On August 6, the third day after our arrival in Jeddah from Mecca, the whole Hajj mission was invited to attend the ceremony of reviewing the armed forces of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The ceremony was presided by the King and the Army, Navy and air force were reviewed..... The respect and hospitality we received during the Hajj shows that the ties and friendships established by the two countries during the Asia-Africa Conference are developing.²⁰

At the Bandung Conference, the PRC delegation exchanged views with Saudi Arabian representatives on the Hajj and won the right of Hajj for Chinese Muslims. It greatly improved the relationship between PRC and Arab countries, gained the identification and trust of some Arab countries, and changed Saudi Arabia's stereotypical impression on PRC. According to the report of Burhan, during the Hajj, "Abdullah Karikori, one of the highest religious leaders in Jordan, told us (the PRC Hajj mission) that 'the Hajj mission organized by Chiang Kai-shek had intended to slander you here, but they were severely refuted by us as soon as they opened their mouths. We answered them and said, 'We tend to the People's Republic of China. Because they have taken a friendly attitude towards us and firmly supported Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and the Arab countries' fight against imperialism.'²¹ In 1956, Burhan led a 37-Muslim Hajj mission to Mecca for the Hajj. As the head of the mission, Burhan was also invited to attend the *Kaaba* cleaning activities as the highest religious ceremonies, and was also received by the Saudi Arabian minister of Finance.

The Bandung Conference opened up the Hajj road for Muslims in the PRC and was an important breakthrough for the development of relations between PRC and Asian and African countries. In 1955, the PRC Hajj mission firstly arrived in Mecca and successfully performed the Hajj. It laid a solid foundation for the Hajj journey of the PRC Muslims in the next ten years, which was also the only contact channel between the PRC and Saudi Arabia at that time. It is noteworthy that although the PRC and Saudi Arabia have made initial contacts with the Hajj as a breakthrough point, this has not fundamentally changed Saudi Arabia's doubts about communism.

■ DENG XIAOPING, HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1979, AND THE RESTART THE PRC MUSLIM HAJJ

In the mid-1960s, especially during the Cultural Revolution, PRC's ethnic and religious affairs fell into a difficult situation. Saudi Arabia stopped issuing Hajj visas to PRC Muslims because of its anger at the retrogression of Muslim religious activities in mainland China and its fear of Communist ideology. The Hajj of PRC Muslims was interrupted. During this period, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Taipei authorities had developed more closely. In the fear of communism, Saudi Arabia has continuously

²⁰ Qingzhi Gong, "Journey to Mecca", *Traveler*, No. 5, 1956, pp. 50-53.

²¹ Burhan Shahidi, "Speech at the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China", in *Selected Works of Burhan al-Shahidi*, Beijing: Ethnic Publishing House, 1989, p. 3.

strengthened its ties with the Taipei authorities. From 1963 to 1964, Muhammad Surur Al-Saban, a Saudi Arabian, served as the Secretary General of the Rabita al-Alam al-Islami (Muslim World League, MWL), undertook a 12-day visit to Taiwan to investigate Taiwan's military and economic development. In 1964, a delegation composed of ministerial officials of the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture visited Taiwan and the two sides signed an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance. In the same year, Taiwan sent five-Muslim Hajj mission to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. The Hajj mission stayed in Saudi Arabia for one month and visited Prince Faisal. This Hajj journey "contributed to the Saudi-Taiwan relations especially as it coincided with the halt of hajj mission from Chinese main land."²² At the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 25, 1971, when voting on the issue of the "restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations", only Saudi Arabia voted against it in all Arab countries with voting rights. This proves the close relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Taipei authorities, and also shows the hostility and resistance of Saudi Arabia to the PRC.

Since the 1970s, China had been trying to ease relations with Saudi Arabia. By publicly declaring its appreciation and affirmation of Arab countries' use of "oil weapons" to safeguard their own interests in the media, and asking Arab countries that have established diplomatic relations with the PRC to act as "intermediaries", China attempted to establish diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia, which had not impressed Saudi Arabia. Even under the general trends of the relaxation of PRC-US relations in the 1970s, Saudi Arabia still expressed to the United States its proposal to keep distance with the mainland China. In his exchange with President Nixon, Prince Faisal once said, "Communism is communism, irrespective of the means it uses. It is unfortunate that such countries as Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, the Philippines, Greece and Italy, and others, which were once very closely allied with US' policy, are now establishing relations with mainland China... It seems that the Chinese are now concentrating their efforts now on South Arabia so as to make it a jumping board for increased activity in other parts of the area. We are trying, and we need your help, to stem this tide and eradicate this unwanted influence. We have helped the Yemen Arab Republic to combat Communist influence."²³ Thus, Saudi Arabia had not yet abandoned ideological prejudice and was blindly hostile to the "communist China".

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the international situation changed significantly. Facing the situation of the aggressive Soviet Union versus the passive United States, the evolution of the "Great Triangle" of PRC-Soviet Union-United States promoted the further advancement of the honeymoon period between PRC and the US. On January 1, 1979, PRC and the United States formally established diplomatic relations. In February, the Islamic Revolution broke out in Iran. In November, the occupation of the Makkah Grand Mosque broke out in Saudi Arabia. At the end of the year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. All the issues showed that international relations were undergoing differentiation and reorganization. The era of religion occupying a prominent position in modern international relations really arrived. Saudi Arabia began to re-examine its national interests and diplomatic relations, and PRC-Saudi Arabia relations entered a short period of relaxation.

At the same time, in the late 1970s, China's political situation was gradually improving, and religious policies were gradually implemented. At the end of 1978, the focus of the Communist Party of

²² *China Yearbook 1964-1965*, Taipei: China Publishing Company, 1965, pp. 249-250.

²³ US Office of Historian, "151. Memorandum of Conversation", *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume: 24, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970, 27 May 1971, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v24/d151>.

China (CPC) shifted to socialist modernization. In early 1979, Deng Xiaoping visited the United States, including offering the United States a desire to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia and allowing the United States to convey it to Saudi Arabia. According to the US National Archives, in a conversation on the afternoon of January 29, Carter asked Deng Xiaoping whether he would establish any form of communication with Israel. Deng Xiaoping explicitly refused and answered, "Because if we were to do so, we could not conduct any work at all."²⁴ Then Carter asked if it was in the same with Saudi Arabia. Deng Xiaoping answered, "No, Saudi Arabia is different. It is the Saudi Arabians who do not want to have contacts with us. But if you can do some promotion work there, we would be grateful. The Saudi Arabians say they do not want to establish diplomatic relations with an atheistic country."²⁵ This showed that in improving relations with Saudi Arabia, PRC's attitude was proactive, and Saudi Arabia had maintained its hostile policy towards the PRC because of its ideology. President Carter said, "Deng seemed quite interested in better relations with Saudi Arabia, and again emphasized the religious aspect of the problem. There were perhaps as many as seven million Moslems in China, he said, and his government did not interfere in their worship. When I asked if these believers were allowed to travel to Mecca, he said no, but also said that if such travel was significant, this policy could be changed. We later sent this information on to the Saudi leaders."²⁶

On October 17, 1979, *People's Daily* published a signed article entitled "Fully Implementing the Policy of Freedom of Religious Belief", pointing out that the policy of freedom of religious belief is the basic and long-term policy of the CPC and the state in dealing with religious issues. With the improvement of religious situation in PRC, resuming sending mainland Chinese Muslims to Saudi Arabia for Hajj was on the agenda, as well as establishing diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. PRC sought help from third countries and asks them to convey its attitudes towards Saudi Arabia. The three countries that played a major role in this were the United States, Kuwait and Yemen Arab Republic. Kuwait had played an important role in seeking the help of Arab countries that had established diplomatic relations with it. In an interview with *Al-Seyassah* in May 1979, Ding Hao, PRC ambassador to Kuwait, made it clear that "despite differences, related to the nature of the political systems and social structures, between Beijing and Riyadh, China desires to establish formal diplomatic relationship with the KSA."²⁷ This was the first time that PRC had declared in public that it wanted to establish formal diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. PRC wanted to communicate with the Gulf Arab countries by persuading Saudi Arabia and making use of Saudi Arabia's influence in the Gulf region. However, Kuwait did not succeed in persuading Saudi Arabia. Besides, North Yemen conveyed to Saudi Arabia the real living conditions of Chinese Muslims. From July 15 to August 3, 1978, Mufti Sayyid Ahmad Zabara of the Yemen Arab Republic with his wife and his son were invited to visit China. During his visit to PRC, Zabara and his delegation, accompanied by Liu Kefan, Deputy Secretary-General of China Islamic Association, visited Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guilin, Guangzhou and Beijing, and met with Ulanhu, Vice-Chairman of Standing Committee of the National

²⁴ US Office of Historian, "204. Memorandum of Conversation", *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980*, Volume: 13, China, 29 January 1979, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d204>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, Bantam Books, New York 1982, p.207.

²⁷ *Al-Seyassah*, 2 May 1979. Quoted from Abdulwahab Abdulrahman Aborhman, *From ideological antagonism to 'strategic partnership' Saudi-Chinese relationships (1949-2006)*, Durham University Thesis, 2010, p.117.

People's Congress.²⁸ Zabara was delighted to see the reopening of Chinese mosques and the arrival of Chinese Muslims at the mosque on Friday, and helped convey the wishes of Chinese Muslims to resume Hajj.

In the 1970s, the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia entered a period of relaxation. After the mediation by the United States, Kuwait, North Yemen and other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia finally agreed to issue Hajj visas to the mainland China Muslims after Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States. According to the records of the China Islamic Association, "In 1979, a Hajj mission of 16 Chinese Muslims, headed by member of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC, Imam An Shiwei of the Beijing Dongsi Mosque, with two deputies: Zhang Jie, a representative of the National People's Congress and the Vice-Chairman of the China Islamic Association, and Maimaitiming Tuoheti, head of the United Front Work Department of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, went to Saudi Arabia for Hajj. This was the first resumption of Hajj after 10 years of the cessation of religious activities (1965-1978) due to the Cultural Revolution."²⁹ According to the records of Imam An Shiwei, the Hajj mission was warmly received by the MWL. "Sheikh Muhammad bin Ali al-Harqan, Secretary General of the MWL, has met with us several times. The Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Mohammad Safowa Amin, came to visit us at our residence. Zhang Jie, deputy director of the China Islamic Association, briefed them on the China Islamic Association and the life and religious activities of Chinese Muslims. Mr. Safowa said to us: "The Rabita al-Alam al-Islami warmly welcomes Chinese Muslim brothers to perform Hajj at the Holy places. We greatly cherish our friendship with Chinese Muslims and are willing to strengthen our ties with them." He also said: "We believe that the China Islamic Association is a member of the world Islamic organization. We are glad to know that in recent years, religious lives within China has been resumed and the situation of Muslims has improved. We hope that the China Islamic Association will better serve Chinese Muslims and make due contributions to strengthen the friendly relations between Chinese Muslims and Muslims of other countries."³⁰

In 1979, Chinese Muslim Hajj activities had back on track, which laid the foundation for the continuous expansion of the scale of mainland China Muslim Hajj activities, the orderly organization of the Hajj and laid the foundation for close contacts between PRC and relevant international organizations in the Islamic Arab world in the 1980s. In 1980, the PRC Hajj mission visited King Khalid and congratulated His Majesty on behalf of Chinese Muslims. They also visited the MWL many times and exchanged views with Taiwan Muslim compatriots.³¹ In 1981, a group of seven members of the MWL was invited by the China Islamic Association and visited PRC. Among them, Ahmed Salah Jamjoom, Saudi Arabian, head of the delegation and chairman of the Quran Publishing Committee of MWL, wrote, "the purpose of this historic visit was to obtain first-hand information about the conditions of lives of Muslim community in China, and to offer, within the broader framework of Islamic cooperation, all possible moral and material help for our brothers in that remote region."³² After field visits to Beijing, Xinjiang, and Hangzhou, they saw that Chinese mosques were normally open, Muslims worshipped every Friday, and that PRC's religious policy was implemented. PRC proposed to

²⁸ China Islamic Association, "The Great Events of 1978", <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/about/xhgk/dashiji/201208/17-2907.html>.

²⁹ China Islamic Association, "The Great Events of 1979", <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/about/xhgk/dashiji/201208/17-2908.html>.

³⁰ Haji Salah An Shiwei, "Return of Hajj", *China Today* (Chinese Version), 30 April 1980.

³¹ Summarized based on Li Huaying, "Mecca Chronicle", *Journal of Arab World*, No. 5, 1981, pp. 108-110.

³² Ahmad Salah Jamjoom, "Notes of a visit to mainland China", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Volume: 6, No.1, 1985, p.208.

the Rabita al-Alam al-Islam that “the Muslim World League should approach various universities both inside and outside the kingdom to make necessary arrangements for the admission of Chinese Muslim students into these universities.”³³ At the same time, Ahmed Salah Jamjoom concluded, “We would also like the Muslim World League to implement the opinions of the members of the League’s Foundation Council regarding the nomination of one of the Chinese Islamic associations as a permanent member of the League...We also proposed that the Muslim World League should take up with the Islamic Association the issue of provision of facilities to Chinese Muslims for the performance of Hajj. The Association should in consultation with the Chinese government facilitate the Hajj journey. These pilgrims should be issued Hajj visas by the Saudi Arabian consulate in Karachi...We also proposed that invitations to perform the Hajj on the sponsorship of the Muslim World League should every year regularly be extended to selected leaders of the Chinese Muslim Community.”³⁴ Thus, the Hajj affairs of Chinese Muslims, as a link between PRC and the Islamic world, once again promoted the unofficial contacts between PRC and Saudi Arabia.

In 1983, Xi Zhongxun, then Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress, said in a speech at the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the China Islamic Association that he hoped that the China Islamic Association would “further develop friendly international exchanges... The Islamic circles of our country should strengthen mutual visits and friendly exchanges with Islamic circles of various countries and carry out religious academic and cultural exchanges. It is of great significance to our friendly cooperation with the third world countries, to enhance mutual understanding and friendship, and to oppose hegemonism and to safeguard world peace.”³⁵ The support of the government promoted the exchanges between Chinese Muslims and the Islamic world in the 1980s. Since then, PRC and Saudi Arabia have gradually established cooperative ties in economic, trade and military fields.

ACTIVE COOPERATION IN HAJJ MANAGEMENT BETWEEN PRC AND SAUDI ARABIA SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN 1990, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE 21st CENTURY

After the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia on July 21, 1990, the development of bilateral relations has been on a normal track. The areas of cooperation have expanded from economic and trade to political fields, and from informal contacts to formal exchanges between countries. From the end of October to the beginning of November 1999, President Jiang Zemin paid a state visit to Saudi Arabia, which was the first visit by the PRC head of state to Saudi Arabia since the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia. In January 2006, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia paid a state visit to PRC, which was the first time that the King of Saudi Arabia visited PRC since the establishment of diplomatic relations. In April 2006, President Hu Jintao paid a state visit to Saudi Arabia. In June 2008, then Vice President Xi Jinping paid an official visit to Saudi Arabia. In February 2009, President Hu Jintao paid another state visit to Saudi Arabia. In January 2016, President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia. In March 2017, King Salman of Saudi Arabia visited PRC. As an important area of PRC-Saudi Arabia relations, although the proportion of Hajj in Sino-Saudi Arabia

³³ Ibid, p.218.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Zhongxun Xi, “Speech by Comrade Xi Zhongxun, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, at the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the China Islamic Association”, *China Muslim*, No. 3, 1983, pp. 6-8.

relations has declined dramatically, its importance has not been weakened at all. In January 2006, the trampling accident of Hajj in Mecca caused heavy casualties, including Chinese citizens. President Hu Jintao “instructed our relevant departments and PRC embassy and consulates in Saudi Arabia to take measures to rescue our wounded citizens and properly handle the aftermath.”³⁶ In January 2016, Xi Jinping paid his first trip to the Middle East after becoming the President of PRC, and Saudi Arabia was one of the stops. President Xi published a signed article on *Al Riyadh*, entitled “Being a Good Partner for Common Development”, in which he mentioned that “Zheng He, China’s Muslim navigator in the Ming Dynasty, travelled to Jeddah, Mecca and Medina, and he described them as paradises where people enjoyed peace and harmony. The interactions and mutual learning between the Chinese and Islamic civilizations are an important part in the history of inter-civilization exchanges,” “the light rail line constructed by a Chinese company in the sacred city of Mecca provides convenient travel services to Muslim pilgrims from around the world. Chinese companies have provided good telecommunication services for the pilgrimage for many years.”³⁷

With more than ten years of reform and opening-up policy and economic development in China, the level of foreign exchange reserves and the economic level of Muslim-populated areas have been greatly improved, the economic conditions for Chinese Muslims to perform the Hajj have been significantly improved. In addition, PRC Muslims no longer need to bypass Pakistan to obtain Hajj visas, but instead, they can apply directly at home, which has also brought about changes in the Hajj routes of PRC Muslims: no longer bypassing other countries, but directly from home to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. These factors have contributed to a significant increase in the willingness of PRC Muslims to perform the Hajj and an increase in the number of pilgrims. However, there is a huge gap between the relatively limited Hajj quota and the absolute number of Muslims who have the willingness to perform the Hajj. As a result, illegal Hajj which are dissociated from the legitimate organized Hajj have emerged. In fact, Hajj quotas are scarce resources all over the world. The difficulties in Hajj is a common problem faced by large Muslim population countries, including Saudi Arabia. There are endless problems of illegal Hajj outside the legal Hajj activities of various countries.

Hajj is the largest annual transnational population flowing and the largest annual gathering of Muslims in the world. It is very important to ensure its smooth and orderly launching of Hajj activities. Therefore, Saudi Arabia strives to safeguard the safety, stability and orderliness of Hajj activities, and intensifies its efforts to combat illegal Hajj according to law, so as to effectively safeguard the global Muslim’s interests. Saudi Arabia’s vigorous fight against illegal Hajj and China’s fight against “private Hajj” have become the consensus of PRC and Saudi Arabia in Hajj management, “private Hajj” is in fact the illegal Hajj defined by Saudi Arabia.

(1) Saudi definition of “illegal Hajj” and its counter measures

Saudi Arabia highly cherishes its status as “Islamic leader”. In “Vision 2030”, Saudi Arabia positioned itself as “the core of the Arab and Islamic world, representing the heart of Islam”. Saudi Arabia “representing the heart of Islam. And we are confident that god willing, we will build a brighter future, one based on the bedrock of Islamic principles”. Saudi Arabia clearly proposed that it should “increase the capacity and improve the quality of the services offered to Umrah visitors”. It puts forward

³⁶ “Hu Jintao’s telegram of condolences to King Abdullah on the trampling in Saudi Arabia”, *Xinhua News Agency*, 13 January 2006.

³⁷ “Xi Jinping publishes signed Article in Saudi media”, *Xinhua News Agency*, 18 January 2016.

the target of “increase our capacity to welcome Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million every year” by 2030, and providing perfect and diversified Hajj services. “Will establish more museums, prepare new tourist and historical sites and cultural venues, and improve the pilgrimage experience within the Kingdom.”³⁸

Saudi Arabia has strict regulations on Hajj applications, and Muslims applying for Hajj need to obtain Hajj Permits or Hajj Tasreeh. The Hajj Permits service provides regulations and registration for Hajj fleets in this system. It allows registered fleets to acquire Hajj permits electronically and allows regulators to verify the Hajj Permits issued; in addition, the service can issue Hajj Permits for government fleets.³⁹ Hajj without a permit is called حج بدون تصريح, that is, “unauthorized Hajj”, or “illegal Hajj”.

Because of the important religious significance of Hajj to Muslims, many Muslims attempt to go to Mecca again for a second Hajj or even many times after their first Hajj, to perform الحج النوافل; namely, the Hajj to Mecca after completing their first Hajj. Saudi Arabia has a strict visa system with complicated and time-consuming procedures. Its visa categories are divided mainly into Hajj visa, visiting visa and working visa.⁴⁰ For various reasons, some Muslims who do not have the opportunity to obtain Hajj visas have chosen to take risks to apply for other types of visas. After entering Saudi Arabia, they make every effort to go to Mecca. Some Muslims in Saudi Arabia who do not have Hajj permits will join the illegal Hajj groups to perform illegal Hajj activities.

In order to restrict the unorganized and disordered Hajj activities every year, also to give qualified Muslims who have never performed Hajj the opportunity to finish it, and to avoid the chaos and blind obedience caused by a large number of repetitive pilgrims in the Hajj process, Saudi Arabia has intensified its efforts to combat illegal Hajj. Its main measures are: to enact laws to restrict only one Hajj per Haji within five years; For illegal Hajj, the Ministry of the Interior of Saudi Arabia has imposed penalties in the form of imprisonment and fines: 15 days for transporters of illegal Hajj activity and a fine of 10,000 riyals for transporting one Haji; 2 months for transporters of two illegal Hajj activities, a fine of 25,000 riyals for transporting one Haji; and 6 months for transporters of more than two illegal Hajj activities, a fine of 50,000 riyals for transporting a Haji; the more the number of illegal pilgrims, the more the fine.⁴¹ The Saudi General Directorate of Passports issued a decision to prohibit the transport of pilgrims by Saudi nationals and foreigners without permits through the seasonal Management Committee at the entrance to Mecca City. Penalties for violators include imprisonment and fines, expulsion of foreigners who violate the law and confiscation of vehicles used in illegal activities.⁴² Each visitor who violates the Hajj regulation will be repatriated and prohibited from entering Saudi Arabia for a specified period of time.⁴³

³⁸ “Saudi Arabia Vision 2030”, 26 April 2016, <http://china.aramco.com/zh/home/news-and-media/publications/full-text-of-saudi-arabias-vision-2030.html>.

³⁹ “Hajj Permit Service”, <https://www.moi.gov.sa/wps/vanityurl/ar/hajj>.

⁴⁰ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Notes for Chinese Citizens to Saudi Arabia, 21 March 2015, <http://www.chinaembassy.org.sau/chn/stgk/t189333.htm>.

⁴¹ “No Hajj without Permission: Provisions for All Muslims”, Al Riyadh (Arabic version)

لا حج بدون تصريح .. النظام فوق الجميع. جريدة الرياض. 2015.9.19

http://www.alriyadh.com/1084026?fbclid=IwAR0b3AVQ7g07sewc_LfM4BU1ijDe2ycziYnM%20bJboqXEkTzP-c5u0Pxfuo

⁴² “Passport Directorate Issues (38) Administrative Decisions against Hajj Regulation Violators”, *Saudi Press Agency*, 21 August 2018, <https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1800641>.

⁴³ Summarized based on “No Hajj without Permission: Provisions for All Muslims”, Al Riyadh (Arabic version)

(2) Cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia in Hajj management

With the rapid growth of the global Muslim population and its increasingly widespread distribution in regions and countries, the demand for Hajj has increased dramatically. Faced with the huge number of potential pilgrims in the world, in order to balance the allocation of Hajj quotas and promote the rights and interests of Muslims in non-Islamic countries, and due to the relatively limited supply capacity of Hajj products, Saudi Arabia has to strictly control the total number of pilgrims, limit the repetition of Hajj, and combat illegal pilgrims all over the world, including Saudi Arabian citizens. Illegal Hajj has seriously damaged the international entry-exit institution, and poses a serious threat to the national security, social security and health security of Saudi Arabia and related countries. China and Saudi Arabia have a lot of consensus on combating illegal Hajj and maintaining the global Hajj order. Saudi Arabia has paid more and more attention to the stable, orderly and efficient Hajj management plan in China.

After the Bandung Conference, especially the PRC-Saudi Hajj exchanges history since 1979, as well as the high attention paid by many leaders of the PRC government to Hajj, have made Saudi Arabia fully aware that PRC actively safeguarded the Hajj interests of Chinese Muslims, so that it could understand the PRC Hajj management beyond the ideological divide, especially putting the PRC-Saudi cooperation in combating illegal Hajj activities under the context of global Hajj governance. Illegal Hajj activities by Muslims in any country inevitably violate the rights and interests of legitimate pilgrims.

One of the main business and tasks of the China Islamic Association is to organize Hajj activities, provide corresponding services, and set up special Hajj office taking charge of related work.⁴⁴ China Islamic Association has made great efforts with Saudi Arabia for the orderly and organized Hajj activities. In May 2006, China Islamic Association and the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah reached an agreement stipulating that PRC pilgrims should be included in the channels of unified organization. Saudi Arabia stopped issuing visas for scattered pilgrims from mainland China. China is also required to organize unified Umrah activities since that year. In August 2006, a large number of PRC Muslims forcibly applied to the Saudi Embassy in Pakistan for Umrah visas. Saudi Arabia refused to issue Umrah visas for them in accordance with the agreement between PRC and Saudi Arabia. PRC and Saudi Arabia cooperated fully in resolving the crisis. PRC urgently applied to Saudi Arabia for an increase of the Hajj quota, and pledged to include eligible returnees into the Hajj mission of that year. In response to the sit-ins and demonstrations of some Chinese Muslims in Pakistan, PRC and Saudi Arabia, after consultation, agreed to issue Umrah visas for these Muslims detained in Pakistan, but stressed that this was a special arrangement under special circumstances, and was the last time that Saudi Arabia issues Umrah visas for PRC Muslims in Pakistan. In addition, PRC and Saudi Arabia had jointly stressed and demanded that Chinese Muslims could only apply for Hajj or Umrah visas at the Saudi Embassy in China.⁴⁵

PRC has set up a good Hajj cooperation mechanism with the Saudi government and Islamic organizations, and its organized Hajj management model has won full recognition from Saudi Arabia. Unlike many other countries which organize Hajj activities through market-oriented Hajj travel agencies, under the guidance of the PRC State Bureau of Religious Affairs, the leadership of China Islamic

⁴⁴China Islamic Association, "Introduction to the China Islamic Association", <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/about/xhgw/about132.html>.

⁴⁵ "Speech by the State Administration for Religious Affairs on the issuance of visas by Saudi Arabia to pilgrims in stagnation", *Xinhua News Agency*, 3 October 2006.

Association runs through the top-level design of Hajj management system and the details of Hajj activities. There are more than 300 staff members to arrange everything for pilgrims from PRC Hajj mission, including visa application and flight booking, and some of them travel to Saudi Arabia in advance to arrange hotel, catering and bus services.⁴⁶ In addition, China Islamic Association has strengthened its institutional interaction with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, conducted frequent exchanges on issues about Chinese Muslims' Hajj and visited the Hajj service sector during its visit to Saudi Arabia. In December 2018, a five-member delegation from China Islamic Association visited Saudi Arabia for 10 days. The China Islamic Association deputy director Adilijiang Ajikelimu held formal talks with Dr. Abdulfattah Sulaiman Mashat, deputy minister of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, "We reiterated to Saudi Arabia our organized and planned Hajj policy, and thanked the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah for providing convenience and service for our pilgrims"; Dr. Mashat "highly appraised China's Hajj organizing and service in recent years, believed that Chinese Hajj working team's ability in the Hajj organizing and service has steadily improved, and the level of organizing, management and services has become a model for other countries. The cooperation with Saudi guidance and service organizations has been continuously consolidated and developed, and entered a new stage. It has won the appreciation of the Saudi government and other countries' Hajj organizations. China and Saudi Arabia have become strategic partners. It is hoped that the two countries further deepen cooperation in Hajj affairs, further enhance mutual understanding and friendship, and promote cooperation in Hajj between the two countries."⁴⁷

The PRC Hajj mission attached great importance to the safety of Chinese pilgrims. The general Hajj mission further strengthened their contacts with the Mecca police to strengthen the security of PRC Hajj mission. For example, in the Hajj management in 2018, on July 19, Li Ge, deputy head of the PRC general Hajj mission, met with Saad al-Zahrani, acting chief of the Mecca Police Bureau. Saad stressed that "this year, as always, we will provide security assurance for Chinese pilgrims and continue to maintain police patrols in the area where they are stationed."⁴⁸ After the Hajj begins, on August 8, Ma Zhongping, head of the PRC general Hajj mission, Li Ge, Chen Yulong, the deputy head of the PRC general Hajj mission, and other main leaders went to the Mecca Police Bureau again to inform them with the security problems Chinese pilgrims encountered and faced, and asked the Mecca police to pay more attention to them. Chief of Mecca Police -Fahd bin Mutlaq Al-Osaimi stressed that "China's Hajj organizing and management measures are in place, and their pilgrims abide by Saudi regulations. This is the best Hajj team. We should further strengthen exchanges with the PRC general Hajj mission, establish a close contact mechanism to help solve the problems encountered by Chinese pilgrims timely."⁴⁹ PRC not only pays great attention to the security of members of the PRC Hajj Mission dispatched through legal channels, but also to the safety of Chinese "scattered pilgrims" in Saudi Arabia. For example, the 2015 Hajj caused a trampling accident, Hong Lei, spokesman of the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out: "More than 14500 pilgrims of the PRC Hajj Mission have been in touch, and no casualties have been found. These pilgrims have performed the Hajj and will return home in the

⁴⁶ Qian Liu, "Chinese Government Goes to Great Lengths to Help Muslims Go on the Hajj", *Global Times*, 14 August 2017.

⁴⁷ The Hajj Office of the China Islamic Association, "A Delegation to Saudi Arabia for Hajj Affairs in 2019", 27 December 2018, <http://m.chinaislam.net.cn/cms/news/xhxxw/201812/122G13532018.html>.

⁴⁸ PRC Hajj Mission, "Consultation between the mission and Mecca Police to Strengthen the Security of PRC Hajj Mission", 20 July 2018, <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/cms/zjsw/news/abroad/201807/20-12414.html>.

⁴⁹ PRC Hajj Mission, "PRC Hajj Mission Further Strengthening Contact with Mecca Police", 9 August 2018, <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/cms/zjsw/news/abroad/201808/09-12485.html>.

near future. Four casualties of Chinese scattered pilgrims have been reported, and the PRC embassy and consulates in Saudi Arabia are working hard to verify and assist with the aftermath.”⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The relationship between the PRC and Saudi Arabia, which started with Hajj, has gone through more than 60 years. Although there was a pause of mainland China Muslims' Hajj from 1965 to 1978, the Hajj exchanges between PRC and Saudi Arabia have continued up to now since the Hajj mission was re-dispatched in 1979. In 1955 and 1979, PRC sent Hajj missions to Saudi Arabia through the efforts of top national leaders. This reflects that the PRC government surpassed the ideological differences early and sought to develop relations with Asian and African countries of different ideologies, especially the early attention paid to the unique role of religion in post-war international relations. Although China is not an Islamic country, in terms of the absolute number of Muslim population, China is a large Muslim population country, which has become a strong objective basis for PRC to carry out Hajj exchanges with Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia remained highly alert to PRC in the 1950s-1970s because of its strong hostility to communism under the background of the cold war and its fear of so-called atheistic countries from a theological perspective, the Hajj demand of PRC's huge Muslim community finally enabled it to withstand the political pressure of the United States and Taipei authorities and allow mainland China Muslims to perform the Hajj from the perspective of religious interaction. The confrontation between the two blocks was gradually broken down after the transformation of international system since 1979. In particular, the establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and the United States facilitated the relaxation of PRC-Saudi Arabia relations. In addition, with the significant improvement of economic and social status of PRC Muslims after the reform and opening-up, the Hajj exchanges between PRC and Saudi Arabia have been continuous since then and have been well continued since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. PRC-Saudi Arabia relations have developed from pure religious relations to both religious and non-political relations. The establishment of diplomatic relations between PRC and Saudi Arabia in 1990 under the background of the end of the cold war is a new starting point for the development of bilateral relations. Religious exchanges have become a special link in all-round exchanges between PRC and Saudi Arabia. In 2008, PRC and Saudi Arabia established strategic friendly relations. In January 2016, under the impetus of President Xi Jinping and King Salman, PRC and Saudi Arabia announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership. The Joint Statement states in the section of cooperation in the “section of security” that “we oppose linking terrorism to any religion or sect”; and in the “section of humanities”, the “both emphasize that different civilizations are the crystallization of human wisdom and should respect and tolerate each other to achieve the harmonious coexistence of different human civilizations. China appreciates Saudi Arabia's active promotion of dialogue and exchanges among civilizations and religions. Both sides are willing to work together to safeguard the diversity of civilizations in the spirit of tolerance and mutual learning. China appreciates Saudi Arabia's efforts to establish King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna.”⁵¹ The consensus on religion and humanities between PRC and Saudi Arabia is also an

⁵⁰ “Foreign Ministry's Answer to the Update on the Casualties of Chinese Citizens Caused by the Saudi Arabian Hajj trampling accident in Mecca and the Work done by China”, 28 September 2015, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-09/28/content_2939985.htm.

⁵¹ “Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the Establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (full text)”, *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 January 2016.

important part of their comprehensive strategic partnership, which will inevitably play an important role in promoting cooperation and understanding in Hajj management between PRC and Saudi Arabia in the future. Compared with many other magnificent areas of cooperation between PRC and Saudi Arabia, Hajj is not a “visible landscape”, but the sound development of Hajj relations between them will influence the overall situation of bilateral relations, which has been clearly verified at different stages of PRC-Saudi Arabia relations.

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