

# *Seminar Report*

## Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies  
Islamabad**



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# ***Seminar Report***

## ***“Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)”***



**Organized by**  
**Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad**  
**at**  
**Conference Hall, National Library, Islamabad**



***Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd)-Moderator***

Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd), started the proceeding as the moderator of the event and welcomed everyone for their participation at the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ Seminar. He highlighted the primary agenda of the seminar and invited Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua SI(M), (Retd), to commence the seminar with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Afterwards he requested Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam HI(M), (Retd)-Chairman CGSS, to shed light on the significance of the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’.



***Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam HI(M), (Retd)-Chairman CGSS***

Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam HI(M), (Retd) started his speech by extending gratitude to the panelists of the seminar, guests and the participants. He acknowledged the presence of the Speakers and Experts and hoped that they will enlighten the audience about the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI) by shedding light on the economic benefits as well as challenges. General Zahir (Retd), also brought to the attention the Trans-Pacific Partnership reference with respect to the regional integration for which the previous President of the USA, Barack Obama, made concerted efforts but since then it has faltered for various reasons. General Zahir (Retd), further stated that China has taken over a leading role in connecting the region and the economic benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative will not only be shared by its immediate neighbors but the entire world. There are two key Silk Routes; one is Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) while the other is Maritime Silk Route. The question to be answered is that what future does BRI holds? And in this meeting we will deliberate on the visible and invisible advantages and possible risks to this project.



***Mr. Makhdoom Babar- Member Advisory Board CGSS***

Mr. Makhdoom Babar stated that on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015, the National Development and Reforms Committee (NDRC) deliberated on Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI comprises of six corridors, amongst which the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the most significant one, as it is the only corridor which has been designed for Pakistan while other corridors are planned amongst a cluster of countries. He appreciated the positive role of media and further stressed the need to introspect on the possibilities emanating from such a historic initiative. Mr. Makhdoom



further stated that the CPEC will be an instrument for people to people bonding between Pakistan and China and the financial collaboration will further strengthen. We cannot isolate BRI and CPEC as they are deeply interlinked with each other.

***Mr. Amer Hashmi-Advisor National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)***

Mr. Amer Hashmi started his speech by discussing the strategic outlook of the CPEC for Pakistan and highlighted the aspects on where we failed in the geostrategic, geo-economics and geo-culture. Pakistan has reserves of \$ 21 billion whereas US has reserves of \$1 trillion while China is catching up fast. He stated that the US establishment previously made negative remarks about China but in the past ten years a lot has changed. China spent \$1.5 trillion on infrastructure in the US in the last 10 years. Mr. Amer further stated that since Pakistan has very low foreign reserves and negative economic indicators and the fact that Pakistan has \$ 21 trillion of net public debt, how can a country like us can avail benefits from CPEC? Talking about the importance of the geographical location of Pakistan, he stated that one of the Russian scholars was of the view that Pakistan is the zipper of the South Asia.



***Mr. Zhao Lijiang-Deputy Head of Mission of People's Republic of China***

Mr. Zhao Lijiang started his speech with an introduction of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He stated that the name of BRI was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 and the idea was drawn from the ancient silk route which consists of both; the land routes and the sea routes. More than 100 countries and international organizations have welcomed the idea of BRI whereas around 65 countries are directly involved in the mega project. In other words 4.4 billion people of the world have become a part of BRI, which constitutes about 66% of the world's population. Furthermore, \$ 21 trillion of the trade is involved



in BRI which comprises of 29% of the world's trade output. Mr. Zhao told the audience that they must have heard about a train that originated from China and goes up to London in only 21 days of journey. This has become a reality. The train may not carry as much freight as ships but they are useful as they save time due to its speed and distance.

Mr. Zhao stated that CPEC has been regarded as the most successful of the six corridors of the One-Belt-One-Road project. Under CPEC 39 projects are proposed, out of which 18 projects are already under construction. CPEC has an advantage over other corridors for example Bangladesh,



China, India, and Myanmar (BCIM) corridor has multiple participating countries and in such projects a consensus cannot be reached easily.

Mr. Zhao stated that in June this year, one of the largest coal power plants of the country will be inaugurated in Sahiwal. The speedy development in CPEC compared to any other corridor is because of the cordial relationship between Pakistan and China and their mutual cooperation on plethora of issues. Joint Cooperation Corporation (JCC) has been built which takes its inputs from Chinese National Development Reform Commission (NDRC) and Pakistan's Ministry of Planning and Commission. He suggested that mutual visits of top leadership are beneficial in speeding up the projects. He further regarded the year 2015 as the year of initiatives, 2016, as the year of consolidation, and the year 2017 as the year of take-off.

***Ambassador Akram Zaki-Former Minister of States for Foreign Affairs***

***“Belt and Road”- A Creative Initiative for a New International Order***

President Xi Jinping, the dynamic Supreme Leader (or Core Leader) of China and the entire Chinese leadership are making determined efforts to fulfill the ‘Chinese Dream’ of the rejuvenation of the great Chinese Nation by reviving glorious achievements of five thousand years old Chinese Civilization. They are also making efforts for building a peaceful, stable and harmonious world by promoting a new type of relationship between the Big Powers, based on cooperation and mutual benefit rather than confrontation and conflict. Their aim is to build a community of shared destiny for all the humanity.



China, the second largest economy in the world, is poised soon to become the number ‘One’ economy, ahead of USA in terms of GDP. In fact, it is believed already to be the number One in terms of its Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Fast growing and self-confident China has taken a new positive and creative initiative of sharing the fruits of its development with the other countries

of Central Asia, South East Asia, West Asia, and Africa by promoting “One Belt and One Road” proposal.

This is an outstanding example of ‘Creative Diplomacy’. It is a vision for the creation of a New International Order, where the sovereign states can voluntarily cooperate for achieving the goals of shared development and peace. To give a touch of realism to the vision of shared development and common destiny, adequate financial resources have been provided. The creation of a Silk Road Fund, the establishment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, (AIIB) and China- ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund have given great financial strength to this initiative of improving connectivity and common development.

The importance of the “Belt and Road”- A Creative Initiative for a new International Order will become more explicit if we look at the developments in International Politics since the end of the Second World War.

In 1945, after W.W.II, the victorious states, along with a total of 51 states, signed a charter to establish a ‘New International Order’ and created the United Nations Organization (UNO) with Six Principal Organs to maintain peace resolve conflicts and promote economic and social development. The primary responsibility for maintaining peace and preventing conflicts rested with the Security Council, which required



cooperation and agreement of Five Major Allies i.e. USA, USSR, UK, FRANCE and CHINA.

Due to ideological and political differences between the USA and USSR, the International Order, based on the hope of consensus of the Big Five, was transformed into Bi-Polar World Order. Peace between two major power blocs was maintained by “Balance of Terror” based on Mutually Assured Destruction or the so called ‘MAD’. While another World War was prevented, endless struggle between two power blocs, for political influence and control of resources continued in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Both sides used clandestine means, including spying, subversion, sabotage, terrorism and violence, and warfare by organizing private armies of Non-State Actors.

The Bi-polar World Order was finally destroyed through the extensive use of subversion and by creating and supporting non-state actors like Al-Qaeda, during the decade of 1980s, in the battle field of our neighbor Afghanistan. This had serious consequences for Pakistan, from which we have still not recovered. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) disintegrated into 14 States. A much smaller and weaker Russian Federation, inherited the permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

The United States of America emerged victorious. It claimed that it was the Sole Super Power and proclaimed a New World Order with the intension of imposing PAX Americana on the World. It claimed the right

- (1) To keep permanent forces in Europe, Middle East and Far East.
- (2) To prevent any rival power from emerging anywhere through preemptive strike.
- (3) To change regimes which did not cooperate and opposed the US policies.

The United States and NATO extended their influence and area of operations to East Europe and Central Asia. They also managed and manipulated the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East. After 9/11, a global war, rather crusade was launched against “terrorism.” Afghanistan was attacked in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Both wars failed to achieve their aims.

In 2006, under a new policy for the Middle East, chaos, confusion and instability were created to destabilize the whole region from Lebanon to Syria, Iraq, Gulf, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This was called “creative instability” to redraw the maps of the whole region. Non-state actors like Al-Qaeda of Iraq, Al-Nusra, ISIL and Daesh were created and are still being supported and patronized. The Neocon doctrine of world domination by military might and Neo-Liberal ideas of



“humanitarian intervention to promote democracy and human rights” are the guiding policies of the United States.

The People’s Republic of China, which was established on October 1, 1949 is pursuing policies of peace and shared development, which are invoking much interest in less developed countries and their people. It is well known that in the first 25 years, under the Leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, China had consolidated its National Independence and Territorial Integrity and had provided basic necessities of food, health, shelter and employment to the Chinese.

Towards the end of 1978, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China embarked upon a program of modernization, reform and opening to the outside world. National development and raising the GDP were declared supreme national aims and China adopted a low profile foreign policy. By 1991, when the bi-polar world collapsed, China had become a fast developing country, with active economic and commercial relations with countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and even with Europe and USA.

Fast developing China, with extensive economic relations in various regions had considerable political influence because of its positive role in the UN Security Council. China did not accept the New World Order dominated by a single power or a group of countries, it opposed Hegemonism and Power Politics. China follows a policy of peace based on Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. It supported the principle of sovereign equality of states, big and small, as enshrined in the UN Charter. It advocated peaceful settlement of disputes. China supported a new International Order, which is just and equitable. China thus won the goodwill of many Third World Countries. Now, that the geo-economic and geo-political center of gravity has shifted from Euro-

Atlantic to Asia-Pacific, a confident China has launched the creative initiative of “One Belt One Road”.

The Silk Road Economic Belt, is the revival of the ancient Silk Road, started before 200 BC, during the Han Dynasty, which really flourished and reached maturity during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), expanding trade, exchange of goods, ideas and inventions and promoting contacts and understanding between nations of Asia, Africa and Europe, their cultures, religions; thus creating people to people interaction and friendship and contributing to peace and stability.

Similarly, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, is the revival of old private sector trade between China and nations along sea routes up to Africa. This maritime trade received official patronage under the Song Dynasty (960 to 1280) and really flourished under the Ming Dynasty (1271-1638). During the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century, under a Chinese Muslim Admiral Zheng He, a large Chinese Naval Fleet conducted seven exploratory voyages (1405-1433) in East Asian waters, Indian Ocean, Arab waters and along the African East Coast and developed trading posts and friendly relations with more than thirty countries. Later, European empire builders began to ride the waves and controlled maritime trade. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road will again link Asia, Africa and Europe for peaceful commerce and trade.

The Silk Road Economic Belt is a multi-dimensional program for building infrastructure projects like network of roads, fast track railways, pipelines, industrial parks, trade centers and custom posts to link China with Russia, Europe, West Asia and South East Asia and Africa. The Belt will pass through the vast land area of Eurasia, which the British Strategist, Halford Mackinder, called “The Pivot Area” or “the Heartland”. He wrote that he who controls the Heartland controls the ‘World Island’ and dominates the globe. American Strategic Thinker, Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had much influence on American Foreign Policy, also attached great importance to this region. After the breakup of USSR, Brzezinski advocated that USA should have strong presence in this vital and energy surplus region, and NATO began determined advance Eastwards.

The USA and NATO continue to retain some role in Afghanistan by maintaining their limited strategic military presence. West Asia or the Middle East, with its energy resources and strategic location, is in a real mess. It has multiple crises and each crisis has many dimensions. Every crisis has the potential to provoke a major global conflict. China, Russia and four Central Asian States

created Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to fight terrorism, extremism and separatism. Russia and several Republics of former USSR have signed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The regional countries, CSTO, SCO, China, and Pakistan (the CPEC partners) can contribute to peace and stability in the region for the safety of Silk Road Economic Belt.

In view of India's negative reaction to Maritime Silk Road Initiative, the safety of the sea lanes and security of sea ports, like Chittagong in Bangladesh, Hambantota and Colombo in Sri Lanka, and Gwadar in Pakistan, has assumed greater importance. The proposed construction of Kra Canal across the Kra Isthmus in Thailand can help to avoid the crowded Malacca Strait and make sea route shorter and safer. The CPEC for the development of Gwadar Port and its link to Kashgar, 3000 kilometers up north, by a network of roads, railways, telecommunications and pipelines is very significant for the security and development of western China's trade with energy rich Middle East as well as with Africa and Europe.

Pakistan, because of its geo-political location, is ideally suited as an energy and trade corridor between West Asia, Central Asia, China and South Asia. The pipelines and electricity project like TAPI, IPI (now IP), and CASA prove this point. The idea of China Pakistan Trade and Energy corridor has been under discussion from time to time. Now, the fully developed master plan for building a comprehensive, multi-dimensional China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been formally launched with great fanfare. It has been called a "game changer."

Pakistan and China are 'all weather' strategic partners. They have a shared destiny and they will implement the plans to ensure regional security and common development. All provinces and regions of Pakistan will benefit from the projects envisaged under the CPEC. It is also a gift of



God for rapid development and prosperity for Pakistan. Belt and Road has plans for several corridors, but China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is being given top priority because CPEC will link the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Any plans to contain or limit the outreach of China will be neutralized. The extensive development of infrastructure, massive investment in energy production and major development of a deep sea port and a port city at Gwadar will greatly enhance the importance of Pakistan.

It is especially important to consistently pursue policies, dedicated to peace, stability and common development. In the next decade, the energy rich Central Asia, and West Asia as well as energy deficit South Asia can improve connectivity and make all around progress in agriculture, industry, commerce, human development, and contribute to peaceful co-existence not only between states of this region but also enhance cooperation for common development and common security for all regions including Europe and Africa.

President Xi Jinping believes that the whole mankind has a common and shared destiny. He has been making efforts for building a new type of major country relationship between China and USA. This has been discussed between the top leaders of China and USA as he discussed this with Obama previously and recently with Trump. This will be good for peace and security in Asia and the world. China, which has a historical tradition of peace, will play a leading role in avoiding conflict, promoting mutual cooperation between the sovereign states on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit and build a stable, peaceful and harmonious world.

To conclude:

- (1) Belt and Road is a creative initiative for the establishment of New International Order committed to peace and shared development among all nations, big and small on the basis of sovereign equality.
- (2) Any World Order imposed by single country or group of countries is not in the interest of the mankind.
- (3) Policy of creating alliances leads to counter alliances. This generates tension. Belt and Road is not to create an alliance.

(4) Regional Blocs, apart from excluding others, impose some limitation on sovereignty, which is partly transferred to a central authority. Belt and Road is not creating any regional blocs.

(5) Internet has brought nations together by reducing distances virtually Belt and Road will reduce distances between nations physically and improve connectivity between the countries and regions.

(6) All countries along the Belt and the Road are free to join and cooperate to enjoy the benefits of common development and to safeguard peace and security.

(7) It is a framework of cooperation between the sovereign states. They are free to cooperate voluntarily for shared development. The idea is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

The vision of “Belt and Road” has caught the imagination of the people everywhere. More than 70 countries and more than 20 International entities have voluntarily agreed to become partners of this cooperative venture. For the unstable world in turmoil it offers new hope. Belt and Road has several regional corridors but work on CPEC is advancing faster than elsewhere. Pakistan is destined to receive great benefits and also to play along with China, an important role in the emerging ‘New International Economic and Political Order’, which will be fair, just and equitable.

***Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua SI(M), (Retd)-Member Advisory Board CGSS***

Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Januja SI(M), (Retd), stated that the overall spectrum of One Belt One Road, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), assumes a great importance by being the gateway to the World Out and World In. It has been termed as the game changer and why not? It has tremendous potential to perform and produce. Brigadier Akhtar (Retd) stated that from his own point of view, it can also be called:

- The harbinger of peace and harmony
- A gamut of respect, righteousness and piety
- The bond of benevolence and honesty
- A courier of courtesy and wisdom



The conduit of loyalty to the country and the cause  
An omen of prosperity and practicality

Pakistan was the first Muslim country to recognize China back in 1950 and since then Pak-China friendship has marched on, no hiccups whatsoever. Passed every test encountered and withstood caprices of internal and international politics. The bond has been growing without any bounds. Though we have been ‘west looking’ for almost 70 years yet on the East, China has been an all-weather friend. We have never lowered our gaze and vigil on our eastern borders but beyond that its been only China. The things are now changing, so it seems, persistent use, regular abuse, orchestrated turmoil in Middle East and elsewhere is asking the East to unite and progress. The CPEC, therefore, appropriately envisages to bring in the connectivity, near and far profiting the entire region and beyond.

Major developments, changes and large scale interaction has its own socio-cultural implications and the Sub-Continent has witnessed the phenomenon many a times. In-comers brought their culture, traditions and languages. Arabs brought theirs’, Mughals’ stamp is still very vivid though Persian has given way to other languages. Raj was conservative enough not to allow the ‘Indians and local Canines’ near them still its mark is in vogue and shall remain so for a pretty long time. Lighter part, it has increased sharply after 1947 because prior to that Quaid had to put on Achkin and Shalwar and Liaquat Ali Khan proudly wore a tunic, they spoke pure Queen’s language which we are still doing but a Bush-Blair mixture.

So cropping up of discussion on possible socio-cultural implications of CPEC is nothing extraordinary, Brigadier Akhtar (Retd), stated that he is grateful to the management of the Centre for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS) to look towards him for some input on the subject.

Exploration of the Chinese socio-cultural values has been amazing. He stated that China is extremely proud of its more than 5000 years old history and has a very extensive experience for creating important cornerstones for civilization. They are untiring, extremely persistent and patient. Their ancient viewpoint is, “with time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes a silk gown” and with hard work and consistency the gravel becomes the Silk Route.

Brigadier Akhtar (Retd), also stated that he finds the cultural values of the Chinese to be divinely and very Islamic and the reason he believes is the fact that anything which is logical, passionate,

harmonious and peaceful, has strong roots with the Islamic values and the psyche of Chinese portrays all these traits. Further to it, following core values are found in the Chinese culture and teachings:

Harmony  
Benevolence  
Righteousness  
Courtesy  
Wisdom  
Honesty  
Loyalty, and  
Piety

He further questioned the audience, that which of the mentioned core values falls out of our curricula. Lets examine each value briefly:

**Harmony.** It is the core value. Harmony means “proper and balanced coordination between things” and encompasses rationale, propriety, and compatibility. Rationale refers to acting according to objective laws and truths. Propriety indicates suitability and appropriateness. The value of harmony advocates “harmony but not uniformity.” Different things fully coordinated achieve harmony.

**Benevolence.** The Chinese hold it in high esteem. “A peaceful family will prosper” is a famous and widely embraced saying. Benevolence, is based in familial ties, also extends to friendships and social relationships, encompassing justice, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, self-discipline, and commitment.

**Righteousness.** It refers to justice and correctness. Confucius had said, “The gentleman understands what is moral; the small man understands what is profitable.” (How appropriate) There are not only individual benefits but also collective and social benefits. All people should seek what benefits both the individual and the society. As two Chinese sayings put it, “Everybody is responsible for the rise or fall of the country” and “Be the first to show concern and the last to enjoy yourself.”

**Courtesy.** It stresses modesty and prudence. It is about respecting laws and preventing misconduct. Traditional Chinese culture respects the importance of rites and has special rites for various occasions. As the saying goes, “It is impolite not to return what one receives.” Courtesy in daily life is extremely important in Chinese culture.



**Wisdom.** It requires that one should distinguish right from wrong, place capable people in suitable positions, know one’s self, and be resourceful. “Benevolence means to love and wisdom means to understand others.” People should have the wisdom and resourcefulness to control evil and promote good.

**Honesty.** It is trustworthiness, integrity, and credibility. “People should obtain their fortunes reasonably and properly through their labor,” said Confucius, “and not through fraudulence and cheating.” Honesty is a moral virtue greatly valued by the Chinese.

**Loyalty.** It stresses service to the motherland. It is an emotion and a value that evolves from blood ties and means that in cases of foreign invasion citizens should exert all efforts to protect their country as they would protect their own homes. Loyalty also means faithfulness to family and friends.

**Filial Piety.** It is another very important value for Chinese. According to Confucius, “Respecting and supporting the family’s senior members and handling their funeral affairs are duties of younger generations”, and caring for the old and nurturing the young is also a pure Islamic value.

As regards to the eating habits we know that Chinese eateries are the most sought after outlets in Pakistan but they do eat few things which are restricted for us so know your boundaries. They give gifts and expect as well as accept gifts. They are very humble. They show gratitude and appreciate reciprocity.

### **Mutual Respect Between Countries**

According to Lao Tse’s Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing), “A great state is like a low-lying, downward-flowing stream; it becomes the center which tends all the small states under heaven. Thus it is that a great state, by putting itself on a lower level than small states, wins them over and those small states, by showing their deference to a great state, win it over. For the great state, showing humility leads to gaining adherents. For the small states, it leads to procuring favor.

Since the beginning of the new century, peaceful development, harmonious society, mutual benefit, and win-win development have become China’s diplomatic maxims.

In the concluding remarks Brigadier Akhtar (Retd), said that there is nothing to be afraid of, we have been working together from Karakoram Highway to now CPEC. We have lot in common; we can learn a lot from each other, remember the wise saying “seek knowledge even if you have to travel to China”, here China is coming to you. China has different approach towards other countries then previous centuries’ colonists. It believes in hard work, respect and non-intervention.

CPEC can be a real game changer but would require a whole lot of sincerity of purpose, excellence of execution, foresight, fairplay and good-governance.

Economic corridors of the Raj era had tremendous capacity and potential; only some of which could be realized. Peshawar-Landi Kotal, Quetta-Chamman, Quetta-Zahidaan Railway Lines, Grand Trunk Road could have been extended to Asia, Africa and Europe while the Canal System is also doing its bit.

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere”

“A book holds a house of gold”

“Courtesy Demands Reciprocity”

***Dr. Akram Shiekh-Former Federal Minister/Deputy Chairman Planning***

Dr. Akram Sheikh started his address by stating that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the most important and far reaching initiatives of the State of Pakistan through which we can achieve our dream on equitable basis through the socio-economic landscape available in Pakistan. While talking about the potential of the CPEC, he raised the question that is CPEC actually a game changer for Pakistan or just for the few elites in the country? He stated that Gwadar may



become the petrochemical hub and a bright spot on the map of the region. If the government’s plan is to make sure that Pakistan comprehensively benefits from this historic initiative, the Government of Pakistan must ensure provision of the required “SOFT” institutional structure, systems, various investment policies in addition to the availability of complete information to the private sector regarding opportunities and avenues to attract the investment.

Dr. Akram stated that the strategic cooperative partnership has the potential for Pakistan to achieve exponential economic growth (7-10 %), but only if this initiative is implemented in the best national interest. It should have and still can bring the provinces closer together, but the developments of the last 3-4 years have created serious reservations in the minds of the key stakeholders. He stated that keeping in view the overall state of affairs in Pakistan, our Chinese friends have redefined the CPEC vision and the strategic thrust and accordingly revised the physical targets and investment plans. Pakistan has missed many golden opportunities in our checkered history and it seems that we are reluctant to learn from our mistakes and make the required “Amends”.

Dr. Akram while sharing his experience stated that he feels particularly disturbed as having led the team in the Planning Commission from 2004-08, when the country first formulated and proposed to the senior Chinese Leadership the concept of “Pakistan-China Strategic Economic

Partnership including Pak-China Trade, Energy, Transport & Industrial Corridor”. The CPEC is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects to address critical energy shortages, needed to boost Pakistan’s economic growth. Eventually, the CPEC will also facilitate trade along an overland route that connects China to the Indian Ocean, linking the Chinese city of Kashgar to the Pakistani port of Gwadar.

Dr. Akram Shiekh also opined that Gwadar may become one of the largest Petrochemical hub in the world and will be comparable to Dubai. He also stressed the need for planned cities on the CPEC route to cater the future requirement of quality housing. He emphasized that Pakistan’s population is increasing at a fast pace. Every year approximately of 4.4 million people are added to national tally of population. Almost 100 planned cities are required in next 25 years to adequately cater the housing needs, therefore steps must be taken to address this problem.

The former Federal Minister stressed that Chinese are 100 percent sincere with Pakistan but we must also take steps to stand on our own feet and take decision in our own national interest. He also pointed out that lack of industrial zones/parks on motorways which actually is a good opportunity to build industrial zones adjacent to the main highways. Pakistan and China initiated the joint steering committee on economic cooperation. Apart from this, the Pakistani youth has immense potential but the only thing that they lack is the right direction. We must create opportunities for our youth and guide them through proper schemes of mentoring and counselling.

It was also stressed there is a need for making large hydro-electric dams to fulfill the future agrarian and drinking water demands as well as provide cheap electricity to the national grid. Another important point was discussed that every year 100 million Chinese travel abroad but only one percent visit Pakistan, therefore steps must be taken to revamp tourism industry in the country as well as market positive image of Pakistan internationally. This may be done through branding Pakistan, which other countries have also started doing to attract tourism. He said that the Chinese vision is to develop its western provinces particularly Xingjian region and Pakistan must also focus on developing the under developed regions including Baluchistan and KP.

Dr. Akram Shiekh also underlined some bottlenecks which may hinder the success of CPEC and called the attention of the authorities towards these issues which includes: sluggish bureaucratic

structure and lack of capacity to undertake mega projects, corruption patronized by the elites, and lack of national cohesion on the routes of the project. The key objectives of CPEC should be technology transfer and the blue prints of the project must be shared with the provinces. He also remarked that the project has a huge geostrategic relevance and may integrate the Eurasia, the Middle East and South Asia while the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may play a vital role in the successful completion of this project through consensus.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Akram suggested that more joint ventures must be initiated with Chinese firms to enhance the benefits of CPEC and the local business community must be informed of all the opportunities.

### **Question and Answer Session**

**Question 1: Hydroelectric power is the most cheap and reliable source of electricity and it can provide 3.16 MAF of water in current capacity in Pakistan. The whole world is giving up on coal power but why is Pakistan focusing on coal-powered projects which are environmentally damaging? Even Chinese are empowering Environmental Protecting Agencies (EPAs) then why are we not going ahead with our EPAs? Why are we allowing these projects to go ahead with the required Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)?**

**Ans:** WAPDA was one of the best organizations in the world. Ghulam Ishaq Khan was a genius as he pioneered Pakistan Ordinance Factory (POF), Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) and Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). We need to introspect our ills and weaknesses, only then can we search for solutions.

**Question 2: Brigadier Said Nazir questioned that one day axis of economic power will change into geostrategic partnership between Pakistan and China. You have mentioned that Gwadar will not circumvent the Malacca Strait, but the distance of 10,000 kilometer is a lot of distance. Gwadar has geostrategic importance. By 2030, 40% of Chinese population will reach the age of retirement whereas at the same time Pakistan will have 60-65%of youth. This means that there are big employment opportunities for the youth of Pakistan through this project.**

**Ans:** We have to stand on our feet first. A nation with 200 million population is not a small one. China will do what it wants to do, but Pakistan should set its own priorities straight. Take the example of Israel. Israel has a population of 10.5 million and even with this small population they have succeeded in gaining multiple Nobel prizes. We should talk to China on equal footing. Dr. Akram Sheikh said that 60-65% of youth of Pakistan should get education first.



**Question 3: How can we replicate the Chinese success model in the current circumstances and in the backdrop of CPEC?**

**Ans:** We must provide enabling environment to our business community. Power supply and low trade barriers will jumpstart growth in Pakistan as there is immense potential for improvement. The Chinese economy grew by 10 percent in the last 35 years in order to achieve the standing it possess now. The government enacted prudent policies and mechanism while China has been successful in establishing fruitful ties with its neighbors and regional stakeholder. We must also learn a lesson from such genius planning and evolve new mechanisms of improvements.

**Question 4: What steps should be taken, in your opinion, to enhance the capacity building in order to absorb the huge investments coming from China?**

**Ans:** First and foremost, financial reforms are must needed in order to construct a positive environment for business community. The local investor borrowing has decreased, we must focus on relaxed terms of borrowing to encourage new entrepreneurs to indulge in making new ventures. Furthermore, higher education and technical skill development may be focused. Pakistan's human development index is very low, therefore building capacity in human resources may be prioritized. Maritime studies may be focused and highly trained and skilled workforce should be inducted to fulfill the future demands. The students already studying in China on different academic scholarships may be



integrated in the planning system as they have better accustomed to the culture and traditions of China.

**Question 5: Is CPEC really a “Game Changer”? Please give your own expert opinion on this terminology?**

**Ans:** Dr. Akram Sheikh answered, ‘I have a conviction that CPEC may be a Game Changer not only for Pakistan but for the whole Eurasian and South Asian region, but the real question lies in the sociopolitical circumstances which will determine for whom the CPEC will be a game changer. We need to eliminate the ethnic divide and must take on the only identity of being a ‘Pakistani’ to benefit from this historic opportunity’.

***Concluding Remarks by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir ul Islam HI(M), (Retd)-Chairman CGSS***

Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir ul Islam HI(M), (Retd) concluded the seminar by stating that this was a very open and enlightening discussion, where opportunities and challenges for Pakistan were discussed. State crafting is not an easy task, therefore, expert opinion is very important. I will personally convey these recommendations to the concerned authorities. We peaked in 1960s as the Asian Tigers but we took some drastic decisions and plunged into a cheek. It is good that now we have realized our own weaknesses and mistakes and it is time that we should learn from them also.



## Seminar Highlights









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