



# Online International Conference Report

## “Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward”



Organized by  
Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad on  
4<sup>th</sup> January 2021



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**CGSS**  
**Center for Global & Strategic Studies**

5<sup>th</sup> Floor Khyber 4 Plaza, G-15 Markaz, Islamabad, Pakistan

Tel: +92-51-2328615

Email: [infocgss@yahoo.com](mailto:infocgss@yahoo.com) Web: [www.cgss.com.pk](http://www.cgss.com.pk)



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## CONCEPT NOTE

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China, Pakistan and Iran are geo-strategically significant countries on the globe. China is a rising economic power, Iran is an energy enriched state and Pakistan is strategically located in the crossroads of Asia. As the core aim of regional economic integration is in congruence with the domestic economic and foreign policy perspectives of Iran and Pakistan, Beijing's initiative of economic regional connectivity can be channelized effectively in this region. The leaderships of Islamabad, Tehran, and Beijing are optimistic to explore new ventures of trilateral cooperation and economic integration. In this era of globalization, countries are connecting with each other through various ways i.e., by modernizing their economies, opening their borders and markets, cultural exchange and changing their socio-economic structures to present a model of more accountable and democratic nations. In this aspect, China's BRI serves as a bridge among nations to collaborate in multiple areas.

## **BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS**

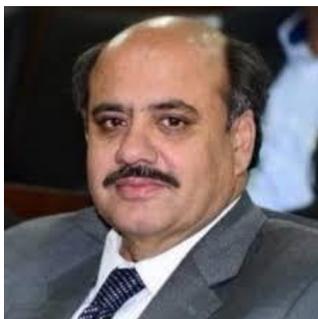
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### **His Excellency Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseni, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan**



His Excellency Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseni served as ambassador of Iran to Italy prior to his appointment as new ambassador of Iran to Pakistan. He has also served as Deputy Minister of Legal and International Affairs, spokesman and Assistant Minister, Deputy Director of the Asia-Pacific Division, Director-General for Assessment and Monitoring, Iran's chargé d'affaires in Jordan, Syria and Uzbekistan, and first deputy director Middle East and North Africa of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mohammad Ali Hosseini has also served as an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

### **Prof Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal- Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad**



Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal is Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan, where he teaches various aspects of International Political and Defense Affairs; Nuclear/Missile Proliferation; National Security, Pakistan Foreign & Strategic affairs, etc. He holds PhD and M. Phil in International Relations and M.A. in Political Science. He did his advance Post Graduate Certificate courses in Peace and Conflict Studies, from European Peace University Stadtschlaining, Austria; Peace Research, International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis from Oslo University, Norway. He is a prolific writer his recent book is "India's Surgical Strike Stratagem: Brinksmanship and Response".

**His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri, Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan & Member Institute for Political & International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran**



His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri has served as the Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan. Currently, he is the member of Institute for Political & International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran

**Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Expert/Analyst**



Dr. Mehmood-Ul-Hassan Khan has degrees in International relations and basic Law too. He completed his M.Phil. leading to Ph.D. in from University of Punjab, Pakistan in Development. He has vast experience in serving different departments of the Federal Government. He has also a rich experience in research, cultural diplomacy, peace and conflict resolution and defence issues. He has been in this profession for more than 26 years. He worked in BBC Asia Network as regional expert on Afghanistan and Middle East in 2004. He worked as regional expert in USGAM, Turkey and had a great experience while interacting with TRT too. Transparency International UK selected him “peer Viewer” from Pakistan in 2015. His research and comprehensive articles have already been published in China, Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, USA, South Korea, UAE and Kuwait too. He has great experience in the socio-economic, geo-politics and geo-strategic issues of Central Asia, Caucasus and Middle East. He is a famous expert on CIS and Caucasus in Pakistan.



**Prof. Deqiang Ji, Vice Dean, Institute for A Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing, China**



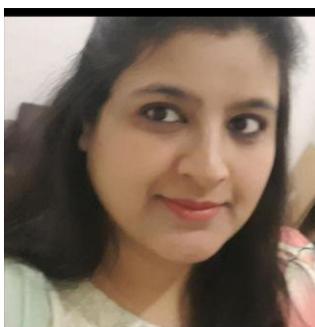
Dr. Ji Deqiang is Professor of Communication Studies and Vice Dean of Institute for A Community with Shared Future at Communication University of China. He is the Vice Chair of the International Communication Section of International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). His research interests include media and digitization, political economy of communication, and international communication. He has published widely in both Chinese and English.

**Professor Wang Hu, Associate Professor, School of Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, Siming-Xiamen, Fujian, China**



Professor Wang Hu research and teaching are about International Relations, conceived largely from a global and historical point of view. On the theoretical side, his interest is in IOs and global governance, Chinese security and foreign policy, environmental politics. His descriptive interests are in the changing positions of China, China's relations with ASEAN, and the implications of China's rising as a more powerful country.

**Dr. Qudsia Akram, Assistant Professor, International Relations, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan**



She has taught courses in different Semesters at undergraduate level on important topics like Foreign Policy of Pakistan under which her area Study has been on East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and Latin America, Research Methodology. Furthermore, she has taught courses in different Semesters at post graduate level on subjects like Advanced Research Methodology, Advanced Theories in IR. She has also worked as *lecturer* in College of Law as Permanent Faculty in University of Lahore (2013-2015).



## **Brief Overview**

On 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an international online conference on “Pakistan-China-Iran Trilateral Conference: Opportunities & Way Forward”. This conference aimed to comprehensively understand the scope, significance, implications, challenges and prospects of a close trilateral cooperation between Pakistan, Iran and China for having better and prosperous socio-economic relations between these countries in the decades to come.

The Guest Speakers of the Conference Included:

- His Excellency Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseni, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan.
- Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri, Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan & Member Institute for Political & International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran.
- Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Professor Deqian Ji, Vice Dean, Institute for a Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing.
- Professor Wang Hu, Associate Professor, School of Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, Siming-Xiamen, Fujian, China.
- Dr. Qudsia Akram, Assistant Professor, International Relations, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan.

The conference was moderated by Ms Minahil Shawal Afridi, Research Executive - CGSS, and was attended by many participants including students and members of academia. It was also viewed by a large number of people on social media networks.



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/KEY TAKEAWAYS**



## **Executive Summary/Key Takeaways**

### **A. Iranian Perspective on its Foreign Policy with Pakistan and China**

#### **i. Iran Relations with Pakistan**

- There are many cultural, ethnic, religious and other commonalities between Iran and Pakistan, which can pave the way for future cooperation and can be beneficial for both the countries.
- Iran is an important country in the world energy market and is ready to share its surplus capacity and potential with Pakistan, whereas Pakistan is a rich source of agricultural products which Iran needs. The important thing however remains the roadmap to materialize this potential for people of both the nations.
- Chabahar and Gwadar ports in Iran and Pakistan respectively have a greater role to play in strengthening socio-economic relations between both countries and offers prospects of economic development for the entire region.
- At present, the volume of trade relations between Iran and Pakistan is less than expected despite the capacities of the two countries. One of the most important factors is the lack of banking relations between the two countries, so for boosting bilateral economic relations, banking relations must be established at utmost priority.

#### **ii. Iran Relations with China**

- Bilateral cooperation between China and Iran has gone towards an upward trajectory during the course of past decade. The 25-year strategic cooperation plan between both countries which was signed in 2019 is a manifestation of the strong relations between China and Iran.
- The Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program is a clear roadmap for the relations between the two countries.
- In pursuance of these plans, China will have the opportunity to further cement its positions as world's top economic power in the coming decades while Iran can also come out as one the main powers of the West Asian region.



**iii. Illuminating Prospects of Trilateral Cooperation between Pakistan, China and Iran.**

- Experts from Pakistan, China and Iran believe that this trilateral cooperation can have wide-ranging positive effects on socio-economic development of all these countries and the region at large.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has the potential to become a converging point of trilateral cooperation. The subsequent cooperation after this convergence can be related to monetary, financial and banking cooperation, energy cooperation, transit cooperation, agricultural cooperation and cultural, scientific and tourism cooperation.

**ii. Challenges in the Way of Pakistan-Iran-China Trilateral Economic Development.**

- There are both internal and external challenges which have the potential to hamper Pakistan-Iran-China trilateral cooperation. Within the domain of domestic challenges, ethnic tensions and the unstable law and order situation have created the sensitive fault lines in political spectrum of all these three countries.
- Similarly, international challenges like subversive activities by regional spoilers like India against CPEC in Balochistan and US criticism on Chinese led economic initiatives has the potential to hinder the trilateral cooperation.
- It will be very wise and prudent for the countries involved in this trilateral cooperation join hands to counter these strategic and socio-economic challenges which have mostly been enforced in the form of direct as well as indirect sanctions against Pakistan and Iran.

**iii. Significance of BRI for Regional Development.**

- Although BRI project was envisaged by China, yet it is a fact that it is an initiative for a win-win economic development for all the participating countries. It is very important for the joint prosperity and rejuvenation of modern globalization process.
- Moreover, BRI can also provide impetus for revitalization of traditional routes between China and the world.



# ANNEXURES



## **ANNEXURE 1: TRANSCRIPT'S OF THE SPEECHES**

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### **Opening Remarks**

#### **Professor Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.**

Mr. Jaspal thanked the CGSS management and stated that indeed it is a great honor to commence this webinar as Iran's Ambassador, His Excellency Syed Mohammed Ali Hosseni has joined. He also welcomed His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri, Dr. Mehmood ul Hassan, Dr. Qudsia and the panelists from China including Professor Deqian Ji and Professor Wang Hu. He stated that this webinar is a great opportunity to highlight the various dimensions of Iran-Pakistan-China relations and the regional developments in this regard.



**Speaker 1:**

**His Excellency Syed Mohammed Ali Hosseni, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan**

**Topic: Iran's Vibrant Foreign Policy and Relationship with China and Pakistan**

Highlighting the existing relations between Iran and Pakistan, H.E. Ali Hosseni stated that the principle of neighborhood, having a long common border, and the significant geopolitical features has made the mutual cooperation inevitable between Iran and Pakistan. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has no restrictions to promote political and economic relations with countries in the East and the West. Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan can complement and fulfill needs of each other in different economic, trade and commerce fields by having cultural, ethnic, religious commonalities and having the best peaceful relations for many years and enjoying various capabilities and economic potentials.

He mentioned that the characteristics and advantages of each of the two countries in the economic field is another factor that connects the markets of the two countries, which, if properly understood, can be a factor for the further enhancing of bilateral relations. If Pakistan requires energy, Iran has rich resources. If Iran is a drought-stricken country that needs rice and agricultural products, Pakistan is a rich source of these products. Therefore, the important question is that how much we have to wait to materialize this potential and our people can benefit from the cooperation?

H.E. stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as an important country in the world energy market, is ready to share its surplus capacity and potentials in this field with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Iran. As one of the most important countries in the field of oil production and extraction, having the second largest gas reserves in the world and having 80,000 Megawatt of electricity generation capacity, is ready to meet the energy needs of friendly and brotherly country of Pakistan at any level.

He emphasized that the development of economic and trade relations between the two countries is the most important task ahead. In view of the goal set by the senior officials of the two countries to increase the volume of trade up to 5 billion dollars, redoubled efforts should be made by both sides to achieve this strategy. Identifying potential capacities and solving existing obstacles and problems can help us to achieve this goal. At



present, the volume of trade relations between Iran and Pakistan is less than expected despite the capacities of the two countries, but one of the most important factors is the lack of banking relations between the two countries, so one of the important priorities in boosting bilateral economic relations, should be the establishment of banking relations between the two countries. This, along with other confidence-building measures, including the finalization of the Free Trade Agreement, can help us achieve this important task.

He stated with utmost confidence that Iran is utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan in all spheres including trade and economic relations and welcomes any idea and initiative to achieve this objective.

H.E. mentioned that the promotion of cooperation in the field of transportation and transit reckoned as a driver of enhancement of economic and trade relations between the two countries, so it also plays a prominent role in bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan. As per the principle of neighborhood and long common border, fortunately Iran and Pakistan are cooperating in four areas of land, rail, sea and air transport. Given the importance of this sector, it is necessary for the two countries to make the utmost utilization of this infrastructure by resolving the existing problems.

Iran and Pakistan by enjoying their privileged geographical location, have a prominent role in connecting Asia and Europe, and the development of transit infrastructure between the two countries is considered important from this perspective. He said that he is pleased to inform that according to the agreement reached by the Ministers of Transport of the E.C.O member countries, the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad freight train, also known as ECO train, is scheduled to operate from the New Year 2021. This is good news for the two great countries of Iran and Pakistan.

Highlighting the negative impact of sanctions on bilateral relations, stated that unfortunately, the unilateral and oppressive US sanctions against the Iranian nation have created very difficult conditions for the people of Iran, and this ominous phenomenon coincides with the Corona virus pandemic, have made the situation even more difficult in procuring of medicine and food items required for the people. He announced that US sanctions are unilateral and completely off the international agenda. There is no law or



legitimacy behind this unilateralism, and many countries have shown the courage to stop it.

He also outlined the areas of bilateral cooperation under the corona virus outbreak. He said that the outbreak of the corona virus has affected all aspects of the world economy, and economic relations between Iran and Pakistan have been no exception. Although at the beginning of the crisis, there were problems for trade relations between the two countries, but now, with the necessary measures, the previous problems have been solved and even new opportunities have been explored. Under these circumstances, two weeks ago, the second official border crossing between the two countries was opened with the aim of facilitating travel and trade activities, which shows the mutual understanding of the officials of the two countries to deal with the restrictions raised by the corona virus and to create new opportunities to strengthen trade and economic cooperation. He said that he was hopeful that these measures will be effective in improving the bilateral relations.

Focusing on the cooperation between the Chabahar and Gwadar Ports, H.E. stated that Chabahar Port in Iran and Gwadar Port in Pakistan have great potential to strengthen the connection between two economies in the first place and all countries in the region in the second place. Fear of such capacity has caused some countries to introduce these two ports as competitors to each other. The main reason for these narratives is nothing but creating misunderstandings in order to prevent future cooperation between the two countries.

Moreover, recognition of the power of Pakistan and Iran in a possible period after convergence and the possible realization of their huge dormant potentials are not something that could be ignored by the furious and malicious parties. Therefore, they will not give up any attempt to suffocate any future cooperation plan between Iran and Pakistan and to spread their negative propaganda on this issue due to their hypothetical panic tendency. Rimdan-Gabd crossing point is the best example of the non-competitive nature these two ports as it can be effective in developing the infrastructure of two ports.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes joining of any project that contributes to the economic development of the region for the benefit of the people and countries of the region, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The Islamic Republic of Iran



supports and backs any plan that strengthens the field of convergence between countries and strengthens the bonds of peace and friendship between nations and contributes to the economic development and prosperity of the region. We appreciate and welcome the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC) in this regard. That is why Iran has repeatedly stated its readiness to participate in this project at the highest level (the level of heads of government).

Highlighting the Regional Cooperation he said that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan by attending regional forums and organizations such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), D-8 organization, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) present a good example of cooperation in these frameworks and regional mechanisms. These regional organizations, especially the Economic Cooperation Organization and the D-Eight Organization, have good capacities for cooperation in various economic fields, including trade, transportation and tourism, which should be exploited with maximum potential through the close cooperation of Iran and Pakistan.

Talking about the existing relations between Iran and China, he stated that cooperation based on mutual respect and independent of the intervening elements of the Islamic Republic of Iran evaluates the development of bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China by understanding the international realities and the diverse capacities and capabilities of the two countries. This strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the policy of denying Western and Eastern domination, as well as on the principle of mutual respect and the principle of expanding and strengthening relations with countries that want friendly and constructive relations with Iran.

Fortunately, bilateral relations with the Peoples Republic of China during the recent years have upward trajectory and the coordination and cooperation between the two in the international areas have been in this direction.

Regarding the 25-year Strategic Cooperation between Iran and China, H.E. stated that the high ranking officials of Iran and China decided to lay a corner-stone for boosting their long-term relationships on horizon of 25-year plan. This idea was given in Tehran in 2015 by Mr. Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, and was welcomed by the Iranian side. The general framework of this plan has been developed over the past



years and its details are being studied by the officials of the two countries, which we hope paving its completion stages well. The Iran-China Comprehensive Cooperation Program is a clear roadmap for the relations between the two important countries in the future world, where China will be one of the world's top economic powers in the near future and Iran as one of the major powers in the West Asian region.

With complementary relations and independent of the traditional dominating powers, while achieving common interests, they can chalk out and implement a comprehensive program to achieve the set goals.

H.E also stated that the Elements and Components of Iran-Pakistan-China Tripartite Cooperation is a unique opportunity to expand the concept of regionalism to further economic cooperation. Islamic Republic of Iran supported this idea and believes that if the framework of cooperation is realized, countless benefits will emerge for the people of the three countries. One of the most important connecting factors of Iran, Pakistan and China in the field of trilateral cooperation is the initiative of One Belt- One Road of the People's Republic of China, which can be studied in various dimensions. The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly stated its readiness to participate in this initiative. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is subsidiary of One Belt one Road, could in practice be the converging point of trilateral cooperation. Monetary, financial and banking cooperation, energy cooperation (oil, petrochemical and gas), transit cooperation (in the field of roads, railways and aviation), agricultural cooperation and cultural, scientific and tourism cooperation are also among the most important capacities of trilateral cooperation between Iran, Pakistan and China.

In his concluding remarks, he emphasized that the relations between Iran and Pakistan, as two important countries in West and South Asia, in recent years are based on the components of neighborhood, common interests and mutual respect, in line with the set goals, moving towards bright horizons. Referring to the countless capacities in bilateral relations, he reiterated the collective efforts of all of us to activate these potentials in order to help promote sustainable development and contribute to the welfare and progress of nations. The Islamic Republic of Iran is open to any initiative in this regard.

Regarding the trilateral cooperation between Iran, Pakistan and China, it is necessary to emphasize that Initiative of One Belt One Road and the China-Pakistan



Economic Corridor are undoubtedly a favorable platform for the development of regional cooperation, especially for the three countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and People's Republic of China that. Also, it could set a unique model for development with other countries in the region.



**Speaker 2:**

**Professor Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Topic: Challenges in the path of China-Iran-Pakistan Economic Development.**

Mr. Jaspal stated that the Asian region has been facing a new realignment process. United States has been struggling to woven in the Asian nations in its alliance and at the same time, China has also been asserting. It was very rightly pointed out in the mid 2020 about Iran and China long term strategic partnership and mostly it has been worked in since 2016. Last year, the New York Times reported about 400 billion US dollars investment of China in Iran in over 25 years. In this case, when we look sitting in Pakistan, definitely it's a great opportunity for Pakistan. He recalled that on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, Iran's foreign minister Muhammad Javad Zarif stated with confidence and conviction that we are negotiating a 25 years' strategic accord with China. If we can bring together CPEC and this accord between Iran and China, definitely we can find that there are many opportunities for a triangular and trilateral relationship.

But there are still various challenges. He divided these challenges into two clusters, domestic challenges, as well as international challenges as he stated that when we talk about the domestic challenges, we first focus in the context that what is happening within these three states. We don't have to forget that within the domain of the domestic challenges, these three states are vulnerable to ethnic and religious confrontations. This is a domestic challenge which can be, or which has been exploited by their rival states. In this context, the Chinese cannot ignore the propaganda which has been taking place about the Muslims within China. We cannot ignore in this context the linkages of India sponsored terrorist activities in Pakistan. Off course, similarly, the Iranian government cannot ignore how they have tried to be put check in the west or in the other parts of the world, some kind of propaganda in the case of Iran. So by this way this is the first big domestic challenge for both these three states to encounter.

The second important challenge is the law and order situation. Though in China, the Chinese government has been able to control this law and order situation but with increasing tension on its border with India, the issue of Tibet they need to be cautious. However, Pakistan is more vulnerable in this context. The anti-Pakistan forces have



targeted the CPEC route. They have been supporting Baloch Liberation Organization kind of movements and similarly, Iran cannot ignore what is happening in its neighborhood in Afghanistan, especially the increasing presence of Islamic State.

Mr. Jaspal said that it is an established fact that Islamic state has tentacles in entire South Asia. It has reached the neighborhood of Iran and Pakistan. So terrorism is posing as a challenge to this three states' cooperation which His Excellency rightly pointed out when he was discussing the potential between Iran and Pakistan, between Iran and China and the triangular potential but these kind of militant organizations like Islamic state can be used as a proxy by entire forces against Pakistan and Iran.

He said that Iran, Pakistan and China have to modernize their laws and orders and their forces to compete with these kind of challenges. It's understandable that interdependence theory tells us that interdependence always leaves for the cooperation of stability. Stability in Iran, stability in Pakistan, and stability in China is good news for the entire region in general, and good news for these three states. But at the same time, it is a cross-cultural kind of thing, so how we have to deal with these challenges.

Pakistan, Iran has a history which is cultural, ethnic, religious, and political. Starting from the RCD, then ECO and then now you can say this transit kind of trade. We are a working history. China is a kind of new entrant in these sort of things you can say but we also have a working history with China as a strategic partner of China and Iran has a long history of energy providing to China but there is also another important organization where these three organizations have been working, Iran as observer, Pakistan as a member and China as a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The biggest challenge, he stated, is from America that has been trying for the last one decade to maintain and preserve it's strategic pre-eminence. Generally, in this context American policy especially during Trump administration and prior to that starting from the 2011 to 2012 when the Americans started to talk about the pivoting strategy or pivot to Asia. In the last decade, the American foreign strategic policy has been very much grounded on the realist paradigm. That is why everyone is saying echo of the cold war for a new kind of cold war. First reference is national security strategy of United States, 2017 nuclear posture review of the United States 2018. Then Asia Pacific Strategy of United States and then you can see the new 2020 document.



In all these documents, the Americans placed China as a security threat. At the same time since 2018 the Trump administration propagated against Iran moving out of this Iran nuclear deal and then alleging Iran the way they raised the tensions. So if you see in these all two documents, Iran and China have been coupled as the cluster or challenge to the American security, and then showing too much mistrust on Pakistan the more we go at CPEC, which is the flagship project of BRI and the more we cooperate with Iran, the more the American anger increases.

He said that in 2018, when Trump administration started to make false allegations against Iran and making it planned to move out of the JCPOA, at that time Chinese said that Iran has been complying with its commitments with this agreement and NPT so there is no need to destabilize this agreement. When you go for this trilateral cooperation, naturally, Iran has been suffering from these sanctions. China has already started to face a challenge through this American onslaught. And now up to that, we have seen the Americans have been openly objecting BRI, and within the BRI, CPEC and definitely this new strategic partnership understanding between Iran, Pakistan and China.

So this is a big strategic challenge and this leaves us to Iran, off course Iran's geo-strategic significance starts from Shat-ul-Arab going up to the Strait of Hormuz. Both Iran and Pakistan are littoral states, and for the western China, and for the landlocked Central Asia and Afghanistan, ports like Chabahar and Pakistan's new port of Gwadar are very significant. Now problem with this what is the demand for Pakistan, Iran and China is, safety and security of sea lands.

When China started to build up its ports, the American analysts started to use the term string of pearls. We can say that India has come up with a necklace of diamonds in order to balance it. Maybe the necklace of diamonds was not able to or will not be able to balance it in the future, but there is another challenge, Asia Pacific strategy of the United States as well as Indo Pacific and India also talks about Indo-Pacific strategy. Now in this context, the most alarming factor which neither China, nor Iran as well as Pakistan sees, is the rise of the Asian NATO which is the QUAD (United States, Japan, Australia and India).

Iran is an outlet for the West Asia and if you see the emergence of India's naval buildup, keeping in mind, you can say, the agreement signed on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020 by India and



United States of America, BECA the logistical space data cooperation naturally when they are building the Indian, blue water navy, that will also be posing a challenge maybe for Iran and it is important to note that India under the pressure of Americans have started to distance from Iran.

Furthermore, he said that Pakistan and India's instability is vulnerable for the entire region. Pakistan's Foreign Minister have alarmed and sensitized the international community that India has been planning for the surgical strike against Pakistan and India is now seeking a permission from its partner states. He stated that any kind of military adventurism, from the eastern side of Pakistan will be having devastating repercussions for CPEC and BRI in a broader perspective as well as if it is extended to the sea side; definitely it hurts the Iranian interests.

Last but not the least, a major challenge is the sanctions, that have been hurting common man in Iran. Sanctions always severely hurt the innocent people and children. So these three countries are going to face direct and indirect sanctions the more they become closer for development. He said the three states need to cooperate and in order to face these sanctions.

China, Pakistan and Iran triangular relationship has a great economic and cultural potential. It has the potential to work for the prosperity of entire region. However, these three nations will have to work together and fight the challenges which are directed towards dividing them.



**Speaker 3:**

**Professor Deqiang Ji, Vice Dean, Institute for A Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing, China**

**Topic: China's BRI and its significance for regional development.**

Mr. Ji stated that the Belt and Road Initiative has been implemented since the President Xi Jinping proposed the concept. It actually has many implementations for different regions in the world not only in practice but also for imagining a better world order or an equal communication relationship between different countries. BRI is very important to build something beyond national interest, beyond international or bilateral relationship. It is kind of a new topic in international public platform that everybody can benefit from.

The BRI has been discussed and has been proposed as an open initiative. It is an inclusive project for everyone to work together and build a win-win relationship. China also benefits a lot from this economic cooperation with almost 80 countries and international organizations. Highlighting the spirit and meaning of the belt and road, he stated that we can list couple of very important points about how important is this proposal for China and also for joint prosperity of the countries that signed BRI agreement. Many countries are looking for a better proposal for better communication with each other, for better prosperity and development with each other. Belt and Road Initiative is one of the many proposals for a sustainable global development and for fight for the global crises with each other in both regional and global spheres.

On the other hand, it is also very important to think about both the countries like Pakistan and Iran are old civilizations and also China as well. Belt and Road initiative is a very important combination within the modern globalization process and also for revitalization of the traditional ties between China and the world. Belt and Road Initiative has a new spirit for imagining a better globalization process like a community with shared future, it's also a proposal for the co-prosperity and for a better global connectiveness and also for a broadening imagination of a better globalization process so this is very important.

Mr. Ji mentioned that if we look back to the history and different proposals for the globalization process from different countries like China, British, or from America, and



the emerging economies in world for example the BRICS, actually they all have their own proposals for a better regional and global development. However, BRI is win-win project for all. China is one of the most globalizing state or nation in the world today. So every decision made by China is about the globalization. So from China and beyond China it's one of the major framework to understand the spirit of the belt and road initiative.

Focusing on the triangle relationship between China, Pakistan and Iran. China Pakistan Economic Corridor is very energy and transportation centric and there are a lot of very important projects. Even today, the projects are still going on during the COVID-19 pandemic. CPEC is not only a project for local development but for the regional development. This corridor is also trying to help Pakistan in the poverty reduction process. Moreover, there are many challenges and problems associated with the regional development for example in Asia or in the Middle East. The BRI is really challenging the power structure in the region, particularly Asia. It depends on different players as how they negotiate the relationship with each other, for example in South Asia in the case of India.

China is really trying to avoid these geo-political tensions or contestations with different stake holders and to provide a public platform for a better economic collaboration. China-Iran cooperation is also very intensified. Focusing on the energy ties and infrastructure building for example the metro systems built by some Chinese state-owned companies they are very successful and also because of the strategic location of Iran in the Middle East and connecting different corridors in the future, the role of the Iran will be increasingly important in the Belt And Road Initiative and especially connecting both Iran and China and other countries surrounding that region. Belt and Road Initiative is the proposal from the Chinese leadership but it is increasingly becoming a public platform so everybody can have an equal say and also have a power to define their own understanding of this platform and their own benefits of relationship with other countries under this framework.

Talking about the implementations for regional development under the Belt and Road Initiative, he stated that China is one of the major driver for the Belt and Road Initiative policies and one of the major economic contributor to this initiative. This will be the major kind of aspect of regional connectivity and collaboration. Even the countries not connected with the BRI can also get inspiration from this spirit for regional connectivity



and a new multi-popular globalization on the basis of regional prosperity. Actually what Chinese policies are trying to tell the global audience is that we need a new multi-polar or equal globalization process on the basis of regional prosperity. This is exactly the major principle that this Belt and Road Initiative tried to highlight for a new global order.

It is imperative to address the geo-political tensions in different regions with some big powers, super powers and also some regional powers. He said that as a communication scholar, he considers increased communication as to enhance relations between states. Today we have a good opportunity to communicate through the radio conferencing platforms so we can exchange ideas exchange even different opinions. In order to have a good relationship between China and the world, we have to make use of communication platforms to promote dialogue and to promote mutual understanding, diversity of the culture in the world and people-to-people connection.



**Speaker 4:**

**His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri. Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan**

**Topic: Implications of China-Pakistan-Iran economic ties on the U.S interests in the region**

Mr. Shakeri highlighted the facts and figures about United States of America and People's Republic of China and how these facts and realities impact the relationship between the two countries and their partners in the region. He stated that the world is going to witness a change of realm in the White House. While a new American statesman is replacing his predecessor Mr. Donald Trump, there are many issues to be resolved. Issues that have effected many important states, regional powers, international organizations, economic blocs and so on.

The world is already facing many problems, on top is the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the socio-economic structure of the world including that of U.S in particular. The US isolationist policies in the last four years have created opportunities for some other big powers, especially for China. Some of the most important opportunities for China during Trump's period include:

1. Secondary importance to foreign policy
2. Adoption of isolationism strategy
3. Withdrawal from international organizations and regional and international initiatives
4. Uni-dimensionality
5. Preferential treatment of commercial rather than strategic issues

Finally, on the other hand, against all the privileges created for China, the only impediment caused for China was that this country replaced Russia as the first priority in the foreign policy of America. The structure of society in the United States has changed. The percentage of white people in the entire U.S population has fallen from 87.5% in 1950 to 56% in 2019. By 2050, it will be 49% and the white people will be the minority against other races in majority. Qualitative changes in the social structure are impacting American values as a whole. Some statistics suggest that the downturn in the U.S economy will continue its downward trend and to the dis-benefit of the consumer class. The



political polarization, the result of the administration's behavior through the course of the last four years, leading to the latest election which much ado about it has brought the society to the state that some commentators branded as cold civil war.

China and some of its partners too are witnessing certain promising progression in terms of security, social solidarity, cultural affinity and similarity and economies in complementarity. A vivid example is China, Pakistan and Iran. With the current continuous trend China is expected to surpass the US as the world's largest consumer market by 2021. Around 2030, China will become the world's largest economy if not early. China, the leading power, the world's second economy, with the share of 16% is predicted to overtake the United States much sooner than estimated before.

The evolving Sino-US competition is likely to influence the US and Chinese assessment of engagement in new alliances which could last for the next several years. China is extending its outreach to new blocks from European Union to Africa, while new alliances are emerging to contain the predominance of China. The powerful China would inevitably influence its partners. A rich literature on China's relation with different regions of the world including South Asia, Middle East and Eurasia exists and continues to expand. He also mentioned that bilateral cooperation between China, Iran and Pakistan could address the menaces but a comprehensive and collective regional cooperation would have a more extensive outcome to the benefit of all the partners.

He stated that China and Pakistan have entered into a strategic partnership under CPEC. As far as the geo-economics of BRI are concerned, as many as 60 countries will be connected to China and this connectivity is envisaged to further enhance the competitiveness of China. Iran can become partner in CPEC projects as the geography of Iran gives it key advantage that could add to the strategic value of CPEC.

**Speaker 5:****Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan, Member Board of Experts of CGSS****Topic: Iran's economic resurgence and cooperation with China countering the US agenda of isolating Iran in the international system.**

Mr. Mehmood stated that the US President Trump waged a comprehensive campaign of maximum pressure on Iran. This compelled Iran to reconsider, reshape and redesign its foreign policy options to mitigate exploitative power of USA and its regional allies. China has been one of the key factors in the foreign policy of Tehran. According to China's ministry of commerce, Chinese -Iranian trade was 51.8 billion US dollars or 1.2% of China's total trade in 2014 and it has further decreased since then because of constant severe socio-economic sanctions by the USA. In this regard, there is hue and cry in the power capital of the world and off course international media about socio-economic integration, geo-political gelling and geo-strategic convergence of Iran and China through expected China Iran strategic deal which may be a paradigm shift in the region as well as international politics in the days to come.

Moreover, he said that, the investment and security pact would vastly extend Chinese influence in the Middle East boosting Iran economic lifeline and creating new flashpoints with USA. On other hand, US department want that China would be undermining its own stated goal of promoting stability and peace by defying US security sanctions and doing business with Iran. It is not defiance to prevailing international power system but new chapter of dialogue, diplomacy and development which is primarily based on mutual respect and peace. It is indeed diplomatic, political, economic and geo-strategic victory of the most ancient civilizations of the world, Iran and China.

Punishing sanctions regime imposed by Trump administration will now be severely mitigated by the Chinese investment, expertise and massive infrastructure upgrading. It seems that new chessboard of power politics will have new queen, king and new armies to conquer new fields. There may be a new triangle of power in the region in the shape of China, Pakistan and Iran in the days to come in which Chinese BRI and its flagship mega project CPEC would play a vital role. Washington, Brussels, Tel-Aviv and even Delhi have now rattled with imminent strategic deal between China and Iran. The New York Times reports that China and Iran have prepared a far-reaching commercial agreement that



would offer Iran 400 billion US dollars Chinese investment over next 25 years in terms of selling China a large proportion of the oil it produces over the same period at the discounted rate.

He said that this deal would further enhance Chinese presence in Iranian domestic banking system, telecommunications, shipment, ports development, railways and dozens of associated projects. In this connection, materialization of Chahbahar port as well as various railway road projects will provide unique opportunities for both the countries to connect with all the Central Asian countries and beyond. Moreover, it would deepen military cooperation and chance of a foothold in the region that has been strategic pre-occupation of the USA for decades.

It calls for joint training and exercises, joint research and weapon development and intelligence sharing. According to this deal, the projects include airports, high speed railways and subways. Furthermore, China would develop free trade zones in Maku and Abadan. It proposes China to build the infrastructure for a 5G telecommunication network to offer the new Chinese global positioning system and help Iranian authorities assertive greater control over what circulates in cyber space. It also calls for joint training and exercises, joint research, weapon development and intelligence sharing to fight against terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes.

Chinese President Xi Jing Ping proposed this strategic partnership while visiting Iran in 2016 and which was subsequently approved by President His Excellency Iranian President Hassan Hosseini's cabinet in June 2020. Iranian geography opens an additional route for Beijing's BRI. Iranian China cooperation in naval development would be a balancing act against the Quad. Iranian large sources of revenue have plunged since Trump's administration began imposing sanctions. China gets 75 percent of its oil from abroad and it is the world's largest importer at more than 10 billion barrels a day last year. It hopes that new partnership would be a game and fate changer for Iran to accelerate its declining economy in the days to come.

Mr. Mehmood further said that many regional experts are of the opinion that it would start a new era of cold war in the world where economic vested interests would be vastly manipulated for creating hurdles for the others. Nevertheless, he was of the opinion that, the European Union would remain neutral because the Europeans are so deeply tied



financially and economically to the US that they would not offer any independent arrangements permitting them to offer sanctions release to the Iranians. Due to superior economy and good governance in its financial system, China would face no such constraints. China has been building a financial system that bypasses the US. Overall the Chinese economy is so large that any negative impact from a cut of western trade can easily be mitigated. It also renders the newly reviewed joint Israeli US efforts of sabotaging Iran's nuclear program almost obsolete.

He stated that the policy members of Pakistan should focus on the China-Iran emerging partnership since present Iranian ambassador in Pakistan time and again showed his country's keen interest to be part of CPEC. For the further strengthening of bilateral relations in terms of diverse trade and commerce, socio-economic connectivity and energy cooperation, a new border crossing point between Iran and Gwadar has been opened. Second international border crossing point between Iran and Pakistan has also been opened which is situated 130 kilometers away from Chahbahar port, which would further increase the inflow of important export in terms of petroleum, in terms of construction material, in terms of food and vegetable from both the countries.

Moreover, Pak, Iran and Turkey transcontinental railway project has been principally agreed which would further promote regional trade and commerce. Chessboard of regional power politics is rapidly changing which has now opened new avenues for Pakistan too. The government of Pakistan should avail this opportunity carefully for further strengthening its bilateral relations with China and Iran. He said that KSA and UAE would be stumbling blocks for Pakistan's future policies, which the government needs to cater for. Pakistan may play a regional reconciliatory role among Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE with the help of China.

The India's exit from Chahbahar port has opened a new window of opportunity of convenience for China, Pakistan and Iran. India has found its vested interest under siege after this exit. This initiative will make Pakistan a trade and logistical hub linking China with Middle East, Turkey and Europe. To conclude, China will have to maintain balance amongst the other strategic partners like Saudi Arabia and UAE which have comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with China. after this deal with Iran.



**Speaker 6:**

**Professor Wang Hu, Associate Professor, School of South Asian Studies, Xiamen University, Siming Xiamen, Fujian, China**

**Topic: Prospects of China Pakistan Iran Trilateral Partnership: Challenges and Implication.**

Mr. Wang stated that trilateral partnerships can be established through agreements, like the BRI to connect the three countries. However, trilateral partnerships can be enhanced by establishing civil society collaborations. In the early 1980s, at the very beginning of the reform and the opening to the outside world, a variety of foreign companies and investment came into China. The non-governmental organizations have promoted the development of China and they have established very good relationship with Chinese grass root organizations. They have collaborated well and so far 800 thousand NGOs, more than that are working in China.

Now with the Chinese companies going out, especially with the development of the Belt and Road initiative, Chinese companies and government have realized the cooperation between future organizations around Belt and Road countries are very important. In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the countries in Belt and Road Initiative to enhance collaboration among social organizations and to build networks of social organizations to facilitate belt and road cooperation. It is a very good opportunity to develop real people to people relationship among Iran, Pakistan, and China and to build, establish a real trilateral partnership.

China and Pakistan are all weather strategic partners and China and Pakistan economic corridor projects is a testimony to it. Beijing sees this as a 21<sup>st</sup> century silk road to connect eastern Africa and the Europe right yet in these areas we only see the cooperation between governments, enterprises, normally the two represent the first and the second sector. The third sector mainly comprises of civil society organization. So the civil society organizations should be taken into consideration before BRI projects are implemented.

In Pakistan, NGOs have been growing in large numbers and getting place for themselves through the sector of civil society. NGOs are becoming a third sector side by side with the state. The business sectors could help the other two sectors who are providing effective



development mechanism at the grass root level. In Pakistan there are a large number of community based NGOs including indigenous community groups, village level clubs, local and national organizations etc. These are playing very important role in combating COVID-19 pandemic.

Iran also endorses BRI and has friendly relations with China. The future cooperation in basic projects and development of infrastructure for example non-BRI projects and also in other various economic fields including industry, tourism, information technology and communication is quite possible, although there are some speculations. Iran has a long rich history of community participation. NGOs under their government, the traditional community based organizations and modern NGOs are found in great numbers all over Iran. Both community based organizations and non-government organizations are increasingly becoming engaged in more development oriented activities as well as their traditional charity and their relief work. So when Iran and China are cooperating on BRI, the two countries could also allow their NGOs to play a part. This can quite possibly promote Iran-Pakistan-China trilateral partnership building.

Iran and the Pakistan have friendly relations with China and it is possible for us to build a true trilateral partnership to benefit the people of the three countries and promote right people-to-people relations and eventually peace and the stability in this area. We can take pragmatic and practical measures to establish true relationship between the three countries and their civil society organizations.



### **Speaker 7:**

#### **Dr. Qudsia Akram, Assistant Professor in International Relations Department of the Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan. Topic: Prospects of building linkages between Gwadar and Chabahar ports.**

Giving the geographical overview of these two strategic ports, Ms. Qudsia stated that the Gwadar Port is the warm water and deep sea port of Pakistan. It is situated at the mouth of Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz in Indian Ocean. It is located at cross-junction of international sea shipping and oil trade routes. Gwadar can act as an international trade hub for Pakistan. Through CPEC and BRI projects Gwadar can serve a larger role than just serving for the interests of Pakistan. Gwadar Port would connect three regions, i.e. Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East region.



With CPEC, China is connected with Pakistan and if Pakistan and Iran decides to trilateral organization based on cooperation mechanism, I think it would be a game changer not only for Pakistan or China but for Iran as well. And because with these three nations cooperating together with each other through their natural resources is going to change the geo-political and geo-economic scenario of the whole region.

Discussing the Chabahar port, she mentioned that the port is situated in Sistan and Balochistan Province in south Iran on the Gulf of Oman. Pakistan's Gwadar is about 70 kilometers to the west along the coast. Afghanistan is connected to the port through its land border with Iran, and India via the sea.



BRI and CPEC projects are in process. So for Iran, it is a huge opportunity to actually explore to join CPEC and BRI projects. And definitely Pakistan's contribution is immense when it comes to it. First of all, it is very important to recognize that the international order, economic order, world order is in transition. It can be said that a global transition and power, diffusion in many dimensions of the global political economy is happening currently. This transition, which is currently underway, is being driven by many factors such as: technological developments, demographic shifts, migration waves, new alignments among Asian and Middle Eastern countries, changing market structures, demands of the key economic and financial actors, and so on and so forth.

The concept of geopolitics has a connotation with historical imperialistic policies whereas geo-economics denotes integration with networks, connections, and trans-border ties. It focuses on economic space, transportation connectivity, networks, and economic strengths. There are prospects of integration and linkages between the Gwadar port and Chabahar port through a liberal approach because it is the approach which provides us the opportunity to actually cooperate with each other. Integration stands for regional integration So far in international relations, European Union is the only organization which we can do as a successful organization that reflects the concept of integration.



Pakistan, Iran and China have different historical past and different challenges. Some of them are mutual but some of them are not particularly when it comes to India as a factor. She stated that definitely we share different kind of relationship with India particularly when US comes into consideration we all share a different kind of relationship with United States of America as well. Our strength is our connectivity. We all are regionally integrated naturally, because of our geographies and we possess unlimited natural resources. So it is very important here to understand the concept of integration.

The issues here are that economic integration could be used as an instrument of foreign policy, where political considerations influence the choice of contracting partners. Gwadar and Chabahar present multiple opportunities for connectivity across the region. If geo-politics is isolated from geo-economics, then both ports could provide an impetus for growth for the entire region but this is very hypothetical and very ideal situation, we cannot isolate these things.

One thing common between EU model and us is the geographical connectivity. We all states are connected geographically and naturally. But one thing we differ is the shared history. The European Union states fought and then survived great wars and they were imperialist nations and so on and so forth and then they survived it and they have the stimulus to reconstruct Europe. That was the force that forced them to integrate eventually because they have survived the horrors of the great wars. Plus, at that time they had the support of United Nations and United States of America and so on and so forth.

Whereas when it comes to develop an integration model for Pakistan, China and Iran, it's different because first we are located in three different geographical regions. We share different historical backgrounds and then yes we have a history of cooperation through different eras of past and currently we actually can look for establishing a network of social, political and economic cooperation because the times are changing so fast and it is the need of the hour that all these three important states realize that significance of integration particularly when it comes to Chabahar and Gwadar port.

There is a need of political will for integration. For that all the diplomatic means and channels should be utilized on all levels to achieve trilateral dialogues, discussions, exchange of officials, academia etc. so that the things get smoothed down and the



integration process can be carried on perfectly. Then the second task is to challenging and change the notion, the narratives in academia or in international relations that Pakistan's Gwadar port and Iranian Chabahar port are rivals.

Then the third thing is establishment of an effective and active trilateral organization that reflects the commitment from all states for mutual prosperity and development. It is very important to establish an effective and active trilateral organization. There are so many organizations which currently exist, they have huge portfolios and aims and objectives but unfortunately they are not that effective when it comes to execution of the decisions. So an effective and active trilateral organization should be made and definitely after the political when the notions are countering the notions that would be a symbol of commitment from all these three states. Then there is a need to address the geo-political scenario.

To integrate to generate a linkage between these Chabahar and Gwadar port, we need to address these geo-political scenarios, we need to realize the change in geo-politics and a subtle framework to address them. There is a need for inclusion of other states strictly under international law; a mechanism to ensure that the purpose and objectives of integration are secured of all the states involved; have transparent system of finances; and mechanism to resolve interstate issues within the organization.



## ANNEXURE 2: PRESS RELEASE

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On 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, "Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward".

The conference aimed to examine the opportunities in trilateral cooperation, particularly the sphere of economic partnership. Moreover, the conference also highlighted the prospects of economic cooperation between Gwadar and Chabahar port in the region under China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The conference was commenced with the welcome remarks from Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Senior Member Board of Advisors, CGSS & Professor, School of Politics & IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. He stated that it is a very timely initiative to organize this conference, there is huge potential in this cooperation and certain challenges as well, and we must understand how to maximize the potential of triangular cooperation of Pakistan, Iran, and China.

**His Excellency Syed Mohammad Ali Husseini, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan** discussed Iran's vibrant Foreign Policy and relationship with China and Pakistan. He discussed Iran-Pakistan cooperation by emphasizing the neighborhood component and in the light of the commonalities of the relations. Discussing the bilateral relations, he stated that believes Pakistan is the gateway to Asia and Iran is the gateway to Europe. This has made cooperation inevitable for the two countries. Furthermore, Iran has resources and these resources can meet the needs of Pakistan and other friendly & countries. If Pakistan requires energy, Iran has rich resources. If Iran is a drought-stricken country that needs rice and agricultural products, Pakistan is a rich source of these products.

He also highlighted the development of economic and trade relations between these countries. Chabahar Port in Iran and Gwadar Port in Pakistan have great potential to strengthen the connection between both economies in the first place and all countries in the region in the second place. He emphasized that the BRI and CPEC are undoubtedly favorable platforms for the development of regional cooperation, especially for the three



countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China.

He concluded by announcing, that Iran is utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan in all spheres including trade and economic relations, and welcomes any idea and initiative to achieve this objective.

**Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Senior Member Board of Advisors, CGSS & Professor, School of Politics & IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan** discussed Challenges in the path of China-Iran-Pakistan Economic Development. He highlighted that a new realignment process between all three countries is reemerging. The 400-billion-dollar Chinese investment for the next 25 years reported in US media in the middle of 2020 is good news for Pakistan.

While discussing the domain of domestic challenges he stated that the three states have to keep in mind that there are big potential challenges for their international and economic progress as well as stability. The second important challenge is the law and order issue. Pakistan has also been affected by propaganda and subversive activities against the economic corridor through BLA. He emphasized that Pakistan, Iran, and China have to deal with how to counter these rival powers who are trying to disrupt this trilateral relationship.

Furthermore, Pakistan and Iran's ports are very important for many countries in this region. The US propagated about the chain of pearls after Chinese infrastructure building was initiated in Gwadar, similarly, India can also be rightly blamed for many of such activities. He concluded by emphasizing that we have to work together for this trilateral cooperation and be aware of various challenges like the one posed by the US-India alliance. If these three countries work together, they can effectively counter and neutralize these challenges.

**His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri, Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan & Member, Institute for Political & International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran** discussed implications of China-Iran-Pakistan economic ties for the US Interests in the region. He stated that the Chinese leadership has overtaken the reigns of many international organizations during recent times.



China has also replaced Russia's contentious position in the US foreign policy. He highlighted that the downward trend in the American economy will continue as their administration's misbehavior in the last four years was a major issue. Discussing the BRI projects, he stated that China and Pakistan are engaged under the CPEC initiative under the Belt and Road projects. It is interesting to see that as many as 16 countries are to join this initiative.

In event of Iran-China cooperation, CPEC can take a new look. He discussed, that this is the time for Iran to join CPEC. The geostrategic position of Iran can add to the value of CPEC projects. Iranian oil and gas resources can go to China through this route. Furthermore, Iran's geostrategic positions for countries like Turkey and Afghanistan can also play an important role in this regard.

**Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst** discussed Iran's Economic Resurgence and Cooperation with China, countering the United States agenda of isolating Iran in the International system. He stated that it is indeed an important victory of China and Iran over Trump's policies and US imperialism. It is also a great example of vibrant Iranian diplomacy. Furthermore, Iranian geography also opens new routes for BRI projects. Cooperation in naval development will neutralize and equalize naval issues in the region. He further stated that Iran has found a partner in the form of China which is strong enough in the east to counter the west.

He suggested, for further strengthening of bilateral cooperation, a new entry point with Gwadar between Iran and Pakistan has been initiated which is the second border crossing between both countries. Transcontinental railway project between Pakistan-Iran-China has also been agreed in the recent past. He concluded by suggesting that, we need to have collaborative efforts in the region to counter challenges imposed by the alliances of rival players in the region.

**Prof. Deqiang Ji, Vice Dean, Institute for a Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing, China** discussed China's BRI and its significance for regional development. He highlighted that the Chinese leadership has continuously proposed working together and having a win-win relationship with all its partner countries. He discussed the importance of BRI projects for China and countries



involved in it in the wider region. Moreover, he also emphasized that China has tried to avoid geopolitical tensions with different players and alliances working against it in the region. Discussing the bilateral ties of China and Iran, he stated that there can be better energy ties and initiatives for infrastructure building as the strategic location connecting both countries is very important. Highlighting the positive implications of BRI projects, he mentioned, regional connectivity and dialogue under the trilateral cooperation as well as multiple channels and dialogue initiatives for scholars and experts.

**Prof. Wang Hu, Associate Professor, School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, Siming-Xiamen, Fujian, China** discussed, Prospects of China Pakistan and Iran Trilateral Partnership, Challenges, and Implications. He emphasized that relations between these countries can be established through a trilateral partnership by establishing collaboration. To achieve a real trilateral partnership, we must include civil society participation and broader partnership. He suggested that civil society organizations and various enterprises can help in effective grass root development. Discussing the trilateral partnership of Pakistan, China, and Iran, Both Pakistan and Iran have friendly relations with China which can be beneficial in many ways. He also mentioned that BRI projects are important to establish friendly contacts and people to people relations amongst partner countries.

**Dr. Qudsia Akram, Assistant Professor, IR, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan** discussed the Prospects of building cooperation and linkages between Gwadar and Chabahar ports. She presented a detailed geographical overview of the Gwadar and Chabahar port. Discussing the concept of economic integration, she stated that it could be used as an instrument of foreign policy, where political considerations influence the choice of contracting partners. Gwadar and Chabahar present multiple opportunities for connectivity across the region. If geo-politics is isolated from geo-economics, then both ports could provide an impetus for growth for the entire region. Discussing the prospects of linkages and integration she emphasized that, diplomatic means should be utilized on all levels to achieve trilateral dialogues.

In his closing remarks, **Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst** extended his gratitude to all the panelists. He praised the role of CGSS in initiating important dialogues as being an important institution in Pakistan to bring Pakistan, China, and Iran on the same platform.



The conference was moderated by Ms. Minahil Shawal Afridi, Research Executive, CGSS, and was attended by 100 participants from various fields. It was also viewed by more than 300 people on various social media networks through live stream.

## ANNEXURE 3: MEDIA COVERAGE

### Daily Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/iran-utilizing-its-full-capacity-to-promote-its-ties-with-pakistan-envoy/>



#### DNA

**ISLAMABAD:** Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward”.



**Centreline**

<https://centreline.com.pk/2021/01/04/iran-utilizing-its-full-capacity-to-promote-its-ties-with-pakistan-envoy/>



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DIPLOMATIC NEWS Pakistan WORLD NEWS

# Iran utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan: envoy

By admin - January 4, 2021

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**ISLAMABAD:** Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an



**Diplomatic News Agency**

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### Iran utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan: envoy

DNA News | January 4, 2021



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**Syed Mohammad Ali Husseini, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan** discussed Iran’s vibrant Foreign Policy and relationship with China and Pakistan. He discussed Iran-Pakistan cooperation by emphasizing the neighborhood component and in the light of the commonalities of the relations. Discussing the bilateral relations, he stated that believes Pakistan is the gateway to Asia and Iran is the gateway to Europe. This has made cooperation inevitable for the two countries. Furthermore, Iran has resources and these resources can meet the needs of Pakistan and other friendly & countries. If Pakistan requires energy, Iran has rich resources. If Iran is a drought-stricken country that needs rice and agricultural products, Pakistan is a rich source of these products.



National Herald Tribune

**INTERNATIONAL** National Herald Tribune

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "PAKISTAN-CHINA-IRAN: TRILATERAL COOPERATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND WAY FORWARD" ORGANIZED BY CGSS, ISLAMABAD HELD

**Iran is utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan: Iranian Ambassador**  
**A new realignment process between Pakistan, China and Iran is re-emerging: Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal**

SALEEM RAIS

ISLAMABAD, January 4: Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward on Monday. The conference aimed to examine the opportunities in trilateral cooperation, particularly the sphere of economic partnership. Moreover, the conference also highlighted the prospects of economic cooperation between Gwadar and Chabahar port in the region under China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The conference was commenced with the welcome remarks from Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Senior Member Board of Advisors, CGSS & Professor, School of Politics & IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. He stated that it is a very timely initiative to organize this conference, there is huge potential in this cooperation and certain challenges as well, we must understand how to maximize the potential of triangular cooperation of Pakistan, Iran, and China.

His Excellency Syed Mohammad Ali Husseini, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan discussed Iran's vibrant Foreign Policy and relationship with China and Pakistan. He discussed Iran-Pakistan cooperation by emphasizing the neighborhood component and in the light of the commonalities of the relations. Discussing the bilateral relations, he stated that believes Pakistan is the gateway to Asia and Iran is the gateway to Europe. This has made cooperation inevitable for the two countries. Furthermore, Iran has resources and these resources can meet the needs of Pakistan and other friendly & countries. If Pakistan requires energy, Iran has rich resources. If Iran is a drought-stricken country that needs rice and agricultural products, Pakistan is a rich source of these products.

He also highlighted the development of economic and trade relations between these countries. Chabahar Port in Iran and Gwadar Port in Pakistan have great potential to strengthen the connection between both economies in the first place and all countries in the region in the second place. He emphasized that the BRI and CPEC are undoubtedly favorable platforms for the development of regional cooperation, especially for the three countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China.

He concluded by announcing, that Iran is utilizing its full capacity to promote its ties with Pakistan in all spheres including trade and economic relations, and welcomes any idea and initiative to achieve this objective.

Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Senior Member Board of Advisors, CGSS & Professor, School of Politics & IR, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan discussed Challenges in the path of China-Iran-Pakistan Economic Development. He highlighted that a new realignment process between all three countries is re-emerging. The 400-billion-dollar Chinese investment for the next 25 years reported in US media in the middle of 2020 is good news for Pakistan.

While discussing the domain of domestic challenges he stated that the three states have to keep in mind that there are big potential challenges for their international and economic progress as well as stability. The second important challenge is the law and order issue. Pakistan has also been affected by propaganda and subversive activities against the economic corridor through BIA. He emphasized that Pakistan, Iran, and China have to deal with how to counter these rival powers who are trying to disrupt this trilateral relationship.

Furthermore, Pakistan and Iran's ports are very important for many countries in this region. The US propagated about the chain of pearls after Chinese infrastructure building was initiated in Gwadar, similarly, India can also be rightly blamed for many of such activities. He concluded by emphasizing that we have to work together for this trilateral cooperation and be aware of various challenges like the one posed by the US-India alliance. If these three countries work together, they can effectively counter and neutralize these challenges.

His Excellency Mashallah Shakeri, Former Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan & Member,



Institute for Political & International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran discussed implications of China-Iran-Pakistan economic ties for the US Interests in the region. He stated that the Chinese leadership has overtaken the reigns of many international organizations during recent times.

China has also replaced Russia's contentious position in the US foreign policy. He highlighted that the downward trend in the American economy will continue as their administration's misbehavior in the last four years was a major issue. Discussing the BRI projects, he stated that China and Pakistan are engaged under the CPEC initiative under the Belt and Road projects. It is interesting to see that as many as 16 countries are to join this initiative.

In event of Iran-China cooperation, CPEC can take a new look. He discussed, that this is the time for Iran to join CPEC. The geostrategic position of Iran can add to the value of CPEC projects. Iranian oil and gas resources can go to China through this route. Furthermore, Iran's geostrategic positions for countries like Turkey and Afghanistan can also play an important role in this regard.

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst discussed Iran's Economic Resurgence and Cooperation with China, countering the United States agenda of isolating Iran in the International system. He stated that it is indeed an important victory of China and Iran over Trump's policies and US imperialism. It is also a great example of vibrant Iranian diplomacy. Furthermore, Iranian geography also opens new routes for BRI projects. Cooperation in naval development will neutralize and equalize naval issues in the region. He further stated that Iran has found a partner in the form of China which is strong enough in the east to counter the west.

He suggested, for further strengthening of bilateral cooperation, a new entry point with Gwadar between Iran and Pakistan has been initiated which is the second border crossing between both countries. Transcontinental railway project between Pakistan-Iran-China has also been agreed in the recent past. He concluded by suggesting that, we need to have collaborative efforts in the region to counter challenges imposed by the alliances of rival players in the region.

Prof. Deqiang Ji, Vice Dean, Institute for a Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing, China discussed China's BRI and its significance for regional development. He highlighted that the Chinese leadership has continuously proposed working together and having a win-win relationship with all its partner countries. He discussed the importance of BRI projects for China and countries involved in it in the wider region. Moreover, he also emphasized that China has tried to avoid

geopolitical tensions with different players and alliances working against it in the region. Discussing the bilateral ties of China and Iran, he stated that there can be better energy ties and initiatives for infrastructure building as the strategic location connecting both countries is very important. Highlighting the positive implications of BRI projects, he mentioned, regional connectivity and dialogue under the trilateral cooperation as well as multiple channels and dialogue initiatives for scholars and experts.

Prof. Wang Hu, Associate Professor, School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, Siming-Xiamen, Fujian, China discussed, Prospects of China Pakistan and Iran Trilateral Partnership, Challenges, and Implications. He emphasized that relations between these countries can be established through a trilateral partnership by establishing collaboration. To achieve a real trilateral partnership, we must include civil society participation and broader partnership. He suggested that civil society organizations and various enterprises can help in effective grass root development. Discussing the trilateral partnership of Pakistan, China, and Iran, both Pakistan and Iran have friendly relations with China which can be beneficial in many ways. He also mentioned that BRI projects are important to establish friendly contacts and people to people relations amongst partner countries.

Dr. Qudus Akram, Assistant Professor, IR, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan discussed the Prospects of building cooperation and linkages between Gwadar and Chabahar ports. She presented a detailed geographical overview of the Gwadar and Chabahar port. Discussing the concept of economic integration, she stated that it could be used as an instrument of foreign policy, where political considerations influence the choice of contracting partners. Gwadar and Chabahar present multiple opportunities for connectivity across the region. If geo-politics is isolated from geo-economics, then both ports could provide an impetus for growth for the entire region. Discussing the prospects of linkages and integration she emphasized that, diplomatic means should be utilized on all levels to achieve trilateral dialogue.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst extended his gratitude to all the panelists. He praised the role of CGSS in initiating important dialogues as being an important institution in Pakistan to bring Pakistan, China, and Iran on the same platform.

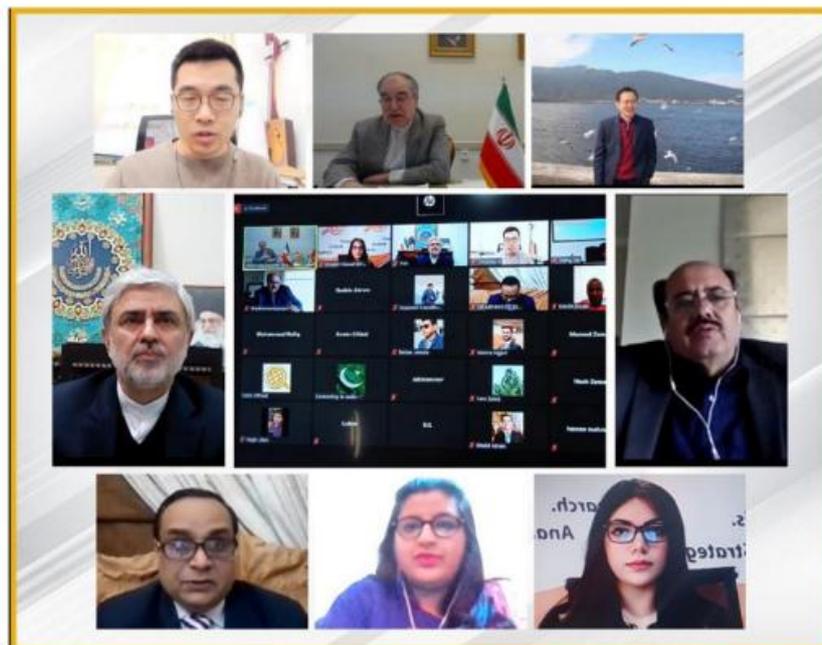
The conference was moderated by Ms. Minahil Shahal Afridi, Research Executive, CGSS, and was attended by 100 participants from various fields. It was also viewed by more than 300 people on various social media networks through live stream.

**Diplomatic News**

<https://diplomaticnewspk.blogspot.com/2021/01/cgss-organized-online-conference-on.html>

# CGSS organized Online Conference on Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward

FARUKH SHEHZAD January 06, 2021 CHINA, DIPLOMATIC NEWS, PAKISTAN, WORLD



ISLAMABAD: On Jan 4, 2021, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward.

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<https://dailymailnews.pk/2021/01/05/cgss-holds-virtual-conference-on-pak-china-iran-trilateral-co-operation/>

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Metropolitan

# CGSS holds virtual conference on Pak-China-Iran: Trilateral Co-operation

By Ajmal Khan January 5, 2021

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By Ajmal Khan Yousafzai

**ISLAMABAD:** Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, "Pakistan-China-Iran: Trilateral Cooperation: Opportunities and Way Forward", here on Monday.



## **Voice of East**

<https://voiceofeast.net/2021/01/05/trilateral-cooperation-between-pakistan-china-and-iran-opportunities-and-way-forward/>

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# Trilateral Cooperation between Pakistan, China and Iran: Opportunities and Way Forward

BY WEB EDITOR on JANUARY 5, 2021 • ( 0 )

## Trilateral Cooperation between Pakistan, China and Iran: Opportunities and Way Forward

By News Desk

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