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Report- In-House Meeting

with

Chinese Delegation from Shanghai International Studies University

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Pictures of the Event



In-House Meeting with Chinese Delegation from Shanghai International Studies University

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised an In-House Meeting on January 18, 2016 with a three-member Chinese delegation from Shanghai International Studies University headed by Professor Wu Yongnian, Director of South Asia Research Centre at the University. Other members of the delegation included: Ms. Zhu Xiufang, Research Fellow and Zhao Pei, Editorial Director.

Director Research ISSI, Najam Rafique welcomed the delegation and invited Research Fellow Muhammad Faisal from China-Pakistan Study Project (CPSP), to brief the guests about CPSP and developments on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Muhammad Faisal began his presentation by saying that the major purpose of the Project is to strengthen Pak-China bilateral ties by carrying out research, holding seminars and regularly publishing documents on CPEC, maritime security, counter-terrorism, strategic and security issues in Asia, and people-to-people contacts. He then talked about initiation, completion, and overall worth of the CPEC briefly. Explaining the institutional framework of CPEC implementation, he said that it is being run under Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), which is co-chaired by Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms (PD&R) and Vice Chairman of Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). It is further divided into five Joint Working Groups (JWG): Planning Joint Working Group; Energy Joint Working Group; Transport Infrastructure Joint Working Group; Gwadar Joint Working Group; and Industry Cooperation Joint Working Group.

In the 6th JCC meeting, he added, upgradation of ML-I Peshawar Karachi Railway Line and Khuzdar Basima Project, Dera-Ismael Khan Zhoub Project, a section of Thakot-Havelian was included in the CPEC framework. Moreover, feasibility study of mass-transit rail systems for provincial capitals - Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar - have also been decided upon. Afterwards, he informed the distinguished guests about the security measures at length. A multi-layered security apparatus, in consultation with Chinese authorities, has been designed. A special security division comprising of 9 army composite battalions (9229 personnel) and wings of Civil Armed Forces (CAFs), which consists 4,502 personnel, has been raised. Pakistan Navy has raised Task Force 88 to ensure secure trade and maritime security. Pakistan Marine Battalion has been tasked with ensuring security of Gwadar port. TORs of Special Security Division (SSD) have also been finalised. SSD will be deployed in accordance with articles 147 and 245 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and under ATA Act 1997.

He suggested the following mentioned policy proposals:

- Incentivizing new industry, particularly local, as the core of new nodal cities;
- Relocation of Chinese Industry/Entrepreneurs to existing SEZs/Industrial Parks in the B2B format. It requires policy support on both sides;

- Reviewing China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in line with momentum being generated by CPEC. It will create for Pakistan's exports in China;
- Introducing One Window Operations, in federal and provincial capitals, for CPEC related projects and industry;
- Amending relevant laws and regulations to give priority to CPEC industry in the provision of utilities, facilitation and incentives;
- Smooth implementation of CPEC projects requires institutional arrangements between federal government and provinces;
- Accelerating the process of establishing special economic zones, acquisition of land, provision of necessary infrastructure and skill development of in regions close to economic zones;
- Aligning Development Policies and Internal Policy Reform Agenda with CPEC by building industrial infrastructure and upgrading Regulatory and Policy Support System e.g., early establishment of already approved Exim Bank and Land Port Authority of Pakistan.

Professor Wu Yongnian greeted Director Research, Director Admin and researchers at ISSI. He appreciated the details provided in the presentation. He said that his purpose to visit Pakistan was to increase the bilateral cooperation and analyse the people's expectations here. Pakistan, situated at a significant geo-strategic position, can benefit itself a great deal to address its issues in geo-strategic and economic domains. CPEC, he was of the view, had a strategic meaning for Pakistan; it was a great economic opportunity as well. Subject to Indian inclusion in CPEC, Pakistan can help address its regional security issues by raising a Triple Armed Forces. He said that his main interest was in security issues of CPEC and Chinese working in Pakistan. He asked the Director Research that he is interested to know about the current activities of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Afghan Taliban as well.

Najam Rafique began by saying that one must distinguish between the Afghan Taliban and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). As far as two wings of Taliban are concerned, the Afghan are concerned with finding a political niche in Afghanistan. On the other hand, TTP is focused on anti-Pakistan doctrine whereby it would like to replace the current political setup in Pakistan and impose their interpreted version of Sharia in Pakistan. This particular group has been dealt with wisely through operation Zarb-e-Azb. Much of its strength has been dissipated, however, many of the groups affiliated with it find support from regional parties, which are interested in sabotaging CPEC, particularly India.

On Afghanistan, he said that a Quadrilateral Cooperation Group has been put together between Pakistan, China and Afghanistan in order to find a solution for peace in Afghanistan and bring all the stakeholders together. He said that other regional countries including India and Iran would also need to be brought onboard in order to find regional solutions for regional problems. He said now Russia, China, and Pakistan have also initiated a trilateral dialogue for an inclusive peace process in Afghanistan.

With regard to security of CPEC and Chinese personnel, Mr. Najam said that the kind of security currently being provided by Pakistan is unprecedented. Specialized protection measures have been taken for the CPEC projects and the Chinese working on them. Other than raising Special Forces, as a component of these security measures, Pakistan has been very successful in curbing militant activities through operation Zarb-e-Azb. This operation has been successful in destroying safe havens of the militants in FATA, and there has been a marked drop in terrorist activities inside the country. However, there are still larger geo-political games at play, and India is making all efforts to sabotage CPEC. Though security operations have been in progress, such efforts by India need to be considered by our Chinese friends. He said that Pakistan has shown its willingness to extend the CPEC modes into India as well, but there has been no encouraging response from the Indian side.

Professor Wu was of the view that India must be a party to CPEC, which will benefit not only Pakistan, but Asia too. He recollected his visit to India and shared his observations with the researchers. He said that in his meetings with Indian academics, Indian professors and scholars wished to benefit from CPEC and were of the view that joining CPEC would be beneficial for Indians. He maintained that research and policy institutes like ISSI must have some collaboration mechanism with Indian policy and research institutes.

Mr. Najam said that at the academic level, there is much support for CPEC, yet, the elephant in the room remains the hegemonic ambitions of the Indian governments. He shared his impressions of the scholars on his recent visit to Yunnan and Beijing. He said that the scholars, including Indians, were unanimous that the CPEC project would be extremely beneficial for South Asia and its connectivity with other regions. He said that the Chinese officials cited CPEC as a success story under their One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. The officials and academics in Beijing and Yunnan were disappointed with the pace of progress on Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor (BCIM). On question of having academic ties with Indian research and policy institutes, he informed the professor that the institute did have academic ties with the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in New Delhi, however these have not been utilised constructively in the presence of a tense relationship between Pakistan and India. He said that while academics in India were convinced of a cooperative relationship with Pakistan, the government of India was another story.

Senior Research Fellow at ISSI, Dr. Ahmed Rashid Malik, further explained about CPEC, its progress and security measures at large. He said that our Chinese friends always consider security measures taken by Pakistan as inadequate. He inquired the professor that if these measures, in Chinese view, were insufficient what else should Pakistan do. It is a shared responsibility and which needs to be shouldered equally.

On this, Professor Wu replied that there must be a proficient mechanism of security and that this needs to be done by the two governments.

On a question on slowing down of Chinese economy and its impact on various CPEC projects, Professor Wu expressed his confidence in President Xi Jinping's capability of dealing with the

economic issues. In the end, he said that he will make all efforts to hold a trilateral conference in Shanghai between scholars from Pakistan, China and India.

Mr. Najam reciprocated the invitation and furthered it by saying that he would like to see a memorandum of understanding between ISSI and the South Asia Research Centre at the Shanghai International Studies University. This will be an excellent opportunity for the two to interact closely on the academic and research levels, as well as exchange of scholars between the two.