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## The CICA Beijing Moot

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The demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 created two important regional security architectures: one was the China-led Shanghai Five that later converted into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the other was the Kazak-led Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The primary purpose of both these regional organisations was to create congenial security atmosphere in Asia by tacking differences and building confidence among Asian countries to resolve their outstanding and emerging issues.

The CICA is a Kazak initiative taken by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1992 when many Asian countries confronted with the implications of demise of the Soviet Union and their security could be at stake for one or other reason. Building new trust and confidence among Asian nations was considered crucial at that time.

CICA unites around 26 countries and 14 observers to fostering equal level of cooperation among its members. It was established as the platform for strengthening mutual understanding, dialogue and trust between the member states and has become one of the biggest forum of the modern system of international relations contributing to the maintenance of security and stability in Asia from Southeast Asia to the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and up to the northern seas.

The CICA summit meeting process was initiated in 2002. The first CICA summit was held at Almaty in June 2002 and the second in June 2006 at the same city. The third summit meeting was held at Istanbul in June 2010, while Shanghai hosted the fourth summit in May 2014. The current chairmanship of the CICA conference lies with China. CICA also promotes its ideals through think-tanks level interaction, youth exchanges, ministerial level meetings, and non-governmental level fora.

The Second Non-governmental forum of CICA was held in Beijing on June 28. CICA non-governmental forum had its first annual session in 2015 in Beijing. Nearly 300 delegations from CICA member countries, observers, former politicians, think-tanks, social groups, and media attended the forum to discuss common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia, as well as the Belt and Road construction.

Besides a plenary session, there were eight roundtables covering topics such as cyberspace security, anti-terror cooperation, climate change and the implementation of United Nations 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. China now holds the CICA presidency.

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message in which he stated that the CICA celebrates its 25th anniversary of founding this year, and has served the common expectations of Asian countries seeking security and development in the region.

Stressing on the expansion of cooperation among countries and establishing peace all over the world, the Secretary of the Conference, Yuan Chen, in the opening ceremony of the second annual forum said that achieving these goals are not merely the mission of the governments and their organizations, rather the non-governmental entities should feel responsible and play a more active role to realise them.

The establishment of the CICA Non-governmental forum was an important initiative proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the CICA Shanghai Summit in May 2014. The First Conference of this forum was successfully held in Beijing in May 2015.

The CICA Second Non-governmental conference was hosted by the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, organized by the People's Government of Beijing Municipality, co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and supported by the China Public Diplomacy Association.

As Director of the China-Pakistan Study Centre in Islamabad, I asked India to join the CPEC as it does not question Indian sovereignty. I invited CICA to play a role to build confidence between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India to address security issues in the region. Sudheendra Kulkarni, Chairman of the Observer Research Foundation, Mumbai, proposed India not to be isolated from the CPEC.

Citing the India-China crisis- management mechanism model to address disputes, former Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon said today that Asian countries should collectively cooperate to combat terrorism, maritime and cyber security threats. Head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations Kamal Kharrazi voiced Iran's readiness to play an effective role in New Silk Road project, adding the country has macro plans for expanding connections between regional countries.

In his plenary session speech, former Philippine House Speaker Jose de Venecia suggested to temporarily shelve the sovereignty issue of the South China Sea and convert the potentially energy-rich territory into a zone of friendship, peace, cooperation and development.

The Philippines has improved its relations with China and President Rodrigo Duterte has visited Beijing twice in last October and this May.

Other Asian countries should also follow the Philippines-China model of repairing ties and building trust.

CICA could play a pivotal role in paving the way for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as most of the CICA members are also the part of the BRI and maintain important economic relations with China. The modern Silk Road would go through many parts of CICA members by fostering unity.

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