



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-920-4423, 24
fax: +92-920-4658

Report - In-House Meeting

“Chinese Scholars from Tsinghua University”

August 31, 2018



Rapporteur: Ali Haider Saleem

Edited by: Najam Rafique

Pictures of the Event





The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Meeting with a 4-member Chinese delegation on August 31, 2018. The members of the delegation included: Mr. Yan Xuetong, Professor & Dean of the Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University; Mr. Sun Xuefeng, Professor & Executive Dean of Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University; Ms. Li Li, Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University; Ms. Liu Zhuang, Attache, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Bao Zhong, Director, Political and Press Section, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Islamabad.

Welcoming the delegation, Chairman BOG ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted the ever deepening nature of Pakistan-China friendship. He stated that for Pakistan, it is the most vital relationship. Ambassador Mahmood added that this friendship is widening further because of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it has added economic cooperation to our ties and has enhanced people-to-people contacts.

Mr. Yan Xuetong thanked Ambassador Khalid Mahmood for the opportunity to have a discussion on China-Pakistan relations and CPEC. Mr. Yan said that he has been applying quantitative measures to determine the status of foreign relations as part of his research. He revealed that the relationship between China and Pakistan has always been stable, whereas China's relations with other countries are usually projected by an inconsistent curve. He also mentioned that even with countries like North Korea, Russia and Vietnam with whom China shares the same political system, the relationship curve is not as smooth as it is in case of Pakistan. He opined that the steady nature of this friendship is due to the fact that it is based on common strategic interests.

Mr. Yan said that CPEC has enlarged the base of common interests between China and Pakistan. He emphasized that CPEC is based entirely on economic factors, stating that economic interests are based on benefits and not on threats. In this regard, he asserted that both sides must get benefits to make CPEC a truly successful endeavor. More importantly, the people of both countries should be the main benefactors of CPEC.

Expressing his views on the international political situation under the administration of President Donald Trump, he predicted that there is going to be less order in the world if the United States decides to move away from the liberal order it had nurtured. He added that even the traditional allies of the US like Germany and Canada are not receiving attention from the White House. He said that the trade conflicts resulting from President Trump’s policies will adversely affect the international system.

Dr. Ahmad Rashid Malik, Director, China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSP) at ISSI, asked whether the trade friction between the US and China could turn into an outright war. Mr. Yan replied that this possibility is very unlikely due to the possession of nuclear weapons by both of them. He argued that the tension created by the trade issues can only build up greater economic rivalry between the two.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Muhammad Faisal, Research Fellow at ISSI, regarding the Chinese interest in CPEC projects, Mr. Yan responded that CPEC is strictly an economic project and all China wants from it is to expand the consumption capabilities of its partners and create new markets for Chinese products. He compared it with the European Union which also helped establish a continent wide market.

Discussing the presence of US in South Asia and its effect on China, Ms. Li Li said that India relies largely on China for its development and economic objectives, but looks towards the US for its security interests and added that the US is looking to use India in order to contain China. She added that although China is not directly involved in South Asia, the growing US presence and its Indo-Pacific strategy is going to escalate the tensions between the two.

Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research at ISSI, enquired about the Chinese concerns regarding CPEC and the progress of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor. Responding to the question, Ms. Bao Zhong replied that greater industrial cooperation under CPEC has to be generated along with more opportunities for the local population. About BCIM, she revealed that the four countries have initiated joint studies and the project is still in a planning stage.

Responding to a query by Ms. Amina Khan, Senior Research Fellow, ISSI, about the possibility of extending CPEC into Afghanistan, Ms. Bao said that CPEC is not confined to just two countries and China has reached out to Afghanistan to encourage its participation.

Ms. Li Li raised a question about the economic priorities of the new government and its stance on CPEC. Referring to the statements of the new Prime Minister, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood informed the delegation that the new government is fully committed to bolstering ties with China and continuing cooperation on CPEC. He suggested that the issue of debt burden associated with CPEC has to be jointly resolved. Moreover, protection of local industry and greater employment opportunities must be ensured. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood advocated that CPEC has to be made more people centric.

Mr. Sun Xuefeng asked about the future of Pakistan’s relationship with India and the US. On Pakistan-US relationship, Ms. Mahrukh Khan, Research Fellow at ISSI, stated that the future of Pakistan-US relations stands undecided. She apprised the delegation that this relationship was previously looked through the lens of US objectives in Afghanistan, but now the China factor has added a new dimension to it.

Regarding the future of Pakistan-India relationship, Mr. Waqas Ahmed, Senior Research Fellow at ISSI, stated that the deadlock between Islamabad and New Delhi is likely to persist at least until the 2019 elections in India.

Ms Shamsa Nawaz, Research fellow at ISSI, raised a question on multilateralism and the European opposition to China’s development plan and the response of China towards it. Mr. Yan responded that multilateralism is less effective now and countries should focus on bilateral ties. He stated that the international political environment is quite different from the period of Cold War as countries can choose to side with country A on one issue and country B on another. In order to progress, countries should adopt a delinking strategy and don’t let conflict in one domain hamper collaboration in any other domain.

Concluding the meeting, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that CPEC has given new dimensions to Pakistan-China friendship, making the future seem brighter. He thanked the delegation for visiting ISSI to discuss issues of common interests.