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*Report – Roundtable  
with*  
**“Dr. Haiyun Ma, Associate Professor  
of History, Frostburg State University,  
Maryland”**

**January 13, 2020**



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China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a roundtable with Dr. Haiyun Ma, Associate Professor of History at the Frostburg State University, Maryland at its premises today. The agenda for the session was to discuss Islamic-Chinese cultural dialogue in contemporary times. Dr. Nadeem Omer Tarar, Executive Director at the Center for Culture and Development, Islamabad also spoke on the occasion. Experts from academia, think tanks and media attended the roundtable.

Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, welcomed the speakers and participants. He highlighted the need to bridge the cultural gap between Pakistan and China through intellectual discussions and generation of new ideas.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, said that the people in Pakistan are deeply attached to Islam and Islamic values. The people-to-people contact between Pakistan and China are only just beginning to open up and it is important to work upon them. He added that there are ample opportunities for bringing together Pakistan and China outside of the economic and security realms, and these must be pursued with perseverance and diligence.

Dr. Haiyun Ma shared his views on culture from geographical and historical perspective. He posited that Pakistan has always been at a crossroad, and therefore it has struggled to develop its cultural identity. In reference to Islamophobia, he said that unfortunately there is this notion that fundamentalist elements exist in Pakistan which smear the country's image in China. Dr. Haiyun Ma suggested that cultural communication needs to be strengthened in order to eliminate misconceptions and bridge people-to-people contact between Pakistan and China. He also emphasized the need for Pakistan to strengthen its relations with other East Asian countries as well.

During his presentation, Dr. Nadeem Omer Tarar said that intercultural dialogue is the only way to eliminate misconceptions. He added that religion has an important role in shaping human societies, and so cannot be ignored. He highlighted the deep historical affinities between Islamic and Chinese societies. He said that China and the Islamic world have over 1400 years of cultural contact starting from around the 7th century. Dr. Tarar said that despite obvious religious

differences, the value systems of Chinese and Muslim society resonates with similar ideals and concerns, such as respect for tradition, family honor and deference for women and elderly. He also talked about how Pakistan and Buddhism share a common history and noted that it was high time Pakistan focused on building and promoting its culture, and think of it as a strategic asset.

During the interactive session, topics such as Islamophobia and cross-border linkages were discussed. The participants shared their personal opinions on Pakistani culture and role of Islam in the society. Amb. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry stated that Pakistan was not just a frontier of Islamic empires, but home to ancient civilizations like Indus and Gandhara as well. He added that Pakistan is a place where multiculturalism flourishes, which is a matter of great pride for the people of this country.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG, ISSI, stated that Islam is a living religion in China. He said that dialogue is very important in bringing understanding and harmony between people hailing from different civilizations.

## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



