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*Report – Joint ISSI-SIIS Webinar*

# **“China-Pakistan Relations in Changing Geopolitical Environment and Its Role in Regional Security and Stability”**

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The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) held a webinar on “China-Pakistan Relations in Changing Geo-Political Environment and Its Role in Regional Security and Stability” on September 27, 2021. The dialogue was divided into two sessions; inaugural session and working session. The distinguished speakers in the inaugural session included Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, DG ISSI; Chen Dongxiao, President SIIS; Dr. Moeed Yusuf, National Security Advisor; Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific) and Mr. Liu Jinsong, DG Asian Affairs, MFA PRC. The distinguished speakers in the working session included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI; Ambassador Zhang Chunxiang, Former Ambassador of China to Pakistan; Lt. General (Retd) Naeem Khalid Lodhi; Senior Col (Retd) Zhou Bo, Senior Fellow at Tsinghua University; Mustafa Hyder Sayed, ED PCI and Dr. Liu Zongyi, Senior Fellow at SIIS.

### **Inaugural Session**

In his introductory remarks, **Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC**, said, region around China and Pakistan is experiencing unprecedented change at a rapid pace. The role of regional countries and great powers is undergoing structural changes. With new situation in Afghanistan, the developments there will determine next course of regional security in South and Central Asia. Pakistan and China being neighbours and key stakeholders in peace and stability in South and Central Asia are directly affected by evolving regional situation. At the same time, Pakistan and China need to continue to maintain close strategic communication and coordination to jointly respond to changing situation and work towards peace and stability in the broader region.

Dr. Talat Shabbir underscored that on the heels of the Taliban takeover, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Secretary of State Antony Blinken that China desired a “soft landing” for the country. Chinese Foreign Minister’s words highlight China’s paramount priority for Afghanistan: stability above all else. Similarly, Pakistan remains committed to an inclusive political settlement representing all Afghan ethnic groups as the way forward, which is the path towards lasting peace and stability. China and Pakistan share similar stances and interests on the Afghan issues. As two important neighbours of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan are closely

coordinating on Afghan issues. Both sides welcomed end of the US military presence in Afghanistan, which was a source of regional instability.

He emphasized the emergence of new political dynamics in Afghanistan in the wake of Taliban's takeover has prompted Pakistan and China to push for realisation of extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan. Pakistan and China both have had solid relations for the past 70 years of cooperation and friendship. Now with the departure of the US troops from Afghanistan and changed regional dynamics an opportunity has arisen to deepen strategic communication and strategic coordination between our two countries for regional peace, stability and prosperity. In this backdrop, he added, today's exchange of views between diplomats, soldiers and scholars of both countries would proffer actionable recommendations for policy makers of both countries

During his welcome address, **Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, DG ISSI**, welcomed all participants in the talk. He said that global geopolitics has been changing so rapidly since the start of the century where it can be described as shifting sands. A few trends are more visible than other. He stated that unilateralism is rising and multilateralism is being marginalized. Multiple centres of power are rising to make the world multipolar. Global socioeconomic norms are also changing; free international trade, immigrants are being perceived as economic and security threat, islamophobia and other form of xenophobia are also growing. As are the non-traditional security threats like climate change, water scarcity, food insecurity, cyber warfare and information explosion are all redefining the features of a new world.

Ambassador Chaudhry underscored that the most pronounced change for our region and our continent is the onset of major power competition driven by the US to counter the rise of China. The China's economic rise is shaping up a new balance of power in Asia. The US has chosen India as a counterbalance to China. The US is also teaming up with Japan and Australia to make Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and lately the US also signed up with Australia and UK a massive program of building nuclear arm submarine for Australia. At the same time, India is feverously modernizing its military capabilities and acquiring sophisticated military technologies across the world. The US retreat from Afghanistan after two decades of expensive

and deadly war and Taliban's swift victory over Kabul has brought significant changes in the global politics.

Ambassador Chaudhry further added that all these changes have brought the focus of global attention to this part of the world and in the midst of all that flux, China and Pakistan bilateral relations stand out as a role model for interstate conducts. The two nations have shown to all that the world must not be seen as a zero sum game. China's rise is not America's loss and vice versa. There is complete consensus in Pakistan that our relations with China are of pivotal importance for our two countries and for this region, while at the same time keeping our relations good with the US is also important. Pakistan and China have rightly invested in promoting bilateral cooperation in infrastructure and energy and are moving onto industrial cooperation, I and another area. All this can usher unlimited opportunities for the prosperity of this whole region including Afghanistan which at this point in time needs urgent help and assistance to stabilize.

In his opening remarks, **Prof. Chen Dongxiao, President SIIS**, said that the commemoration of the establishment of 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan makes this year very special. This is a good opportunity to review the bilateral relations from all facets and further intensify the collaboration to make this bilateral relation more robust and stronger. He underlined that this dialogue is focused on the challenges the two countries have been facing in a changing geo-political environment in general and in particular focuses on their role in the context of regional stability and regional security.

He mentioned that with the growing complex reconfiguration of global and regional players meanwhile the existing traditional and non-traditional challenges such as Afghanistan issue and the emergency of those new security arrangement like AUKUS, and Quad have further exposed that complexities and the vulnerabilities of the regional security. So, this changing context has also highlights the importance of how to make bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan strong and serve as a regional stabilizer for peace and security in the long run.

In a special video message, **Dr. Moeed Yusuf, National Security Advisor**, said that this relationship is so important for us is because Pakistan's geo-economic vision and paradigm conceived is really at the centre of the relationship. Pakistan for seventy years talked about geo-

strategic location but what is this geo-economics paradigm? We have used this location more for security purposes then to boost our economy and, unfortunately, this caused massive damage to Pakistan. This location is equally a geo-economics location. It is how we use it to benefit average Pakistani that matters.

In that case, this geo-economics vision has three pillars: Connectivity of the region; if the region connects then Pakistan becomes trade and transit hub and the whole region would benefit tremendously. Second is the development partnership. It means focusing on how do we make Pakistan a production and investment hub. With trade and transit hub, Pakistan can also become production hub and an attractive avenue for foreign investment. Without the third element the first two cannot be tangible, peace within Pakistan and in the neighbourhood should be ensured because without that connectivity and investment is hard to achieve. The key pillar of connectivity is CPEC and absolutely critical to our geo-economic vision. That is why CPEC is a win-win and a necessity for both sides. We are very grateful for our Chinese partners for all the investment they made. Gwadar has the future as the trans-shipment hub that will bring a lot of dividends to Pakistan and China and also to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

During his keynote Address, **Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, Additional Secretary (Asia-Pacific)** said, Pakistan and China are on important juncture of history as our ironclad friendship marks the 70th anniversary this year. The Communist Party is also celebrating its 100th anniversary of its foundation this year. On its part, Pakistan has made significant progress in all walks of life and has solidified our place as an influential and leading voice in the community of nations particularly among the Islamic and developing world. We are at the forefront of supporting cooperative multilateralism and promoting dialogue and understanding between various cultures and civilizations. We are on the right track to achieve our objective of economic development and prosperity.

Ambassador. Iftikhar added we must acknowledge the hard work of a successive generation and leadership of Pakistan and China which has laid foundation for our time tested friendship. He said that he is convinced that these milestones are not only cementing the two nations together but also inspire us to strengthen our cooperation as we go forward. Currently, global geopolitical landscape is going under tectonic shift as president Xi put it “our world is undergoing profound

changes unseen in a century.” The profound changes have implications for Pakistan, China, our region and beyond our region. He urged that we need to fully understand and grasp these developments and join hands to safeguard our core interest and objectives.

Amb. Iftikhar focused on five major changes that are taking place at global political arena. First, the global order is in profound uncertainties. The post WWII Eurocentric world order is rapidly eroding. The US led Neo-liberal world order is under severe stress and new centre of power and influences are emerging across the world. These changes are not only profound but also knocked by uncertainties which may lead to hostilities and conflicts. Secondly, the hard earned virtue of globalisation and multilateralism is being challenged by protectionism, isolationism and unilateralism. We see more and more states policies and decisions based on narrow self-interest and introvert thinking.

Third, he added, it seems that the cold war outlook is returning. The world is drifting toward the cold war approaches of containment, regional alliance and blocs politics. We have recently seen a surge in initiatives and approaches based on exclusivity. These methods go against the spirit of shared future and shared destiny of mankind. Fourth, the rise of ultra-nationalism. It is blindly driving state policies in many parts of the world and our region as well. This poses a serious threat to peace and stability. Lastly, the non-traditional threats such as pandemic, environmental degradation and natural disasters are all posing increasingly difficult challenges.

Focusing on Afghanistan, Amb. Iftikhar added that unfolding of developments took place in a rapid phase and require an urgent attention and cooperation. Afghanistan has been passing through a critical stage. The hasty US withdrawal from Afghanistan created a difficult situation for the whole region. It carries severe implication for Pakistan in particular, but also provides an opportunity to restore long lasting peace in Afghanistan. From Pakistan’s perspective, it is very clear that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is of critical importance for Pakistan and the region. In this regard, Pakistan has very consistently and openly supported Afghan peace process. He added Pakistan supports stable, united and sovereign Afghanistan which offers dividends of peace and prosperity for the region.

He further added that there is a need to assist Afghanistan in order to avoid a humanitarian crisis which requires constructive and sustained engagement by international community. Pakistan and

China are working together with other neighbouring countries and partners for a way forward that ensures peace and stability in Afghanistan and opens up the great potentials in terms of benefiting from the regional connectivity and integrations.

Focusing on India, Amb. Iftikhar said that Pakistan believes to resolve its all longstanding disputes with India even including the core dispute of Kashmir, which should be resolved peacefully and in accordance with the UNSC resolution and aspiration of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The August 5<sup>th</sup> 2019's illegal and unilateral act of India has complicated the situation as it carries direct consequences for both India and Pakistan. On the other hand, the people in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir are living in inhuman perpetual military siege with rampant extra judicial killings, disappearances and wide-range of human rights abuses. The RSS-BJP nexus and its extremist and revisionist ideology poses a serious threat to regional peace and stability. We believe that there is a need for international community to focus seriously on these developments on long standing issue of Jammu and Kashmir and there must be sustained efforts by the international community to resolve this dispute. He thanked the government of China for their just and principle position on the J&K dispute.

Focusing on BRI he said that Pakistan is one of the earliest supporter and participant of the BRI which seeks to transcend national boundaries and lay bridges for win-win cooperation and closer economic integration for a shared future. As a flagship project of BRI, CPEC compliments Pakistan's national development priorities. The two countries held the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the JCC in which both sides expressed full commitment to take the CPEC forward in full force.

In his address, **Mr. Liu Jinsong, DG- Asian Affairs, MFA PRC**, underlined the efforts of the Chinese Embassy in Kabul on humanitarian grounds. He said that since 2017, the Chinese Embassy has conducted the Humanitarian Assistance Programs for Children along with the Belt and Road Initiative. With the help of Chinese Red Cross Society, the Chinese Embassy sent hundreds of Afghan Congenial Heart Disease (CHD) children to Urumqi and Xinjiang for surgical treatment. All the children had fully recovered from the disease. The reason why this program was conducted so efficiently and successfully is that to spare no effort to implement President Xi Jinping's great proposal of building the Community of Share Future for Mankind,



to cherish and value the life of every Afghan child following the principle of putting people and their lives first as well as with the humanitarian spirit of boundless love.

Mr. Jinsong underscored that during the past 20 years, the United States spent 2 trillion US dollars in Afghanistan. However, this money was mostly used for warfare and fell into the pockets of arms suppliers and corrupt officials, with only 2% used for developmental and humanitarian purposes. He mentioned that some western politicians are obsessed with geopolitical competition, economic interest and mineral resources, paying no attention to the lives and welfare of ordinary Afghan people at all, and never cared for the heavy burden of Afghan refugees taken by Pakistan, as well as their huge sacrifice in the war against terrorism. Military interference, so called democratic transformation and irresponsible withdrawal of foreign troops brought serious impacts on the Afghan people and on the entire region as well. He stressed that the unilateral sanctions or restrictions to Afghanistan should be removed as early as possible, and Afghan's foreign reserves should not be used as leverage to impose political pressure on Afghanistan.

Mr. Jinsong said that situation in Afghanistan has undergone fundamental changes. The Afghan people hold a historical chance to master their destiny on their own. On the other hand, Afghanistan is facing humanitarian crisis, counter-terrorism, economic and political challenges. As important neighbours of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan call on the international community to help Afghanistan tackle the challenges collectively and providing urgent humanitarian assistance without any further delay. He said, China, Pakistan and other members of the international community also urge Afghanistan to break off from all kinds of international terrorist activities, and not to become a shelter for and diffusion source of terrorist activities again. He noted that we also expect the new Afghan authority to put the fundamental interests of Afghan people in the first place, build a broad and inclusive political structure, pursue moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, respect the basic rights of ethnic minorities, women and children, as well as develop friendly relations with other countries.

Mr. Jinsong shared his own experience and said that when he served as the DG of Asian Department of Chinese MoFA, he established precious mutual trust and friendship with Moin ul Haque, Pakistan's Ambassador to China. He said, we agreed to beat the enemies of China-



Pakistan relations and the CPEC. In this regard, the best ways are to strengthen China-Pakistan strategic cooperation and build a closer community of shared future, to crack down the terrorists and ensure the safe and smooth progress of the CPEC projects at full stretch. In view of the unprecedented changes that took place in Afghanistan, he added, Pakistan proposed to hold Foreign Ministers' meeting on the Afghan issue among the neighbouring countries, China was the first country to show response and support. We materialized the meeting together within one month, which once again demonstrated the efficiency and effectiveness of China-Pakistan cooperation.

### **Working Session**

**Speaker:** Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI

**Theme:** China-Pakistan Relations in Changing Geo-Political Environment

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that over the past seventy years, Pakistan-China relationship has been marked by deep mutual trust, confidence and understanding and strongly opposed the hegemony of all kinds and abuses. The two countries have always stood by each other through thick and thin. This relationship emerged in a given set of circumstances, when the world was in a grip of cold war between the capitalist and socialist world. In fact, the ideological rift between two leading states of socialist world, the Soviet Union and China, had also started developing in that time. China was deliberately isolated in that time. Both China and Pakistan perceived India as a common threat. Ever since, the unique relationship between Pakistan and China has been growing and has strengthened overtime. Pakistan became instrumental in facilitating the contact between the two erstwhile adversaries; China and the United States. Leading to the recognition of the People's Republic of China by the United States and the establishment of diplomatic relations between them.

Following the disintegration of Soviet Union, Amb. Mahmood added, the United States emerged as sole super power heading to the complexity of its relations with the rising China. Lately, the growing nexus between the United States and India introduced a new destabilizing element in the region directly impacting Pakistan and China. Apart from these, new developments have occurred which complicates the situation further. One is the developments in Afghanistan. Of course, this

should be seen as a positive development in terms of a chance to peace returning to Afghanistan but there are still many hiccups. Then a new Eurasian order is in the making; China and Russia are working together to build a common understanding on the economic and security issues.

Ambassador Mahmood said that Pakistan and China are striving their best not only to consolidate their unique bond of friendship but also trying to further build it up. In that context, CPEC which is the part of BRI is the guiding norm of their relationship. The 10<sup>th</sup> JCC meeting is a test to the firm commitment of the leadership and the government and people of both countries to ensure no amount of opposition or subversion by detractors will prevent the further progress of this mega project. After the successful completion of the first phase of CPEC, we are embarked upon the second phase which has expended the scope of the CPEC. He concluded with the remarks that the situation requires step up cooperation and coordination between Pakistan and China. The fundamentals of their bilateral relations are intact and what is further required is to add greater economic and commercial interaction and sustain people to people exchanges in all spheres at all levels.

**Speaker: Ambassador Zhang Chunxiang**

**Theme: Cherish the Hard-won China-Pakistani Friendship**

Ambassador Zhang Chunxiang said that China-Pakistan relationship has weathered constant changes in the international and regional situations. The two sides have properly responded to and dealt with the ever-changing geo-political environment despite the difference of social systems, histories, cultures and religious beliefs of the two countries. This unique characteristic made the China-Pakistan relationship a comprehensive all-weather strategic cooperative partnership making this friendship deeply rooted in the hearts of the two people, and made this relationship a model of state-to-state relations. He comprehended this bilateral relationship into four phases:

The First Phase (1951-1960) was a period of mutual recognition, limited contact, and getting to know each other. Pakistan depended on the American assistance and aid especially in the sphere of defence. The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China had experienced ups and downs in that period. For instances, in 1954, Pakistan joined two military organizations: The

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The two organizations centring on the United States formed an anti-China encirclement. Pakistan maintained limited relations with China. From October 18 to 29, 1956, Pakistani Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy visited China, Chairman Mao said, the only disagreement between us lies in the two treaties.

The Second Phase (1960-1980), in the face of India's provocation and aggression, the leaders of China and Pakistan exchanged frequent visits, enhanced mutual trust, and strengthened mutually beneficial cooperation. The China-Pakistan relationship entered the "in love" phase, supporting each other and strengthening cooperation on issues related to the territorial security of the two countries and other core interests. Pakistan supported China's claim on the China-India border issue, and China resolutely opposed and fully supported Pakistan's opposition to India's ambition of "gnawing-away" Pakistani territory and expanding aggressively. Pakistan resolutely finalized the border with China through peaceful negotiations between the two countries and signed the China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement.

Amb. Chunxiang mentioned that Pakistan also supported China's requirement of restoring its lawful seat in the United Nations, and signed the China-Pakistan Air Services Agreement and the Pakistan-China Maritime Agreement, which broke the anti-China encirclement of the imperialists, revisionists and counterrevolutionaries, and provided China with aerial and maritime passages to the world. During the two Indo-Pakistani Wars in which India invaded Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, China stood firmly on Pakistan's side, fully supported Pakistan's just fight against Indian aggression, and provided a large amount of military assistance and armament, which won the world's acclaim. In this stage, he added, several state level visits have been exchanged from both sides to enhance the trust and cooperation between the two states.

In the Third Phase (1981-2000) the bilateral relations were further consolidated, expanded and enhanced, and the width and depth of cooperation in various fields were further strengthened, especially in the fields of infrastructure construction and hi-tech. The cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and aerospace was even more impressive to the world. Great progress was also made in the cooperation in defence, military industry, trade and other sophisticated fields.

In the Phase Four (Since 2000), Amb. Chunxiang focused on the construction of the CPEC related-projects. Gwadar Port and a large number of energy, transportation and other infrastructure projects have been completed, and a number of projects related to Pakistan's national economy and people's livelihood are under construction. We believe that the completion and improvement of the CPEC will further promote the development of Pakistan's economy and trade, and the residents along the corridor and the people in nearby areas will surely enjoy more benefits.

In recent years, some new changes have taken place in the geo-political environment of this region. India keeps making troubles and conflicts in the China-India border area, and keeps trying to destabilize Pakistan. It blatantly tries to change the status quo of the disputed area in Kashmir and to forcefully occupy the entire Kashmir region, creating conflicts and incidents of bloodshed in the area along the line of actual control in Kashmir and at the border between India and Pakistan. We suggest that the Chinese and Pakistani militaries strengthen communication and intelligence exchange, join hands and cooperate with each other to fight back the Indian provocations and respond timely.

Amb. Chunxiang added that with the US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, a series of new changes have taken place across the region. Afghanistan is an important neighbour of China and Pakistan. Afghanistan's peace, stability and reconstruction are interlinked to peace and stability of China and Pakistan. He recommended that the two countries should timely communicate and discuss countermeasures, strengthen ties with various tribes and factions in Afghanistan, promote peaceful negotiations, encourage the Taliban to form an inclusive central government, and help Afghanistan achieve peace and stability and lay a good foundation for reconstruction. We should also communicate with the International Community and provide necessary assistance to Afghanistan timely.

**Speaker: Lt. General (Retd) Naeem Khalid Lodhi**

**Theme: Perspectives on Regional Security**

Lt. General (Retd) Naeem Khalid Lodhi .... said, the regional security perspective is contingent upon whatever goes on at the global level and the sole super power, America, is trying to

perpetuate its status for as long as possible which is very natural in the world of politics. Of course, it is being challenged by emerging powers such as China and Russia. America has tagged them with a name “revisionist states” because China seeks revision of the faulty global political order and also faulty global economic order. While Russia resists American designs of changing regimes and their unilateral actions such as in Syria and elsewhere.

General Lodhi added, the Asia Pivot Policy of America is undergoing changes to the second line defence in the shape of QUAD in the Asia –Pacific region. They are also planning a third line of defence in the shape of AUKUS in more depth. They want to monopolize the strategically important regional sea choke areas such as strait of Malacca and other important chokepoints.

While remaining in Afghanistan for twenty years, General Lodhi mentioned, the question arises that did they achieve anything? The answer is yes because while staying in Afghanistan, they pushed back the Chinese influence in the region and also the Russian dream of North-South corridor and access to the Indian ocean.

General Lodhi noted, the US and its allies have two options as far as this region is concerned. The first option is trying to sabotage peace efforts and political and economic stability in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and CARs. They will keep challenging BRI and the CPEC in close collaboration with India. They will keep threatening the region with sanctions. The second option, realizing the actual reasons of military withdrawal from Afghanistan, they re-orientate their strategy and decide to checkmate China and Russia in the economic and political fields. Invest in this region in the name of build back better world and, General Lodhi added, hopefully this region will not fall for the trap as long the things are beneficial. In both the cases whatever option they adopt, Pakistan and China relations and Indo-Pak rivalry are going to play a very vital role.

General Lodhi gave some recommendations. First, China should play a more proactive role regarding Afghanistan and openly sign some pact about this region and about Afghanistan. Either it can be an extension of SCO or a separate pact. Recognition of Afghanistan should not be delayed and the country should be supported to fulfil its promises. India must be deterred from playing second Fidel to the US especially in this region. Quit potent forces such as China, Russia, Pakistan and others lie in this region should deter India to avoid to be a bulwark of

America in the Quad and elsewhere. Any further wastage of time by China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, CARs and Turkey will only enable Indo-US nexus to execute their design and strengthen their reach to trouble this region. This needs an active push back strategy against any nefarious designs rather than waiting and watching passively. At the end he suggested to “act now.”

**Speaker: Senior Col (Retd) Zhou Bo**

**Theme: Perspectives on Regional Security**

Senior Col (Retd) Zhou Bo focused on the US war in Afghanistan and said that invasion of Afghanistan was a strategic blunder and the US has repeated the mistake of Vietnam war. He mentioned the Taliban regime is not a secular government but they have the ability to professionally drive its foreign policy and effectively deliver good governance domestically. The challenge for Taliban is political recognition and economic sanctions.

Col Bo highlighted, since the war is over, China represents golden opportunity for the people of Afghanistan for two reasons; one for China’s impartiality as China never invaded and intervened in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; second, China’s economic investment is providing greater opportunity to build up the industrial capability and infrastructure development of Afghanistan. He raised a question that, how does Afghan issue provide chance for China-US cooperation? He said that currently, the two countries don’t have much cooperation but still there is firm conversation between the foreign ministers of the two countries. They have expressed commitments for combined efforts and cooperation when it comes to the issue of Afghanistan.

As a Chinese, he mentioned that he believed Pakistan policy toward Afghanistan is to ensure friendly regime in Kabul and counter Indian influence in Afghanistan. From China’s perspective, smooth relations between Islamabad and Kabul is in best interest of Beijing and important for the successful implementation of BRI. China has always played its role to improve bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He raised two question; When could Pakistan possibly recognise Taliban Regime? Could Taliban consolidate stability in Afghanistan?

While focusing on QUAD and AUKUS, Col Bo said these alliances are formed to counter China. It is a nexus of the US, Japan, India and Australia. AUKUS might encourage Japan to get more close to the US and Australia and one day may acquire nuclear technology for military purposes.

About the QUAD, he mentioned, the linchpin of QUAD is India. Historically, India is a founding country of non-align movement and it will not take hasty decision to take a firm side of the US against China. It is also because of its strong military connection with Russia as India purchases 70 percent military equipment from Russia. Besides, the US also challenges India's maritime claim. He expressed hope that the QUAD will not black and whitely against China because none of the member countries is ready to sacrifice its huge economic interest with China for the benefit of other three countries.

**Speaker:      Mustafa Hyder Sayed, ED PCI**

**Theme:        Enhancing Pakistan-China Cooperation on Regional Security and Stability**

Mr. Mustafa Hyder Sayed... focused on key challenges regarding the shared core interest of Pakistan and China in the region.

One, when it comes to the security of the CPEC, he said, we have to follow three Ps: to preserve CPEC, to protect CPEC, and to promote CPEC. The CPEC is the biggest connectivity project in the region. The biggest challenge for CPEC is security issue in the form of 12,000 terrorist fighters having presence on Afghan soil. They are fighters of ETIM, TTP, IMU, and Al-Qaeda. He recommended that when it comes to Afghanistan, Pakistan and China should have a shared approach of a "Quid pro quo" with Afghanistan. Economic development in exchange for 100 percent of guarantee of neutralization of these terrorists which prospectively pose a threat to CPEC and the shared interest to Pakistan and China in the region. So, he mentioned, the issue of these 12,000 terrorists, as reported by Reuters, have to be addressed and it needs a very categorical quick approach and action.

The second major challenge, Mr. Sayed added, to our shared interest in the region is the institutionalization of new Cold War which is no longer a mere mentality. The strategic competition act which has been passed by the US, from the house of representatives to counter Chinese influence, it is for the first time that to counter a country a law has been passed for it. This was not even done against Soviet Union in the first Cold War. The first component of the strategic competition act is the strategic counter act as what is called the countering China's



influence fund which allows the US to give \$300 million annually to specifically counter China at the international arena.

He mentioned that the US strategic framework for Indo-Pacific also focuses on a second component of strategic competition act, which states a strong India in cooperation with likeminded countries and would act as a counter balance to China. India and the US cooperate to preserve maritime security and counter Chinese influence in South and South East Asia. The QUAD and AUKUS are also part of this strategic framework for Indo-Pacific. The strategic counter act would also act in the form of disinformation war which includes; painting Belt and Road Initiative as a debt trap, painting China as a new colonial power and demonizing CPC. Its peaceful rise, soft power and lack of military intervention in other countries are not highlighted. However, Atlantic council, their own leading think tank in Washington published a paper that Chinese debt trap is a myth, the US Think Tank saying themselves. Secondly, Daniel S. Markey wrote a very important article titled “How the United States Should Deal with China in Pakistan” in which he said that when the US cannot target the Chinese state, which is very strong, they will look for softer option i.e. Pakistan and Huawei and target soft affiliates of China.

Mr. Sayed mentioned three recommendations for Pakistan and China. Firstly, the two states have to have a strong coordinated and cohesive counter narrative. It should not only rely on governments but it should be the shared responsibility of think tanks, media and other stake holders. This counter-narrative cannot be built single-handedly by a single stakeholder, instead, it should be a collective effort. Secondly, Pakistan should establish the rapid response information network (RRIN) to check fake news as immediately as its comes which is being propagated by Western media outlets and Indian media.

Thirdly, Pakistan must maintain strategic clarity. Right now, he comprehended Pakistan's strategic direction, Pakistan's best friend is China which the US considers its arch-rival and main competitor. India is the top most preferred Asian partner for the US which Pakistan considers its arch-rival. We are always going to be look through that lens. Despite Pakistan's full support for the US interest in war on terror and facilitating the US exit from Afghanistan, in the testimony in the house of representatives once again representatives urged the US need to reassess its

relationship with Pakistan. However, Pakistan's desire, he added, is to do commerce, enhance people to people connectivity and other ties with the US.

**Speaker: Dr. Liu Zongyi**

**Theme: Enhancing Pakistan-China Cooperation on Regional Security and Stability**

Dr. Liu Zongyi in his remarks stated that in recent years, the global and regional international structure is undergoing major changes. At present, the change of strategic situation in South Asia and its neighbouring regions is mainly reflected in Afghan issue.

The United States hastily withdrew its troops from Afghanistan on the pretext of concentrating resources to contain China, and the Afghan Taliban quickly occupied Kabul and controlled all Afghan territory. Many strategists and media in the West and India have linked the Afghan Taliban's seizure of power with China-US relations, China-India relations and India-Pakistan relations. They believe that the successful seizure of power by the Afghan Taliban is a success of China and Pakistan, but a strategic failure of the United States, the West and India. The reason why they have this cognition is mainly due to the geo-political competition thinking and zero-sum game thinking in their minds.

On a larger regional level, in order to contain China, the United States is trying its best to promote military competition and even confrontation in the whole "Indo-Pacific" region. India is an important pillar of the "Indo-Pacific" strategy. India also has the ambition to achieve its goal of becoming a global power through the "Indo-Pacific" strategy of the US and attempts to use the United States' dependence on it to implement Hindu nationalist policies at home and in the region. Indian strategic elites are smarting from the Afghan Taliban's rapid acquisition of power and attempt to use the differences within the Afghan Taliban, the differences among various political factions in Afghanistan, the possible Pashtun nationalism and the possible differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan to pursue an opportunistic policy on Afghan issue. To achieve its geo-strategic objectives, the United States not only further promotes the "De-hyphenation" policy, but also encourages India to play a greater role on the Afghan issue. The United States attempts to sacrifice Pakistan's interests in exchange for India's strategic cooperation and make India its agent in the region.

As we know, India has long been marginalized on the Afghan issue. If India is to play a role in Afghanistan, it can only play a negative role. India is likely to use its intelligence agencies and some forces cultivated in Afghanistan and its surrounding areas in the past more than 20 years to undermine and disrupt the stability of Afghanistan. This is unfavourable to Afghanistan and its close neighbours, including China and Pakistan. The Dasu terror attack in July 2021 shows how crazy India is in undermining the construction of CPEC and regional stability.

The United States' hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan and its attitude towards the Afghan Taliban after the withdrawal show that the United States does not care about the security and stability of Afghanistan and the whole region. It seems that the United States does not hesitate to let Afghanistan fall into turmoil and further make Afghanistan the source of instability in the whole region. Russian experts believe that Americans are evacuating hot spots and leaving behind chaos and turbulence, immigration crisis and so on. They believe the United States now wants to create an "unstable arc" (the Balkans in Asia), an explosive and dangerous area extending from the Mediterranean to China's border. As a result, regional states, including China, Pakistan, and Russia, have to deal with regional instability.

As all-weather strategic partners, China and Pakistan must work together to maintain and promote regional security and stability.

First of all, China and Pakistan must cooperate closely on the Afghan issue to persuade the Afghan Taliban to establish an open and inclusive government and implement a moderate domestic and foreign policy. At present, the verbal expression of the Afghan Taliban is very different from that in the past, but we do not know its specific policy in the future. The Afghan Taliban are now facing a series of severe challenges: first, the unity of Afghan Taliban itself; second, whether the Afghan Taliban can establish an open and inclusive government; Third, food shortage is likely to lead to humanitarian disasters and refugees; and Afghan economy has long lacked hematopoietic capacity and is on the verge of collapse; Fourth, they hope to win the recognition and assistance of the International Community, but at the same time, they also face the hatred, blockade, sanctions and even subversion of some hostile forces in the world. Real stakeholders such as China, Pakistan, Russia, and Iran all hope that the Afghan Taliban can establish an open and inclusive regime so that all ethnic groups and parties in Afghanistan can

have their own representatives, which is the key for the Afghan Taliban to win domestic and international support. China does not want Afghanistan to fall into turmoil again due to domestic political struggle and humanitarian crisis, nor does China want Afghanistan to become a shelter for Eastern Turkistan forces such as the ETIM, nor does China want Afghanistan to become a source of regional unrest due to the excessive intervention of some external forces, affecting the security and stability of Xinjiang and its neighbouring regions, affecting the security of CPEC. Therefore, on the issue of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan should coordinate with Russia, Iran and Central Asian countries, warn Europe of the consequences of refugees, and put pressure on the United States, India and some European countries to take responsible actions to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Secondly, while strengthening strategic and security coordination against India, China and Pakistan should work with countries inside and outside the region to promote the construction of an open, inclusive, democratic and equal regional governance structure and security structure, including the Indian Ocean Security structure, adhere to the international rules and principles of multilateralism centered on the United Nations, and implement real multi-lateralism, consciously resist all kinds of threats to genuine multilateralism.

Finally, while cooperating to deal with the pandemic, China and Pakistan should accelerate the building of CPEC. The 10th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meeting of CPEC has been held, and a new IT working group has been established, which will bolster CPEC. The success of CPEC will effectively enhance Pakistan's comprehensive national strength and international status. The key to the success of CPEC is that Pakistan needs to form its own industrial advantages through reform and development and can provide a safer environment for the construction of CPEC.