

**Symposium Report on  
“China in Global Politics”  
Date: Sunday, 26 May, 2019  
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.  
Venue: BILIA Auditorium**

To discuss about China’s emergence and role in the global politics and how it is changing the dynamics of international order, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) organized a symposium on **“China in Global Politics”** on May 26, 2019 at BILIA Auditorium. Relevant to the main theme, Mr. Mahmudul Hoque Moni, Senior Assistant Secretary, BCS Administration Academy and Ms. Rumi Akter, Research Assistant (International Affairs), BILIA presented their respected papers at the symposium. The event was presided over by Dr. C. R. Abrar, Professor (retired), Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka. Whereas, Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Deputy Director (Part-Time, International Affairs), BILIA was the designated discussant for the symposium. The event was commenced with the welcome address from Dr. Shahdeen Malik, Honorary Director, BILIA. Then the honorable chair pointing out how sleeping giant China is establishing it in different regional blocs, how other powers are reacting against this and what can be the related issues for Bangladesh here, invited the presenters to present their papers.

**Presentation of Mr. Mahmudul Hoque Moni:**

Mr. Mahmudul Hoque Moni’s core focus was on China’s Belt and road initiative (BRI) in his paper titled **“China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for Global Politics and Development”**. He began his speech denoting the magnanimity of BRI as a 3-8 trillion dollars project that includes 80 countries mainly from Asia, Europe and Africa, encompassing nearly 36% of the global GDP, 68% of the world population and more than 40% of international trade. He also mentioned the absence of the USA as an interesting factor here. He said that there are total six economic corridors or land routes that are known as belt and one sea route known as road to be built under this gigantic initiative. Then he put forth some comparative analysis between China and the US where he argued that China is already outstripping the US in some aspects of economy. Also citing how since 1997 China started many of their construction works in many countries and how China was looking at new markets and new demands actively, he noted that China was actually playing **“Chess”** by thinking well ahead while other superpowers led by the USA were busy fighting terrorists in West Asia.

Then he talked about the economic, political and geostrategic factors along with institutional framework of the BRI. He pointed out that China’s BRI member states or targeted states all belong to ‘young and poor’ category states and also has a significant amount of young population as these countries in one hand have the highest development potential, and on the other, they can provide cheap labor to China. Also, learning from the US and India who don’t have good relations with most of their neighbors, China emphasizes on good relations with its neighbors.

Furthermore, citing Dr. Parag Khanna's latest book 'The Future is Asian' he argued that future will be China-centric as China holds the mid-point of the Silk Road both at land and the ocean.

However, coming to the drawbacks of BRI, he said that BRI may struggle in South Asia as India doesn't have good relation with both China and Pakistan, where Bangladesh is also confused in BRI due to China's support to Myanmar in the Rohingya issue.

Finally, he concluded that emergence of China as a soft superpower and as a practitioner of socialism; the ideological war seems to regain its momentum once again after the post-Cold War period. He said that China's BRI has raised hope and business among the developing and developed nations and China seem to begin its journey as a superpower within the near future, well before 2049. If BRI gets pace in the next decade, China will undoubtedly be the centre of global politics and development. The USA will have to reinvent its policies and find new strategies if it wants to cease the Chinese rise and expansion.

#### **Presentation of Ms. Rumi Akter:**

With the paper titled "Rising China: Implications of BRI, AIIB, and BRICS for Global Politics", Ms. Akter discussed about how the sleeping giant China may begin to move the world. She began with stating some important facts about China like – the most populous country in the world, the oldest living civilization, second largest economy and the projection about China may surpass the USA in economy by 2030.

Her first focus was on the "Implications of BRI for Global Politics" which she elaborated in two aspects – i) Changing Dynamics in South Asia and ii) Changing Dynamics in Asia Pacific. In the first one, she pointed out that South Asia is simultaneously one of the fastest growing and most conflict prone regions in the world. Stating the World Bank report about South Asian nations being less integrated and connected to each other, however, she argued that with the BRI, the South Asian region will be more integrated and connected than before. She also talked about the changes in Bilateral Relations in South Asia – India-Pakistan and India-Nepal. Here, she pointed out that Nepal sees the BRI fruitful for its own development. But Nepal's closer relations with China is worrying India as due to the geo-strategic location, Nepal plays a major role in maintaining peace in the Himalayan region. On the other hand, The China Pakistan economic Corridor (CPEC) of the BRI faces objection from India as it runs through Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan administered Kashmir. India sees CPEC as a threat to its sovereignty as India claims the whole of Kashmir as its integral part. Then in the changing Dynamics in Asia Pacific, first, she highlighted Trump Administration's new "Indo-Pacific Strategy" that includes the forming of the Quad (a potential security arrangement among India, Australia, Japan, and the United States) as a major response to China's rise in the region instead of the broader Asia Pacific strategy. She also discussed about India and Japan's Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) designed to link the larger Indian Ocean region in range of sectors as an alternative to BRI and to counteract the broader geopolitical effects that China's Maritime Silk Road would have on the Indian Ocean region.

Regarding the Economic Area, Ms. Rumi described about the importance and Implications of Asian Infrastructure and Investment bank (AIIB) for global politics where she mentioned how through AIIB bank's different development related initiatives, China is increasing its influence in the developing countries, especially in the Global South, as AIIB has much more representatives from there and gives developing nations a bigger voice.

In the Strategic Area, she talked about BRICS, China's emergence in and gradually taking over of the Latin America with its soft power projection and investing in the infrastructure. She also mentioned about the competition between China and India's over Africa – the continent which has huge energy reserves. Here, she put forth the scholarly argument that due to increasing instability in the Middle East, both India and China turned their eyes into Africa to procure oil to fuel their industrialization process. Strategic Importance of Africa, especially some of the African littoral states in the Indian Ocean are also vital for both China and India. However, she pointed out that India lags behind China in terms of bilateral trade.

Finally in the concluding remarks she said that China has the geostrategic and geopolitical advantage to move the world toward its own interest and counter the Quad and Indo-Pacific Strategy. However, she concluded that, the responses of the other major powers in the international system will determine how China's rise will have implications for global politics.

#### **Comments by the Discussant:**

After the presentation of the two presenters, Dr. Lailufar Yasmin made some valuable comments on the papers. She advised that Bangladesh must be prepared for the next 20 years by learning strategies how to deal in the international arena. Especially, she expressed the needs to learn about China's economic plans and policies. Again, citing narrations of scholars who think Bangladesh is gradually coming out of China's sphere and moving toward Europe and USA, she put forth her argument that it's not like that; it is rather Bangladesh is prioritizing them and simultaneously diversifying its interests in the international domain. Dr. Yasmin also pointed out that Bangladesh-China bilateral relation is not only based on donation, rather they are more like development partners. On the other hand, pointing out Ms. Akter's paper she agreed that Bangladesh needs to learn about the India-China competition in Africa. Finally, Professor Yasmin described our necessity to work on more academic research and exercise on China. She praised that the two keynote papers are excellent works regarding that.

#### **Open Discussion:**

After the comments by the designated discussant, the chair of the event Dr. C. R. Abrar invited the audience for the open discussion session. With the participation of former ambassadors, academicians, researchers, teachers and students, the open discussion session imparted more understanding of the topic. Former Ambassador Mr. Muhammad Kamaluddin was present and he made some excellent points. He began with saying that the dynamics of foreign policy is changing every moment, and in today's world, economic diplomacy has the utmost priority. He marked out that China-Afghanistan relationship has deteriorated due to the present India-

Afghanistan close relations. Hence, he advised that Bangladesh must maintain its relations with both India and China in a cautious manner. He also expressed Bangladesh's necessity to improve relation with China due to the Rohingya factor. Questions were asked about as India opted to stay out of BRI and Bangladesh is still confused to join it due to the Rohingya issue then is BRI project is going to cause more disintegration in South Asia. On behalf of the presenters, Ambassador Kamaluddin responded there that South Asia was disintegrated even when there was no BRI. He emphasized that we have to solve our problems ourselves. He also slightly touched the US-China trade war where he said, China will get the upper hand in it as the US citizens have to buy things with higher expenses.

### **Closure of the Symposium**

Finally, after the open discussion session, Dr. C. R. Abrar made his concluding remarks with applauding both the papers. Then thanking everyone he ended the symposium.

*The event was covered by Labib Murshed, Research Assistant (International Affairs), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA).*