



Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS)

Keynote Address by Ambassador Liu Jinsong

at the Launch Ceremony of DROPS' study on

“Integrating Afghanistan into the Belt and Road Initiative: Review, Analysis and Prospects”

16 January 2019 at Serena Hotel, Kabul, Afghanistan

On 16th January 2019, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Afghanistan, H.E. Liu Jinsong delivered a keynote address at the launch ceremony of DROPS recent study titled: “Integrating Afghanistan into the Belt and Road Initiative: Review, Analysis and Prospects.” Below please find the full transcript of Ambassador Jingson's address:

You know, in Afghanistan, I have heard many of my friends [who] told me that they do not call it the Belt and Road Initiative—they call it ‘*yak kamarband, yak rah*’ and this means One Belt, One Road. They also ask me what is the meaning of *yak kamarband*, and what is the meaning of *yak rah*. I told them, it should be very simple, very easy [to] understand. I say, *yak kamarband* means a *kamarband* of kindness, and *rah* means road, road for reach... So, *kamarband* for “kindness” and *rah* for “reach.” It is easy to understand.

What the meaning of kindness? Kindness means want something good for the region, something good for Afghanistan. We will show our role as a rich major power responsible for this country, responsible for the world. We will do our best for the new model of international relationship and work for the human being's community of the shared future.

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We thank our Afghanistan friends. Don't be shy for the Chinese offer for security, for peace and for economic development. Because in Asian time Afghanistan contributes a lot for the Chinese civilization. May no so many of Afghans today know that Buddhism textbooks [and scripts] acknowledge glasses, pomegranate, lapis lazuli is right now very popular in China and change a lot the Chinese culture and the Chinese arts. All of this come from Afghanistan. We remember that, we respect that. So, when China is rising, when China is developing, when China can do something more, Afghanistan is always we think... we need to give more feedback. We thank you. It is our will, [our] very good will towards you.

And the road for reach: that means in Asia and European continent, and in the [colonial England] era, not too many countries cared about landlocked countries. They all focused on the coastal areas. The colonial [powers] only occupied the coastal areas and then used it as a base to invade the land areas. But right now, the situation [has] changed. England had that advantage. China wants to have the landlocked countries based on connectivity, based on joint development. We would like to do that. Many people get to be rich.

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For the past five years, China and all the Belt and Road countries—we made about 5,000 billion US dollars trade and we contributed more than 200,000 new employees for these countries. We opened our markets for many countries, and we hosted major powers for the first Import-Export in Shanghai last November and it was very successful. So, that is my personal explanation for the Belt and Road—yak kamarband, yak rah.

The people ask me: can you briefly tell us what are the main points of the Belt and Road Initiative? I want to explain [these points] from one to eight.

1. The purpose of and objective is for the community of the shared future. It is for all the human beings. It is not only for China and its neighbors.
2. B&R includes land cooperation and maritime cooperation. So, it is like a phoenix—it has two wings: one is for land cooperation between continents and another is for ocean cooperation.
3. The three principles: principle of wide consultation, shared benefits and joint contribution; another three principles is high standard, high level and high quality for all the projects.
4. We think the Belt and Road Initiative will benefit the four billion population mostly in Asian and European continents.
5. The number five [point] is the key to Belt and Road Initiative and that is communications in policy, infrastructure, finance, trade, people-to-people communications. We think the heart-to-heart communication and people-to-people friendship is the foundation for the Belt and Road Initiative.
6. The number six, which is important for Afghanistan as mentioned by Ms. Safi, is the big part of the B&R: the six economic corridors. (1) China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor; (2) China-West Asia-Central Asia Corridor; (3) China-New Continental Economic Corridor; (4) China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); (5) China-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Corridor; (6) China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor. And finally, we also have a maritime economic corridor. So, as you can see, all these corridors make a network for the Asia Continent. No country will be left.
7. The number seven will cover mainly seven pieces of the world—seven blocks. One is East and North East Asia; second is South East Asia or ASEAN countries; third is South Asian; another is Central Asia; another is CAR countries and Russia; [another one is] West Asia; and North America and rest of the world. And Afghanistan belongs to both Central Asia and South Asia

and also touch on the Western Asian. So, you are the linchpin for the Belt and Road Initiative. Before that, in the Asian time, Afghanistan was the crossroad of the Silk Road, so Afghanistan occupies a big advantage for this great initiative.

8. B&R covers about eight main fields: infrastructure and construction works, industrialization, energy, trade and investment, financial cooperation, cultural exchange, econ-economy which mean environmental protection is one of priorities, and finally maritime cooperation. In all these fields, including maritime cooperation (as Ms. Safi mentioned the Gwadar Port and Chabahar Port), we will engage Afghanistan in all these and we will benefit from that.

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My dear friends, many of my Afghan friends ask me about B&R. I can make a conclusion in a few questions. First, where is Afghanistan in the landscape of the B&R? Some people think Afghanistan is not inside of that. They have this kind of image because if you see some maps, it is bypassing Afghanistan. I would like to say that all those maps are not official maps from China, they are all academic maps. Afghanistan from the beginning was one of the key partners—a vital partner—in co-building the Belt and Road Initiative for its location, for its relation and for its history with China. And, as Ms. Safi mentioned in her remarks, Afghanistan is one of the countries that has signed MOU of the Belt and Road Cooperation with China. And Afghan leaders were one of the first [leaders] to support the idea of the B&R. And Afghanistan is also [among] the groups with whom we have discussed some of the concrete projects of B&R. And China treats Afghanistan [as a] very important partner in this regard.

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Second, as Ms. Safi mentioned the CPEC, many of my Afghan friends want to make some comparison for CPEC and make the comparison for Pakistan and complain to me: why you leave (allocate) so much money for Pakistan, and not for us? You spend some 40 to 50 billion dollars for CPEC, why not one billion for Afghanistan? Or two billion for Afghanistan? We are so dissatisfied. My answer is: Pakistan and Afghanistan are China’s close neighbors. We do not give offers and benefits for one country—we treat all of you as equal. CPEC is also inclusive, and it doesn’t mean it is monopolized by one or two countries. The CPEC is also open for Afghanistan and for the last years, in the trilateral meetings between Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, we are always talking about future opportunities. The CPEC can extend, or be linked, to Afghanistan. It is not only CPEC, but also China-Central Asia-

West Asian Economic Corridor. It can also be linked or extended to Afghanistan. That will make Afghanistan a transportation crossroad for the two economic corridors. So, Afghanistan, you have your advantage.

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If Afghanistan’s relation with Pakistan improves, there will be more opportunity for connectivity, and it will be more convenient for you for trade and transit. And we encourage for that.

Some ask me: if Afghanistan joins Belt and Road Initiative, will it offend other countries? My answer is, NO. Because B&R is not right a regional initiative, it is already an internationally sponsored spot. Even now, Latin American countries and Oceanic countries are very eager and very enthusiastic to join with that. For the last year summit of the Belt and Road cooperation, America (the USA) and Japan joined with that. India and China also build a corridor.

The Belt and Road Initiative doesn’t have any intention for the geopolitical increase (expansion). It is a thing for economic partnership, it is not sr monopoly or hegemony. It is not a military or geopolitical strategy. It is not a second Marshal Plan because it is not only China’s donation or China’s assistance; [rather] it is a joint effort by all the Asian and European countries.

“B&R convers about eight main fields: infrastructure and construction works, industrialization, energy, trade and investment, financial cooperation, cultural exchange, econ-economy which mean environmental protection is one of priorities, and finally maritime cooperation. In all these fields, including maritime cooperation (as Ms. Safi mentioned the Gwadar Port and Chabahar Port), we will engage Afghanistan in all these and we will benefit from that.”

The last question is very important and important for my Afghan friends. How can Afghanistan engage in the B&R and how can Afghanistan get any benefit from that? That is a question for discussion. So, I think this [research] report gives us a first step, give us a window for these kinds of studies [and discussions]. My opinion is, first Afghanistan needs peace. Without peace, there is no development. Peace is vital for everything. So, China and the international community would like to help Afghanistan. We would like to facilitate any kind of events for the peace of Afghanistan, for different parties and different political forces engagement for peace dialogue, for ceasefire, and for the future



political settlement. There is no military settlement for this country—there is only political settlement. China would like to be the facilitator and this is most important for the B&R.

Second, we would like Afghanistan to make more of [its] initiatives. We have some initiatives like the Five Nations Railway, the Wakhan Corridor Fiber Cables, and more. But we at the same time ask you to [help us with] some of the details, do some of the feasibility studies, some of the economic studies, market forces, and some of the challenges and obstacles [that] you need to [pay] attention to. We need you to improve your relations, as Ms. Safi said, with your neighbors, to have transnational agreements on how to reduce costs, tariffs, and how to reduce non-tariff barriers. China would like to help, but we want Afghanistan to [take initiative] first.

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My next point is [on] trade. Trade is most important for our bilateral relationship. Last year, we had a great breakthrough—the new contract for pine nuts. During the last two months of the last year, China imported more than 1250 tons of pine nuts and its value is about 140 billion US dollars [maybe Mr. Ambassador means 140 million US dollars]. So, you can see that based on mutual understanding and based on air corridor, we make these kinds of big achievements. This year, we can talk about pomegranate. We already have the agreement for marble stone, for saffron, and now we can talk about other [items]. But we need the Afghan friends [to make efforts] for promotion of these items like pine nuts. In China we call the pine nuts Brazilian pine nuts, and everyone laughs as to why it comes from Brazil. It is not matter of Brazil but in China, businessmen just mention that it is from Brazil, and it makes the Chinese customers less confident. But, [we can say] it comes from Afghanistan. Afghan people, Afghan businessmen, and your diplomats need to promote [these items] for their high quality and better price. You need to do that. Your marble stone has a very [high] comparative advantage in China. But because of transportation issues, the price is too high. You need to reduce the price, you need to talk with your neighbors, and you also need personal communication and market channel in China. Pakistan does it very well, Iran does it very well. So, I would like to ask my Afghan friends to take advantage of your businessmen. You have 500 businessmen [in China] and they can speak fluent Chinese. They are your advantage and you need to take advantage of that. There are more than 100 Afghan students in China and they can speak fluent Chinese and I hope your officials use it, utilize it and respect their talents, and make them as a bridge.

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So, as a Dari zarbulmasal always mentions, it is not a one-side work; az yak dast sada namiayad. So, we need to put to work the two hands. Or, az yak gul bahar namishawad; one flower is not a garden, right? So, China wants to be a great garden and Afghanistan is one of the good flowers, beautiful flower. We like to share, and we like to be both in that garden.

Thanks a lot. Kheli tashakkor.