



**Golden  
Ring  
Economic  
Forum**



## **GRAF - UMT JOINT WEBINAR SERIES PROCEEDINGS**



### **REGIONAL GEOSTRATEGIC CHALLENGES: GOLDEN RING BLOC- AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC & ECONOMIC SECURITY**



## **Volume - 1**

### **Collaboration:**

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**GOLDEN RING ECONOMIC FORUM**

**“REGIONAL GEOSTRATEGIC CHALLENGES:  
GOLDEN RING BLOC — AN OPPORTUNITY FOR  
PAKISTAN’S STRATEGIC & ECONOMIC SECURITY.”**

**(VOLUME – 1)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Series of Webinars 2020.**

- 1. REVISITING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY VIS-À-VIS GOLDEN RING BLOC AND REGIONAL CHANGES.**
- 2. REVISITING THE NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY VIS-À-VIS GOLDEN RING BLOC AND REGIONAL CHANGES.**
- 3. DEVELOPING A NATIONAL MEDIA POLICY VIS-À-VIS GOLDEN RING BLOC AND REGIONAL CHANGES.**

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## **1 FOREWORD BY CHAIRMAN GREF.**

The Golden Ring Economic Forum (GREF) is a Think-Tank established in 2015 at Lahore by a group of businessmen and industrialists and got registered under Society's Act in 2016. GREF is working in the domain of strategic economic cooperation between China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey. The grouping of these five countries has been termed as the "GOLDEN RING": "GOLDEN" -- because over 30% of total human and natural resources of the planet are with these five countries and "RING"—because they form a ring around Central Asia, and Afghanistan.

The Mission of GREF is "To Work for the Establishment of a Regional Strategic Economic

Bloc/Grouping" of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey. GREF objectives are:

- a. Lobbying for a new strategic economic bloc in the interest of Pakistan.
- b. Developing common, long term joint strategic economic interests of other four countries in Pakistan.
- c. To act as a bridge between the policy makers and stakeholders.
- d. To assist the government in developing policy framework, procedures, rules and regulations for multilateral strategic economic cooperation.
- e. To work for the establishment of Joint Customs Union of member countries.
- f. To assist in developing advanced joint industrial groups in Pakistan.
- g. To collaborate, cooperate, coordinate and initiate joint advance research programs and projects in applied and social sciences and technology.

GREF is managed by its Board of Governors having members from industry and senior retired officers of armed forces.

In the short period of four years, GREF has made some notable achievements at the international level. GREF has been successful in convincing the concerned government quarters of China, Iran and Russia to support the initiative of GOLDEN RING Economic Bloc. China sees it as a regional subset of their BRI whereas; Russia takes it as part of their North- South Economic Bridge. Isolated Iran takes it as an opportunity to safeguard their economic security like Pakistan. Therefore, the idea was well received and accepted by member countries. As a result of GREF lobbying efforts, they all agreed to hold first Parliamentary Speakers Conference in 2017 at Islamabad, which was made a permanent feature unanimously. The second and third consecutive meetings were held in Tehran (2018) and Ankara (2019). Meetings at Beijing and Moscow were postponed due to Covid-19. The cycle will start again once the pandemic is over. GREF has also successfully conducted several seminars and webinars with high level official participation from China, Iran and Russia which again confirms their acceptance.

As a result of consultations with their Embassies at Islamabad and officials at their respective Capitals, during and after these seminars and webinars, GREF has planned few short term and long term initiatives covering different aspects of economic and national security. One of such Initiatives is “Post Covid-19 Shared Economic Recovery” by China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. Three very high level webinars were held with the very senior level representatives from China, Iran and Russia to find out the point of view of other member countries. Very positive and productive result oriented discussions on “HOW & HOW SOON” were held. All three countries fully supported the GREF initiative.

GREF has planned a second series of webinars to discuss the “**Changing regional geostrategic environment and how Pakistan can extract maximum benefit from it**”. There will be a total of three webinars as follows,

1. Defense & National Security and relationship with Golden Ring countries;
2. Pakistan’s Foreign Policy and relationship with Golden Ring countries;
3. Media joint initiatives of Golden Ring countries.

Through this series of Webinars GREF seeks to generate a discussion on the effects of the evolving regional developments around Pakistan, internal political scenario and how Pakistan can adjust to the evolving opportunities in the short and medium term for its strategic security in sync with Golden Ring countries.

The first two webinars will comprise speakers who have been Defense Secretaries / National Security Advisor and Foreign Secretaries. The third webinar will comprise of media persons as media plays a very prominent role in projecting and promoting national narrative, point of view and policies of countries and is driver of public opinion.

## **2 MESSAGE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL UMT.**

The University of Management & Technology (UMT) takes pride in bringing to you the second Webinar series in collaboration with the Golden Ring Economic Forum (GREF), titled; Regional Geostrategic Challenges: Golden Ring Bloc- An Opportunity for Pakistan Strategic and Economic Security.

We at UMT, have always supported work for development and prosperity of Pakistan through our academic expertise. This collaboration with GREF has allowed us to explore different avenues which are critical due to their contemporary nature, and have political and strategic importance for the future of our country.

After the success of the first webinar series, which received an incredible and heart-warming response, we are excited and fully committed to continue this journey to keep exploring and researching interesting themes in the hope that our work can contribute towards betterment of our country.

This webinar series includes three thought-provoking and informative webinars with renowned dignitaries and well-versed experts for each session relevant to their respective fields. The themes of the webinars are as follows:

- The introductory webinar aims to focus on ‘Regional Geostrategic challenges for Pakistan’ with the focus on trying to promote regional harmony and growth by aligning our common interests with the GREF countries.
- The second webinar will be on “Foreign Policy” to analyze the challenges and opportunities of the current policy and how GREF can contribute in foreign policy planning.
- The highly controversial and critical topic of “Role of Media” is planned to be discussed in the third webinar to apprehend the importance of media as a powerful tool used to shape perceptions of entire nations.

I am certain that this webinar series has been a great learning experience for whoever joins us due to the intriguing themes that we have finalized and Insha’Allah it will also be a success like the first one.

### **3 CONCEPT PAPERS**

#### **3.1 CONCEPT PAPER ON REVISITING DEFENSE & FOREIGN POLICIES**

In the short period of four years, GREF has made some notable achievements at the international level. GREF has been successful in convincing the concerned government quarters of China, Iran and Russia to support the initiative of GOLDEN RING Economic Bloc. China sees it as a regional subset of their BRI whereas; Russia takes it as part of their North- South Economic Bridge. Isolated Iran takes it as an opportunity to safeguard their economic security like Pakistan. Therefore, the idea was well received and accepted by member countries. As a result of GREF lobbying efforts, they all agreed to hold first Parliamentary Speakers Conference in 2017 at Islamabad, which was made a permanent feature unanimously. The second and third consecutive meetings were held in Tehran (2018) and Ankara (2019). Meetings at Beijing and Moscow were postponed due to Covid-19. The cycle will start again once the pandemic is over. GREF has also successfully conducted several seminars and webinars with high level official participation from China, Iran and Russia which again confirms their acceptance.

The fact that these new geostrategic developments have changed the world and the earlier we realize it the earlier we shall be able to adjust to the new normal. In our opinion, the new normal would be to look for opportunities closer to home and in our region for economic growth and recovery rather than in the West. While the western financial institutions will continue to exert their influence, we can look for out of the box initiatives within the Golden Ring countries, which can offset the economic downturn.

The US has aggressively moved to take advantage not only by exiting out of Iran nuclear agreement but also threatening China with economic consequences, creating a crisis in Afghanistan and trying to use India aggressively in the region. IMF and other lending agencies are also using Covid-19 to their benefit. They have started loading poor countries with loans in the name of Covid-19.

Keeping in view the ongoing struggle for economic and political ascendancy Pakistan, China, Iran, Russia and Turkey need to carefully exploit the environment to their common

Advantage. It is the opportune time for China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey to start working closely with each other to ensure own and each other's economic strategic security and stability. The basic concept is to develop joint planning by taking advantage of the geostrategic location of these five countries on the globe. For this, the partners can mobilize the economic resources for mutual support in the key sectors like agriculture, industry, energy and human resources on one hand and develop some sort of strategic partnership on the other hand to ensure the geographical security. Moreover, the joint policy for economic cooperation should be an out of the box solution without involving Euro or Dollar. It could either be on pure barter without involving any currency or through some common currency that can create a financial impact transmitted by revenues gain. The stakeholders need to formulate appropriate policies to empower private sector to spear head and to build up vibrant communities with the support of public sector. The idea is that all Golden Ring Countries must

pool and share their resources, both economic and strategic to the mutual benefit.

As a result of consultations with their Embassies at Islamabad and officials at their respective Capitals, during and after these seminars and webinars, GREF has planned few short term and long term initiatives covering different aspects of economic and national security. In the light of these discussions GREF has planned this second series of webinars to discuss the “**Changing regional geostrategic environment and how Pakistan can extract maximum benefit from it**”.

There will be a total of three webinars initially,

1. Defense & National Security and relationship with Golden Ring countries;
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Through this series of Webinars GREF seeks to generate a discussion on the effects of the evolving regional developments around Pakistan, internal political scenario and how Pakistan can adjust to the evolving opportunities in the short and medium term for its strategic security in sync with Golden Ring countries.

The first two webinars will comprise speakers who have been Defense Secretaries / National Security Advisor and Foreign Secretaries. The third webinar will comprise of media persons as media plays a very prominent role in projecting and promoting national narrative point of view and policies of countries and is driver of public opinion.

### **3.2 GREF sought recommendations from the experts on:**

1. Whether Pakistan needs to make adjustments in its National Security and Foreign policies and how soon to benefit from proposed Golden Ring Bloc, if so, what would be your recommendations?
2. Will a closer grouping with Golden Ring countries help Pakistan evolve an independent and national interest driven Foreign Policy?
3. What can Pakistan do to safeguard its national interests in the wake of economic pressures from international financial institutions, FATF, brotherly Muslim Countries, other regimes and probable sanctions?
4. How can media play its role in enhancing projection of Pakistan’s narrative in conjunction with media houses of Golden Ring Countries and the prospects of a joint media association of Golden Ring Countries?

This series of Webinars has been planned to create a discourse on these issues and to find answers to “HOW” and “HOW SOON “.

### **3.3 Concept Paper on Media Policy**

Media is one of the most powerful tools for the formation and molding of the public opinion. Public opinion is the driver of change in the world today. Public opinion is based on perceptions, true or false, which are fed to the public. This feeding of perceptions, opinions, ideologies, propaganda, values, morals you name it, is done by using media as the main driver. Here media includes Print, Television, radio, internet and the social media applications. In ninety-nine percent of the cases the average



citizen exposed to this onslaught is unaware of whether it is correct or fake, where it is coming from and what would be the consequences of his sharing it further.

Today, all major powers in the world are using mass media as a “Weapon of Mass Distraction” not only to show their side of the picture but also for the promotion of their agenda, ideologies and policies. The information and the psychological warfare, which are the main components of Fifth generation warfare, basically rely on the mass media. The use of such means of warfare is termed as fifth generation warfare which leads to molding public opinion against existing policies. Thus state enemies, using social media can start a wave demanding social, political, moral change by propagating palatable information which is fake and lead to a political / social economic change. The GWOT is one such demonstration which led to anarchy in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, death of millions and destruction of four countries.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been facing this media onslaught and war from near and far. Before 9/11 it was nuclear proliferation after 9/11 it was terrorism. Fissures were created and exploited within the diaspora to exacerbate existing differences. Political agencies and self-interest were exploited through media. Millions were spent to propagate a narrative against the state of Pakistan. This has resulted in numerous negative consequences and continues even now. This has led to the vilification of Pakistan and Pakistanis on the global stage in both their professional and private lives. This phenomenon needs to be addressed urgently and without delay. It has been allowed to foment for far too long.

This continuous onslaught through the social media has negatively impacted the life of not only the common citizen but has transformed the thoughts of upcoming generations which started to believe in the morals and models which are alien to our Islamic culture and morality. Plus it has depicted Pakistan as a country which is propagating terrorism, religious extremism, economically failed and a rogue country where lack of freedom and other standards by which modern society is judged are missing. Therefore, it is imperative that all possible means are used to project our image abroad in the correct perspective reflecting our rich culture, social, traditions and Islamic values.

The geo-strategic environment evolving internationally and in the region around Pakistan have made the requirement of stronger, powerful and geographically wide rang projection of **Pakistan’s narrative and point of view**, far more greater than ever before. Unfortunately, so far Pakistan has not been successful in countering the media onslaught against it. Now, we have a God given opportunity to correct the mistaken perceptions about Pakistan and in the process not only achieve strategic economic and geopolitical goals but also help promote tourism and trade in a five trillion dollar market in which Pakistan has only 0.70 percent share. Therefore, it is high time that Pakistan must take certain initiatives not only to counter all this but also to publicize its narrative and show its side of the picture. Pakistan must develop strong media linkages and relationships with the friendly countries in the region and through the use of their media achieve its strategic economic and geo-political goals.

The Initiative of Golden Ring Economic Forum for establishing an Association or Union of media houses, public and private, from all five Golden Ring Countries (China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia & Turkey) is a timely step in the right direction. This Initiative (the Project) will definitely be used to propagate Pakistan’s narrative not only in these countries but through their media platforms across the world.

GRAF is not proposing reinventing the wheel. It is however proposing a way to strengthen the existing means available to countries in a manner that the same are used to propagate their narrative through a social media counter narrative. Our trade and press councilors in Pakistani missions abroad can also use this opportunity to carry forward the narrative in these countries.

We should also be prepared that the detractors of this Initiative, funded by our enemies, from within the country in private and in government bureaucracy, will come up with various objections and will create hurdles. They may say that it is a paradigm shift in the foreign policy which will annoy the US and other Arab countries, West is more important than these countries, so on and so forth. But are we not members of SCO and other organizations? Is being their members a policy shift? All we are saying is let us start with what is closer to us and whose interests are interlinked with us in the existing geopolitical environment using their media we can have greater access.

### **3.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Broadly, aims and objectives of this initiative would be as follows:

1. To build up a counter narrative for Pakistan, to dispel the negativity created by the Western media and building up a soft image of the country
2. To harness the power of electronic, print and social media to reach out to the people of these countries for promoting relations at the cultural and social levels
3. Build relationships between media houses of these countries and strengthen their respective outreach
4. Build relationships between official circles of the member states, related to information & broadcasting
5. To promote and safeguard our strategic and economic interests
6. To market Pakistan as a sourcing point for a wide range of industrial products and services
7. Present Pakistan as an attractive tourist destination
8. To introduce other member states and the economic opportunities they present to our people in general and the business community in particular
9. To create a facilitative regulatory environment in member states to achieve the above objectives

## 4 SPEAKERS

### 4.1 Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal HI(M), (Retd.)

Lt. Gen. Sikander Afzal was commissioned in the Pakistan Army in April 1972, in an Armored Corps Regiment. During his long meritorious service in the Army the General Officer had been employed on various command, staff and instructional assignments. The Lieutenant General is a graduate of National Defense College and holds Master's Degree in Defense and Strategic Studies.



After serving in the unit, he was posted to Headquarters Armored Division as General Staff Officer Grade 3. From there he proceeded to attend foreign language Course (German) in NUML and Company/Battalion Commander Course in Germany. In 1984 he attended Staff Course in Command and Staff College Quetta, followed by Technical Staff Course in 1985 from College of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. He has held the appointment of Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade.

He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1990. In 1991, he was posted as Battalion Commander in Pakistan Military Academy. In 1993 he was posted as Commanding Officer of an Armored Regiment. He served in Somalia as part of UNISOM-2, commanding his regiment from 94-95. In 1995 he was posted as Colonel Staff of an Armored Division. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier in 1996 and commanded an Armored Brigade. In 1998-99 he attended National Defense Course at National Defense College Islamabad and was posted as Directing Staff at National Defense College on termination of the course. He also commanded an Infantry Brigade for 2 years. He was promoted to the rank of Major General in 2002, commanded two Infantry Divisions and thereafter was posted as Director General (Analysis) in Directorate General Inter-Services Intelligence. As a three stars Lieutenant General he commanded Pakistan Army Strike 2 Corps, Multan, from May 2006 to Nov 2009. In December 2009 he took over the command of United Nations forces in Liberia as Force Commander and completed his assignment in December 2010.

#### **4.2 Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd.)**

Lt. Gen. Naeem Khalid Lodhi was commissioned in the Pakistan Army on 27 October, 1974. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's Degree in International Relations. Gen. Naeem Lodhi is also a graduate of Command and Staff College, Quetta and National Defense University, Islamabad. He has served on various command, staff and instructional assignments in his career in the Army, including the important appointments of Directing Staff at National Defense College



(now National Defense University) Islamabad, Commander Corps Engineers, Director General Engineering Directorate, Director General Staff Duties Directorate, General Officer Commanding Bahawalpur and Corps Commander Bahawalpur.

After his retirement from active duty in the Pakistan Army, General Naeem Khalid Lodhi was made the Defense Secretary of Pakistan in 2011. Then in 2018 he became the Minister of Defense. He has also remained the Chief Executive and Managing Director of Fauji Fertilizer Co. Ltd and FFC Energy Limited.

#### **4.3 Lieutenant General Asif Yaseen Malik HI(M), (Retd.)**

A fourth generation soldier, Lt. Gen. Asif Yasin Malik joined the Pakistan Army in 1973 as an infantry officer. He has undergone one year training in Germany and served in Saudi Arabia for two years. The General is a graduate of Pakistan Army Command and Staff College, Master's in Defense and Strategic Studies from National Defense University Islamabad and a Master's degree in Strategic Resource



Management from National Defense University, Washington, DC. While at the NDU Washington DC he was the Class President of the International Fellows. He was bestowed the privilege of gracing the Alumni Hall of Fame in 2013, the first Pakistani to have this honor. He was also a faculty member at Command and Staff College.

The general had been the Chief of Staff of a Strike Corps, commanded an Infantry brigade and a Strike Infantry Division. His last assignment was the command of one of the largest Corps of Pakistan Army (11 Corps), spearheading the stabilizing operations against terrorists in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and in KPK province. He has also served as the Director General Joint Intelligence and Information Operations at the Joint Staff Headquarters of three armed forces of Pakistan and as Director General in Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). He got retired from active duty in Dec 11 and was appointed as Secretary of Defense in 2012 for two years.

#### **4.4 Lieutenant General Naseer Khan Janjua HI(M), (Retd.)**

Lieutenant General Naseer Khan Janjua HI(M), (Retd.) is a graduate of 59th Class of the Pakistan Military Academy. Got his Master's degree from the National Defense University (NDU) in political science. As an Infantry officer his military career saw an active action in 2005 at Siachen (the highest battleground on earth) against the Indian Army where he was commanding the Brigade. In 2007, he was posted as Director General at the Directorate General of Military Operations, as GOC of the 17th Infantry Division Gen. Janjua participated in combat operations against terrorists in Swat and oversaw the Rah-e-Haq Operation. In 2011, Gen. Janjua was appointed as the Vice-Chief of General Staff at the GHQ in Rawalpindi and in 2012, he was appointed as the President of the National Defense University. In 2013, Lieutenant-General Janjua was posted as field commander of the XII Corps in Quetta, Balochistan and supervised firsthand counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations against a variety of Indian-sponsored militant groups. Upon retirement from active duty in 2015 he was appointed as the National Security Advisor of Pakistan.



#### **4.5 AMBASSADOR RIAZ MOHAMMAD KHAN (RETD.)**

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan (Retd.) holds a Master's degree in mathematics and a B.A. (honors) from Punjab University, Lahore. Prior to joining Pakistan's Foreign Service in 1969, Khan taught quantum physics from 1965 to 1969 as Assistant Professor in the Mathematics Department at Punjab University, Lahore. His diplomatic career began with a posting to Beijing in 1970. He then served seven years at Pakistan's Mission to the United Nations in New York City from 1979 to 1986. Amb. Khan remained Director General of Afghanistan and Soviet affairs at the Foreign Office, during which time he took a sabbatical to serve as a diplomat-in-residence at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. He had served as Pakistan's first Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (1992–1995), Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union (1995–1998), as Additional Secretary in charge of international organizations and arms control issues for Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1998–2002), as Spokesman of the Foreign Office (2000–2001) and as Ambassador of Pakistan to China from 2002 to 2005.



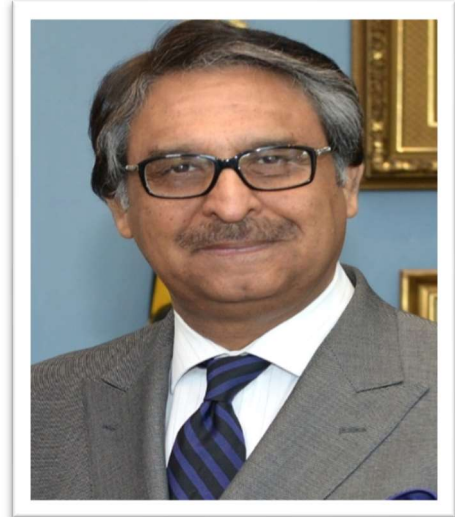
Amb. Khan served as Pakistan's Foreign Secretary from 2005 to 2008. He retired from service in 2008. After his retirement from the Foreign Service, he spent a year as a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. He also served as Pakistan's envoy for "back channel" diplomacy with India from 2009 to 2012.



Ambassador Riaz A. Khan has also written two books (i) *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Duke University Press, 1991) and (ii) *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism and Resistance to Modernity* (Woodrow Wilson Center, Johns Hopkins Riaz Mohammad Khan | Wilson Center University Press, Oxford University Press, 2011).

#### **4.6 Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani (Retd.)**

Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani (Retd.) born on February 3, 1955 in Multan to a family known for high-profile bureaucrats. Amb. Jilani was educated as a lawyer at the University of Oxford, before joining the Foreign Service of Pakistan in March 1979. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Law and later on a Master's degree in Defense and Strategic Studies. He speaks several languages including English, French, Arabic, Seraiki, Punjabi and Pushto.



He served as the Deputy Secretary at Prime Minister's Office between 1989 and 1992, and as the Deputy High Commissioner to India between 1999 and 2003. He headed the South Asia desk at the Foreign Office between 2003 and 2007, during which time he was also appointed as the Ministry's Spokesman. He was Pakistan's High Commissioner to Australia from 2007 to 2009 and Ambassador of Pakistan to European Union based out of Brussels 2010-2012. Amb. Jilani was appointed as the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan in March 2012 and then as the 22nd Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States from December 2013 to February 2017. He currently serves as a Senior Director at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS).

#### **4.7 Ambassador Tehmina Janjua (Retd.)**

Ambassador Tehmina Janjua (Retd.) joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1984 after studying French literature at the Quaid-e-Azam University. She also has a Master's degree in International Affairs from the SIPA, Columbia University. She served at Pakistan's missions to New York City and United Nations before serving as the Director of Foreign Secretary's Office between 2004 and 2005. She had served as the Director General of Strategic Planning in the Foreign Secretary's Office and in 2011



became Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. She was the Ambassador of Pakistan to Italy from 2011 to 2015 with concurrent accreditation to Albania, San Marino and Slovenia, Pakistan's envoy to the UN Office in Geneva from October 2015 to December 2016 and became the first woman, and the first developing country representative, to preside over the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In February 2017 she got appointed as the first women Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

#### 4.8 Mr. Moazam Ali Khan.

Mr. Moazam Ali Khan has a Master's degree in journalism and has a vast experience of working with different media houses of Pakistan. Currently he teaches at the University of Management & Technology, Lahore as Assistant Professor.



#### 4.9 Mr. Adnan Adil Zaidi.

Adnan Adil, 55, is a Lahore-based journalist and media trainer, currently working as an Analyst for a national television channel, Samaa TV. He also regularly writes essays for Urdu-language daily 92 News. He is author of a book on television journalism, Television Sahafat. In 1998, he earned Alfred Friendly Press Fellowship and worked as a writer for the St Paul Pioneer Press in Minnesota, USA. In 2008, he was awarded Knight Fellowship by the International Center for Journalists as a consultant and media trainer to work with the ARY News. In his 31-year long career as a journalist, Adnan Adil worked for several national and international media outlets as a reporter and writer including the Viewpoint, The Friday Times, The News, Express News, ARY News, Geo News and BBC Urdu. His areas of interest include national politics, human rights, public safety, Urdu literature and geopolitics. Currently, Zaidi is a freelance writer for The News and a media consultant for the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. He has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Punjab University.



#### 4.10 Mr. Mubasher Lucman.

He is a Pakistani film director-turned-journalist and former caretaker provincial minister in Punjab caretaker ministry in 2007–08. He currently hosts a talk show *Khara Sach*. He was made caretaker Minister of Punjab for information technology, communications and works in 2007–08.

In Mubasher's youth, he gained recognition for his theatre plays. He cited and directed a number of productions. In his early career, his first job was at the (then) Lahore Hilton (now Avari). Later, Mubasher Lucman joined an advertising agency as a Copy Writer. He had worked in the advertising industry of Pakistan for several years and proved his skills through his script for the advertisement of top local and multinational brands of Pakistan including Coca-Cola, Nestle and many others as well. After this, Mubasher Lucman had set up a production company of his own which



developed software and content for television channels of Pakistan. Mubasher Lucman had also worked in the corporate field in key positions like WorldCall Group, ARY Digital, NTM (First Private Television Network of Pakistan), PAKTEL and others as well.

Mubasher Lucman then set course for his career in journalism starting from the channel Business Plus as a host. During his first experience on the television screen, Mubasher Lucman had covered many socio-economic and political problems of Pakistan. Due to his brilliant stance on several important issues of the country, he then joined the popular and one of the biggest media group of Pakistan, Express News as a host with the program *Point Blank* and then later moved to Dunya News and started to host a program *Khari Baat Lucman Ke Sath*.

He then joined ARY News hosting *Khara Sach*, then joined BOL Network TV channel with his program *Meri Jang* then joined Channel 24 With *Khara Sach* and now has joined Samaa TV continuing with his hit program *Khara Sach with Mubasher Lucman*.

#### **4.11 Dr. Mr. Muhammad Arif Siddique.**

Dr. Muhammad Arif Siddiqui is known as Trainer of the Trainers. He also teaches meditation and concentration techniques to make the success easy. His thesis for PhD was about Peak Performance, he is designing and conducting training programs for numerous country-wide organizations in the Public and Private Sectors as well as Govt. Sector. He has the credit of conducting life changing seminars and workshops for more than a million people in last two decades.



He trained people in different fields like, Education, Sales, Life management, Time & Stress Management, Customer Care, Capacity Building, Communication, Goal Setting, Leadership, Team Management, NLP, Mind Sciences and many more.

He wrote 20 books and recorded 14 life changing video sessions for the ease of public. He also appeared many times on different TV channels like Dunia News, Dawn News, ATV, PTV, Such TV, Kay 2 TV, etc.



#### **4.12 Prof. Dr. Munawar Sabir.**

Dr. Munawar Sabir has a Ph.D. in Role of Media in Pakistan from Punjab University, Lahore and have five (05) Master's Degrees with Gold Medals and Rolls of Honors from Punjab University Lahore, BZU Multan, AIOU Islamabad and Government College Lahore in Mass Communications, Journalism, Geography, Pakistan Studies and Sociology.

He has published ten (10) research articles and various newspaper articles in National English and Urdu Newspapers. Worked as Script Writer

and Program Coordinator in PTV Program, Jeevay Pakistan Show. Worked as an Anchor Person for Six months at Royal Channel of Current Affairs. Participated as Expert at Various Channels **Waqat, ARY, Express, Geo** and others. Dr. Munawar is currently working as **Consultant Editor** in the monthly English magazines **World Times**.



## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS.

This section presents a summary of recommendations and suggestions put forward by the speakers of the three webinars.

### 5.1 Defense Policy

- i. We must recognize that our natural foreign policy direction should be east and not west and then diligently work for that.
- ii. Russians are interested in having better relations with Pakistan. Pakistan must utilize this opportunity to enhance and strengthen its relations with Russia regardless of Indian factor. They should be convinced to bring their economic and strategic interests into Pakistan.
- iii. Pakistan should also develop more strong economic as well as strategic ties with Iran, circumventing sanctions, so that one its soil should not be used by our enemies against Pakistan and we have alternate sources for energy security.
- iv. Afghanistan has become not a barrier for itself but a barrier for us and a barrier for Asia too. Afghanistan should be used as the heart of Asia. Afghanistan should not be a barrier but a bridge. Peaceful Afghanistan should be our serious priority and should be ensured at all costs as much as we can do. Pakistan must take leverage of its strategic location and influence on Afghan situation to pursue own interest. Afghan peace talks should be held at Islamabad and not Doha and without India.
- v. Recognize that IMF, World Bank, FATF etc. are political tools in the hands of world powers and we need to get free of their claws.
- vi. Recognize the importance of CPEC, not only for us but for the entire region and act accordingly.
- vii. Evolve of a political system that creates harmony, efficiency and deliverance. Stop being defensive, stop taking refuge behind weak economy, and do what has to be done to fight back hybrid war effectively.
- viii. Reconsider certain myths and correct our planning, Myth number 1, all political problems can be resolved by table negotiations, wrong! Myth number 2, without strong economy, we cannot think of fighting back, wrong! It can be proved historically. Myth number 3, moral diplomatic and political pressure on India will change their attitude, wrong!
- ix. Put the domestic house in order for which there are three essentials. Number one is governance, number two is governance, and number three is governance.
- x. Declare an economic emergency to create a positive and stable economic environment as an incentive for foreign investors, thereby evolving the interest-based relationship with those countries. We should establish our preferential niche for Golden Ring countries for which our economic and social policies have a lot of space.
- xi. For our preferential status within Golden Ring, we have to move on bilateral as well as on multilateral spheres. Bilateral should be interest-

based with economic and security ties in leap. While in the multilateral arena, we must play an aggressive role in organizations like ECO and SCO. Since, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey will be members of Golden Ring Bloc, the prospects of revival of RCD, considering the new geostrategic situation in the region, may be evaluated and discussed with the stakeholders.

- xii. Our reliance on Gulf Arab countries has to be reduced gradually.
- xiii. We must have a 'crisis management cell' in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It should constantly study and evolve worst-case scenarios like sanctions etc. We, luckily, have had a good experience of sanctions for nearly 11 years in the 1980s and 90s and should be able to farewell in such eventualities.
- xiv. Activities like anti-terrorist and military maneuvers should be done on multilateral as well as on bilateral bases with all Golden Ring countries.
- xv. Work towards reducing hostilities with India, keeping an upper hand and bring the relationship to a minimum workable level, nothing more and nothing less.
- xvi. Keep the West and the USA, in general, good humor to ensure positivity in the relationship but not at the cost of our relations with China, Russia and Iran.
- xvii. Our media has serious issues like a low standard of education and general illiteracy. Unless our media is made literate and intellectually deep, we cannot find any space in the international arena even within the Golden Ring Countries. Therefore, we must have proper training academies linked to universities for the purpose, especially on the topics of International Affairs and Geopolitics or political economics.
- xviii. We should not fall prey to hard geostrategic dividing lines which have been drawn of the evolving world and also the Muslim world and not to be a part of this division. We should act as a balancing force and get ourselves recognized for this which will elevate our international position. You have to take care of them in the coming times. Help bring lasting peace in Afghanistan.
- xix. Pakistan must have its own strong education system covering our history and keeping Pakistan's ideology supreme.

## **5.2 Foreign Policy**

- i. A very strong, well informed foreign policy research department at MOFA should be formed to continuously study the geopolitical and geostrategic around the world and in the region and make changes and corrections in our foreign policy directions to safeguard our interests and achieve our goals.
- ii. MOFA must consider positively GREF initiatives and provide support to GREF by working with them.
- iii. Pakistan should not be, directly or indirectly, under any circumstances, become part of China, Iran and Russia curtailment policy of the US.

- iv. GREF should be used by the Foreign Office and the Commerce Ministry as lobbying organization for economic, political, trade and strategic purposes like India, which is very effectively using FICCI for this purpose. GREF could be provided funds by TDAP, PBC and other national security organizations.
- v. The Golden Ring Bloc idea should be developed on the tested model of EU.
- vi. Connectivity issues should be worked over and routes circumventing Afghanistan should be developed. CARs already have developed land routes which should be exploited by Pakistan through China and Iran to enhance its trade on one hand and providing exit to land-locked CARs.
- vii. CPEC economic connectivity with the region including Russia, Iran and Central Asia should be enhanced.
- viii. Afghanistan has become a bottle neck for our policy makers, they need to come out of it and find ways circumventing Afghanistan and keeping Afghanistan issue separate.
- ix. Iran and Russia should be engaged more actively and widely, circumventing US and international restrictions and sanctions, on all issues economic, political and security.
- x. With Arab-India-Israel-US nexus in the region, measures should be taken to ensure Pakistan's energy security through Iran as an alternative. IP Gas Pipeline issue needs to be resolved on urgent basis.
- xi. New groupings in the region are of a great concern to Pakistan. Considering Abraham Accord, Quad agreement and other India-US agreements related to nuclear and security aspects, Arab-India security collaboration agreements, etc. Pakistan must develop a comprehensive combined and interlinked defense, foreign and economic policy safeguarding Pakistan's national security.
- xii. Pakistan must consider developing Russia Pakistan Economic Zone in line with CPEC.
- xiii. Pakistan should play a more proactive and stronger role in diluting Iran-Saudi Arabia tensions for its national security and regional peace.
- xiv. All stakeholders, concerned Government Divisions and major trade organizations, must carry out rigorous sustained analysis of the impediments in the way of expanding our economic ties with regional countries as well as a more effective multi-stakeholder mechanism for following upon the outcomes of such analysis. GREF can and should play a major role in this regard because what has been often seen lacking is inputs from the private sector which is important to develop our economic policies towards countries within the region. We will only achieve something if we strengthen our capacity to examine and understand relevant issues and also drastically upgrade the institutional mechanisms to implement the required measures.
- xv. GREF initiative of the role of media in strengthening ties with regional countries should also cover the need to reestablish the common cultural

and economic space that historically existed in the Central Asian region. This face was ruptured by colonial intrusion and of course by the Afghan world. No matter what, right now, we need to see and how this can be restored. For that, work needs to be done not only in the economics field but equally in the cultural sphere. The historically intense and fruitful exchanges of scholars, artists, and craftsmen across the countries of the region should be recommended by GREF. Long-standing cultural ties should be reinvigorated. This should greatly facilitate deeper economic and strategic ties. The media clearly has a central role in reminding us of these historical ties and promoting the reestablishment of these styles. We definitely need to pursue an ambitious step of setting of objectives in our relations with our regional neighbors. These objectives should be informed by a grand vision of how we visualize our long-term relationship with these countries. The GREF initiative does reflect this thinking but it is equally important that we should be practical in the way we seek to realize the objectives we set for ourselves.

- xvi. Pakistan needs to establish Special Purpose Financial and Trade Vehicle (SPFTV) for economic dealings with Iran and Russia.
- xvii. Ministry of Commerce should work through GREF to resolve bilateral trade issues with Turkey.

### **5.3 Media Policy.**

- i. A proper media policy considering the geopolitical, geostrategic scenario in the region and to counter the information warfare needs to be devised urgently.
- ii. PEMRA should play the role of Regulator and not the Controller.
- iii. Golden Ring Media Association initiative of GREF is very in time and should be persuaded by Ministry of Information involving private sector, urgently.
- iv. A training academy or institute should be established under PEMRA in collaboration with Ministries of Commerce, Defense, Foreign Affairs, NDU and ISPR to develop and train media personal on economic and international affairs. They can also run degree courses in these fields.
- v. ISPR should also provide training to private sector media houses and persons to support its efforts in fighting information and media warfare.
- vi. Pakistan does not have media persons who can speak good English, HEC should direct all universities having Journalism departments to make English language, both spoken as well as written, courses compulsory.
- vii. Pakistan must do exchange of media personal and journalists between the Golden Ring countries to better understand each other's point of view, culture and economic preferences.
- viii. Capacity building of Pakistani media is urgently needed to bring it to the level of international media.

## 6 TRANSCRIPTS OF TALKS.

### 6.1 REVISITING NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY.

- i. *Mr. Abid Sherwani.*
- ii. *Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza.*
- iii. *Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal HI(M), (Retd.).*
- iv. *Lieutenant General Khalid Naeem Lodhi HI(M), (Retd.).*
- v. *Lieutenant General Asif Yasin Malik HI(M), (Retd.).*
- vi. *Lieutenant General Nasser Khan Janjua HI(M), (Retd.).*

#### i. **Mr. Abid Sherwani:**

In the name of Allah the most merciful and the most beneficent! First of all, I'm really pleased to welcome all the participants of this webinar, organized jointly by GREF, UMT and the Department of International Relations and Political Science. I am also thankful to Dr. Shoaib and his team as well for joining us. This is a very important 2<sup>nd</sup> series of three webinars. And in this series we are trying to cover defense and national security policy, national interest-based foreign policy and media policy for the promotion of Pakistan's national narrative through Golden Ring Bloc initiative. Strategic economic security, energy security, industrial and trade security and very important the food security shall be discussed in the third round as well. We are very blessed that in this webinar we have our very renowned heroes with us like General Sikander Afzal is here. General Naeem Khalid Lodhi sahib our former Minister for Defense is here. General Naseer Janjua sahib, our former National Security Advisor, and Commander Southern Command also with us. There is General Asif Yasin Malik former Secretary Defense also with us. If we look around the GREF, it basically consists of 5 countries including Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, China, and Russia. If we look into the situation we have at the moment, this GREF is very important as we look at Pakistan is engaged with India and Kashmir. Externally and internally we have a lot of problems. We are facing problems with FATF and the internal security as well and economic situation and we look around our neighboring country China. China is also engaged with India and if we look at Iran it is also engaged in Yemen and other countries as well. If we look at Turkey, it is also engaged in Syria, Azerbaijan and Armenia as well. Although luckily Turkey is very strong economically and at the moment it is a role model for us as well. If we look into Russia, Russia is also engaged with Ukraine, Chechnya and also in Azerbaijan. So this GREF is really firing now. If we look at Afghanistan, it is the neighboring country of Pakistan. Both countries are depending on each other. We are also engaged in Afghanistan as well. If ever we settle Afghanistan in a peaceful way and that would be a very blessing for Pakistan. I'm not very expert on these topics but luckily we have very good speakers and experts to speak on these topics who will definitely throw light on the issues of how we handle and how we cope with all these internal issues and external issues to bring prosperity, peace and security to Pakistan. And I'm also very grateful to Mr. Hasnain Mirza who initiated this GREF and his team as well. My team and my Political Science and International Relations Department team and their participants are with us in this webinar. We do hope that Inshallah we'll continue with this spirit in the future as well. And we will organize more and more webinars to enlighten all these issues with our

national and our other international friends. Thank you very much! Hasnain Reza sir, over to you!

**ii. Hasnain Reza Mirza:**

Thank you! Abid Sahib. Bismillah arRehman arRaheem. Dear participants and honorable speakers of this webinar Assalamu Alaikum! General Sikander sir with your permission I would just take few minutes to introduce GREF and Webinar concept. I think we have a very good participation 59 participants are here. Thank you, everybody.

First of all, on the behalf of GREF, I would like to thank you all for joining us today. Our special thanks to Mr. Abid Sherwani, Director-General UMT (University of Management and Technology) and his faculty members, the staff of UMT for monitoring the webinar all their cooperation and support in arranging this webinar and the previous webinars also. I hope we will be doing the webinar in the future also. GREF is also grateful to our speakers General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, General Asif Yasin Malik and General Naseer Janjua for joining us and sparing their precious time today. They are going to give us their views and opinions on our topics in today's webinar. Today the Chair of this webinar will be General Sikander Afzal, Chairman GREF. I will just take two minutes to introduce GREF. Golden Ring Economic Forum, the idea was floated in 2010 through one of my papers and by 2015 this organization came into being as a policy research think tank and lobbying group for Pakistan's strategic economic cooperation with China, Iran, Russia and Turkey – the Golden Ring countries. And in 2016 we got registered under with the Government of Pakistan. The Board of Governors of GREF, basically consists of businessmen, retired senior Army officers, former Pakistani diplomats, industrialists and scholars. It is a group of multiple expertise, so its main aim is to bring all types of expertise under one roof and we can work towards the betterment of the national economic security through regional strategic economic cooperation. Now, why we call it Golden Ring? As you can see on the map of the world that China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey form sort of a ring formation around Central Asia and Afghanistan, so "Ring" comes from there. And why we call it "Golden", because almost over 30 percent of total natural and human resources of the entire globe belong to these five countries. Our mission is to form this new grouping of these five countries. We used to call it a bloc, but we have a detailed discussion with our partner countries China, Iran and Russia and they have proposed that instead of calling it a bloc at this stage let's call it a "Group" of countries to have less political opposition. Since, our purpose can be achieved, we can call it a Group. The objectives basically are, lobbying in the interest of Pakistan in these four countries and to bring all four countries to Pakistan creating joint multilateral strategic economic interests as much as possible. If their strategic economic interests are in Pakistan, it will in turn make Pakistan's security and economic security more stable in the region. Rapid geopolitical and geostrategic changes, formation of new groupings and shift in global policy in this region has made it very critical to revisit our defense and foreign policies. GREF is working on helping government for developing and revisiting existing policies and forming new policies for multilateral collaboration.

GREF has launched different initiatives after discussing them with the concerned organizations, government departments, and high officials of China, Iran and Russia. On the whole, all these countries are very much supportive of the whole idea of making this Group and almost all of GREF initiatives as well. So now we have to cash these countries' interests in Golden Ring initiative. In a very short period of past five years

GRAF had mentionable achievements. The first achievement was when we managed all these countries to come to Pakistan in 2017 in the first Golden Ring Parliamentary Speakers' Conference, held at Islamabad. There it was decided by the five countries that this should be made as a permanent regular feature as a forum and not a one time show. The second Conference was in Tehran in 2018 and the third one in Ankara in 2019. The Conferences at Beijing and Moscow have been temporarily delayed due to Covid-19. But I hope next year maybe it will happen there.

We have also conducted international webinars with China, Iran and Russia, very senior and high level officials participated from these countries and presented point of view of their respective governments. For example, in case of China, their Ambassador and from Beijing, China, the Chairman of China Sky News Network channel. From Iran, the Advisor to their Foreign Minister M/o Foreign Affairs Iran, Deputy Minister for Economic Planning and Privatization, Iran and Senior Executive Policy and International Studies Institute, M/o Foreign Affairs Iran. Similarly, from Russian side we had Acting Ambassador & Deputy Head of Mission Russian Embassy at Islamabad and Deputy Head of Russian Trade Mission to Pakistan. Whereas, speakers from Moscow were the Head of Pakistan Chair, Oriental Studies Institute, Academy of Sciences of Russian Federation, Head of Russia-Pakistan Friend Council of M/o Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, Head of International Relations of "Delovoy Russ" (an organization of top 100 Russian businessmen) Advisors to the Presidency of the Russian Federation. This heavy weight participation clearly shows that GRAF has not only been able to convince these countries but also they have accepted initiative, put forward by GRAF, of post Covid-19 Shared Economic Recovery very positively. We had very good seminars with very constructive suggestions from all them.

Now, this second series of webinars that we have started will be dealing with geopolitical and strategic side. I am sure our learned speakers will be discussing it and giving us their considered opinions and views. Our main aim of this seminar is to find out and suggest that what all is needed in revisiting Pakistan's defense and foreign policies to get maximum benefits for our national interests by forming this new grouping with China, Iran, Russia and Turkey under the changing regional geostrategic scenario. We know that India and Israel are now sitting in UAE and also have defense and strategic collaboration accords with UAE and Saudi Arabia, the two main countries from where our major supplies of fuel are coming. So now it would be a lot easier for India, Israel and US to squeeze and exert pressure and to teach us a lesson if we don't listen to them, by delaying or disrupting oil and gas supplies to Pakistan. So, we have to find alternative energy sources, closer to our borders, within the region, from our neighbors. In this respect GRAF has also launched an initiative of the "Regional Energy Grid".

Secondly, India having defense cooperation with Israel and Israel's presence in Gulf States and US being the "guarantor" of Israel, our "Eastern" Borders have now practically got extended to South and South-East putting more pressure on undersized Pakistan Navy. Now Pakistan has to be a lot more vigilant and battle ready to safeguard its interests in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf due to addition of Israeli traffic and increase in Indian presence in this area. Third, is that US has also pushed a new Indo-Pacific group that means they are actually encircling China and Russia from coming into the warm waters. But in that way, actually they are encircling Pakistan as well. So it is not that simple, these are the issues which we are going to face in near future so we need to discuss and find probable solutions.



In this regard GREF has launched several initiatives to safeguard Pakistan's strategic economic interests. The major ones are (i) establishment of Barter Trade Chamber of Golden Ring Countries, (ii) creation of a Commerce and Trade SPV to circumvent sanctions on some of the Golden Ring Countries and FATF, (iii) establishment of Golden Ring Media Association, (iv) developing of a common currency to get rid of Euro, US dollar, etc. and (v) establishment of Joint Counter Terrorism Council of Golden Ring countries. So these are the initiatives taken by GREF has launched.

In this webinar, we would like your opinions and views by looking at this holistic picture of happenings around us and how best we can get out of it. With this, I once again thank you very much and I hand over to General Sikander sir. Thank you very much.

iii. **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal HI(M), (Retd.):**

Thank you very much Hasnain! In the name of Allah the most merciful and the most beneficent. Assalamu alaikum everyone and good afternoon! I will not be boring you all that much with preliminaries so I would like to cut down to the crux of today's main activity through these series of the webinar of Golden Ring Economic Forum seeks to generate a discussion on the effects of the evolving regional developments around Pakistan. And how Pakistan can adjust with the evolving opportunities in the short, medium and long term for strategic insecurity. The discussions are intended to draw relevance from the following developments and come up with viable recommendation for Pakistan to adjust its national security policies in order to take advantage of the changing environment.

Now, what are these developments? These are the effects of the worldwide economic downturn and slowdown on Pakistan. Evolving environment in Afghanistan, ongoing confrontation between China and India, Indian government deliverance against Kashmiris in particular and Muslims in terror in India. Pakistan relations with the Arab world in the light of increasing Indian, Israeli and US influence. Pakistan's relations with Iran and Russia and the possibility of increased economic interaction with Iran and Russia. The threat of FATF and other similar regimes. Today's webinar is focused on what adjustment Pakistan need to make in its national Security Policy in order to draw maximum benefit from the changing environment from the Golden Ring countries namely China, Iran, Russia, and Turkey. For this purpose, we have a panel of very eminent speakers who have been involved in issues of national security at the highest levels. Our first speaker for today is Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi, Hilal-e-Imtiaz military, retired. He is one of the former Secretaries of Defense and was also Minister of Defense in the last Interim Government. General Lodhi joined the Army in 1974. He has a Bachelor of Engineering degree. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff College Quetta, National Defense University Islamabad and holds a Master's degree in international relations. I will not go into a lot of more details but he has had illustrious career including appointment of Director in the staff at National Defense College, Commander Corps Engineer's, Director General Engineering Directorate at GHQ, General Officer Commanding Bahawalpur, Engineer-in-Chief Pakistan Army and also the Corps Commander in Bahawalpur. General Naeem Lodhi has also remained the Chief Executive and Managing Director of Fauji Fertilizer Company and FF Energy Company. And as I have mentioned earlier he served as a Secretary of Defense at the Ministry of Defense. He also participates as a defense analyst in different TV channels and contributes regularly in National and international newspapers. Over to you General Lodhi.

iv. **Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI(M), (Retd.):**

Thank you very much! Bismillah Rahman Rahim. Thanks a lot GREF and UMT for this I would say interactive session and thank you very much General Sikander, Hasnain Mirza sahib and Abid Sherwani sahib. Taking advantage of the level of intellect at the UMT, as I've been told that faculty and students from IR and Fuji other relevant disciplines are present therefore, what I intend doing is that instead of giving details of the issues I would just speak of certain pointers. I am sure that the things will be cleared and well understood but of course, if there is any further details required we can do it in the question-answer session. First of all I have written fact sheet sort of thing which I would like to place before you and then see that if there is any disagreement then we can talk about it. If you look at the global scenario everything is reshaping. First of all, I think we all should understand that geo-economics, geopolitics and geo-strategy are intertwined, so if you are looking for success in one only and neglecting the other two, then most probably one will not get there. For example, this Forum and the UMT might also be interested in the economic progress, peace and prosperity in Pakistan or having a national policy in Pakistan. Then unless and until we have a coordinated well jointed foreign policy, finance policy and defense policy, reinforcing each other, only then we will be able to accomplish this. Otherwise, if you just pay more attention to any one of three and less to the other two, problem will not be solved.

What is happening at the global level is that a superpower is trying to prolong its hegemony and control which is being threatened by two powers, the revisionist China and resurging Russia. Resurging Russia is understood but why do they call China "revisionist China," because they take it as a threat. As a matter of fact, they are afraid that China is trying to revise the national and global settings, whether it is the global political setting or global economic setting. Now, let us talked about it, before maybe we'll go into more details. US still enjoys edge in advanced technologies like space technology, internet, GPS, etc. Although the alternatives are coming up and we are aware of that but still I think they are on top of it. Even in the present world economic order the hegemony of dollar is still there and so far cannot be broken. Political control of large parts of the world by whatever techniques they use, I don't want to go in details, is also with them.

What do we have at the regional level is Indian strategic shift towards US camp, rapidly weakening relations with China and slowly with Russia also. US and India have signed a number of strategic pacts and MOUs, we are aware of at least about 12 of them and the most recent one is either been signed today or tomorrow. So, there they are collaborating in intelligence sharing, in Logistics and providing each other interoperability in the region. This intelligence sharing and interoperability may look very benign but they mean a lot and they have very deep connotations for Indians. Both of them India and US actually are also part of Indo Pacific pact, this new security paradigm known as the "Quad Plus" which include Australia, India, Japan and US mainly with a few other countries. We are aware of the Indo China standoff, it has its own dynamics I will not go into details then Indian unhealthy relations with all their neighbors and we know it. Now what is the Indian situation, we just summarily look at it. They have got an embarrassment in Ladakh with China, then they got a bloody nose in a skirmish with PAF, unable to subdue Kashmiris so far and problem with the minorities, diminishing role in Afghanistan and deep economic impact due to Covid pandemic. Their forces are demoralized because of various reasons and they are in a state of, you can say, injured vanity.

Pakistani situation is also not very rosy, we have deep internal strife and worsening law and order situation, a dismal economic situation and damaging inflation. We have successes in Afghan peace efforts but have not been able to leverage to a best advantage. Pandemic has been fairly controlled. We have CPEC with the great potential but is moving sluggishly as I see it. Similarly, the nuclear parity is not being leveraged properly in my opinion. As far as Kashmir is concerned, we know that it has been fairly Internationalized by Pakistan's efforts, no letup in Indian atrocity in Indian occupied Kashmir but at the same time we see that Pakistan is not succeeding in giving any worthwhile support to Kashmiris, we are more like a bystander, forgive me for that, Kashmiris are alone and not in a position to face such a large Indian Army. Indians are slowly but surely consuming territories of Indian occupied Kashmir.

Now let us have a look at the future of the region. Of course, we're talking about the five countries. We have excellent relations with China, largely improved and continuously improving relations with Russia. We still have a sort of, you can say, stalemate with Iran and good relations with Turkey. But as far as the Indo Pak relations are concerned we are in the state of confrontation rather than cooperation and it is likely to stay like that unless some big strategic shift takes place in the region. India can do little with China but can attempt to redeem its honor by trying to humiliate Pakistan, which is risky but comparatively less risky. India cannot digest the occupied Kashmir without discrediting Pakistan in a big way. They also very well understand that. Although US being India's strategic partner, is apparently showing its satisfaction on Pakistan assistance in Afghan peace process but in my opinion, deep down US blames Pakistan for its unsuccessful venture in Afghanistan. Pakistani leadership is busy in creating a good boy image and accommodation touching at time the boundaries of appeasement. The deterrence's have been diluted due to new normal situation along line of control and elsewhere. Keeping all this in view I think this region is likely to witness unlimited but intense military showdown in near to mid future and if it will not be a military showdown it will be a war-like situation and we know that in hybrid war kinetic is not the only option. However, if we can succeed in redeeming own sovereignty and run our external and internal affairs in line with modern nation-states concept maybe we can avoid the worst-case scenario. When I say that we are not totally sovereign, none of the states are, as far as the today's world is concerned. But we have become less and less sovereign because of certain internal and external factors, because you know the definition of sovereignty is, and all the students of international relations understand that if you can make laws that support your interest and if you can implement those laws then you are sovereign. But if you cannot make laws or if you have laws but you cannot modify or implement them then there is a problem in Sovereignty.

So what we need to do, I think the first is that we must recognize that our natural foreign policy direction should be east and then diligently work for that. Then leverage on strategic location and influence on Afghan situation to pursue own interest. In my opinion, you know, Afghan peace talks should be held at Islamabad and not Doha. Recognize that IMF, World Bank, FATF etc. are political tools in the hands of world powers and we need to get free of their claws. Recognize the importance of CPEC, not only for us but for the entire region and act accordingly. Evolve of political system that creates harmony, efficiency and deliverance. Stop being defensive, stop taking refuge behind weak economy, and do what has to be done to fight back hybrid war effectively. In the end, I would like to revisit and reconsider certain myths and this is especially for our students who were listening to us. Myth number 1, all political

problems can be resolved by table negotiations, wrong! Myth number 2, without strong economy, we cannot think of fighting back, wrong! It can be proved historically. Myth number 3, moral diplomatic and political pressure on India will change their attitude, wrong! Thank you, very much!

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you very much, General Naeem Lodhi and I'm sure with the thoughts that you have on the standard myths of international relations it would be a very important discussion for the participant from the department. I also acknowledge the fact that you also recognize, like GREF does, the importance of looking east and closer to home than to the standard areas that we have been interacting with, not that we may neglect them. We do not count them out but we have to slightly refocus our orientation and in that you are right that we have to leverage whatever environment is developing around us to our advantage instead of their turning it into our disadvantage. And for that we have to be proactive and not keep waiting for the things to become what we want them to become and then we say now what would happen. Now, I would like to thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Lieutenant General Asif Yasin Malik, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military), retired as former Defense Secretary. Also, he is the fourth generation soldier who joined the Army in 1995 as an infantry officer. He is a graduate of Pakistan Army Staff and Command College, has done his Master's from National Defense University Islamabad and also has a Master's degree in Strategic Resource Management from National Defense University USA at Washington DC. He had also acted in a joint capacity by serving as the Director-General Joint Intelligence Information and Operations to the Joint Staff Headquarters. The General has commanded a strike infantry division and 11 core located at Peshawar, spearheading the stabilizing operations in FATA and KPK. The General lead neutralizing operations against terrorist activities, militancy, insurgents and criminal groups. He was also responsible for major rehabilitation efforts after successful counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism operation in the border and others in affected areas, including de-radicalization, infrastructure restoration, development of health and education services and livelihood program. He was appointed as Secretary of Defense in 2012 and served for two years. All yours General Asif, please.

**v. Lieutenant General Asif Yasin Malik HI(M), Retd.:**

Ladies and gentlemen accept my gratitude for considering me worthy of speaking on a very important subject. I must congratulate GREF for evolving a very unique concept of establishing a think tank strictly designed and structure to meet emerging challenges faced by Pakistan particularly with reference to its relation with four countries in the region. The Golden Ring countries have rightly been identified because of their geo-security and geo-economics significance on global as well as a regional spectrum. Let me begin by bringing out a paradigm shift in global dynamics of security over the last 100 years since World War 1. The world was tackling with created security threats by operating security alliances impacts. In my opinion, this was primarily due to insecurity of bigger states and alliances, pacts created a herd

mentality which made them feel secure. Secondly, it gives them some sort of moral support by taking crowd along the best example is the coalition of Iraq where none of the participants had a dispute with yet they join the invasion just to justify US aggression. Now, we see almost demise of global and regional security pacts and alliances', CENTO died in the 70s, the demise of the Soviet Union in early 90s. NATO also seems to be breathing its last with the reduction of US contribution and European liberalism policies. After 100 years, states are left to guard their own borders, and state to state conflict is emerging back as a design of security. The next paradigm shift has emerged after overcoming the use of terrorism by States as an instrument of policy and non-states and organizations as a weapon of convenience except for some pockets terrorism has become a fringe strategy or tactic so far. The third change has been a shift in priority from geostrategic security to geo-economic security. The concept of military invasion is being gradually overtaken by economic subjugation or paralysis. Economics has become the real lead instrument duly supported by a credible military deterrence. Based on the four mentioned scenario Pakistan also to set it to cost to survive rather emerge as a positive state in the community of nations to bring honor and pride to its citizens. Today, pride is no more in the number of ICBMs or tanks the state possesses, rather its per capita income its citizens live by. In this context, we can divide the zone into regional and global spheres. In the regional zone, the Golden Ring states emerge as decisive and important. So, Pakistan has to restructure its national security policy according to the new geostrategic environment. Since it is an evolutionary process, so ideally, I wish to start with selected states which none of them are better than the Golden Ring five.

I will start with China. In this context, we must try to understand the Chinese mindset and approach which is not very easy. Yet, if we trace the last seven decades, we can see their amazing rise from ashes and drugs. Just 30 years ago, no one could imagine what China is today. Actually, it was a very simple path that China treaded. First, internal political-economic strength and security, and then protection abroad. It is self-explanatory, so I will straightway come to the Sino-Indian clashes. In my opinion, most of us failed to hold the grasp of the whole design of Chinese. If we analyze the backlog of Indo-US strategic accord, we will realize that the Chinese challenge this arrangement, and the US mutant reaction during the days of conflict exposed its relevant strategic worthiness with China on the regional platform.

The design of containment of China was challenged to its own script. The reason was the economic stranglehold China has established over the US and its ability to manipulate it according to its wishes. China also established its unchallenged military supremacy in Asia by dissection in South China Sea assertion. This situation has clear overtones for Pakistan and makes clear the path we need to follow. Furthermore, it brings out the security dimensions of CPEC that it is not only an economic corridor but also a security assurance instrument for Pakistan. Currently, it is a very close and critical friend of Pakistan from its very independence.

Like China, Turkey is also asserting itself in a new design in creating a new niche for itself not only in West Asia but also in Europe. In addition to rising GDP, it is also emerging as a credible security player in the region as it is evident from its role in the Syrian conflict. Similarly, it is finding a new footprint in the Gulf by getting close to some states like Qatar, Kuwait, and other states not very close to Saudi Arabia. It is also said to challenge Saudi domination in the Gulf. Turkey not only has a trade potential but also has a reckon-able defense industry which has a potential for close collaboration and cooperation for Pakistan. In any case, 2020 would bring a change in

Turk-Arab relations. After the expiry of the 1921 agreement, for this, I would suggest that MOFA is to start studying the post-2021 Arab-Turk environment and evolve a fresh approach in the coming years.

Of all the Golden Ring countries, Iran is the most critical and difficult to manage. Iran has a very sensitive situation internally, globally, and regionally. Globally, it is facing sanctions and regionally, it is involved in the sectarian struggle with most of its neighbors. Pakistan has implications on both the planes after it allowed sectarian strife, the game of Iran and Saudi Arabia on its soil while Pakistan being Iran's immediate neighbor. As immensely potential, it cannot be exploited due to sanctions. Our 30% or so Shia population and the rest of the right-wing Sunni clergy are vulnerable to exploitation while our energy needs can be easily met by Iran as an alternate.

Again, the situation in Afghanistan requires both the countries to adopt a synchronized approach without which the post peace accord environment may put us at cross paths. Finally, the Chinese package of \$400 billion for Iran in the next 20 years puts Pakistan and Iran's interests in the same frame which could be exploited for better Pak-Iran relations.

Lastly but not definitely the least is Russia. Like China, Russia has also put itself on a new path in the global and regional security dimensions. Russia started asserting its security strength by capturing Crimea and the domination of the Black Sea and North Atlantic. Closer to us, it came in the Syrian Conflict and challenged the US and West's campaign against Syria. As far as Pakistan is concerned, we have to re-orientate our policies on mutual as well as on multi-lateral planes as Russia and China are following a coordinated approach in ECO and SCO. Both of them are trying for greater regional influence yet no in conflict with each other. We have to be mindful of Russia's historical relations with India and Afghanistan. In this context, we must have a consultative and cooperative approach about our Afghan policies with Russians. As far as India is concerned, we should not insist on the Russians with "either or" policies rather than interaction relations and create our own space in Russian policy structure. For that, we have to create an interest-based Pak-Russia environment.

Some policy guidelines having dwelled at the country's specific environment, we can formulate guidelines for our policymakers and I'll just give the salient measures. Put the domestic house in order for which there are three essentials. Number one is governance, number two is governance, and number three is governance. Declare an economic emergency to create a positive economic environment as an incentive for foreign investors, thereby evolving the interest-based relationship with those countries. Create stable economic conditions, we should establish our preferential niche for Golden Ring countries for which our economic and social policies have a lot of space. For our preferential status within Golden Ring, we have to move on bilateral as well as on multilateral spheres. Bilateral should be interest-based with economic and security ties in leap. While in the multilateral arena, we must play an aggressive role in organizations like ECO and SCO. While the prospects of revival of RCD may be evaluated and discussed with the stakeholders. Our reliance on Gulf Arab countries has to be reduced gradually. We must have a 'crisis management cell' in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It should constantly study and evolve worst-case scenarios like sanctions etc. We, luckily, have had a good experience of sanctions for nearly 11 years in the 1980s and 90s and should be able to farewell in such eventualities. Activities like military maneuvers should be done on multilateral as well as on bilateral bases.

Peaceful Afghanistan should be our serious priority and should be ensured at all costs as much as we can do. We should reduce hostilities with India and bring the relationship to a minimum workable level, not nothing more and nothing less. Finally, we must keep the West and the USA, in general, good humor to ensure positivity in the relationship.

There was a question about the media in Golden Ring countries. I am afraid that our media has serious issues. Number one is a low standard of education and general illiteracy. Unless our media is made a bit literate and intellectually deep, I don't think we can find space in the international arena even within the Golden Ring Countries. Therefore, we must have proper training academies linked to universities for this purpose, especially, on the topics of International Affairs and Geopolitics or political economics. I think NUST and NDU can play a good role in this with the support from ISPR. Having said that, there is no harm to increase the media cooperation on bilateral bases with these countries. I'm afraid that these 5 countries may not be able to create a new organization immediately, be it media or be it politics. So that's all from my side. Thank you, very much!

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you very much, General Asif. We really appreciate the input you're providing us. First of all, I appreciate the fact that you also think on the same lines as the Golden Ring Think Tank is thinking that there needs to be closer interaction near the home. We cannot rule out our association with others but we need to have new venues to look at. I am grateful for the specific directions you have given especially, with regards to Russia of creating a room space within the domain of Russian thinking and their policymaking. And you are correct that this is what we also found when we were interacting with our Russian counterpart at the think tank and policy level. You also emphasized it and that is also the gist of what Golden Ring is all about that it is economy, economy, and economy at the focus. Like General Lodhi also mentioned that it is inter-linkages of all these three. The economy is a significant part of geo-strategy and it needs to be dealt with. I know that it is 4 p.m. and it is the end of our time but no, I will take the liberty of extending the time so that we certainly allow our third speaker to have his say. And also give a little extra time and I'm sure the speakers unless they have prior commitments will bear with me. I apologize for this delay in the long introduction.

Without wasting any more time, the third speaker for today is Lieutenant General Naseer Janjua, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military), retired. I hope that I have spoken his name correctly. He is former National Security Advisor of Pakistan. Gen Janjua was commissioned in the infantry in March 79. He is a graduate of Command and Staff College and received his Master's degree from National Defense University Islamabad. He has served in Cambodia, commanded an Infantry regiment in the Northern areas of Pakistan, a Brigade at Siachen, and led the counter-terrorism operation Rah-e-Haq by commanding an Infantry Division in Swat. When I talk about Swat, I'm sure that one of the participants asked a similar question about Swat, we will organize a session with General Janjua for the sake of all the other participants of the department to talk more about Swat and the region. Gen Janjua has also been Chief of Staff of a Strike Corps. A Strike Corps is the one that is designed to cross the border and not only fight a defensive battle but fight an offensive battle. He has been Director

of Military Operations, Chief of Staff of Southern Command that is Quetta, Vice Chief of General Staff, and President, National Defense University. His last position was Commander of Southern Command, commanding a very large formation of Pakistan Army in Balochistan where he played a vital role in eradicating terrorism, extremism, militancy, and insurgency in Pakistan's largest province. One thing I mention here of significance is that it was during his time that a large number of separatists flags were brought down voluntarily by the people because of his interactive sessions with the locals. In recognition of his long service, he was appointed as National Security Advisor in 2015. As the NSA, he played a very proactive role with reference to National Security regaining mutual prospects between Pakistan and all the regional countries and especially with the Golden Ring countries. General Janjua, all yours!

**vi. Lieutenant General Naseer Janjua HI(M), Retd.:**

Thank you, sir, for such an elaborate introduction. Let me begin by thanking all of you, by thanking Golden Ring Economic Forum, UMT, and the department of political science, International Relations, students, and everyone for inviting me over. It was very enlightening to hear General Lodhi, General Asif Yasin Malik, and not only their experiences but they have also been practitioners. Hasnain sir, thank you very much for your opening.

As of today, if you really ask me what is challenging or what is more worrisome, it is our internal situation, unfortunately. We need to redeem internally and we need to solidify internally. We need to soothe internally. But it's a very important subject today that we have to discuss the regional geostrategic challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. We also have to identify opportunities. Very elaborate speeches have already been made, I would not like to repeat the points already discussed. There have been very cogent suggestions on the table by imminent speakers. Since, we also have students listening to us, so we are also investing in the future. Therefore, there will be a little bit of reflection.

First of all, when we want to talk about regional geostrategic challenges, it would be pertinent to briefly discuss first 'Global Geostrategic Challenges' and then the regional, as they both have direct and indirect linkages. The global construct i.e. the evolving world shows that the uni-polarity is under stress. Uni-polarity is faced with geostrategic, geopolitical, and geo-economic challenges. Uni-polarity seems to be withering away into multi-polarity. It even seems to be transiting into evident bipolarity. Now the whole process of uni-polarity to multi-polarity and evident bipolarity has made the world more competitive than cooperative. Though as of today, the world is still largely focusing and expressing deep relations with uni-polarity. But the process of reorientation, the process of realignment, the process of re-carving, and readjustments have already commenced. At the global level, the new lines have been drawn. Some lines are very clear, some lines are very hazy and some lines just have quite a volume. So that is how it creates a strategic haze that we, like Pakistan, have to look through this and envisage for future which is worthy of us.

Let's draw closer to the direct and indirect linkages of global and regional areas. I feel that at the global level, geo-economics predict that the ongoing century belongs to Asia. General Naeem Lodhi explained it very well, let me follow by saying, geo-economics predicts that the ongoing century belongs to Asia which is an unacceptable geostrategic and geopolitical construct. Geostrategic and geopolitics have become



vulnerable if the geo-economics slips out of hand. So all three have to be together. Geo-economics is altering. It is finding its way somewhere else. To retain geo-economic, it is now to mitigate the challenges. Today, geostrategic and geopolitics affairs are now contesting. Hence, the strategies like Containment of China is actually the containment of geo-economics. The containment of China, since it was very obvious, was renamed as a pivot to Asia. That also became very evident, so it was called rebalancing Asia. So that was also very obvious, it is now called an indo-pacific policy or indo-pacific strategy.

The basic concept of this is to contain/retain/limit China and resurging Russia geographically. Because, if they can be contained in this backyard, they will never be able to challenge and they will never be able to be a superpower. So actually, it is the place where our challenges reside as a smaller and poor country. If we just see, we are not making any assumptions, we are quoting here the US strategy (security strategy) in which China and Russia have been declared as revisionist States and strategic challengers. Iran is declared as the rogue state. India is declared as a strategic partner and net security provider. Pakistan is mentioned as supporting the terrorists and terrorist groups. Though they are improving in Afghanistan.

Now, what does it imply? I want to talk to the students, actually that a great power rivalry has come to Asia where we are co-located with China and Russia. Now, anything against China or Russia equally affects us. It so happens. The third-largest country of the region is India which has become the strategic partner and net security provider in the region for the US. When it is prepared, when it is nurtured, when it is supported not only by the US but also by the Israel, to counter China, it becomes a heavyweight for us. So anything against China and Russia affects us. Empowering India affects us. Next Iran is a rogue state as per the US. Then Afghanistan is in war, since the last 40 years' children have seen nothing but war. As you know that the Muslim world is also in trauma and it's withering because they are failing to withstand the ongoing design against them. So the region has reasons to go to war including this greater power rivalry. There are disputes like Kashmir. There is no dispute resolution or mechanism. Pakistan is over-relying on its nuclear capability because there is a huge conventional dissymmetry between India and Pakistan. On the contrary, India is trying to keep the war alive despite being a nuclear power. The sense of responsibility seems to be non-existing. India is projecting, rather vindicating now through which it gains a two-front situation i.e. China and Pakistan. Everyone feels that China has done great recently. I feel that it goes to India's way. It vindicates India's retrieve through which it gained. Now India will gain from the US, from the West, and from its public by projecting China and Pakistan as a two-front situation. So, the region, despite being the future century of the world, is very fragile. Its stability, instability, and security architecture is under stress.

I would say that given these challenges at hand, opportunities are there. They are very much there. But we are into a transition. We are into a transition when the world is changing, the world is evolving. If we become fast as the part of this division which is going on, we will be taking sides and we will be a part of this division which, perhaps, will not go well. I would first like to say that we need subtle soothing internally because the political stability is the first need of the hour. Then I would like to say, avoid the danger of an evolving world i.e. evolving competition because we are its incidental victim. There is a greater incompatibility externally and internally. We need to enable ourselves to embrace this change. I would say our largest opportunity resides in the connectivity of Asia. Our opportunity lies in the well-being of our people and in enabling

them to embrace the change. Our opportunities lie in our economic capacity, in our industrial capacity, and in our private sector where we not focusing. We are barely meeting the power requirements. Look at the cost of production. We want to do our business but what are we producing? So I would come back and say don't fall prey to hard lines which have been drawn of the evolving world. Don't be a part of the division. Still, hold on! Don't rush! Similarly, in the Muslim world, also don't be a part of the divide. We are a balancing force. You have to take care of them in the coming times. Help bring lasting peace in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has become not a barrier for itself but a barrier for us and a barrier for Asia too. Afghanistan should be used as the heart of Asia. Afghanistan should not be a barrier but a bridge. That is how we have to think about it. About Kashmir General, Naeem Lodhi has been very clear. Somehow, I think, let's prevent economic meltdown first because this is leading us nowhere. Thank you very much. As you have indicated the time, I am grateful, sir. Thank you, very much!

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you very much, General Janjua! In my honest opinion, I thought the three military speakers speaking today, we will be having a lot of talk of War and Fireworks. But for the consumption of students, we realize and what I must point out is that the military men who have seen it and done it are the proponents of peace all over the world because they have seen what you and others sitting at home have not seen. While we are and always will be ready to lay down our lives for the country and the nation but war is not a solution and as was pointed out practically by all the three speakers. The world is changing around us and we need to be very aware of it. We need to look at interconnecting our interests with our neighbors, and especially bigger neighbors but not falling into the trap of alliances again. We need to keep our interests and our national interests first and foremost. We need to focus more on our economy, our industrial capacity, and the well-being which will lead obviously to the well-being of the people as people will become more settled. We find that the frustration dies down. I know that we are running short of time or we have already overshot the time but I would still allow if people would like to open to questions. Please indicate who would like to ask a question so that the same individual is given the mic and his mic is released. When you are asking a question, please be courteous enough to name yourself. I find Ali Raza raising his hand. Ali, please have the mic. Please identify yourself and when you are asking a particular speaker, please name that speaker.

## 6.2 QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

- **Ali Raza (Student):**

Assalam-o-Alaikum, Sir! My name is Ali Raza. It's my 6<sup>th</sup> semester. I'm doing International Relations. I have a question for Sir General Naeem Lodhi. He talked about 3 topics. The last but not the least one was moral diplomatic and political pressure wouldn't change the mind of India. So are we having any other strategies, tactics, and other plans to change their mind? He also said that we have internationalized this issue. So what Pakistan is doing diplomatically and as he mentioned, we don't have any political pressure. So what could we do in another sense like in strategy and other tactics? What do you say, sir?

- **General Naeem Lodhi:**

Thank you, very much! I think what I'll do is that first, I'll try to list a few actions, which in my opinion, are possible and all of them may not be acceptable to everyone. Some of them are controversial but I always say that some discussion should be done on these. You have to use them to make some ripples. The first thing we must understand is that we have done well as far as diplomacy is concerned like the Prime Minister's speech and the follow-up things. Now the world is talking about Kashmir especially about human atrocities that are being carried out. They have thrown out the Shimla Agreement, we have not talked about it. We must discuss whether the Shimla Agreement is still in our interest or not. I always say that we should ask the UN to conduct a partial plebiscite in Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir which can be later extended to the rest of Kashmir whenever it is possible so that we can make them as part of our country properly with the condition that whenever total plebiscite will take place, the situation can be reviewed again. We have not done well in law affairs. We know that many Indian Generals have talked about even up to the extent of raping the Kashmiri girls and women. We know that their Prime Minister and Defense Minister have been talking about, every time, attacking Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan openly. (I'm trying to remember) I think, it is 2233, there's one UN resolution, not Security Council resolution, a General Assembly resolution which says that occupied people have the right to take up arms in the defense and other nations are allowed to help them even provision of arms. You can go through that. Find out through Google and you'll find that there is a UN resolution in that. We can, at least, show some preparations for war other than of course our standing army. But we can start training our youth by saying that because India is saying again and again that they will attack; so here we are training our youth for defense whenever it is required. Then, whatever Indians are doing to us, we have all the right to do to them and what they are doing to us, I don't need to go into the details. You know that Kulbhushan is here with us. You have seen what is happening in Balochistan. You have seen what is happening on the soils of FATA. I don't have to go into those details. Also, one thing I would like to add that whenever you say that you have given a befitting reply, it should mean that they should not carry out the same action again; that is a befitting reply. Saying every day that we are giving a befitting reply is, at least, not acceptable to me and I don't know the view of other Generals sitting here. So, I've given you some of the things we can have a government in exile and so many other things too. Of course, we have pros and cons for all these things but I think there are, at least in my vocabulary, 9 or 11 steps we can take. At least we can start discussing and whatever we can do we might go for it. We know what the hybrid war is, you know what hybrid war is. So I can take

only one of these stands. What about the all other stands there should be a national dialog. Thank you, very much!

- **Dr. Fatima Sajjad:**

Okay, I'm Doctor Fatima Sajjad. I'm an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations. My subject is 'Peace Education'. As a 'Peace Educationist', I totally agree that we need to have regional thinking, regional bloc, regional economic bloc, and regional strategic bloc. But I think, we cannot develop fully and we cannot free ourselves from Western influence unless we have better ideas. And for better ideas, education is really important. So, I have 2 short questions. Do we have a development vision of our own that is different from the development vision of the West which focuses solely on the economy? But I think that our own vision should have things that go beyond the economy, beyond military strategy and all these things. I think we need to have a vision of our own and need to think over that vision. Secondly, I want to ask where you place education in your development vision. I think that because that is extremely important as long as we have the best universities in the West. They are leading in that, and they will be able to maintain that. So I think, one thing which very important is to work in the field of education. Make education our priority. I think we can have better-thinking patterns of our own, rather than just focusing on ideas of the balance of power and all those ideas which are coming from the West. Unless we have thought of our own, I don't think we can fully develop or free ourselves from Western influence. So I think we need to place education at the center of all this and maybe, we need to think about developing vision of ourselves as well. So what would be your take on that?

- **General Naeem Lodhi:**

I would say just one sentence. "I totally and fully agree with Dr. Sahiba."

- **Lt. General Asif Yasin Malik:**

Dr. Sahiba, my question is to you 'name a Pakistani leader who has a vision for Pakistan'. So unless you have a vision, you can't go anywhere. Unless your leaders have the ability to see behind the wall, you are not going anywhere, you will just stand on this side of the wall and keep trying. Now why education has not been encouraged in Pakistan. I have been a great proponent of education. My analysis is that this political system is irrespective of who is in power. It's not conducive for education because it runs on a five-year cycle and if I'm the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister and I go for the education, it is a 10-year or 20-year cycle. So I'll do only those things that are doable in 5 years. If there are some things that I can show around to the illiterate population, they will also see those things that I will show them. Therefore, this is a very serious question. I will just quote one example and then stop.

During General Musharraf's time, nothing is about a military ruler or something. He had HEC under Doctor Atta. About 5000 students were studying abroad. Low and behold, the first budget was presented in 2008. By the time the budget was presented, the next day I received calls from Berlin, Germany, France, and where not, who were doing Ph.D. and suddenly their stipends and everything was stopped. So I called somebody in HEC and he told me that the major drop in the budget was for HEC. So, this is the question. Thank you!

- **Dr. Fatima Sajjad:**

Yes, I do accept the responsibility. But I think whenever we're working on a forum which is working for development, it's very important to identify the people from other Sectors as well especially from the education that together we can have a dialogue on things and maybe we can develop a vision from different perspectives. That is your suggestion. But thank you for a very enlightening talk and it was wonderful to know about this regional bloc that is very important. Thank you, so much!

- **Ehsan Ullah:**

My question was for General Asif. The question is about geopolitics. I was talking about if we see our country Pakistan, the situation is not well. If we see our country's religions and leverages, they are not good. So how it could be better for Pakistan?

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

I will request one of the panelists to answer but I will just add something. Your question basically focused on that the situation in Pakistan is not good and what leverages we can pull and use to improve the situation. In simple words, yes! The situation is not good. If the situation would be good, we would be discussing something else and that is the purpose of this webinar. This is the first of the series of 8 in which we will have experts from all fields coming in one by one and deliberating upon it. The idea is that none of them can give you an optimal solution. A solution comes from a consensus of thought processes that will come in. What we will conclude as the GREF at the end of these eight webinars would be shared not only with the government but by other think tanks also, encouraging more future discussion and interaction. We would encourage that it would then become a word of town and then can be translated. That is why apart from calling ourselves a think tank, we also call ourselves a lobbying group so that when we interact with people, we try and tell them this is something that is doable. It is with the efforts of all such people that we will come to a point where we will be able to come up with solutions or recommendations which would help in improving the situation in Pakistan. So I will request you to keep joining us in all the webinars and you will hear people talking about how to improve national security, how to talk about food security, so on and so for. But nobody will give you one answer.

- **Abdur Rehman:**

Yes, sir! Assalam-o-Alaikum, everyone. Sir, my question is for Lt. Gen Janjua. Sir, in the light of GREF, how Pakistan will navigate its relations with Russia especially in the backdrop of closed economic and military cooperation between India and Russia.

- **Lieutenant General Naseer Janjua:**

Okay! We all understand that we have a history of a relationship with Russia. If we look at it, we are very proud of what happened. If you look from their side, maybe it is not the same. Both of the Nations have to walk over their past. I have been to Russia 3 times. We have discussed and we have participated in a lot of interactive sessions. We have shared the vision of the future world with them and they understand and I find that now, they are willing to walk over the past. Hence, you see a lot of improvements coming around in almost every sphere. We have had joint training. We are into economic activities. We are visiting each other. So, gradually it is improving. Now again, their history of the relationship between India and Russia. And they have had a very good relationship and they have continued to build on that. We are actually a new Country in. We have also started doing very well. I think nations act in their own

interest. So let's, for the time being, not look at the India-Russia relationship grudgingly. We should not be envious unnecessarily. However, we should do well and we should create your own space with them. They have started realizing and gradually, the whole region is likely to come in a more compact form. The greater vision in Asia, then Europe, and then Eurasia. So I think this will come together gradually but we have to continue to work on this. Thank you!

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you, Gen. Janjua! Before Sidra asks a question, I'll just add something. For the information of all those, who may not be aware of it, Russians have nothing against improving and enhancing relations with Pakistan whether there is India. Interests of each country are different and this is what the Russians also claim. However, what is hampering the improving relations is not a Russian attitude or Pakistan's willingness or Russian willingness. What is hampering is the continued sanctions on Russia and its economic and industrial concerns. For example, we have a deal with Russians for improving and making an oil pipeline. The Russians are ready to do it tomorrow and the discussions are going on between the Government of Pakistan and the Government of Russia. The only thing which was holding it back is that whichever company the Russians offer, would come and do the work and undertake the construction, turned out to be the one which was under sanctions by the US Government. Again, the question is, if you interact with a company that is already under sanctions of the US Government, it has other implications. So that is why, we are talking about finding ways and means of interaction with countries like Russia, which is under sanctions, and Iran, which is under sanctions too. One realizes that but this is how we come about and find ways and means of how to go about it. That is one of the goals of what GREF is all about. General Asif, would you like to add something? Please!

- **General Asif:**

I would just like to add a little bit. The heating up of Indo-US relations is a blessing in disguise for us because Russians are very annoyed with the strategic alliance or strategic partnership of India and the USA. In about the last 5 years, the weapons and arms purchase by the Indians has annoyed the Russians a lot. I have given the knowledge that they have stopped sending spare parts of the hardware present in India. Therefore, I think we should just wait and watch the Indo-Russian relationships getting unraveled. We should have that much worth that Russia is forced to have good relations with us. Thank you, sir!

- **Sidra Nosheen:**

Assalam-o-Alaikum, everyone! My name is Sidra Nosheen and I am a student of BS International Relations, 7th semester. My question is for General Asif. As you said that good governance is the solution to all mess in Pakistan but sir, the government is polarized on governance prerequisites. So what will be the strategy to cope with it?

- **Lt. Gen. Asif:**

I think the issue is of our political system. It's not about this government or that government. It's my opinion and it's a very personal opinion that this British system of government is not suiting the thinking of our people. Political leadership and people are miles apart. Their interests, at least visibly, don't seem to be common. The proof of this is that all the political leaders, irrespective of political parties, have hugged the

system and don't try to change it. As a result, people are suffering. There is no accountability. NAB is not accountability. The accountability is in the ballot. You know it very well that when you go to our voters, competence is not the issue for them. We have to change this political system in Pakistan, and I'm not suggesting some new system, but we will have to review the whole structure of the system in Pakistan. The Civil Service, the Police, and the political system have to undergo a major review and restructuring. Without that, I don't think we're going anywhere and I bet after 10 years somebody else will be asking the same questions and somebody will give the same answers. Thank you!

- **Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you very much, Asif! Ladies and gentlemen, we have already taken a lot of time and we have overshot the time for about 45 minutes. I know there are other hands that are being raised and questions waiting to be asked but I will have to forego the questions for today. We can organize a session later on. As we go along, for all the students and the participants, just to point out the issues of governance. Please focus on these issues when we have the politicians sitting here for the webinar because that would be more specific. For example, the next webinar is going to be with ex-Foreign Secretary. So we will apprise you of that beforehand and their focus will remain the foreign policy of Pakistan. I would be really obliged if your questions are asked accordingly and then we will go on to the role of the media, the agriculture sector, the economy as theorists, and as practitioners. We will be talking about energy security and so on. So you will have ample time to address each subset of the national policy and national security issues one by one. I personally would like to, first of all, thank the three guest speakers for today. I would like to thank Mr. Abid Sherwani from the UMT for providing us this opportunity and as always being gracious enough to accommodate GREF with this interaction. I would also like to thank Doctor Shoaib, his team, and the students of the Political Science and International Relations Department for participating. We started off with nearly 60 members. I would like to thank UMT for the technical support that they have provided us, the participants, and certainly the members of GREF who were part of this webinar. Thank you, so much and Inshallah I hope to see you again. We will keep you informed as we go along with our next webinars. Thank you, so much!

## 7 REVISITING NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY.

- i. *Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza.*
- ii. *Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal HI(M), (Retd.).*
- iii. *Ambassador Riaz H. Khokar (Retd.).*
- iv. *Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani (Retd.).*
- v. *Ambassador Tehmina Janjua (Retd.).*

### i. **Hasnain Raza Mirza:**

Thank you very much, everybody, for joining us today. My name is Hasnain Raza Mirza. They have put me as the President of the Golden Ring Economic Forum, because they say, it was my idea some time back. I welcome all of you, and I also see Ambassador Masood Khan there, so also welcome him. I also welcome all faculty members and students of IR department of UMT and other participants who are participating today.

I would just like to say a few words regarding the Golden Ring Economic Forum as well as on the concept of today's webinar. This organization was formed as a think tank and a lobbying group back in 2015, and got registered officially, with the concerned government authorities, in 2016. So since then, we have been working for strategic economic cooperation between Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey. These five regional countries, if you see on the globe, are forming a Ring formation around Central Asia and Afghanistan and on the economic side these five countries possess more than 30% of the total share of Global resources. That's why we call it Golden Ring. There were several reasons for the initiative of making this new group. It was primarily for our own Pakistani national economic interests and national security. When we call national security and national economic security, we talk of the whole thing. It is the defense, economy, and agriculture, etc. etc. So it is in the interest of our national economic security. What we have proposed is to have a grouping, in the beginning we were calling it a bloc of these five countries but recently we had long discussions with our partner countries i.e. China, Russia, and Iran. At the end of these discussions with their higher political and commercial side, they have all suggested that let's call it Golden Ring Economic Group instead of calling it Golden Ring Economic Golden Ring Economic bloc. They say that when you call it a bloc, it suddenly gives sort of a blow and all international bells start ringing. Therefore, let's keep it a bit milder and call it a Group of Golden Ring countries.

Since our inception, we had good achievements. Amb. Tehmina, you were there in 2017 when there was this Parliamentary Speakers' Conference at Islamabad. We convinced Mr. Ayaz Sadiq with the initiative and requested him to take a lead and to go for this venture and it was a success. Then you remember, it became a permanent Forum. The next Conference was in Tehran in 2018 and then in Turkey in 2019. I think now next would be in Moscow or China once the Covid-19 thing is over. So our first initiative took off well. Similarly, we have launched another initiative, which is Post-Corona Shared Economic Recovery with China, Iran and Russia. That was also accepted and very well taken by all the involved countries. They came forward with a lot of ideas that how can we jointly come out of the impacts of Covid-19 on our economic side.



Similarly, we have also launched several other initiatives like Joint Media Association, Joint Barter Chamber and Trade SPV, Joint Counter-terrorism Council, Advanced Technological Joint Research Organization, Joint Agriculture Research Council, Common Banking System and Common Currency.

Now let's come to the topic, as you all very well know that what is happening geopolitically and on geostrategic side, around Pakistan and in the region. There are new, you can say, alliances being formed and some of these alliances, we feel, may not be very much conducive towards our national interests and security. One thing which we just recently have seen is India, Israel, and UAE joining hands with the US backing. We see it in a different way since, both India and Israel are US strategic partners. Most of our oil and energy resources come from Persian Gulf countries, i.e. UAE and Saudi Arabia mainly. Their mutual agreement is clear that if there is a war like or similar situation or threat then each country will support the other. Therefore, I will not be very wrong in having the legitimate fears, and this is also what a lot of people in industry and private sectors fear this is going to happen, that tomorrow if they want to squeeze us or to put pressure upon us, they may restrict or cut our oil supplies and our energy supplies from these countries. We hope it won't happen. Actually why we are saying this, because they want to curtail Iran on one hand and China and Russia from coming in to warm waters to Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea on the other. So all these things are there, we see them in a different perspective also. For example, we have CMF (Combined Maritime Forces of NATO and other countries) controlling Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. We have major US Army, Air Force and Naval bases in Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. China and Russia are critically looking at it as a clear attempt against their economic and security interests if Gwadar is blocked. Our own maritime trade lines running through Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean can be blocked since, now India and Israel are also there. These are the things which are happening, so we have to very carefully check and revisit our foreign policy now. In the past, sorry ambassadors please don't take it personal, our policies were something more like a day-to-day basis type, then they were like that we don't want to annoy this country or that country. We were always just trying to do some firefighting. There never, in my opinion, ever was any Pakistan centric national foreign policy. This was and unfortunately, is our failure here.

Now what we are suggesting under this new scenario is that we should be coming up with policies which are more based on national interest not somebody else's interest, and more on the regional collaboration being understood as the economic collaboration so that our national security is ensured. This is what we want to do and today, here we would like to have your suggestions that one how we can manage this or we can achieve this type of thing and second, how quick and how early it could be done. What are your suggestions by looking at what is happening in the world and around us in the region? We have a lot of things hanging on us. We have FATF on us, we have IMF on us and we have a lot of pressure upon us. Just one small thing before I finish is that if you remember, we are trying to build a pipeline with Russians. The contracts have been awarded but it has not been started yet. Because every time we want to start, the Americans put sanctions on the Russian company or any other national company coming in. Then Russians come up with a new company and US again puts sanctions on this company and the same thing keeps happening. Unfortunately, most of our bureaucracy is also psychologically under US spell. These things are happening. Basically we see that they are converting Pakistan into their slaves. Our land is being used for settling their scores we are becoming a battleground

for them. With this thing, I thank you once again to all of you and I would like to hear your suggestions and comments and the concrete ones. So how we can do this very correctly, I would say i.e. put our foreign policy on a corrective path? Thank you! Gen. Sikander sir, over to you!

ii. **General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you Hasnain. Bismillah Al Rehman Al Raheem...

Ladies and gentlemen, Assalam o Alaikum and good afternoon and for some of our colleagues who are sitting far away, still good morning and for those in east, good evening. As you are aware through a series of webinars, the Golden Ring Economic Forum seeks to generate a discussion on the effects of the evolving regional developments around Pakistan and how Pakistan can adjust to the evolving opportunities in the short and midterm for its strategic security. Just as a background, the discussions are intended to draw relevance from the developments which are taking place around us, such as the effects of the worldwide economic slowdown as a result of COVID-19, especially on Pakistan. Our own internal political discord which we see at the moment and which we see proving up and becoming an area of concern even for the common man. Our internal inflation which is affecting the livelihood and the day-to-day routine of the common man. The evolving environment in Afghanistan as to which side would it finally come down to. Ongoing confrontation between China and India and Indian government's belligerence against Kashmiris in particular and Muslim in general. Pakistan's relations with the Arab world in the light of the increasing Indian, US and Israeli influence. Pakistan's relations with Iran and Russia under the threat of FATF and other similar international monetary regimes which continue, to in a way impede Pakistan's economic progress. What we are looking at today's webinar, which is the second in the series, is focused as to what adjustments Pakistan needs to make in its foreign policy in order to draw maximum benefit from the changing environment, especially from the Golden Ring countries namely China, Iran, Russia and Turkey. For this purpose, ladies and gentlemen, we have today with us a panel of very eminent speakers who have been involved in issues of foreign policy formulation and its implementation at the highest level. We have amongst us today Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan, Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani, and Ambassador Tehmina Janjua. All of them had served as the Foreign Secretaries of Pakistan. We are seeking as GREF from them, their recommendations whether Pakistan needs to make adjustments in its foreign policy and if so what would be their recommendations? Will a closer grouping with Golden Ring countries help Pakistan evolve an independent and interest-driven foreign policy?

We have participants from across Pakistan and also some from abroad. I'm sure they will take part in the question-answer session by seeking answers to questions which are educating their minds. Question-time will be allocated after all three speakers have spoken. I will request the participants who wish to ask a question to indicate me either by raising their hand or sending a message in chat that they would like to ask a question. This will help me as the moderator to provide an opportunity to allow maximum persons to participate.

I will start today's session with Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan and before I give him the opportunity to speak, just to acquaint those who are not aware of his achievements; this was something new to me sir also that he started his career as a lecturer in Mathematics at Punjab University in 1965 and he served as Pakistan Ambassador to China, European Union, Belgium, Luxembourg Kazakhstan and

Kyrgyzstan. He participated in Geneva talks on Afghanistan, led Pakistan's side for the Pakistan-India composite dialogue and Pakistan-US strategic dialogue, and was appointed as special envoy for back channel diplomacy with India. Here I remember his tall height and his dominating voice was sufficient for us to gain, in a way, certain angles over the Indians. Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan was appointed as the Foreign Secretary in 2005 and for those who are not aware, he also has written and published books on Afghanistan and Pakistan conflict, extremism in the resistance to modernity, then untying the Afghan knot, negotiating the Soviet withdrawal, and apart from that he has also published coffee table books, glimpses of Vistas history and culture.

### **iii. Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan:**

Bismillah and Assalam o Alaikum! Thank you, very much General Sikander for introducing me in such generous terms. I'm not a very tall personality at all and surely in diplomacy that doesn't help. The other thing I want to say is that unfortunately, I have not been able to prepare anything for this particular seminar, the reason being that I injured my hand about two weeks ago and I can't write and type. So that has been an obstacle, nonetheless when I saw this proposal for the webinar and the title about this Golden Ring countries, I was genuinely intrigued and I thought to myself that it would be very useful to participate in the webinar and to see how you are looking at this particular initiative, and what are the parameters of this initiative. I'll make a few observations and perhaps my colleagues can take over from that.

First of all, the question that Mr. Hasnain has raised that there is a need for some changes in our foreign policy. Now this is something I can tell you that in the Foreign Office there are people who are concerned, who are in the seats (not the retired types like myself but) those who are constantly preoccupied with this issue and see what we can adjust, what we can do. But then foreign policy doesn't depend on you entirely. Foreign policy basically is shaped by the environment and the environment keeps on changing. Have we been used by others? People talk about Afghanistan, people talk about foreign terrorism, etc. But I can tell you that we had also our own interests at stake. Why we took the kind of decisions that we took at that time. Afghanistan, I remember there was a big debate in the 1980s and certainly Mr. Zia ul Haq was very much inclined to help the resistance. But this was debated and one thing which became critical was not this whole question of Soviet Union at that time seeking the warm waters, but what became critical was that the Soviet pattern has been that if they are able to consolidate themselves in a country then the pressure comes on the next country and the next country was Pakistan. So this basically decided that this is not acceptable to us, we must ask for withdrawal of the Soviet troops and then there is a whole history of what happened later on.

Terrorism, we tried our best with the Taliban that they should somehow the other handover Usama Bin Laden to Saudi Arabia but Mullah Umar was a different kind of personality. I remember Shuja Nawaz's book, in which he quotes General Mehmood, who was DG ISI at that time and had gone to meet Mullah Umar. General Mehmood said that it is extremely difficult to convince a man of faith. And his faith is that the United States is not a greater power than the power of Almighty. Anyway, one can say that look, finally the Americans are leaving i.e. wanting to leave but the thing is that 20 years of the national life in Afghanistan has been lost, I think. The Afghan leadership, and their neighbors in particular Pakistan, have to have some deep thinking as to what we have achieved in these 40 years of warfare of conflict. All these initiatives that you

are talking about the relations with Russia, relations with other countries; one of the biggest hurdles has been the continuing conflict in Afghanistan because if you look at the various models, now here I would also touch upon one other point. A “strategic” is an overused word. When you have, for example, economic strength, you also develop a certain strategic maneuverability in your own region and in your own area. So it creates a gravity.

In this forum, I would first suggest that we should also try to define the focus of this. We can, of course, talk about foreign policy. We can talk about strategic matters, defense matters, security matters and all that but what is the core area which this group would want to address. If it is for example an economic relationship, promotion of economic relationship, economic cooperation, which I think presents by itself a very daunting challenge then we have to see some other models, i.e. models like the European Union, like the ASEAN, like the GCC. What seems important in these models is certain complementarities i.e. complementarity in terms of economies, complementarity in terms of industrial productions, complementarity in terms of technological progress and how they can help each other in that very important area. Then there is the question of connectivity, geographical continuity, and with all these things they become very important.

Connectivity now when it comes to this particular initiative, I find that with Russia we don't have much of our connectivity because of Afghanistan (Central Asia is in between). But in Central Asia, I can tell you as I served over there, every important country was in Central Asia except Pakistan and Pakistan was blocked because of the Afghan conflict. Anyway, we lost on that count quite a bit but nonetheless hopefully, there would be opportunities. So for Russia, we don't have. Iran and Turkey, yes! We have tried, ECO was one model, ECO then expanded another model but despite our very good intentions and good intentions expressed by all the members, ECO has not taken off. So we have to see why it has not taken off. It is because when it comes to economy and the economic progress of the countries i.e. individual member countries; that is key. Now take example of China. We have very important relationships with China and that has all kinds of dimensions, I don't want to go into that. But sometimes, instead of building the sign, use the economic cooperation between the two countries and the relationship we are engaged in platitudes economic cooperation. What is the trade between China and Pakistan? Barely about, I think, 15 billion dollars or even less than that, I think it is 12 billion dollars. What is the trade between India and China who are at logger's head? It's close to 100 billion dollars. What is the trade between United States and China? Half a trillion dollars! Look at these figures. These are very important figures so the thing is that we have not been able to develop. We developed, for example, preferential Trade Treat Agreement with China in 2003 and we had all the tariff lines given to us that we could export whatever we wanted under those without any tariffs. But what happened, we had nothing to sell to China. We were stuck with a couple of things, the great lock i.e. the Yuan and the cotton bales. This is that we were stuck with. So, we have to develop that kind of complementarity.

We talk a lot about Gwadar. Gwadar is very important but the fact is that it has not yet developed to its potential as it should have been. We talk about the strategic importance and I think the best way to, somehow, harm the Gwadar initiative which was taken way back in 2002 I think, is to keep on emphasizing its strategic importance while not developing its economic potential. It was to begin within Mr. Musharraf's days. When it started to begin with, it was supposed to be a transshipment port, an energy port, and a port to serve the hinterland. And at hinterland, we had the

Balochistan area etc. But it is a second port apart from Karachi. Apart from that, we were hoping that there would be peace in Afghanistan and there would be Central Asian goods which would come and pass through Gwadar and all that. We have not even been able to develop transshipment capability to any extent. The energy-port idea has not taken off yet. So, the thing is that what is important is that we have to develop these muscles i.e. economic muscles.

Take for example KKH, that's the only route that we have with China. KKH is still not capable of taking 40 feet containers. It only takes the 20 feet containers. We are asking the Chinese and Chinese will do it. They will upgrade this route but it is one of the most difficult routes anywhere in the world. In comparison, if you look for example, the Chinese policies with Central Asia, one of the first things they did way back in 1993 was to have agreements with Central Asian countries. They were boundary agreements. On those boundaries they had always contested with the Soviet Union. So it established trust between them. With that, they open, with Kazakhstan I know, two road links and one railway link and that railway goes right up to Europe. So from 1994 onwards that activity has been going on. China is the largest trading partner of Central Asia. So we have to basically think in terms of very practical measures.

One other thing that comes and I'll finish with that because I think, one can keep on talking. I don't have a written text so that I can confine myself. So, one of the things is infrastructure for trade and economic cooperation. Now for economic cooperation, I think with all these countries rather than having joint ventures involving all others, if you have bilateral ventures involving each one of them (wherever it is possible), that will create a certain mass for a meaningful economic cooperation between involving countries. Take for example, the idea of special economic zones. Now the special economic zone is not a new idea. But you have to do a lot. In China, where I was Ambassador, I know there were scores of special economic zones. There were certain things which were guaranteed in terms of connectivity, in terms of electricity, in terms of roads, in terms of your internet links, and all those kinds of things including in terms of flattening the ground. So that, any company from outside which was interested, it could come, set up its shop, and it was a one window operation. In Pakistan, we have been talking about this goddamn one window, sorry pardon my language, for a very long time. But where is it? I haven't seen. There have been my friends, my old friends Pakistanis who, in their old age, wanted to come to Pakistan. They have been abroad, they had made money and wanted to invest and do something and after about two to three years in disgust, they left. And a couple of them that I asked them why did they do that? They said that even for small things, we have to run from pillar to post and at this age, we are not in a position to do that. So where is it? What is it? You know, our systems in a way, have failed. So, the economic zones! Good idea but this good idea needs a lot of work and a lot of homework and we are always very weak when it comes to homework. I must say it's a credit although I have also criticism about the army. Don't misunderstand me but I think the projects that we have with China in the defense area or in the nuclear power area, they have been doing well. But all in the other areas, there have been so much controversy and so much problems.

Anyway, the other things are the infrastructure like banking, like tariffs, and the all that. I have given you one example of the preferential trade agreement with China which then later on, after seven years, was converted into free trade agreement and then we had been complaining that China is flooding our market, right. But the seven years, when we had free hand to try to make a place for ourselves, we couldn't do that, our capacity was not there. We were very busy with our own politics inside the country.

You have to have tariff arrangements but you have to have banking systems. This is a long shot and I'll conclude on this that I hope you will develop a focus on the core interest and then also keep this other activity which relates to foreign policy, the security etc. But I may just add a note of caution that at security and foreign policy, we have been far too preoccupied with this, rather than developing our internal strength politically and economically. Thank you!

- **General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you, very much! I will now request Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani for his views. Ambassador Jalil has 38 years of experience of bilateral and multilateral as a career diplomat, has served as Pakistan Ambassadors to the US, Belgium, Luxembourg, European Union, and Australia. He is a specialist in South-Asian affairs. Ambassador Jalil has worked as Director General of South-Asia and SAARC. He was acting High Commissioner to India and Director India in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was appointed as the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan in 2012. In 2018, the Government of Pakistan nominated Ambassador Jilani as the member of the experts and eminent persons' group of the ASEAN regional forum and in 2019, as member of Prime Minister's advisory council on foreign affairs. He has also served as a senior fellow of leading international think tanks including the International Institute of Strategic Studies, UK, and the United States Institute of Peace. He is also associated with Center for Aerospace and Security Studies as a Director. Ambassador Jilani all yours.

**iv. Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani:**

Thank you, very much Gen. Sikander Afzal. It's a great honor to be invited by a Golden Ring Economic Forum and sharing this panel with two of other distinguished Foreign Service colleagues. With both I have worked very closely and we consider certainly Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan as a guru and a wise man of the Foreign Service and he is somebody who has always remained a guide and a teacher for us. Like sir Riaz Muhammad Khan, I would like to, first of all, respond to this question that was posed by you and Mr. Hasnain as to whether there is a need to change the foreign policy? I would share with sir Riaz Muhammad Khan that since that time, we continue to address this question in the Foreign Office and also within all the government stakeholders. From time to time since 1947, Pakistan faced many challenges and we were confronted with some of the most formidable rock hard choices in pursuit of our national objectives. But I think, we tried to opt for the best possible options in order to preserve our national interests. If you recall that from a relationship shape of complete reliance on the United States of America, in order to address the changing geostrategic environment, we also chose to diversify our relations with other countries.

We fought the Soviet Union but then today, we are trying to develop a very close political, economic, and security relationship with Russia. We also share many commonalities in terms of our views on some of the regional and global issues. China, again from a purely strategic relationship, we are now diversifying our relationship and introduced and trying to introduce economic content to this relationship which is also moving forward, I think to a great satisfaction to everybody. With the Middle Eastern countries again, we have made certain hard choices. If you recall that when we were approached by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, two of our very close friends, to support them on their Syrian initiative, we thought that this did not fall within the principal Foreign Policy objective that we have pursued. So, we did not become a part of the Syrian initiative to the annoyance of these two friends. Again. I'm sure that you would recall

that on the Yemen issue, we also followed a principled position of not getting involved in this Yemeni conflict. We also took a clear principled stand on Iranian nuclear issue against the wishes of US and others. You know that the kind of pressure that Pakistan was subjected to but since we thought that was in the best interest of Pakistan, we pursued it despite all the pressures. Even on Kashmir relations with India or Kashmir issue that we will be confronted many challenges but I think we equated ourselves very well.

Talking about the regional and global challenges, certainly it's a very challenging time for Pakistan and our diplomacy. There are many factors that can be listed. One is obviously the US-China strategic rivalry. In the Asia-Pacific, tension is rising since the launch of Asia-Pacific Strategy by the Obama administration about a decade ago which has been renamed as Indo-Pacific strategy by the Trump administration. This confrontation that has developed between US and China, it has also impacted on many of the regional dynamics in our region. For instance, Pakistan's close relationship with China is now being viewed with a degree of suspicion. That was not the case earlier in the 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s. Our close relationships with China were seen as helpful to the United States of America because of the kind of role that Pakistan played in bringing about an approach between US and China in 1971. Then Pakistan has begun to face pressures on CPEC, both from US and India. And this is also the direct outcome of this strategic rivalry that is developing between US and China. India has been declared as a pivot of the US policy to promote its Indo-Pacific strategy and to contain China. So this is the outcome of this tension. India and the US are forming a close alliance, both in the strategic and security domain. If you recall that in 2018, both India and the United States of America signed this agreement COMCASA (communication compatibility and security agreement) and now they have signed BECA. Both these agreements will certainly embolden India's security domain. If you look into the details of both these agreements, it also brings US as a silent partner with India in any future conflict that may arise either between India and Pakistan or for that matter between India and China. India-Pakistan tension has become more pronounced and India-China conflict has also become more intensified in the recent years, particularly after the repeal of Article-370 of the Indian constitution by India. Due to close Indo-US partnership, India remains unwilling to resolve issues with Pakistan. I can give several examples whereby India was amenable to resolve some of the bilateral issues during the Cold War period but following the Cold War, many of those India's stances on almost every issue was hardened and we see further hardening of their position on every issue after this Modi phenomenon which has been introduced in the Indian politics at the center since 2014.

Last year, both India and Pakistan came to the brink of a major war in February when India launched airstrikes against Pakistan. Why I bring this aspect is that even while India launched those strikes against Pakistan, there was a widespread perception because of the statements which originated from the US i.e. from some senior US functionaries. It gave the impression as if India was being encouraged to undertake these operations against Pakistan. Repeal of Article-370 is yet another manifestation of India's high-handedness to the next Indian occupied Kashmir in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions as well as the bilateral agreements. As a matter of fact, the repeal of Article-370 has almost killed the revival of the dialogue process between the two sides which in any case had been suspended. I would like to argue that since 2014, ever since Prime Minister Modi became the Prime Minister, there has been no substantive official dialogue between the two sides. But some leadership may have

met on the sidelines or Prime Minister Modi may have undertaken a visit to Lahore for international consumption. But then it was obviously devoid of any serious desire on their part to engage Pakistan. There is a constant propaganda that is taking place between the two countries. Trade volume which had gone up during the peace process that we pursued from 2004 to 2008, from the 250 million dollars, we brought the trade level to almost three billion dollars between our two countries which was likely to go further up in the next three four years, that had slowed down. After last year's Indian action, it has almost suspended the trade relations. Our mission strengths have also been curtailed since last year. More worrying for us and other regional countries is that the US and India have begun to coordinate their policies or Foreign Policy moves in respect of all South Asian countries including Pakistan. I was in Washington as Ambassador when India lobbied extensively in order to deny the sale of F-16 to Pakistan and also other equipment and they did concede the Indian demands. The US and India have also joined hands, they have a joint strategy on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Financial Action Task Force because in the last at least two years, these are the two countries where the moving spirit behind Pakistan remaining in the gray list of FATF countries. Then we also have apprehension that in order to divert attention from its domestic issues, India may launch some kind of a hybrid warfare against Pakistan and counterparts of this warfare are already visible in the context of some of the recent attacks which have taken place either in Balochistan or in North Waziristan.

Closer to us, another country's situation i.e. Afghanistan remains precarious. Despite the intra-Afghan dialogue, the situation remains uncertain. There are attempts by internal and external forces to sabotage the peace process. Violence has intensified in Afghanistan. And in case the ongoing peace process fails, the US will look to find escape goat and may lay the blame on Pakistan's doorstep, so this is a real fear that is there in the minds of almost everybody in Pakistan. Saudi-Iran rivalry again creates difficulty for Pakistan in maintaining a balance in our relations with the true countries. This rivalry, besides political and security challenges, also poses economic challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan-Iran Gas pipeline project which is critical for Pakistan and a viable cheap option for Pakistan to generate energy, is again becoming a victim of US sanctioned law and Saudi-Iranian rivalry. Volume of trade incidentally between Pakistan and Iran can go up to five to six billion dollars very easily, remains extremely low, I think, we are even less than a billion dollars between our two countries. Mr. Hasnain mentioned the Israeli factor. The Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE partnership that has developed in recent years certainly presents another challenge for us. For instance, when I was posted in Washington and if you ask me what are the kind of challenges that Pakistan faced in Washington? There are many lobbies working against Pakistan and one of the most pertinent lobby which works closely with the Indian lobby is the Jewish lobby. They work very closely because of the perception that Pakistan poses a threat to Israeli interests in Washington.

Well, I had basically listed all the challenges in my earlier presentation but I wanted to say that despite all these challenges that we are faced with, there are also e-commerce based investment opportunities that are also coming our way. One on the US front, the US is deeply concerned about the Chinese economic and other engagements in Pakistan and therefore, would like to counterbalance its own investments. For instance, a bill in the US congress has been moved by Senator Chris Van Hollen to divide the concept of construction opportunity zones to be established on Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Now in case this bill is passed, it will certainly create enormous



opportunities for Pakistani and US businessmen community to undertake joint ventures. Similarly, we also need to engage the next US administration to revive the strategic dialogue process which had been suspended by Trump administration and establish a working group besides other working groups on the promotion of trade and economic relations. In order to remove the US concerns related to CPEC for instance, it is extremely important that immediately after the new administration takes over, we organize a joint conference involving Pakistan, China, and the US in order to allay US concerns with regard to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor because we would like that the US business community to become part of the economic zones which are being established along the length and breadth of this China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Again China wants to extend China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Iran and Afghanistan. In case Mr. Biden becomes the President, he will revive the nuclear deal with Iran and this is something that he has already mentioned in his article that he wrote for the Foreign Affairs magazine. Following the revival of this JCPOA, there are chances that some of the sanctions which have been imposed on Iran could also be lifted. In case those sanctions are lifted then certainly, we could enhance our trade and economic relations with Iran as well. One another important aspect which I think Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan sahib alluded to is the Trans Himalayan network initiative that has been introduced by China to link Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, and China through a network of roads connecting the Himalayan network. So in case that materializes, again that would also present great opportunities for our community. Negotiations are also underway with Afghanistan to allow trade via Wakhan Border. In view of the improved relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the last almost a year or so, I think there is a receptivity to this idea even in Afghanistan and this is something that had been discussed extensively in recent visits between the two countries. There are opportunities and I think we need to gear ourselves to take advantage of these.

One important aspect that I think we need to address is that our business community also needs to develop some lobbying activities in key capitals. Why I say this is because the embassies establish linkages between the business communities of Pakistan with the respective countries. But then in order to convince the business houses in those countries, I think a lobbying effort is something which is of paramount importance. India, for instance, has extensive lobbying network in the United States of America. They have a designated lobbying firm which is financed by the FICCI and CII. FICCI is the federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and CII is Confederation of Indian Industry and they fund the activities of that lobbying firm which basically promotes India's business interests in the relevant circles, both in the private sector as well as on the official government level. Similarly, I think we also need to have a similar lobbying activity undertaken, say at Brussels for instance, because it is the European capital. I remember that when we launched this drive to get GST plus concessions from the European Union, then I was Ambassador, there were a number of hurdles that we had to face because of various lobbies who were in trade like the cotton lobby, the textile lobby, the transport lobby, and many other lobbies who were working to deny us this GST plus, but we were able to get it. But then in case, if we had a lobbying firm helping us with our efforts, then that would have been much easier for us to work. This initiative of Golden Ring Economic Forum, I think is best suited to undertake this lobbying role in not only its member countries but also in Central Asian states. I have been told that they are hard on financial side to undertake a lot of their activities, I strongly recommended to the Pakistani business, industry and certain

government organizations to provide them funding and task them with lobbying for Pakistan trade development. Thank you so much, I think I can respond to other issues during the question-answer session. Thank you so much!

- **General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you Ambassador Jilani for presenting a clear picture of pressures faced by Pakistan and a very good suggestion regarding lobbying for Pakistan. I would like to inform you that it is one of the main objectives of GREF.

Ambassador Tehmina, Janjua had served as Pakistan's Ambassador and permanent representative to United Nations at Geneva, Ambassador to Italy, credit to Albania, Slovenia, FAO, IFAD, and WFE. She has also served at UN, New York. I'm sure most of you remember her from her days when she was the spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, Director General strategic planning and held important staff appointments with the National Security Advisor and several foreign secretaries. She has represented Pakistan in several international conferences. Ambassador Tehmina was appointed as the Foreign Secretary in 2017.

**v. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua:**

Thank you, very much General Sikander and Mr. Hasnain Raza Mirza. Assalam o Alaikum and Bismilla. Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan and Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani have both elaborated our relationships with China, with India and importantly, with the US as well. I intend to structure my intervention by addressing the four questions that have been posed on your concept paper. In order to answer the first question, that is whether Pakistan needs to make adjustments to its national security and foreign policies? It would be helpful to have greater clarity on the proposed Golden Ring Forum (GREF). It is my understanding that GREF envisages the creation of a formal grouping of countries which would pursue common economic, political and even security policies. The focus of this grouping or bloc as I understand from what Mr. Hasnain Raza said that bloc is being set aside, grouping of countries would apparently be economic. But at some places in the concept paper, it is mentioned that they would also have strategic games which are left undefined. I have two concerns regarding this proposed bloc or grouping. Even ostensibly, economic groupings have political connotations. Suspicions are aroused about the objectives and about the ultimate formal aims of any grouping. For instance, any formal grouping which includes Iran, China, Russia, Pakistan, and Turkey under the present circumstances could inevitably raise concerns. On one hand, amongst one of our key Arab friends and on the other, among some western countries especially, the United States, considering the rhetoric that is going on in the world right now with regard to China and the US. Secondly, the proposed GREF does not seem to take into account our experiences with similar economic and political groupings, primarily RCD, ECO and even the D-8. The D-8 was referred to by Hasnain Raza sahib on the go. These groups were formed with very similar objectives but their potential remains unrealized. The reasons are both political and economic. You will find that those reasons for underperformance and unsatisfactory outcomes could also apply to the proposed GREF. Hence, by establishing a new formal grouping, we may not be able to achieve even the more limited trade and economic objectives we have in mind, leave aside the vaguer and ambitious strategic objectives which have been alluded to in the concept paper. I would contend, therefore, that the economic and trade objectives that are

envisaged in GREF initiative should be pursued bilaterally with the target countries and by reinvigorating existing regional mechanisms, especially ECO.

A long time concept could be the GREF in the long term but at the present time considering the politics, considering what's happening in the world, perhaps setting up another grouping may cause some difficulties. I was present as a slam-subset at the Parliamentary Speakers Conference that took place in 2016. I was able to draft a paragraph which became an important part of the declaration of Kashmir which was a very important breakthrough as far as the parliamentary groups were concerned because it had Afghanistan and all the important players within the region who signed on to it. But that was in the parliamentary context only, whether other countries in an open discussion within GREF or any such forum who would be able to accept that language is something we need to look at, and in the long term we can have a discussion on it whether GREF is possible or not. But we should work on the very noble objectives that GREF has with economic and trade in the context of existing regional recognitions. To do this does not require any radical reorientation of Pakistan's national and security foreign policies. And I would completely agree with Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani that with the options that were available to us, Pakistan did choose the best options that were built to us. Sometimes, they may have not been passed in the Foreign policy or in the Security Policy but at least, they were what was considered best at that time in Pakistan's interest. What is required?

I believe in rigorous sustained analysis of the impediments in the way of expanding our economic ties with regional countries as well as a more effective multi-stakeholder mechanism for following upon the outcomes of such analysis. And this is especially because in your grouping, in your Board of Governors, you will have a long list of very important business leaders and corporate leaders who can play a role in this regard because what has been often seen lacking is inputs from the private sector which is important to develop our economic policies towards countries within the region. I'm afraid we will only achieve something if we strengthen our capacity to examine and understand relevant issues and also drastically upgrade the institutional mechanisms to implement the required measures. Let me give you a few examples as to why this is of utmost importance. Take the issue for a stagnant or almost stagnant economic relationship with Iran. There have been problems and the more extra-regional and overarching problem is the US sanctions. Because of these, we have been unable to get set up banking channels to finance a bilateral trade. Several proposals have been advanced but we are still in an impasse and that is because of this overarching extra-regional problem that is their vis-a-vis environment.

Besides this core problem, we have also encountered a number of other impediments. These include the imposition of importance on several of our key export items if I say so, from the sublime that has been spoken off by Ambassador Riaz Khan and Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani to the very practical. So import duties have been imposed on export items such as Kinnoos and seasonally on rice. Additionally, they are non-tariff trade barriers in the form of SPS certifications and heavy road taxes. This is where the business community comes in. SPS certifications are something that the business world has to work on. Otherwise, we'll be stuck with only textiles. Now on all of these specific issues on which there have been endless unproductive negotiations, we would greatly benefit from deeper economic analysis which would yield more creative solutions. Because whilst political factors are definitely impacting on trade, there is also a rigidity and a lack of imagination. The positions being adopted by the

two countries. This can only be rectified by generating a richer set of options whether on banking arrangements or on the question of NTBs.

Secondly, let's take Turkey. We've never had a political environment that has been so conducive to expanding economic and trade relations and yet this expansion is not taking place. The attempt at concluding an FTA has been unsuccessful. This has been despite our excellent political relations, we find sometimes the other side not willing to open certain sectors where we also compete, especially textiles, leather, and agricultural. For textiles, they have their own lobby. So, they have to cater to that. Additionally, they demand adherence to international technical standards and SPS sanitary and vital sanitary standards. For example, on our meat exports, we are impeded due to the lack of certification. Again, we need inputs from all stakeholders especially the private sector, in order to have greater success in our efforts to remove these impediments. Simply, including Turkey and another political arrangement will not do the trick. We have to do our own homework.

Let me quickly turn to the other questions. I'm not too clear about question two so I'll jump to question three. Question three highlights the concerns that I've already referred to, and that is GREF grouping is likely to arouse misgivings amongst our friends and the United States and the repercussions can be manifested in all sorts of ways from added pressure in FATF and stricter conditionality's from international financial institutions. So these have to be all factored in. In the long term, as I said an aspiration of grouping can be looked at. But in the short term, we need to see right now what we need to do for economic and trade relations with this group of countries that you've listed. You are all aware of the defining feature of current global politics, that's the deep thick rivalry between US and China. This has troubling implications for lots of countries including Pakistan. The US is not too happy about CPEC but we shouldn't worry about the US. We should look and focus on our own national interest as far as CPEC is concerned. So you can imagine what would be the reaction, if there would be an economic grouping that involves all these countries that have been mentioned further. This is not to say that we should not pursue our national economic interest as we perceive those to be but we should pursue our interest in a way that positive outcomes are maximized and negatives are minimalized. So, I would repeat that the objectives that GREF initiative seeks to achieve are the expansion of economic and commercial links with some key regional countries. These are extremely important objectives but these may be realized more effectively through sustained intense efforts that are undertaken bilaterally with these countries and by revitalizing existing regional economic arrangements.

Now to come to the fourth question i.e. the role of media in strengthening ties with regional countries. What the GREF initiative is seeking to do in some ways is something that I've been arguing for a long time i.e. the need to reestablish the common cultural and economic space that historically existed in the Central Asian region. This space was ruptured by colonial intrusion and of course by the Afghan world. No matter what, right now, we need to see and how this can be restored. For that, work needs to be done not only in the economics field but equally in the cultural sphere. The historically intense and fruitful exchanges of scholars, artists, and craftsmen across the countries of the region should be recommended by GREF or by scrutiny. Long-standing cultural ties should be reinvigorated. This should greatly facilitate deeper economic and strategic ties. The media clearly has a central role in reminding us of these historical ties and promoting the reestablishment of these styles. We definitely need to pursue an ambitious step of setting of objectives in our relations

with our regional neighbors. These objectives should be informed by a grand vision of how we visualize our long-term relationship with these countries. The GREF initiative does reflect this thinking but it is equally important that we should be practical in the way we seek to realize the objectives we set for ourselves. I will not go into the details of our relations with the countries in the region which has been given in detail by my other colleagues. I stop here and I'm going to be happy to respond to any questions.

- **General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you so much, Ambassador Tehmina! Ladies and gentlemen with that, we come to the end of three speakers.

Thank you so much, excellences. It was a pleasure listening to you. Before I try and wind up today's session, please do not be taken away from the fact that there are only 17 participants. Because if you open the window of Aiman Khan, you will find over 20 students sitting in one class and watching the whole webinar on a large screen. We try to make the arrangements in a manner where maximum students of the UMT can participate. I will just recapitulate a few things which I thought were very important. I will start with the last recommendation of Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani regarding the involvement of business communities. Actually, to be very honest, it was the effort and realization of our own business community and when I'm talking about business community, let me also correct the impression here, we are talking about medium and slightly larger industries. We are not talking about the mega industrial tycoons of Pakistan who are part of this group. The mega are not part of this. The initiative came from these medium ones because they felt that whenever they went to, especially, our neighboring countries like Russia, Iran, and even China at times looking for concerns and for business opportunities, they also already have interaction there. They found that there were hindrances which they could not overcome in enhancing even individual trade that they were doing one-to-one with different companies in these countries. While they themselves came forward and that is how they said, "look, we have for example Russia, we have connections in the highest forum that is the Duma in Russia and they are willing to come forward and help us in enhancing trade. Well, this is one of the reasons. We also have highest connections in the "Rehbar Committee." Again business community in Iran said, "We can find all ways and we can help you overcome whatever obstacles" and it is with this intention that this group came about and created what we started calling a strategic bloc like Riaz Muhammad Khan exactly said that it is a big, big name. Personally, it hides a lot of things of which we do not want to talk about or define but we use these terms. We are a small practical group of people who are trying desperately to enhance the volume of trade which is already existing within these countries with more opportunities. Mr. Jalil talked about the border communities and special zones which are coming up with Afghanistan. That was also one of the proposals that was floated by us about three years ago that in order to overcome the problems especially with Iran of (what you call) sanctions, open border markets. They already exist in an informal manner but we, Pakistan, at times make no money out of it. If you formalize them in a manner, that will help traders of both countries. From formalized trade, some of the trade would get regulated and so on it expands.

Riaz Muhammad Khan has very correctly, as he always does, talked about Foreign Policies depending upon changing environment. You're absolutely right, there is no doubt about it. Because the environment around us is changing, that is why we were also of concern that it needs attention. You're talking about economic strength of a country driving Foreign Policy, you're absolutely correct again and that is what I would like, especially, our students to take home as a thing that they can think about and come up with ideas of how to go about this. You talked about increasing connectivity. We, as you know, have had energy projects like TAPI and so on in the works for years to come and they were done with. We all understand why they were done and why they were not developed and we haven't seen anything coming out of it. The more we have our infrastructure coming along, even now I find, if you travel now in Pakistan between Karachi and Lahore, or Pindi, the volume of traffic, just because we have a motorway up to Sukkur, of individual families and cars has multiplied tremendously. Yes one reason was the restriction on buses due to COVID, but now people tend to drive on the car as it takes you about 14 hours to reach Karachi. I mean which in my mind is as much as you take a train from Karachi to Lahore for that matter.

Ambassador Tehmina talked about grouping and the economics. Yes, I mean we are not asking for anything radical. Our purpose primarily being focusing initially only on economy and trade and trying to enhance that in whatever manner we can in our endeavor to do that. And we are hoping that as we go along and whatever we can offer in the terms of suggestions which will be coming out of the end of this webinar and others like that, it would in whatever way, we can contribute and people like you who have direct access already into the government channels. But if we can help in formulating it, formalizing it, putting it up to Government, I'm sure it would help. I will stop there. Hasnain you need to say something?

- **Hasnain Reza Mirza:**

Thank you very much, sir. I'm just going to add a few things to what you have said because there were some points raised by Ambassador Riaz, Ambassador Jilani and good Ambassador Tehmina.

The first one was, they said that the goal of GREF, you have said, is not very clear. I just want to say that we have a very clear defined mission and a goal which is more of on the economic side as General sahib just said it is the "strategic economic". When we call strategic economic, we are looking at bilateral and multilateral cooperation and the investments of these four countries in Pakistan. So that is what we call the strategic economic investment like CPEC, like we can have Russian economic investments, and Iranians. So that is the first thing.

Trade volume, you rightly said! The trade volume of China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey with the world is 5 trillion dollars plus and today, unfortunately, we, Pakistan, have only 0.7% share of this five trillion-dollar market. So, you're very right and that was the reason why we started working on this GREF idea and the business community started this thing. Instead of looking towards the government that they would do something, we decided that let the business

community themselves take an initiative and move forward. So this was the second point which is there.

Connectivity! I have been saying this thing, some people may not like it, that we have got stuck with Afghanistan. There are other routes and ways of connectivity bypassing Afghanistan through Iran into Central Asia and going into Russia and Europe, we have a direct link to China. So I remember when I was in Soviet Union in good old days, I'm talking of 70s and early 80s, there used to be a train coming from Moscow to Tehran (Train-92 it used to be called). It used to take three days from Moscow to Tehran. What I'm going to say is that the train link and the road links into Russia, up to Moscow you can say, are already existing. If we do not even want to use Afghanistan route, we can go via Iran. Yes, we are developing our route. You rightly said that KKH is a very difficult route. We, with the help of China, are also trying to develop the railroad link into China. Today, if we have to send our container to St. Petersburg, it takes 45 days by ship. But if we develop this land route, then we have worked out and we have done some exercise that it will take almost 14 days to reach Yekaterinburg in Russia. So we have to explore what we are proposing and what we are pushing that we must explore the existing links there.

## 7.1 QUESTIONS/ANSWARS

Assalam o Alaikum, sir! My question is from all the panel here. Sir, I would like to ask that as you know that regionalism brings strength to all the members and we build such an organization to solve political issues too. So would this regional cooperation fail us on Kashmir issue just like OIC or any other organization? This remains a basic concern too, sir. Thank you.

### **General Sikander Afzal:**

Excellences', any one of you can answer this. His basic question was that if we have this regional grouping, would it fail as like the OIC and other groupings on the issue of Kashmir? I can say a lot but I will reserve my comments in the presence of such eminent people please.

### **Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani:**

Well, I would say that the regional forum involving South Asia which is SARC. It bars the member countries to discuss the political issues. So that has remained a major constraint in involving other countries in a discussion on this Kashmir issue dispute our will. But then I feel that in case there is a conducive atmosphere which is created in the region of the kind that we were able to create from 2004 to 2008 when we were making progress on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in terms of looking at various options, we were also discussing other issues like Siachen issues were again close to a settlement because of the efforts which were being made by Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan Sahib who was closely involved with the peace process. Then, we were also making progress on Sir Creek and other issues. As I mentioned in my earlier briefing, when I left India, I was declared 'Persona Non Grata' from India in 2003. When I left India, the volume of trade was just 250 million dollars. Then the process started between our countries. The volume of trade went up from 250 million dollars to almost 2.5 billion to 3 billion dollars. Now this volume increased because we didn't take any substantive actions on the part of the respective governments, but what we did was to facilitate business-to-business interaction between the two countries encouraging holding of trade exhibitions between the two countries. We were hoping that this 'Peace Process' would also result in the trade volume going up to almost five to seven or eight billion dollars in a span of four to five years. But unfortunately, the process was disappeared. There is a very good study which has been carried out by a Mumbai based think tank called 'Truth of Conflict Studies.' They have undertaken a study highlighting the costs of conflict in South Asia. According to this study which is based on empirical evidence, the GDP growth of South Asian countries mainly India and Pakistan can go up by two to three percent in case there is a peace between two countries. Unfortunately, with the new developments which have taken place since last year, it basically makes it impossible for Pakistan to engage with India because of some serious reasons unless India reverses its 2019 decision to the Article-370 and engage with Pakistan in a forward-looking 'Peace Process'. There are a lot of people who are saying that why we should make these other nations stick to this Kashmir dispute. But unfortunately, these are capabilities that we have to grapple with, we have to respond to the public stance. We can't undertake a Foreign Policy initiative which does not enjoy the support of all political parties and our public.

One last word that I would like to say that for any peace process to proceed further, there are four or five important elements that we have to take into account. One is the vision of the leadership. The leadership has to be visionary and bold. Number two,



there should be a broader domestic consensus in support of that initiative. Thirdly, in the context of Kashmir, obviously the communities need to be involved. Fourthly, which is very important, the support by the core constituencies is very important and the core constituencies mean people who are Government officials, the people belonging to intelligence, or the people dealing with the Foreign Policy issues. They have to be fully on board because they also have tremendous ability to either pass the process or to create hurdles in the process. And I think media support is important and the international support is also important. But unfortunately, SAARC is also kind of stalled in this process because of the difficulties which have been created by India in the region. Thank you.

**Ambassador Tehmina Janjua:**

This young person was asking whether GREF would be able and what it could have in its discussion points for Jammu and Kashmir. Well, all depends. The fact is that first Jalil Sahib spoke about SAARC, I would also like to refer to SCO. Now SCO was an organization that we all joined i.e. both India and Pakistan joined at the same time but most of these organizations have sort of a basic understanding that no bilateral issues will be discussed in that context. So what remains for us is of course the UN, the OIC whether whatever your views about the OIC may be. But the fact remains that the OIC, despite its difficulty, of course what an organization produces depends on its membership. But let's not forget that it's OIC that has adopted a number of very important resolutions. It has a Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir where discussion on Jammu and Kashmir takes place. Yes, we have had difficulties but that is because there are governments within the OIC who have a different view on it. Therefore, I don't know if GREF will be in a position to discuss Jammu and Kashmir as a part of its agenda but let's also not forget that there are countries within this grouping that you're looking at who have spoken about the issue. Turkey has been very vocal, Iran has made statements and China has made its position in the Security Council and in that sphere. Russia may have not necessarily come out openly, obviously and it has very good relations with India but it did not stop some kind of a discussion within the Security Council itself. So formally, I don't think it can handle it, but informally of course it has members who have spoken about Jammu and Kashmir and their position on it. Unfortunately, we are stuck in a very bad situation and I completely agree with Jalil Sahib that perhaps this is not the moment to talk about trade or economic relations with India because there seems to be no rationality coming from the Indian leadership unless there is a rational view of the situation not only in Jammu and Kashmir but also in other issues that have directly affected Muslims in India. It is something that we need to take into account while formulating Foreign Policy. Thank you.

**Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan:**

I'm sorry, I was using my left hand and it's also a little shaky. Since my two colleagues have spoken, I think I may also say that at this stage, I think Kashmir issue is something that we have to keep alive internationally, in particular. So, in that, any efforts at individual levels make a contribution within this forum. Formally, it is not possible. I don't see any chance of raising Kashmir, getting any kind of statement or anything. We should not even try it. There are difficulties but if (for example) this forum gets active, you invite people in seminars and other things, you interact with them (hopefully in the post COVID-19 situation) then on the sidelines, you can talk about Kashmir, you can talk about any other issues that you would like and that would be a help, in my view. There were opportunities and Ambassador Jalil mentioned about

2004 to 2008 period, I would say 2007 period. There was an attempt for out of box kind of approach which had some potential but then we had our judicial crisis that simply brought everything to a halt. Then we had other events and then I would say that hardline positions we regressed into, not just us but India also regressed into those hardline positions. Opportunities, for these kinds of questions, they are not available for a very long period or they have a very short shelf life, so to say. During Manmohan Singh's period, there was a possibility that we could explore but for today, I certainly agree with my colleagues that there is absolutely no hope for any kind of a peaceful process to take root today because India's actions have literally taken the heart out of the Simla Agreement for dialogue process because in dialogue process, Pakistan's interest is not just security terrorism but it is basically Kashmir. As you must have seen the Jai Shankar's statement and by their own actions to merge the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh into the union. They have literally taken Kashmir, that part of Kashmir which is under their occupation removed from the agenda for a dialogue. So what kind of a meaningful dialogue can we have with India? I am not that much sort of speaking here with that much focus on India but I would say that in these kinds of approaches, the bilateral linkages are extremely important. For example, there is trade that you can have with China. There are opportunities. We have Free Trade Agreement and earlier we had the Preferential Trade Agreement. Were we able to take advantage of that? But for advantage, you have to develop capacities. Those capacities were not there, I remember. For example, we got from China this possibility of exporting our mangoes and our citrus. I had met the Minister. The Minister said that "Well, there are 200 applications from various countries, we will put you first and we will give it to you but what I am not going to do and I cannot do is that I will wave off the phytosanitary requirements that is pest control. That you will have to do and send the things after phytosanitary process to China." And we found that Pakistan had a facility only to process 50 kgs of mangoes in 10 hours for Phytosanitary Certification. Now you can't have exports on that basis. So, you see, you have to develop capacities. For textiles, I think Mirza Sahib would know much better than us that how Bangladesh has more textile exports than our total exports. So we have to look at these things on bilateral level with Iran, with Russia, and with Turkey. We should develop these bilateral linkages and strengthen them. Also at the same time, we should have these kind of collective activity wherever it is possible because all these things supplement each other. So this would be my sort of take on this.

**Student:**

Sir, my name is Muhammad Muaz Ali. Sir, my question is as we say that we are working for perfection in Golden Ring Bloc, we can say Golden Bloc will work as a progress for all states either economically or strategically. So what could be future possibilities for Iran as it is facing economic sanctions by USA or How can GREF help to overcome an increasing trade with Iran which is limited due to the US sanctions on Iran?

**General Sikander Afzal:**

Before I ask the excellency if they have any views on that, because being chairman of GREF, and the concept having been developed by my group of friends who are from the business community, the purpose actually is that we need to find ways and means to overcome these limitations of sanctions on some of the countries that we are trying or proposing opponents with whom we can be able to increase our trade. It is not only Iran which is under sanctions. There are a lot of Russian companies which are under sanctions. If you recollect and if you are reading newspapers, you would know that we

have a Memorandum of Understanding with Russia which talks about making the North-South pipeline in Pakistan to take white oil from Karachi Northwards up to Rawalpindi. In the project, the Russians have the money. They are willing to do it. The problem lies in the fact that whichever companies were nominated by the Russians that they can undertake this project on behalf of the Russian government, are in problems because those companies were under severe sanctions. And if we in Pakistan, the government, was to allow these companies to work on them, there would have been problems and Pakistan would also come under sanctions. Same is the case of Iran. I'm sure we are all frustrated as to why the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline has not been completed and why we are not getting gas from Iran at cheaper rates and buying LNG from the gulf countries. But the fact remains, if we do that, then the entities which would be utilizing that gas would also come under US sanctions or the government of Pakistan would also become fair game for the US government to twist more by the use of sanctions that we are working with Iran. If you recollect again in this perspective, when the US put sanctions on Iran for exporting its oil, India and Japan were given a six-month window in which whatever they had paid for, they could collect from Iran but other countries were not given that. So these things are what GREF is endeavoring to find out. As we go along and come to the areas of economy in this webinar series where we will be talking be talking on one side to economists and on the other side we'll be talking to business community. That is when their views can come up of how to come up with Barter Trade Agreements, for example, the government's initiative of opening these border markets. So both sides can bring their goods, keep them there, trade them goods to goods and you do not have to do any exchange of money which becomes a liability. Those are some of the ways how we can move around and avoid getting affected by these sanctions. Like Riaz Muhammad Khan and other excellences' mentioned that if we have Biden coming in, probably a large number of sanctions on Iran would be lifted, giving us more opportunity of enhancing our trade with Iran. Would any of the excellences' like to add anything?

**Ambassador Tehmina Janjua:**

I'd like to just make a bunch brief comment in this regard. I agree with the entire analysis you've given about the pipelines and about Iran and Russia. Now in the case of Russia, as you rightly pointed out, the problem was that the entities that they had suggested to build the pipeline were under sanctions and obviously created a huge problem for Pakistan. I just like to take the example of Turkey and Iran as how there are two countries that have a great amount of trademarks themselves. But let me put as a footnote that since the US sanctions have been implemented, 70 percent of trade between Turkey and Iran has followed its decline. Nevertheless, Iran and Turkey have been able to do trade with each other for three reasons.

One, they have banks. What is the problem of Pakistan? Pakistan has not been able to set up banks that could work with Iran because of the problem of sanctions. One, they have a bank. They have an Iranian bank in Turkey.

Number two, they have seven border markets on which they work and they work through informal and formal means, mostly as informal means to barter through cash, through quota for locals, and on the basis of gold as in the exchange goods on the basis of gold. So there is no financial money transaction that takes place which comes under the regard of the US. We have an additional problem because we are under the scrutiny of FATF as well. So we have to look at US sanctions and also we have to look at where FATF takes us.

Thirdly, there are large number of Iranian companies that are in Turkey trading for Iran there. But they, as I said, have a banking sector, India was able to have a bank that worked with Iran as well but that's also gone because of the sanctions. On oil, as we pointed out, they had an agreement between India and Iran and that has been taken away as well with the flexibility that was given by the US. Of course, on our part, we need to be more imaginative about trade with Iran. One, when you talk about the border markets, there's only one operational market and that is in Taftan. We have to see how we can build more markets and the possibility but all of it has to be done in a cultural manner in order to ensure that we do not fall under the US sanctions because we cannot have another problem lurking for us. So that's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

**Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan:**

I have a slightly different point which may be somewhat outside the purview of your particular initiative. There are many companies, Japanese companies and other European companies who are now interested in pulling out of China and relocating themselves. Hasnain Sahib would probably tell us, "Is there a possibility that we can we can attract those kinds of investments to Pakistan?" Because most of these investments are going into Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka but nothing seems to be coming to Pakistan.

**Hasnain Raza Mirza:**

Sir, you have rightly said that they are pulling out and they are not coming to Pakistan. I think, as you or Ambassador Jalil said, we have a problem of ease of doing business. When you want to come to Pakistan, unfortunately, our board of investment and the government regulations and rules are so many. We have 148 different departments from where you have to go and get your NOCs. So these Japanese companies do not want to waste their time. That's the reason. We have talked to them in the chamber. I remember, they were talking, they came to us and the first thing they said that, "You take care of these local problems and then we can continue." So you are right that we have to also correct our things and make the ease of doing business and make this phenomenon workable. So this is the problem. They are willing but they are afraid of coming to Pakistan due to so many insecurities or so many these red tape things which are hindering their coming to Pakistan.

**General Sikander Afzal:**

Thank you very much, Hasnain!

Ladies and gentlemen, I think we have taken a long time. We have taken a long time of our esteemed speakers for today. I would like to start to thank the three of them for taking the time out and joining us and enlightening us with their enlightened views. I have a lot of having worked with all three of them, have a lot of regard and respect for them, not that I don't have it for the others who have been in their shoes before and after that. But once you work with people more closely then you have a different kind of personal relationship with them and I would like to thank them sincerely from the bottom of my heart for taking their time out especially, Riaz Sahib where it is so early in the morning, thank you so much, sir. I would also like to thank the UMT, Abid Shirazi Sahib for being with us and giving us this opportunity to be able to host this webinar through the UMT the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Dr. Shoab and especially the students who participated in such a large number from there, the auric UMT, the technical side and the research side of UMT who helped us,

the participants, and the GREF members who were present there before today's webinar. Thank you so much, sir. We shall endeavor to keep in touch with you. We will, as we go along with the series of webinar, keep sharing with you our next webinars and if you have the time and the opportunity and are interested, you are welcome to join us. We would also like to welcome any sort of input that you would like to contribute to GREF in whatever manner you deem it important for us to consider, so that we can continue to try and serve Pakistan in as much good manner as we can. Thank you, so much.

## 8 DEFINING NATIONAL MEDIA POLICY.

- i. *Mr. Abid Hasan Khan Sherwani.*
- ii. *Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza.*
- iii. *Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal HI(M), (Retd.).*
- iv. *Mr. Adnan Adil.*
- v. *Mr. Mubashar Luqman.*
- vi. *Dr. Mr. Arif Siddique.*
- vii. *Prof. Dr. Munawar Sabir.*

### **i. Mr. Abid Hasan Khan Sherwani.**

Assalaam o alekym and on behalf of UMT I welcome everybody in this webinar on Media especially our distinguished media experts for joining us.

No one can deny the power and the role of media in today's world. Media has a significant role in the development of a society. In world affairs, media has placed itself in a very high place at the helm of state and international affairs. States and regions are facing new challenges every day and, in this regard, think-tanks are trying to engage the people from all walks of life to overcome the challenges faced by the state and the region. GREF, is a think-tank which is focusing on the possible challenges and opportunities in south-east Asia especially China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey. All these countries have great potential and have a huge population.

The role of media in the changing world of a very challenging situation has become a big question. What should be the role of media, how governments can get the beneficial outcomes from the media industry and how we can exchange our learnings with each other, what type of media for what type of use, are the basic issues. Today we will discuss that what are the prospects of Pakistani media in this scenario and what are the areas where these countries can enhance cooperation for the welfare of the people in the field of cultural, tourism, trade and security. I feel that our Pakistani media, which is a young, but very potential mainstream media can play a very positive role in generating a good image of Pakistan. This debate is being conducted under the flag of GREF, on the platform of the University of Management in Technology, School of Media and communication studies. This session is being attended by renowned media practitioners and faculty members of media and communication studies. Now I request Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza, President GREF to say a few words regarding this webinar.

### **ii. Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza.**

Aouzo Billah minasheitan rajeem, Bismillah ArRehman ArRaheem, Salaam Alekym every one and a very good morning to our western friends and good evening to our Chinese friends.

Thank you very much, everybody, for joining us today. My name is Hasnain Raza Mirza and I am the President of the Golden Ring Economic Forum. I also welcome all faculty members and students of Media department of UMT and other participants who are participating today.

I would just like to say a few words regarding the Golden Ring Economic Forum as well as on the concept of today's webinar. This organization was formed as a think tank and a lobbying group back in 2015, and got registered officially, with the concerned government authorities, in 2016. So since then, we have been working for

strategic economic cooperation between Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey. These five regional countries, if you see on the globe, are forming a Ring formation around Central Asia and Afghanistan and on the economic side these five countries possess more than 30% of the total share of Global resources. That's why we call it Golden Ring. There were several reasons for the initiative of making this new group. It was primarily for our own Pakistani national economic interests and national security. When we call national security and national economic security, we talk of the whole thing. It is the agriculture, defense, economy, media, etc. etc. What we have proposed is to have a grouping, in the beginning we were calling it a bloc of these five countries but recently we had long discussions with our partner countries i.e. China, Russia, and Iran. At the end of these discussions, they have all suggested that let's call it Golden Ring Economic Group instead of calling it Golden Ring Economic Golden Ring Economic bloc. They say that when you call it a bloc, some wrong bells at the international start ringing. Therefore, let's keep it a bit milder and call it a Group of Golden Ring countries.

Since our inception, we have good achievements Golden Ring Parliamentary Speakers' Conference at Islamabad which has since been made a permanent forum. The next Conferences were in Tehran in 2018 and then in Turkey in 2019. I think now next would be in Moscow or China once the Covid-19 thing is over. Our initiative of Post-Corona Shared Economic Recovery with China, Iran and Russia was also accepted and very well taken by all the involved countries. Similarly, we have also launched several other initiatives like Joint Media Association, Joint Barter Chamber and Trade SPV, Joint Counter-terrorism Council, Advanced Technological Joint Research Organization, Joint Agriculture Research Council, Common Banking System and Common Currency.

Now, for today's webinar; today we would like to discuss the role of Pakistani media under changing geopolitical, geostrategic scenario around Pakistan and what policy Pakistan should made to cope up with today's requirements. Today we have requested to answer following four basic questions from our learned speakers;

- (i) How our local media can play a role in presenting and promoting Pakistan's narrative and view point, locally and internationally, to counter foreign media onslaught.
- (ii) Media's role in promoting true Pakistani culture, heritage, language, products and trade internationally and especially in Golden Ring countries.
- (iii) How to benefit Golden Ring countries media and airtime.
- (iv) And finally, what policy framework you propose to successfully achieve all this.

We are hoping to get good suggestions from this webinar. With this I finish my submissions and request our Chairman General Sikander Afzal to give his views. Thank you.

### **iii. Lt. Gen. Sikander Afzal.**

Thank you very much Hasnain! In the name of Allah the most merciful and the most beneficent. Assalamu alaikum everyone and good afternoon! I will not be boring you all with preliminaries so I would like to cut down to the crux of today's main activity.

As we all know that media is one of the most powerful tools for the formation and molding of the public opinion. Public opinion is the driver of change in the world today.

Public opinion is based on perceptions, true or false, which are fed to the public. This feeding of perceptions, opinions, ideologies, propaganda, values, morals you name it, is done by using media as the main driver. In ninety-nine percent of the cases the average citizen exposed to this onslaught is unaware of whether it is correct or fake, where it is coming from and what would be the consequences of his sharing it further.

Today, all major powers in the world are using mass media as a “Weapon” not only to project their painted picture but also for the promotion of their agenda, ideologies and policies. The, which are the main components of Fifth generation warfare, basically rely on the mass media. The use of information and the psychological tools as means of warfare is termed as fifth generation warfare which leads to molding public opinion against existing policies. Thus state enemies, using social media can start a wave demanding social, political, moral change by propagating palatable information which is fake and lead to a political / social economic change. The GWOT is one such demonstration which led to anarchy in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, death of millions and destruction of four countries.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been facing this media onslaught and war from near and far. Before 9/11 it was nuclear proliferation after 9/11 it was terrorism. Fissures were created and exploited within the diaspora to exacerbate existing differences. Millions were spent to propagate a narrative against the state of Pakistan. This has resulted in numerous negative consequences and continues even now. This phenomenon needs to be addressed urgently and without delay. Therefore, it is imperative that all possible means are used to project our image abroad in the correct perspective reflecting our rich culture, social, traditions, Islamic values and trade development.

The Initiative of Golden Ring Economic Forum for establishing an Association or Union of media houses, public and private, from all five Golden Ring Countries, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey is a step in this direction. GREF is not proposing reinventing the wheel. It is however proposing a way to strengthen the existing means available to countries in a manner that the same are used to propagate their narrative through a social media counter narrative. Our trade and press councilors in Pakistani missions abroad can also use this opportunity to carry forward the narrative in these countries.

Today’s, this webinar is directed to explore and propose ways that how our media can play a pivotal role in this scenario. Hasnain has already spelled out the aim of this webinar so I will not repeat it. We are grateful to our speakers for joining us and to the faculty and students of UMT for participating. Thank you all once again. Over to you Mr. Moazam Khan.

- **Mr. Moazam Ali Khan**

In their opening remarks all three Mr. Abid Sherwani, Mr. Hasnain Reza Mirza and General Sikander Afzal shed the light on the importance of media in this new geopolitical order. Mr. Mirza described the GREF initiative of Golden Ring Media Association which will constitute the participation of Pakistani, Chinese, Iranian, Russian and Turkish public and private media houses. Mr. Hasnain also said that to present Pakistan’s narrative our local media has to play a major role. General Sikander very clearly explained that how media is being used by



enemy countries to pollute and reshape general public minds to each other's political desires. He said now a day's media is being used as the prime weapon in modern warfare. Now I request our Key Note speaker, a well-known media figure Mubashar Luqman sahib to kindly enlighten us with his views.

**iv. Mr. Mubashir Luqman.**

Slaam aleikum everybody. Thank you very much General sahib and Hasnain sahib for inviting me to speak on this topic.

First of all, I must say that this idea of Golden Ring Bloc is a right on the dot and in time, but on the same time it is a very uphill task looking at the current geopolitical pressures on Pakistan. I shall be very candid and may be blunt, for some, in sharing my thoughts and viewpoint. Looking at what is happening around Pakistan and in this region, failure of OIC and ECO and to a large extent SARC too, Pakistan needs to really work hard on getting this bloc established in its own national interest more than anyone else's interest. Our brotherly Arab states have made alliances with India and Israel, supporting and implementing US policies and designs of containment of China, Iran and Russia. They very well know that both India and Israel are enemies of Pakistan and by doing so they, in fact, are also encircling and restricting Pakistan. These are the hard facts of international politics. I fully agree with General sahib that the role of media under these circumstances not only has become very important but also has acquired a strategic value.

In the wake of the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19), the global community has experienced, an alarming economic recession. Thousands have become unemployed or suffered massive loss in their public and/or personal lives. This in turn, has created more problems for third world and other poor countries simultaneously raising questions as to what steps can be taken to counter this economic instability, especially in countries such as Pakistan tackling terrorism and conservative international narrative against its national identity. We live in a world currently experiencing Fifth generation warfare spearheaded by control over Information and technology, together the two control public opinion and dissemination of news.

If we are to understand the dynamics of world politics, we must first understand what it means to control power and knowledge and for that we must grasp the concept of waging war in today's world. Since the beginning of times, economics has played a vital role in the structuring of any society. Especially when it comes to states with power. Why has the United States been considered a super power? Because the United States has the tools and the manpower to exploit the global economy and mass media – take for example, the ongoing battle of wits between China and the US, the two states are in tough competition pertaining to 5G telecommunications technology. This is because whoever will possess 5G, will also be in power to control the global community.

This brings us to the role of media and how coming up with potent geo-strategic policies can help to solidify the global ranking for a country consequently, aiding in molding their public narrative. The role of media is significant in forming public opinion. In fact, it is absolutely crucial because media is known for its ability to mold public opinion which in turn, is largely based on perception, opinion, propaganda and moral values, among others et cetera. All forms of media namely: Print, Television, Radio, Internet and Social Media can therefore, be scouted to further the cause of molding public opinion. This solidifies the notion that media is a key tool or 'weapon of mass

destruction' that greatly serves the purpose in contemporary warfare. Setting a positive image through media can help to conquer many socio-politico-economic hurdles for any country.

Take for example, the role of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his public presence as a 'conscientious' leader raising his voice against the countless atrocities against Kashmiri women and children. Since coming into power, PM Khan has utilized every opportunity and platform to raise awareness for the cause of self-determination for the people of Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. If we go back further, let us consider 9/11 and Pakistan's image before and after the incident of the World Trade Center. Pakistan is among the countries experiencing an onslaught of media-war on a daily basis. Prior to 9/11 it was considered to be a third world country that was in conflict with neighboring India. In the aftermath of the 9/11 incident however, mass media has exploited the narrative to paint the public opinion of Pakistan as a conservative pro-terrorism state, where freedom is lacking for the masses such as women, children and the minority.

For the sake of an argument, let us consider what this image has done to Pakistan. In a world that is dominated by the Western identity and economies, portraying Pakistan as a backward country where terrorism thrives, has furthered the idea of the 'other' for the general public. This poison has seeped deep into our roots and contaminated generations to come, by alienating our language, identity, culture, and morality. It has sowed the seeds of doubt based on religious grounds solely through the role of Western media. This global narrative has thereby, manipulated and exploited the diaspora of Pakistan.

Once this shock settles in, let us look towards another essential example. Take any popular film or series released in the last two decades, the negative character is almost always a Pakistani Muslim. If a popular English movie must portray a terrorist, it is more often than not, a Pakistani male, Muslim character as the leading villain. For example: Iron Man (2008) where the leader of the terrorist is a native Urdu speaker played by none other than, Pakistani actor Faran Tahir. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to use all possible means to project the genuine image and positive narrative of Pakistan through Pakistan's own media.

The geo-strategic position of Pakistan has made it an even greater need to counter the global narrative by promoting Pakistan's own point of view. This is only possible if Pakistan focuses on developing strong ties with media associations of its allied countries including the other members of the GREF: Turkey, Iran, China, and Russia to successfully achieve its economic and geo-political goals.

The takeaway in all of this being that Pakistan should work on networking towards establishing a major media house and/or association in partnership with its allies in order to mold public opinion for the socio-politico-economic progress and to further the national narrative of state. It is recommended that Pakistani media houses should come together to work out the capacity to ensure the suggested partnership. Moreover, media houses in Pakistan should arrange mandatory workshops focused on training journalists the basics of international relations and global politics. These trainings should promote the purpose of the GREF, that of, sharing economic goals, creating harmony and devising a concrete action plan so that similar minded countries can take advantage of the knowledge and expertise, respectively. May I suggest that ISPR must also come forward and play the leading role in capacity building of local media in the fields of international relations, political economics or geo-economics and

strategic studies. The universities like NDU, NUST and QAU can be asked to devise courses and degree programs catering current needs and preparing good learned analysts who must not only be well conversant with spoken and written English but should also know one more international language. We must also have a government sponsored sort of an exchange program for journalists to visit these five countries and invite theirs to Pakistan for short periods of a week or so. This will create a one to one relationship and positive feelings regarding Pakistan.

**v. Mr. Adnan Adil Zaidi**

Salaam o Aleikum. Thank you Moazam sahib. As a senior journalist, I believe that a Pakistani media house with such qualities as desired in the Concept Paper and by Mirza sahib and General sahib is quite a wishful thinking. But I also believe that it is also possible if we have some proper media development policy in Pakistan, which we do not have at present. Our second problem as rightly described by Mubashir Luqman sahib is the capacity issue with our Anchor persons and the third problem is that our owners of Media Houses are more interested in political talk shows of political parties rather than promoting International Affairs. Unless and until we resolve these issue I feel it difficult that Pakistani media can compete with or come up to the mark of international media. In this regard the solution proposed by Luqman sahib is the right one and I suggest that GREF must take it up with DGISPR.

The formation of a joint media association of GREF countries will surely have a huge potential and will be very beneficial for countries in many areas. But I think that language would be a barrier as all five countries speak different languages. The difference of culture will also be a barrier but a smaller one. I am of the opinion that a media house association of such type can only run with state help since the content produced in these five countries would be broadcasted in mutual sharing on state TV and hired airtime in all five countries. Therefore, governments of these countries will decide how to and when to air it. Pakistani private sector, except may be for a few like ARY, Dunnya and 92 News, do not have any capacity for such things. Therefore, bringing them into such a media house association with such a design will be difficult at present, but at some time in future it may. Here I would like to mention that the OIC and SARC were unable to start such a media house, although it was on the OIC agenda because of governments involvement and noninterest. I thank you very much again.

- **General Sikander Afzal**

Moazam sahib, I would like to interject here with a small comment regarding Mr. Zaidi's last statement "in case of OIC and SARC". Sir, the reason why it could not happen was enmity among certain member states of these two organizations. In Golden Ring Countries this is not the case. The five countries have many similarities. There are no disputes or enmity between them and their people. Now world is changing and Asia will lead the world in business and politics. Yes, it may be a long journey, but all such successful journeys always have a starting point. Media initiative of GREF is that starting point and there will be many more in different areas. Therefore, this is a perfect time to initiate such steps.

- **Dr. Arif Siddiqi.**

Salaam o aleikym to everybody and I must thank Abid Sherwani sahib, General Sikender sahib and specially Hasnain Mirza sahib for considering me to speak

in this very important webinar. First of all, I must say that we have been hearing for some time that a new bloc of China, Russia, Pakistan and Iran is in making but I never knew that it is GREF in Pakistan which is working explicitly on this direction. Therefore, I feel honored to be part of this webinar.

On the topic and initiative of GREF for creating a joint media house to enhance ties within Golden Ring countries, frankly, I am very optimistic. By Turkey and Iran's participation in this plan it will be very helpful for the Muslims in the region. I believed that Turkey has a very centric position in the Islamic world and specially in Central Asia, and this initiative will be a cultural and social platform for the audience of these five countries, but it will also be a binding effect on the Muslim Ummah. I am of the opinion that it will also be a great opportunity for Muslim women to come forward and show their potential skills and talent. I believe this is a right step now to stand up and go for new alliances in the region, getting out of the shackles of American bloc, get out of the influence of European countries and shape new alliances that can be easy and be a game-changer for the region-

I am very clear that the media industry, which is fully controlled by powerful Zionists and big power's. Since, most of the media companies are owned by the same group of countries, most of them are owned by the Jewish companies therefore, they will never be the real voice makers for the Muslim countries. Therefore, Muslim countries and specially Pakistan need to develop an initiative like this to perpetuate their point of view and Islam's peaceful cultural values to counter Islamophobia. If we manage to do this and it happens, this will be a game-changer, this will completely relinquish the status-quo in the media politics.

Similarly, if you want to harvest all the benefits from the CPEC, we must develop a counter-narrative and counter-propaganda against all the CPEC partners and the initiatives, especially against the Golden Ring initiative member countries. I have no doubts that it is going to be a difficult and long journey but we have to take it. I would like to emphasize here that without certain support from the governments of all these five countries, no private organization can start a media house that can work like the mega organization of Media outlets like the BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, etc. The governments of China, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan and Iran should support by facilitating the implementation of this initiative quickly. Certainly, they have the potential, they have the capability and they have the resources. All we need is a good push from the government and a clear, sound mind by which they can develop such an organization that can lead the country, leading the population towards a clear direction and destination. I also fully agree with the recommendations of Mubashir Luqman sahib. Thank you very much.

#### **vi. Professor Dr. Munawer Sabir.**

Asslaam o aleikym participants and colleagues. Thank you very much General sahib, Mirza sahib, Abid sahib and Moazam sahib to talk in this webinar. Speakers before me have talked and covered many things and left a little room for me. I mainly belong to print media. I will try to discuss the cultural and political role of media in geopolitics.

First of all, let me shed some light on the importance of the media and Western countries' role in controlling the media and using both the mainstream and the digital

media as a propaganda tool for the pursuit of their plans. Since, media can play a vital role, and it plays a vital role in promoting the culture, enhancing the tourism ties between countries, removing the boundaries and hurdles, telling the unheard stories to the world of many countries in the world. In my opinion it is not going to be an easy task to bring together countries like Pakistan and Iran, Turkey, Russia and China having different languages and a diversified cultural setup. Although, some part of the culture may be similar but most of the social traditions are different as compared to Europe and America. So to achieve this target of GREF of bringing these countries together and their potential as well, in one go, will be an uphill task. But I must say that this is a real game-changer and with the support of a very powerful media the Golden Ring Bloc initiative will become the most powerful bloc. Joining the media of these five countries in form of an association or union will provide a very powerful tool, I do not want to use word “weapon” since I am promoter of peace, for these countries to promote their culture, economy, political point of view and tourism. No doubt, if used for the interest and betterment of humanity, media can bring the world together, stop wars instead of igniting them. In case of China’s Belt and Road Initiative it can be used very effectively to broadcast the importance and efficacy of BRI by China. Media can effectively let the people know that it can change their lives and life quality of the Asian countries. I have a very clear vision that the Asian powers will lead the world in this century and beyond.

In my opinion the absence of a powerful and penetrative media, it would be very difficult for countries making part of GREF to counter the narrative which has been built by the big powers against China, Russia, Turkey Iran and Pakistan. Since, media is a perception changer and perceptions are always and mostly stronger than the reality, it has therefore, become very important to build a strong joint media group of these regional countries.