CICIR Delegation Visits IPRI

A CICIR delegation headed by Mrs. Du Yanjun visited IPRI on February 28, 2017. The purpose of the visit was to conduct research prior to the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Summit which is taking place in May 2017. In her opening remarks, delegation head Mrs. Du Yanjun expressed her gratitude to the President of IPRI for the warm hospitality extended to the Visiting Chinese Scholars from CICIR last year. She remarked that both, CICIR and IPRI enjoy a long lasting collaboration and visiting fellowships play an important role towards this end. She also extended an invitation to IPRI scholars to visit CICIR in Beijing. The purpose of the visit was to provide policy suggestions to ensure smooth execution of CPEC.

In his opening remarks, President IPRI Ambassador (R) Sohail Amin reiterated the long standing relations between IPRI and CICIR. President CICIR’s visit to IPRI in 2014 and the participation of CICIR scholars in the IPRI Fellowship Programme is testament to valued relationship both institutes enjoy. On possibility of a Quadrilateral Interaction among China, the US, Pakistan and India, it was said that the strategic relationship among these countries is very complex. Issues such as border disputes, bilateral hostility amongst countries and strategic partnerships define the current political and strategic environment of South Asia. It was opined that holding a quadrilateral dialogue would be a desirable option but unfortunately, India always played the role of a spoiler by taking positions opposite to Pakistan. The chances of a quadrilateral dialogue in the near future are grim.

While discussing the vital China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its possible prospects and challenges, it was said that CPEC is a huge development project and a grand initiative aimed at win-win cooperation for Pakistan, China and the region. Mr. Hu Shisheng said that CPEC as a mega project and first of its kind for both China and Pakistan hence, problems are natural. In this regard, Pakistan and China are in the same boat and failure is not an option.

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British Delegation Visits IPRI

Ms. Laura Dix along with Mr. Kunwar Ali Qutub Khan from British High Commission visited Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) on February 14, 2017 to interact with IPRI scholars. The discussion primarily revolved around Kashmir, Pakistan-India relations and terrorism. During the discussion, it was underscored that despite the presence of UN Security council resolutions, the Kashmir issue has not been resolved. The Kashmiris asking for their right of self-determination has been a just demand which needs appropriate attention from world quarters. The issue is needed to be resolved according to the Security Council resolutions which recognize the Kashmiris’ right of self-determination.

The Indian coercive methods being employed in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) are to suppress the peaceful freedom struggle of the people of Kashmir. More so, the endless atrocities being committed by the Indian security forces must also be condemned at international level. The Indian Army have been targeting the Kashmiri youth by firing pellets to make them blind and crippled. It was pointed out that the resolution of Kashmir issue is in the larger interest of the region.

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CICIR Delegation Visits IPRI

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He further explained that President Xi’s idea of building a community of shared destiny is the foundation of CPEC. He highlighted that China aspires for long lasting security through inclusive developmental projects in the region which is also the vision behind CPEC. One of the major purposes of CPEC is to commence the process of industrialization of Pakistan for which the energy and transport infrastructure would be the base. He emphasized that CPEC is being built on the guiding principle of ‘inclusiveness’, not on a bilateral but regional level. Aspirations for zero-sum security gains is the dilemma faced by countries in the region.

Mr. Hu Shisheng also showed concerns over the hostile and rigid Indian behavior that has been making China to choose between itself and Pakistan. IPRI scholars said that Pakistan has been very forthcoming in investigating India’s concerns. More so, Indian claims on Pakistani territory are based on mere politics and are an attempt to disrupt the execution of CPEC.

While discussing while President Trump’s policies regarding South Asia, it was said that the United States has a very profound influence in South Asia, but the latter did not figure prominently during Trump’s election campaign. Similarly, it would be difficult to predict precise policies due to the uncertainty surrounding President Trump’s administration. It was viewed that there is a higher probability that United States tilt towards India at the expense of regional balance will continue. While exchanging views, it was said that Trump’s election as the US President has abruptly transformed the global politics and current world order, inducing levels of anxiety and uncertainty.

It was also said that there exist various commonalities in terms of interests between the previous and current US administration but the policy instruments employed are different. It was hinted that the United States will take a on-hold policy on Afghanistan and may change the leadership role in South Asia.

While responding to Mr Shisheng’s concerns, President IPRI, Amb. Sohail Amin commented that many Indian scholars are in favour of CPEC, which shows that Indian government’s opposition is based on mere politics. He also denied that there are any internal rifts over CPEC in Pakistan. He explained that the system of governance is different in China and Pakistan. The latter is a democracy and people are open to give their opinions on issues. Difference of opinions must not be taken as an opposition to CPEC project itself. While commenting on the outsourcing of surplus production to Pakistan, he said that equitable distribution of opportunities was of paramount importance. He also said that Pakistan has acted with restraint to India’s poisonous rhetoric.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a project based on trust between Pakistan and China. The current uncertainty in International Politics makes the smooth execution of CPEC more important for China and Pakistan. There is a consensus among civilian and military leadership in Pakistan for the timely completion of CPEC. Security has improved significantly as a result of Operation Zarb-e-Azb which would be conducive for building confidence of foreign investors. The recently started Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad will further improve the security situation of Pakistan. CPEC is a work in progress. It requires immense political will and resolve by both countries to make it a success story.
British Delegation Visits IPRI

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On cross-border violations by India, it was said that the violations across the LoC are deliberate attempts by the Modi government to deflect world attention from Indian atrocities being committed in IHK. Further, it was underscored that being an active former member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Modi views the regional relations/issues with an extremist lens. The anti-Muslim rhetoric has remained to be the pushing factor behind Modi’s belligerent policy.

Regarding India-Pakistan relations and the regional balance, it was stated that despite Pakistan’s smaller size, the country’s defence capabilities have offered New Delhi tough competition. Pakistan’s strategic muscle is a balancer against Indian hegemonic domination. More so, India’s strategic partnership and agreements are negatively impacting strategic deterrence in South Asia.

In view of emerging regional architecture, it was also said that the energy and trade connectivity projects proposed under CPEC, would raise Pakistan’s regional position. Pakistan’s Gwadar port for its strategic position would provide shortest trade route to Central Asia, China, Pakistan, Caucasus and Russia thus, making Pakistan a regional pivot.

Ms. Laura Dix appreciated the Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Pakistan’s effort in counter-terrorism. It was highlighted that people of Pakistan have rejected militancy in all its forms and manifestations. The insinuations linked with Pakistan’s counter-terrorism drive were part of a simmering campaign to downplay the country’s struggle against terrorism and weaken its regional position. The war on terror was being fought by Pakistan in the light of the UN resolution on the subject. It was emphasized that Pakistan’s sacrifices and achievements in the war on terror should be appreciated by the international community instead of looking at Pakistan’s role in this war with scepticism.

On the situation in Afghanistan, it was highlighted that the peace in the country is essential for regional connectivity as well as prosperity. It was stated that some regional players have complicated the Afghan situation thereby, using its soil for subversion pursuits against Pakistan. It was emphasized that for peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan has always supported an Afghan owned and Afghan led peace process, in which all ethnic groups of Afghanistan must be represented.

Addition to Library

THE INVENTION OF RUSSIA: FROM GORBACHEV’S FREEDOM TO PUTIN’S WAR
Author: Arkady Ostrovsky

FINANCIAL TIMES BOOK OF THE YEAR WINNER OF THE ORWELL PRIZE

“This dazzling book flags up the conflicts over ideas, morality, and national destiny in Moscow politics from Gorbachev to Putin’s triumph of narrative skill and historical empathy based on personal experience and rigorous research.”

Robert Service, author of Comrades! A History of World Communism

THE MASTER PLAN: ISIS, AL QAEDA, AND THE JIHADI STRATEGY FOR FINAL VICTORY
Author: Brain Fishman

“With its original and powerful analysis, The Master Plan should be required reading for anyone attempting to understand both ISIS and al-Qaeda and the implications for contemporary global security.”

Bruce Hoffman, Georgetown University
Pakistan-China Relations and Evolving Geopolitics of Asia

Ambassador (R) Riaz Muhammad Khan, Former Foreign Secretary visited IPRI to deliver a lecture on “Pakistan-China Relations and Evolving Geopolitics of Asia” on February 17, 2017.

While discussing the contours of bilateral relations, he said that political relations between Pakistan and China over the span of six decades have remained constant. Pakistan was among the first few countries that recognized People’s Republic of China and established diplomatic relations. The relations were strengthened with the signing of border agreement between two states. With strong economic and defence ties, China has always helped Pakistan in crucial times by providing due assistance.

As regards, strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China, both states have been cooperating in defence and nuclear field. He highlighted that prior to joining NSG in 2004, China by using the grandfather clause, concluded nuclear cooperation agreement with Pakistan in 2003. Amb. Khan identified economy and trade as the weak areas in bilateral relations. He said that both states signed Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2003, China gave Pakistan concessions in almost all the fields but Pakistan, due to lack of resources and storage of facilities did not have the capacity to take advantage. He said that China had significantly invested in heavy industrial sector and some of its examples include construction of Karakorum Highway, Heavy Mechanical Complex, and Sports Complex etc. He added that Chinese investment could have doubled in Pakistan if provided with better security situation.

Amb. Khan regarded initiation of CPEC projects in Pakistan as a fruit of such efforts which needs to maintained and sustained. China has surplus capital to invest and if Pakistan’s security situation is further improved then China can make more investments here.

While discussing the soft image of Pakistan, it was said that Pakistan must develop its tourism and education sectors. In the presence of seasonal variations and scenic beauty, Pakistan must develop infrastructure to attract tourists’ attention as this sector has an immense potential of contributing to the national wealth. Pakistan must also develop strategies to promote educational and professional exchange programme in order to create better understanding and perceptions. Amb. Khan while recognizing the lack of student exchange programmes between two states, said that there are around 80,000 Chinese students in United States while 200,000 in India but there are only 5,000 Chinese students studying in Pakistan.

While talking about geopolitics of Asia, he said that multipolar world order is emerging with focus on regional economic organizations. He said that the new US Administration has been focusing on protectionist agenda specifically in its trade policies. He highlighted that militarily, the US is the only superpower having global reach and predicted that for the next fifty years, the primacy of the West will continue. He said that China has embarked upon the path of building economic blocs as after the independence of Central Asian Republics (CARs); it signed border agreements with CARs on existing boundaries in an effort to restore the confidence of their people and became the largest trading partner of CARs. He said that China had been an active member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its current One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative also shows its efforts for peaceful and stable neighborhood.
The Impact of Middle East Situation on Pakistan-Iran Relations

Ms. Maryam Nazir, Assistant Research Officer, delivered a presentation on the topic, “The Impact of Middle East Situation on Pakistan-Iran Relations.” Following are the salient points of the discussion:

- Strapped in a historical correlation, Pakistan and Iran not only share similar geography and religion but culture and civilization as well. Besides being a neighbour, Iran is the only country with which Pakistan shares historical relations entirely based on cultural, ethnic and spiritual links. Traditionally, both neighbours used to share peaceful, safe and secure frontiers. However, with changing and constantly evolving regional dynamics, the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran have seen brief periods’ of ups and downs. Various concerns regarding security, expansionist and interventionist agendas of extra-regional forces, occupy a dominant position in Iran’s foreign policy approach. Meanwhile, Pakistan desires to see friendly and cooperative relations with Iran specifically in the presence of hostile and unreceptive relations with Afghanistan and India simultaneously.

Contemporary Regional Dynamics in the Middle East

- Owing to the strategic location and rich resource link, the Middle East has remained to be one of the most important regions. Currently, the region is going through an inescapable security quagmire primarily due to the instability, chaos and disruption caused by the situation in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, which has its roots embedded in military interventions, mushrooming sectarian tensions, interfaith disharmony, nationalist movements, Arab spring, rise of Daesh and issues of refugees.
- The contemporary security situation in the Middle East can be analyzed at three levels, i.e. domestic, regional and international.
  - Domestic Level: It includes the major issues faced by Middle Eastern countries such as the sectarian civil wars, sub-national and armed conflicts, ethno-religious quagmire, political chaos, weak and fragile central governments and issues of refugees.
  - Regional Level: It includes the far-reaching impact of the Arab Spring which started off from one state and then pushed various other states into an endless chaos and ranks of failed states and the subsequent involvement of regional powers.
  - International Level: It includes the formation of the alliance system to tackle the issues of the Middle East, concerns such as emergence of Daesh, chaotic Syrian conflict alongside the direct interference of global powers in the domestic and regional affairs of the Middle East.

The Situation in Middle East vis-à-vis Iran’s Foreign Policy

- If analyzed keenly, the Iranian foreign policy ambitions are largely driven by the protectionist agenda with a prime focus on protecting its sovereignty and influence in the region. For instance, President Rouhani’s moderate approach has shifted the country’s attitude towards the West (specifically in the previous US administration), particularly within the framework of its nuclear agenda, while Iran’s regional strategy has remained broadly unchanged.
- More so, it is believed that Iran’s global and regional policy underwent changes due to a number of internal and external factors. The external factors have mainly followed regional trends and have often been triggered by external powers’ military intervention in the neighbouring countries and/or occupation of those countries.

The Impact of Middle East Situation on Pakistan-Iran Relations

- Being close neighbours and important stakeholders in the Middle East, the prospects for cooperation to further enhance or strengthen the relations are positive. However, despite mutual grounds of cooperation, certain factors have always been impacting the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran. In the similar respect, there are factors responsible for ups and downs in the bilateral relations in the past, such as the regional and extra-regional interests in the region, Pakistan-Iran relations with the Arab world and the situation in Afghanistan.
- More so, the prospects of economic cooperation between Pakistan and Iran are bright but haven’t been exploited in the past due to sanctions and other factors. Iranian participation in CPEC is appreciated both by the Chinese and Pakistani officials. However, seeing the constantly evolving dynamics of the Middle East, Pakistan certainly has to formulate an independent policy that could help enhance economic cooperation in the future and maintain stronger ties with Iran. In 2014, overall trade with Iran was US$17 million out of which exports from Pakistan amounted to US$53. The key export items of Iran to Pakistan included: iron ore, iron scrap, dates, detergents, transformers, chemicals, bitumen, polyethylene, propylene etc. While export items of Pakistan to Iran include rice, fresh fruits, meat, cloth and mechanical machinery. However, Pakistan must review that how the crisis in the Middle East can threaten Pakistan’s economic development in order to devise coping strategies accordingly.

Conclusion

The volatile nature of conflict in Middle East has engulfed the entire region into an environment of instability and unpredictability. What primarily had only been a friction between the governments and people of the Arab countries, has now turned into an arena of continuous war and lawlessness. The biggest challenge for Pakistan lies in the maintenance of balanced relations with the countries in the Middle Eastern region. Seeing the regional dynamics, Pakistan must tread carefully by adopting an independent policy with Iran and must continue following the policy of non-violence and restraint. Pakistan must also suggest the regional and international organizations to play a positive role in resolving the regional conflicts.
13th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit:

With renewed pledges to expand trade and economic relations through regional connectivity, Pakistan hosts the 13th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Islamabad on March 01, 2017. In the context of evolving inter-regional economic realignments, this summit holds an immense importance as it brought representatives of ten developing and emerging economies on one platform to discuss the opportunities available and prospects of economic interaction. Five presidents and three prime ministers participated in the summit.

As put by the government, the agenda of summit was to discuss the prospects of connectivity with specific reference to regional prosperity. The 13th ECO Summit concluded at the end note of doubling intra-regional trade in the next five years and promoting connectivity. The member states of ECO have huge scope of cooperation in trade, transport and energy sectors but have remained to be unexploited in the past. The geography of ECO member states is an added advantage as the states are closely linked and can share transit passages for economic activities in future. However, there is still time in developing such transit passages in a manner that they can contribute to the national economies. For instance, there are projects of oil and gas pipeline signed among ECO states but they have remained either half planned or half implemented. As per facts, ECO member states constitute 16 percent of the world population i.e. 450 million but they generate a meager two percent of global trade. More so, there are certain factors restricting trade in the region which include differences in economic systems, logistical constraints due to inadequate transport lineages and problems with banking transactions. A Trade Agreement (ECOTA) was signed in July 2003 but is yet to be ratified by all countries. The agreement basically proposed removal of trade barriers for intra-regional trade. An affirmation in the form of ‘Islamabad Declaration’ was also presented to envisage a future that sees the bloc achieve economic connectivity and assert its influence on a global scale. Regional cooperation in energy sector, including energy infrastructure development, intra-regional energy trade, improving access to affordable energy resources and development of environment-friendly energy technologies, have been proposed by the declaration. It also calls for doubling of the current level of intra-ECO trade in the next three to five years through implementation of the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and other ECO trade arrangements. The conference also adopted the Vision 2025 a roadmap for the next decade which includes the restructuring of the organization’s headquarters and secretariat in Tehran to modern standards.

Pakistan’s Premier Nawaz Sharif said, “The successful holding of the summit is a manifestation of the desire and commitment of the member states to transform the ECO into a vibrant regional bloc.” While Iranian President Hassan Rouhani also stressed upon enhancement of economic cooperation among the ECO member states by stating that ‘Connectivity will help development and prosperity in the region.’ President Rouhani called for restructuring of the ECO to make it more effective. Following the development in Pak-Afghan relations, Dr. Omer Zakhilwal, Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan said that regional connectivity and barriers to trade, transit and movement of people between countries cannot go together. Further, the leaders vowed to collectively face regional challenges including extremism, terrorism and drug trafficking for making the region a zone of peace and prosperity.

Under the theme of ‘Connectivity for Regional Prosperity’, heads of all member states agreed to:

- Underscore three core principles of ECO Vision 2025, i.e. sustainability, integration and conducive environment; emphasizing upon the need to augment cooperation in the areas of trade, transport and connectivity, energy, tourism, economic growth and productivity and social-welfare and environment as identified in Vision 2025.
- Ensure continued and enhanced cooperation in the areas of common interest through effective, timely and result-oriented projects and programmes in the organisation.
- Undertake implementation of long-term sectoral priorities of ECO on development of transport and communication infrastructure; facilitation of trade and investment; and effective use of the region’s vast energy resources and to consider ways and means to promote ECO’s connectivity with other regions in these areas.
- Envision a more efficient and effective ECO, equipped with required capabilities and resources, to better serve the noble objectives of the organization; thereby tasking the relevant officials and the ECO Secretariat to take necessary and effective measures, using inside and outside resources, to bring about necessary reforms in the Organization.
- Encourage member states to accede to relevant agreements developed within the ECO framework in order to achieve the objectives set forth under the Treaty of Imam and the ECO Vision 2025.
- Welcome in this regard the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a far-reaching initiative that would act as catalyst for the development of the entire region.
- Encourage giving priority to, and cooperate on full implementation of the TTFA and its’ annexes as ECO’s approved and most comprehensive and well-studied Transit Transport Framework for ECO Region.
- Work to double the current level of intra-ECO trade within the next 3-5 years, including through implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and other ECO trade-related arrangements; as well as
Major Highlights

- Acknowledge the crucial role of financing projects on regional development, appreciate the ECO Bank’s growing scope of activities in this regard which underlines the need to further strengthen the Bank through augmenting its resource base, as well as increasing its membership.
- Task respective authorities to consider possibility of pursuing the ongoing initiative of establishment of ECO Regional Electricity Market with the widest possible intra-regional power grid interconnection.
- Stress the importance of strengthened and continued cooperation among all stakeholders to build and run information structures in order to bridge the digital divide in the region.
- Welcome the joint Study undertaken by ITU and ECO on the ICT in the ECO Region, which would be presented to the 2nd ECO ICT Ministerial Meeting in Azerbaijan for its approval as well as its subsequent Action Plan in similar context.
- Develop a robust regional tourism industry, built on the vast natural endowments and cultural resources, as potential contributor to the economic growth and sustainable development of ECO Region.
- Recognize the inter-linkage between development, peace and security for lasting prosperity and stability in the region and expressing grave concern over the security challenges of the region, including inter alia terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations which pose a great threat to individuals’ lives and national, regional and global security.
- Take note of the establishment of Islamic Organization for Food Security aimed at the developing cooperation among ECO Member States in agriculture.
- Recognize the important role of the small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the economic growth of the Member States and the Region as a whole, and Task our relevant authorities to undertake necessary measures to strengthen the SMEs, including those that enhance women entrepreneurship and knowledge-based enterprises.
- Renew the strong desire for a secure, prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan, and recalling our recent commitments made in the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan thereby tasking the relevant authorities and the ECO Secretariat to develop a comprehensive ECO advocacy programme for Afghanistan in the upcoming “ECO Special Conference on Afghanistan” to be held in May 2017 in Kabul.
- Express support to the implementation of the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/71/212) on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028, adopted on December 21, 2016 thereby, instructing the relevant authorities as well as the ECO Secretariat to consider this issue in the framework of the activities and projects of the Organization.

Under the overall framework of ECO, following future initiatives will be taken:

- Proclamation of 2017 as the ‘Islamic Solidarity Year,’ an initiative taken by the President of Republic of Azerbaijan.
- Welcoming the ‘International Day of Nowruz’ as a factor contributing to the strengthening of friendship between nations, and in this context, urge the Member States to actively participate in the celebration and preparation of joint events.
- Commencement of 4th Islamic Solidarity Games and 4th World Forum on Inter-Cultural Dialogue to be held in May 2017 in Baku.
- Hosting of 2nd Parliamentary Conference of Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) to be held in 2017 in Islamabad.
- Commencement of International Exhibition EXPO 2017 to be hosted in Astana, Kazakhstan from 10th June to 10th September 2017.
- Hosting of OIC First Summit on Science and Technology to be hosted in Astana, Kazakhstan on 10th-11th September 2017.
- Commencement of 3rd World Nomad Games scheduled for 2018, an initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Moreover, there were two major developments during the Summit. First, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered a project with enough potential to connect Central Asia, Iran and eventually all the ECO member states together. More so, such maneuvering in the ECO region, if implemented as envisaged, can help create a web of such economic and trade connections. Second, the success of ECO Summit in the backdrop of cancellation of SAARC summit has negated the propaganda regarding Pakistan’s isolation in the region. Rather, the summit brought ECO as a strong diplomatic front for Pakistan to grasp maximum support of the Muslim world. Pakistan must now ensure that the infrastructure and connectivity projects that it has undertaken are completed on time to meet the goals of this ECO conference. Provided a strong commitment and dedicated effort, this bloc can become a cohesive unit.
Call for Papers
IPRI Journal Summer 2017

The IPRI Journal is a biannual peer-reviewed publication of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). It is an HEC recognised ‘X’ category Journal, which is Pakistan’s second highest category for Social Science Journals. The objective of the Journal is to produce, foster and disseminate research, policies and ideas, primarily from Pakistan and the Global South, from the fields related to Social Sciences and International Affairs. Research scholars are invited to submit original, unpublished articles and book reviews for the Summer 2017 Issue.

Submission Deadline: March 31, 2017

Papers/articles should be concise and not exceed 8,000 words, including an abstract of 150-200 words. Reviews of recent books by scholars of standing in their field should comprise of 1000 words. Guidelines for Contributors are available at: <www.ipripak.org>.

Authors are requested to submit soft copies in MS Word format, a brief bionote as author of no more than 30 words, complete contact address (email as well as postal), telephone and fax numbers to the Editor at:

Email: ipri.editor@gmail.com

Printed copies should be sent to the Institute’s postal address.

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