

Houston Mobilizes for Mankind's Shared Future

by Brian Lantz

April 7—Amidst the tensions and the potentials which now characterize events taking place on the world stage, the Schiller Institute held a dramatic public forum on April 4, in Houston, Texas, urging cooperation among nations to create “a new paradigm” for humanity. Held at the University of Houston, the daytime public forum was titled, “The New Silk Road—Peace through Economic Development,” and subtitled “China’s Worldwide ‘Belt and Road Initiative’—The U.S. Can Join!” The event is

surely producing wide ripple effects, given the present moment and the quality of participation in this forum.

Following the April 2017 meeting between President Donald Trump and China’s President Xi Jinping at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, and their second meeting during President Trump’s November 2017 visit to Beijing, the potential for positive cooperation between the two nations is great.

The Schiller Institute is mobilizing support—nationally and internationally—for the critical next step, which must now take place to move the world in the right direction: President Trump must be empowered to place China’s “New Silk Road” offer at the very center of both U.S. foreign and economic-recovery policy. Such action—clearing the way for major Chinese investment in the United States in the form of financing and opening up new markets for U.S. exports—will create the conditions for a rapid build-out of new U.S. infrastructure, and simultaneously spark a U.S. agro-



Schiller Institute/Anastasia Mares

Left to right: Brian Lantz, Wang Yu, China Deputy Consul General in Houston, and Aisha Farooqui, Pakistan Deputy Consul General in Houston.

industrial transformation. Houston—the nation’s “energy capital,” home to the second-largest U.S. port, and our fourth most populous city—is intimately entwined in the current global economic and political conflict.

Generations of Americans have been known for their “can-do” spirit, and it is still there, ready to be tapped: The University of Houston forum audience was *bowled over* by the April 4 presentations. “This is really big!” and “Why didn’t I know about this?” came the excited responses. The day’s panelists powerfully conveyed the great possibilities at our doorstep. The panelists were Ms. Aisha Farooqui, Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Houston; Mr. Wang Yu, PhD, Deputy Consul General of the People’s Republic of China in Houston; and Brian Lantz, the event organizer, on behalf of the Schiller Institute.

Importantly, the sizable audience was a cross-section of a Houston which is transforming itself into an

international city. Participants included hyphenated-Americans from around the globe—African-American, Hispanic, Pakistani, Chinese, Nigerian, Vietnamese, Hungarian, and other varieties of “Anglos.” There were business men and business women, a number of students, attorneys, staff from the City of Houston’s trade office, staff of a Texas State Representative, as well as long-time Schiller Institute activists, and the official participation of consular officials from five nations. Three participants had been part of Houston Mayor Turner’s major trade mission to China last December. Press also attended, including a Houston monthly magazine focused on international affairs, and a Chinese news service.



Audience at the Houston Schiller Institute conference.

Schiller Institute/Richard Connelly

A Higher Calling

Kesha Rogers, speaking for the Schiller Institute, first set the stage with introductory remarks. Ms. Rogers began with a short video clip of Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche announcing the 2014 release of the *EIR* Special Report, [*The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge*](#), to promote the BRICS approach and President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative as the alternative to a war of extinction. Several people commented later that the video had immediately grabbed their full attention.



Schiller Institute/Richard Connelly
Kesha Rogers

April 4th was also the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rogers continued, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King on the “The World House”: “All inhabitants of the globe are now

neighbors,” Dr. King had said, due to the revolutions in technology including in making war. King pressed on, Rogers recalled, showing that it was therefore in the interest of all people to put an end to all poverty and war.

Presenting the role of the Schiller Institute and Lyndon and Helga LaRouche in consciously carrying forward Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s work, she held up the January, 1997 *EIR* Special Report, *The Eurasian Land-Bridge, The ‘New Silk Road.’* The title itself clearly reflects the Institute’s influence—over decades—in organizing a process that has taken wonderful form in China’s President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative. The task is to end poverty by achieving peace through economic development, Rogers emphasized, and she urged everyone to join the Schiller Institute, and purchase the *EIR* and Schiller Institute’s special reports.

The Silk Road in Action: Whither the United States?

Ms. Rogers introduced Consul General Aisha Farooqui, a senior diplomat now representing the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from Houston. Texas is home to one of the largest Pakistani-American populations in the United States. Ms. Farooqui stated at the outset that she would “present the Belt and Road Initiative from Pakistan’s perspective.” She began by proudly presenting a brief picture of Pakistan as a nation-state rooted in ancient civilization and now a rapidly developing republic. As the world’s sixth most populous country, with a pop-

ulation of which 60% are under 30 years of age, Pakistan has been achieving a 6% GDP growth rate over the last few years, and the industrial sector has been expanding at 6.8% percent with 1,000 active foreign companies. “Added to this is the significant advantage that we expect to accrue as a result of our strategic partnership with China.”

Ms. Farooqui turned to the China-Pakistan Economic Development Corridor (CPEC) as a “flagship project” of China’s Belt and Road, one that will shape a “21st Century model of economic development.” She authoritatively presented the CPEC plan, using a number of maps and photos, so that the audience quickly grasped the size of the multiple projects involving highways, energy, rail, and ports, with \$46 billion in investments. Students could be seen videoing the presentation on their phones, and clicks were heard from smart phones and cameras, capturing Consul General Farooqui’s slides. Many in the audience were clearly hearing about all of this for the first time. Consul General Farooqui, a veteran diplomat with ambassadorial experience, made a big impact with her knowledge and gravitas.

China’s Deputy Consul General in Houston, Dr. Wang Yu, followed. Dr. Wang, with a career in the Chinese Foreign Ministry and diplomatic postings, has been praised by Houston city officials for his role in overseeing the Mayor’s December 2017 trade mission to China. Dr. Wang began by praising Consul General Farooqui’s presentation. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is, he emphasized, an *initiative*, not a project, and “not a regime.” Mutual consultation, joint con-



Schiller Institute/Anastasia Mares
Aisha Farooqui
Consul General, Pakistan



Schiller Institute/Anastasia Mares
Dr. Wang Yu
Deputy Consul General, China

struction, and shared benefit lie at the heart of the BRI, and it thereby represents a new path for global development. It is both open-ended and open to everyone, including the United States, which China hopes will join.

China is pursuing a policy “of harmony and inclusiveness—we are not imposing anything—and one which is market-oriented, based on mutual benefit and local employment,” Dr. Wang explained. This can be seen in China’s commitment to “integration” of its Belt and Road with other national and regional strategies. He pointed to China’s integration with the Eurasian Economic Union led by Russia, and also with South Korea. “South Korea has its own strategy, and we’re making our own adaptations,” Wang said. “We are resolute; we are determined to integrate China’s economy with regionalization.”

In his dignified, low-key presentation, Dr. Wang focused on making China’s intentions crystal clear and thereby defusing any misunderstandings. He also stressed the cultural and social dimensions of creating “a better environment.” His effectiveness was highlighted when he projected a slide that read, “U.S.-China Cooperation,” with the national flags of the United States and China highlighted against a dramatic background. All the cameras and smart phones in the room seemed to go off again at once! Clearly this was what the audience wanted to know more about.

Brian Lantz, on behalf of the Schiller Institute, was the last speaker, and outlined the enormous potentials of America-China “Silk Road” cooperation. First, Lantz provoked the audience to grasp that the world was, at that moment, being fundamentally changed, as witness the presentations by Consul General Farooqui and Dr. Wang. *Trillions of dollars equivalent* in investment are now being invested around the world through the Belt and Road, Lantz underscored. A slide of a now-iconic photo of Houston’s overwhelmed res-



Schiller Institute/Anastasia Mares
Brian Lantz

ervoirs during Hurricane Harvey went up on the screen, followed by slides showing the topology of the Gulf Coast region. Clearly, “hundreds of billions of dollars of investment” are required to permanently address this situation—not a patch here and a patch there.

Comparing that requirement to China’s projects at home, and in Africa and the Americas, allowed the audience to see for themselves the disparity, and what could be done with the BRI approach. But where would the money come from? Lantz compared what China’s state owned enterprises (SOEs) had done with roughly \$15 trillion invested since 2008, and what the U.S. government, banks, and corporations had done with a similar amount. China Railway, for example, now owns 24,000 km of high-speed rail. American corporations, on the other hand, through “financial engineering,” . . . have doubled their corporate debt!

We clearly have to change our thinking, Lantz emphasized: “China is ready to invest, if we clear the way by creating the needed national credit institutions. Then we can rebuild!” Recall that moment when John F. Kennedy spoke at Rice University, and set the goal of going to the moon “within this decade.” Recall that we actually did it. We have to think that way, and act that way, again.

Through the ‘Lens’ of a New Paradigm

As the reader can imagine, questions and discussion quickly ensued, and continued until the last minute the room was available. The first question, from a businessman, was on China’s willingness to build its high-speed rail in Texas and make similar investments. Another, related question was on the role of “private investments” and how private enterprise can get involved in the New Silk Road.

Dr. Wang, the Deputy Consul General, responded by gracefully stating that China had offered its knowledge and experience, and was open to further participation—but “both sides” had to be willing, and that it was now up to the American side. Dr. Wang also wryly commented on the problem of the U.S. “federal security check” that is blocking fuller Chinese company investments and U.S.-China company collaboration in U.S. projects. He also pointed to the upcoming Houston Innovation Summit, to which tech startups are invited to make their pitch to three hundred Chinese companies

looking to invest. He also advertised the upcoming November 5-10, 2018 International Import Expo in Shanghai, organized by the Ministry of Commerce. U.S. companies are invited to come and promote their products for potential export to China. Thousands of companies are expected.

As the event concluded, many audience members rushed to the front of the room, expressing their happiness and excitement to continue the discussion with the speakers and each other. Discussion continued throughout the room. “How do we get involved in this; why aren’t we involved in this?” exclaimed a young Chinese businessman, originally met at a Lunar New Year festival. An experienced aide to a state legislator, who could be seen taking detailed notes throughout, was personally flummoxed. “I am really glad you invited me! Why don’t people know about this!? We’ve been fighting these wars and keeping Wall Street happy, but. . . .” He wants future discussion with the legislator and himself, on the New Silk Road potential and really solving Houston’s infrastructure crisis.

A business woman walked up to the Schiller Institute literature table. “I want those two reports!” she exclaimed. A 29-year-old with a master’s degree in sociology, who has written on the migrant crisis, “clicked” on the connection between the regime-change wars and the global refugee crisis, with the New Paradigm of the “Silk Road” as the solution. A Houston city official approached the speakers to praise the event as a contribution to fulfilling the potential of the Mayor’s recent trade mission to China. A formerly standoffish diplomat came forward with his “thumbs up.” He now wants to arrange a Schiller Institute meeting with his new Consul General. Press were doing interviews and taking more photographs. Everyone was very, very happy.

The consular representatives all made their pleasure known. One commented on how much he had learned; a Chinese consul commented on “how successful and well organized” the event was; an experienced diplomat volunteered that he had been struck, over time, by the Schiller Institute’s commitment to “a process,” i.e., maintaining its principled focus. One of the speakers commented that no one would believe that the introduction and three presentations had not been closely coordinated for overall effect—when actually each had been prepared quite separately under hectic schedules.