



International Conference

On

The Logistics and Geo-politics of Connectivity Diplomacy in Eurasia: the South-Corridor

17 - 18 OCTOBER 2024

Organised by

**Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi**

IN COLLABORATION WITH



ABOUT THE SEMINAR

Logistics and transport are at the heart of the Eurasian developmental strategies. Eurasian connectivity assumes special significance primarily due to the strategic location of the region between what is understood as developed Europe and the fast emerging Asian economies. Three interconnected components defines the ‘corridorizing’ of Eurasia and has implications that go far beyond the region. The first is the ‘territorialization’ and projection of state power across time and space; the second is spread of civilisation across time and space; and the third and the most visible aspect is the extension and transformation of the physical infrastructure across space through the construction of transnational railways, roads, ports, pipelines and maritime routes. Central to the vision of ‘corridorization’ is the shared understanding of the explicit link between transnational corridor building and the reshaping of the global order.

The landlocked nature of most of the Eurasian states provides opportunities for connectivity initiatives in the region. Evidently, there is a convergence of interest among stake-holders and also a keenness to work with private players. However, there exist two major obstacles: the lack of financial resources and the inability of the regional actors to harmonise the conflicting interests of their powerful neighbours. This creates space for multi-party strategic initiatives and integrated regional strategies that would factor in the political sensitivities of the actors involved and successfully work out mechanisms for coordinated action among states.

The BRI is already in motion with its clearly defined objectives of projecting China’s soft power, hard power and material durability across the region. The six corridors that make up the BRI have been making headway. For Russia, transnational corridors in Asia have become a key priority in its foreign policy goals aimed at creating its vision of a ‘Greater Eurasian Partnership’. Russia’s transnational corridors in Eurasia include the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 7,200 km intergovernmental transport project, the Northern Sea Route or the Arctic marine routes and the Northern Corridor which connects Europe with China via Russia and Kazakhstan or Mongolia on a train route of approximately 5,400 km. The US and its partners have also oriented their foreign policy directions towards connectivity projects. The major projects announced include the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor with the US, EU, and India as well as the ‘Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment’ (PGII) that was launched in 2021. Another major project support by the West is the EU Global Gateway Initiative launched by the EU and the European development finance institutions in 2023.

The competing transitional corridors are redefining the geopolitical and geo-economic realities of Eurasia and given the locational advantage, the Central Asian states have the remarkable potential to act as a transcontinental bridge between Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Therefore, there is an imperative to

initiate deliberations on the benefits of regional integration and the role of corridors in enabling regional connectivity. The financial and logistical aspects of connectivity, has to be comprehended before a feasible roadmap can be worked out wherein the costs and benefits of investments in these mega connectivity projects can be maximized. Developing intense physical, commercial, digital and cultural exchanges calls for greater clarity on the bottlenecks that may lie ahead. The goal is to structure new supply chains that will ensure for every stake holder across the region, smooth and uninterrupted access to global markets.

This international conference is in continuation of a series of Logistics & Diplomacy seminars organized in the last one decade (2014 -2023), focusing on the politics and economics of logistical transformations in Eurasia. The linkages between 'logistics as a necessity' and 'diplomacy as an art' will be the highlight of the 2024 conference. The conference aims to explore the regional dynamics of connectivity initiatives and the role of diplomacy in enabling countries to promote their national interests through regional and pan-regional cooperation. The idea is to look into the prospects of connectivity from South Asia via Central Asia to Europe within a world of 'pan-region-centralism'. The focus will be on multimodal transport linkages — land, port and shipping connectivity — from the Eurasian and Indian perspectives on connectivity.

India's role and involvement in the connectivity initiatives in South Asia, Central Asia, South-East Asia and the Middle-East will be particularly explored. As an emerging power, the largest democracy and the most populous country in the world, India is an important stake holder in these regions. The geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics of these connectivity projects are critical to India's quest for external connectivity and serves its logic of strategic autonomy in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives. Understanding the dynamics of the diplomatic and logistical transformations in its immediate and extended neighbourhood, is therefore critical for India's regional and global outreach. This was very aptly put forward by the Indian Prime Minister when speaking in the Raisina Dialogue in 2017 he stated that India's path of international engagement was focused on "rebuilding connectivity, restoring bridges and rejoining India with our immediate and extended geographies"

The broad themes that the conference will deliberate upon include the following:

1. Logistics as a necessity and diplomacy as a facilitator
2. Connecting Europe, Central Asia and South Asia: feasibilities and challenges
3. Physical and digital connectivity in Eurasia
4. Public-Private partnership for connectivity
5. India's involvement in Eurasian connectivity

PROGRAMME

DAY1

Thursday, 17 OCTOBER 2024

10.00-11.30 AM: INAUGURAL SESSION

Committee Hall -01, Convention Centre, JNU

Welcome Remarks	Prof. Archana Upadhyay Chairperson Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies, SIS, JNU
Dean's Address	Prof. Amitabh Mattoo Dean School of International Studies, JNU
Keynote Address	Amb. Venkatesh D. Varma Indian's Former Ambassador to Russian Federation
Special Remarks	Prof. Pierre Chabal, Director, LexFEIM Research Center at Le Havre University
Special Remarks	Prof. Kuralay Baizakova, Director of the Institute for Security and Cooperation Studies Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
Vote of Thanks	Dr. Rajan Kumar Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies, SIS, JNU

High Tea: (11.30 AM-12.00 PM)

Academic Session 1: (12.00 -01.15 PM)

Title: Regional Geopolitics and Connectivity in Eurasia	
Chair: Prof. Fatima Kukeyeva, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	
Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva	Economic and geopolitical aspects of connectivity strategies in Eurasia
Prof. Pierre Chabal & Celine Seigneur	From pan-Asia centrism to pan-Regionalism in Eurasia
Prof. Kuralay Baizakova	Central Asia as a link-territory in Eurasia
Prof. Sanjay Kumar Pandey	Russia and Iran in Eurasian connectivity

Lunch Break: 01.15-2.00 PM

Academic Session 2: (02.00-03.15 PM)

Title: Developing New Corridors to Connect Europe and South Asia

Chair: Prof. Ajay K. Patnaik, Former Dean, SIS

Prof. Fatima Kukeyeva	South corridor in the development of Central Asia
Prof. Sanjay K. Bhardwaj	Geopolitics of Connectivity in South Asia and Beyond: India's Policy Initiatives
Dr. Saniya Nurdavletova	Transport corridors in CA: New initiatives in logistics and transit spheres
Prof. Bhaswati Sarkar	European Union and India as Connectivity Partners

Academic Session 3: (03.15 – 04.15 PM)

Title: Trade, Transit and Transport Trajectories in Eurasian Connectivity

Chair: Prof. Kuralay Baizakova, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Dr. Yann Alix	Vitality of Ports in Landlocked Central Asia: Open debate on the Geopolitics & Diplomacy of connectivity
Dr. Aida Yerimpasheva	Trade Corridors in Eurasia: Geopolitical and Geo-economic Implications
Prof. Jahangir Karami	Role of Iran's Strategic Ports in Connecting Eurasia to South Asia: Possibilities and Limitations
Prof. Parviz Mullojonov	New Trajectories for Transportation Corridors in Eurasia: Feasibilities and Challenges

Academic Session 4: (04.15 – 05.30 PM)

Title: Developing Digital Connectivity, Sea Ports and Electrical Power-grids in a Sustainable Framework

Chair: Prof. Sharad K Soni, Centre for Inner Asia, SIS, JNU

Dr. Kairat Bekov	Geopolitical and Technological Challenges to Digital Connectivity in Europe-Asia
Dr. Jildiz Nicharapova	Power grids from Central Asia to South Asia: Perspectives from the Kyrgyz Republic
Dr. Govind Kumar Inakhiya	India's Investment in Chabahar Port: Prospects and Challenges
Dr. Pramod Kumar	Chabahar Port: Gateway to Central Asia
Dr. Gulnara Baikushikova	Environmental aspect of the issue of transport connections between Europe and Central Asia

High Tea: 5.30 PM

DAY 2

Friday, 18 OCTOBER 2024

Committee Hall -01, Convention Centre, JNU

Academic Session 5: (10.00 AM-11.00 PM)

Title: Historical Routes of Trade and Connectivity in Eurasia	
Chair: Prof. Bhaswati Sarkar, SIS, JNU	
Prof. Anna Bochkovskaya	Russia-India Trade Logistics in the Early 19th Century: North-South Routes as Seen by MehtiRafailov, a Merchant from Russia
Dr. Nandini Bhattacharya	Indo-Central Asian Connectivity During the Age of Empires : Trade, Diplomacy and Culture
Dr. Preeti D. Das	Historical Roots of Connectivity Routes: Mobility of Trades between India and Eurasia
Prof. Esra LaGro	EU Global Gateway for connectivity in Europe, Central Asia and South Asia

Academic Session 6: (11.00 AM -12.00 PM)

Title—Geopolitical Complexities and Strategic Challenges of INSTC	
Chair: Prof. Phool Badan, CRCAS,SIS, JNU	
Dr. Rajan Kumar	The INSTC Project: Geopolitical Complexities and Strategic Challenges
Dr. Anita Sengupta	The pandemic and the geopolitics of connectivity
Dr. Aleksei Zakharov	INSTC as a tool of Russia's Outreach to South Asia
Dr. Raj Yadav	Envisaging economic growth through connectivity: Role of Eurasian Development Bank'

Academic Session 7: (12.00-1.00 PM)

Title: Competing Connectivity Corridors in Eurasia and its Neighbourhood	
Chair: Prof. Sanjay Bhardwaj, CSAS, SIS, JNU	
Prof. Sangita Thapliyal	Nepal and BRI
Dr. Zhulduz Baizakova	Pipeline Geopolitics in Central Asia: Regional Perspectives
Prof. Sharad K Soni	Trilateral Diplomacy in Implementing China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
Dr. Asma Kouser	Dynamics of trade diplomacy and logistical transformation through 'Ganga-Volga Dialogue'

Lunch Break: 1.00 – 02.00 PM

Academic Session 8: (2.00- 3.00 PM)

Title-India Middle East Economic Corridor: Feasibility and Challenges

Chair- Prof. Anna Bochkovskaya, Moscow State University

Prof. Sameena Hameed	India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor-Making it happen
Prof. Philippe Gast	India's connectivity diplomacy ties with the Islamic States in West Asia and Eurasia
Prof. Bassant Hassib	Digital Logistics: a driver for diplomacy from India to the Middle East

Special Lecture

(03.00- 04.00 PM)

Theme: India's Connectivity Diplomacy in Eurasia and Beyond

Chair: Prof. Anuradha M. Chenoy, Former Dean, SIS, JNU

Speaker: Amb. Ajay Bisaria, India's Former Ambassador to Pakistan, Poland, Canada

Young Scholars' Session on Eurasian Connectivity

(4.00-5.00 PM)

**Chair: Prof. Pierre Chabal,
Director, LexFEIM Research Center at Le Havre University**

Mr. Harry Singh CRCAS,SIS	Strategic Connectivity and Geo-politics in Eurasia: The South Corridor's Role in Shaping India's Diplomatic and Economic Trajectories
Ms. Shalini CRCAS,SIS	Eurasian Connectivity: Balancing Russian Influence and Post-Soviet Independence
Mr. Priyanshu Agarwal CRCAS,SIS	The Geopolitics of Transport Corridors: Strategic Interplay of the BRI, INSTC, and the Middle Corridor in Azerbaijan
Ms. Arunima Kalita CRCAS,SIS	Infrastructure of Influence: India and INSTC through the Soft Power Paradigm
Mr. Suresh Kumar CRCAS,SIS	The Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor: Enhancing India-Russia Trade and Eurasian Connectivity with the Indo-Pacific (Asia-Pacific)

Concluding Session& Final Remarks

(5.00-5.30 PM)