



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 CONFERENCE

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 define the 'corridorizing' of Eurasia and have implications that go far beyond the region. The first is the 'territorialization' and projection of state power across time and space; the second is the 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.

Among the interests of the key actors, 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 supported 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 geoeconomic 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, have 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

DAY 1 : 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
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Dean's Address : **Prof. Amitabh Mattoo**
Dean, School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Keynote Address : **Amb. Ajay Bisaria**
Distinguished Fellow
Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi
- Special Remarks : **Prof. Kuralay Baizakova**
Director, Institute for Security and Cooperation Studies
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan
- Special Remarks : **Prof. Pierre Chabal**
Director
LexFEIM Research Center at Le Havre University, France
- Vote of Thanks : **Dr. Rajan Kumar**
Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

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. Kuralay Baizakova
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

- Prof. Ajay Patnaik : Conflict, Shifting Borders & Challenges to Connectivity in Eurasia
- Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva : Economic and Geopolitical aspects of Connectivity Strategies in Eurasia
- Prof. Pierre Chabal & Coline Seigneur : From pan-Asia Centrism to pan-Regionalism 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
School of International Studies, JNU

- Prof. Fatima Kukeyeva : The Southern Corridor as a Factor in Eurasian Geopolitics
- Prof. Sanjay K. Bhardwaj : Geopolitics of Connectivity in South Asia and Beyond: India's Policy Initiatives
- Prof. 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. Pierre Chabal
LexFEIM Research Center, Le Havre University

- Dr. Yann Alix : Vitality of Ports in Landlocked Central Asia: Open debate on the Geopolitics & Diplomacy of Connectivity
- Prof. 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

- Prof. 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
- Prof. Gulnara Baikushikova : Environmental aspects of Europe-Central Asia Transport Connectivity

High Tea: 5.30 PM

DAY 2 : Friday, 18 OCTOBER 2024

Committee Hall -01, Convention Centre, JNU

Academic Session 5: (10.00 AM-11. 15 PM)

Title: Historical Routes of Trade and Connectivity in Eurasia

Chair: Prof. Bhaswati Sarkar

Centre for European Studies, SIS, JNU

- Prof. Kuralay Baizakova : Central Asia as a link-territory in Eurasia
- Prof. Anna Bochkovskaya : Russia-India Trade Logistics in the Early 19th Century: North- South Routes as seen by Mehti Rafailov, 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 -12.15 PM)

Title: Geopolitical Complexities and Strategic Challenges of INSTC

Chair: Prof. Phool Badan

Centre for Russian & Central Asian Studies, 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: (12.15 PM-1.15 PM)

Title: Competing Connectivity Corridors in Eurasia and its Neighbourhood

Chair: Prof. Sanjay Bhardwaj
Centre for South Asian Studies, 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: 1.15 PM – 02.00 PM

Academic Session 8: (2.00 PM – 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 with the Islamic states in West Asia and Eurasia
- Dr. Bassant Hassib : Digital Logistics: A Driver for Diplomacy from India to the Middle East

Special Lecture: (03.00 PM – 04.00 PM)

Theme: India's Connectivity Diplomacy in Eurasia and Beyond

Chair: Prof. Anuradha M. Chenoy

Former Dean, SIS, JNU

Guest Speaker: Amb. Venkatesh D. Varma

Indian's Former Ambassador to the Russian Federation

Young Scholars 'Session on Eurasian Connectivity: (04.00 PM – 5.1500 PM)

Chair: Prof. Pierre Chabal

LexFEIM Research Center, 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
- Mr. Priyanshu Agarwal
CRCAS, SIS : The Geopolitics of Transport Corridors: Strategic interplay of the BRI, INSTC, and the Middle Corridor in Azerbaijan
- Mr. Suresh Kumar
CRCAS, SIS : The Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor: Enhancing India- Russia Trade and Eurasian Connectivity with the Indo-Pacific (Asia-Pacific)
- Ms. Arunima Kalita
CRCAS, SIS : Infrastructure of Influence: India and INSTC through the Soft Power Paradigm
- Ms. Shalini
CRCAS, SIS : Eurasian Connectivity: Balancing Russian Influence and Post- Soviet Independence

Concluding Session & Final Remarks (05.15 PM – 5.30 PM)

High Tea : 05.30 PM