

Report of Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group- Rosa Luxemburg Shifting Consultative Meeting

A Social Mapping of Infrastructure, Logistics and India's Look East Policy

In collaboration with Vidyasagar University

Date 7 March 2017

Venue: Sabhaghar 1, Swabhumi, Kolkata

Asia is on the threshold of a new phase of connectivity where the materialization of logistic visions would be dependent on complex negotiations in the spheres of geopolitics and geoeconomics. Among these competing visions is the Chinese one of a network of land to sea routes that seek to revitalize Silk Road visions but also looks to new economic outreach and fresh strategic space. All these visions open new logistic spaces for the global capital, a new scenario, in which there are possibilities of the re-emergence of Kolkata as a vital nodal point of connectivity not just for India's Northeast but also the larger region of South East and East Asia. In various blueprints on this age of connectivity, mercantilism, and innovative supply chains Kolkata is seen as holding the key to regional integration between South, Southeast and East Asia. The project seeks to converge various elements of this new connectivity within a broader framework of India's logistic visions, particularly its Look/Act East Policy, thereby opening up critical elements in the logistical calculations of the new age both on the east and west of the subcontinent.

While expansion of trade and commercial links will follow the expanding networks the possibility of greater flows also brings to the forefront various positive and negative developments; on the one hand the development of certain centres as nodal in the process but also the possibilities of conflict and violence induced by uneven development. The transformation of certain cities from 'frontier' to 'gateway' cities and the subsequent emergence of borderlands as new markets call for alternative imaginings but also provide opportunities for new claims for place and belonging. These cities have become the starting point of all kinds of ventures, highways/car rallies/trade fairs and have become a 'zones of potential' where rising India's power challenges that of China. India will confront the China led new globalization through infrastructural interventions not just on the eastern and north eastern borders of India with Bangladesh/Myanmar/Nepal and Bhutan but also on the western and northwestern border with Afghanistan/Pakistan and as an extension with the Central Asian states. While corridors are generally defined in linear terms as defined by dominant modes of transportation they also tend to deepen economic activity and create logistic hubs. One sign of this growing engagement will be the proliferation of special economic zones, industrial parks, transport hubs and other dedicated spaces that will create a new geography for organizing production, attracting investments and regulating the supply of labour. Greater connectivity between these nodes and the mainland would mean that the frontier would increasingly be transformed into a corridor. But logistics is more than simply connecting diverse firms and labour forces on the basis of cost calculations. Logistics also creates environments and subjectivities through co-ordination and optimization. Social governance therefore assumes

relevance not just because of the expansion of labour forces but because infrastructural hardware (roads/pipelines/electricity grids/bridges) is particularly prone to disruption.

In recent years fundamental assumptions underlying the global world order have been politically, economically, socially and culturally challenged. Typically stable territorial formations (nation states, ideological blocks, global markets) have devolved into chaos while typically unstable extra territorial flows (communication networks, trade arrangements, cultural codes or capital reserves) are evolving into new coherent cohesions. A 'new world order' is in the making proposed by a China with more involvement in global affairs, openness to immigration and with the aim of building a global community of shared interests and responsibility through economic corridors. The corresponding reduced emphasis on the sanctity of sovereign limits, that the proposed large scale logistical arrangements would necessarily entail, has brought with it debates on how this would change the rules of the game as far as global influence is concerned. OBOR signals the anticipation of new political principles guided by connectivity and infrastructural development whereby China would become the epicenter that links Eurasia.

The 'new normal', in economic terms, on the other hand, is a position that is likely to disrupt openness to trade on the part of the world that was its most vocal proponent and its support from states like China, which is stepping into the role of 'globalization's biggest supporter'. This is reflected in President Trump's electoral promise to pull the US out of the twelve nation mega trade deal (the Trans-Pacific Partnership TPP which had been viewed as the means for the US to deepen economic engagement in the Asia Pacific region) and increasing numbers of states opting to join the China led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Begun as a free trade agreement between the ten member states of the ASEAN and the six states with which the ASEAN has existing free trade agreement, RCEP will in all probability be expanded with the inclusion of states like Peru and Chile bringing into question the spatial aspect of the 'regional' economic partnership. And this is not an isolated example. 'Regional' organizations like the SCO today include as its 'dialogue partners' states as geographically separated as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia and Nepal.

Another development that is increasingly becoming crucial is the collaboration among existing and emerging financial institutions which have sought co-financing, knowledge work, and joint policy dialogue with member countries. Institutions like the AIIB and the ADB undertake regular high-level consultations and joint data collection to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the COP21 climate agreement. ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. Established in 1966, ADB is owned by 67 members—48 from the region. AIIB, located in Beijing, is a multilateral development bank that focuses on the development of infrastructure and other productive sectors in Asia, including energy and power, transportation and telecommunications, rural infrastructure and agriculture development, water supply and sanitation, environmental protection, urban development and logistics. ADB and AIIB are involved in co-financing in the road and water sectors. The first of these projects is expected to be Pakistan's M4 highway

project, a 64-kilometer stretch of motorway connecting Shorkot to Khanewal in Punjab Province. And as India becomes a part of a number of these financial institutions the necessity of a closer examination of their role in global financing of infrastructural projects will assume not just geo-economic but strategic importance.

Programme:

10.30 am-10.45 am: Registration and Tea

10.45 am -11 am: Introduction by Paula Banerjee (Director, CRG and Professor, University of Calcutta)

11.00 am-1.30 pm: **Presentations on the Research Abstracts and Expert Comments**

(Abstracts and Comments have been uploaded at

http://www.mcrq.ac.in/RLS_PML/RLS_L_Researchers.asp)

Chair : Prasanta Ray (President, CRG)

11 am to 11.10 am

Trade, Capital and Conflict: Frontier Towns of Northeast India and Myanmar

Snehashish Mitra and Soma Ghoshal

11.10 am to 11.30 am

Discussant: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (Vice Chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University)

The first segment will attempt mapping the changes that have taken place in frontier cities and towns (Moreh, Dimapur, Agartala in Northeast India, Tamu and Pangsau in Myanmar) in the last few years with regards to logistics and infrastructure. On the basis of such mapping the researchers will examine the extent to which the cities/towns have facilitated cross border trade and the various impediments encountered in the process. It will also examine how the spatial intervention of the state through formal infrastructure and information networks, influences the politics of the region, specifically to what extent it transforms the question of sovereignty into question of governance. Understanding the changing roles of actors and subjects in the region, such as women, security forces, local governing institutions (autonomous councils, urban bodies, development authorities) and business enterprises was also identified as crucial.

11.30am -11.40am

New Capital, Emerging Conflicts and Social Governance in Northeast India: Nagaland and Manipur

Paula Banerjee and Sucharita Sengupta

11.40am-12pm

Discussants: Subir Bhaumik (Senior Journalist and Strategic Commentator) and Shibaji Pratim Basu (Professor, Vidyasagar University)

The second segment will examine new forms of political mobilizations that will obstruct the flow of the logistical apparatus and bring them into question. Within this context examine whether prolonged obstruction of logistical operations has evolved as a strategy of political

action in Northeast and what can be the new forms of disruption of the new logistical apparatus in the background of past conflicts and what can be the policy responses.

12pm -12.10 pm

Interwoven Realities: The Interface of Geopolitics and Geo-economics in Asia

Anita Sengupta

12.10pm -12.20 pm

Discussant: Swaran Singh (Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

The third segment will examine the interface of geo-economics and geopolitics through an examination of multilateral organizations like ASEAN and SCO which identify logistic and infrastructural as central and involve both India and China. Examining how the concept of a 'region' has been transformed by overlapping 'trans-regional' membership and 'regional' institutions that encompass global spaces; how the inclusion of China in Asian regional organizations has the potential to transform it into a new 'region' in terms of influence whereas India still remains peripheral in many of the organizations; how regional connectivity corridors, trade partnerships and preferential economic arrangements are bringing traditional regional arrangements into question; examining the possibility of areas along the corridors forming a central core 'region' and the resultant social conflict in the 'new' periphery, the regions on the outskirts of the corridor and finally how Indian engagement with 'regional organizations' on the one hand and economic corridors on the other would impact upon its policies

12.20pm -12-30pm

Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development: The Asian Context

Iman Mitra

12.30pm-12. 40pm

Discussant: Sharmistha Banerjee (Professor, University of Calcutta)

The fourth segment will explore the connection between the idea of 'seamless Asia' and the infrastructural requirements for its realisation in connection with the emerging networks of finance capital in the region where the concept of finance capital is often reduced to discussions around the figure of the solitary, speculative economic agent and their speculative decision-making abilities. Also try to bring the concept of infrastructure development at the core of its conceptualisation and look at the institutional paradigms of regional conglomerates and their conversations with the expansive networks of finance capital. This will involve a close reading of the policy documents of the Indian government, statement of purposes and designs of on-going infrastructural projects in the country, studies and project reports conducted by the regional groups and development banks, and discussions about these forms of developmental activities in public forums and media. The main objective of these readings will be to produce a narrative of changes in both geopolitics and the ideas of finance capital in instances of shifting of their mutually constitutive boundaries in the last one decade.

12.40pm -12.50 pm

The New Silk Road

Priya Singh

12.50pm -1.30 pm

Discussants: Sujata Ashwarya (Faculty, Jamia Milia Islamia) and Dr Arpita Basu Roy (Senior Fellow, Centre for Studies in International Relations & Development, Kolkata)

The final segment will examine ways in which the Look East policy become the nodal point for both land and maritime new Silk Routes not just to the South East but extending to the Asia Pacific on one side and upto the Mediterranean on the other. It questioned whether the New Silk Road Initiative represents the next stage of globalization by way of multi layered connectivity culminating in greater regional/global integration. Conversely, can or will the New Silk Road Initiative trigger or intensify existing rifts and fault lines between nations and regions? Is there a possibility of reworking on certain facets of the OBOR and situating the Indian Governments Look East/Act East Policy (with its emphasis on Link West policy), within the New Silk Road Initiative?

1.30 pm -2.30 pm: Lunch

2.30 pm to 4 pm: **Discussion on the Project by Experts**

Moderator: Subir Bhaumik

Speakers: Swaran Singh and Sujata Ashwarya

The moderator **Subir Bhaumik** began by making three observations that he considered central to any possible research agenda dealing with the issue of expanding infrastructure and commerce as part of the 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy. The first of these concerned the status of the region that is the 'North East' through which much of these policies are supposed to unfold. The moderator raised a vital point concerning whether this region was to actually emerge as a stakeholder or whether it was to remain simply a route for such infrastructural projects. Was the North East to persist as a kind of halfway-house on a transport corridor with huge trucks whizzing past, carrying produce from mainland India to countries beyond? Or was the North-East to be sufficiently situated in relation to India's engagement with her eastern neighbours whereby economic development, investment and industry come into the region thus creating a stake in the policy for the region. The moderator in explicating this also pointed out that after all, the North East was not a monolith. Certain communities will look at the possibility of creating corridors positively and some might just oppose it depending on how the establishment of these corridors plays out for them. The trend in the new government, he thought was to ignore this problem by claiming that everyone was in support of their policies. However the great demographic, ethnic and religious diversity in the North East makes the problem more difficult to handle than this naive optimism supposes. This diversity requires critical analysis: who might oppose, who might consider themselves stakeholders and who think they are not to benefit from these schemes. Even the nature of opposition needed more understanding – who were opposed to the new infrastructure on grounds of principles/ideology, who were opposed to it on the basis of the understanding that their

interests will be hurt or who were in opposition simply to garner a kind of 'rent' from the concerned schemes.

A second point that the moderator stressed on was to understand how existing and other social engineering exercises are going to play into the whole process of infrastructural expansion. The example given here was that of the recently formed Assam government helmed by the BJP that has started a process of extending Scheduled Tribe status to 6 communities in Assam. If this is seen through, Assam would become a tribal state with more than 55% of Assam being marked out as ST. This would also be ironic since a set of tribal entities have always sought disconnection from what they think are the domination of the Assamese. Thus as this example might evince, there is a need to understand how policies and governmental practices not directly connected with Act East/Look East might come to impact them in turn over the years to come.

The third point that the moderator sought to draw attention to was the larger 'global games' – the new 'Great Game'. This is not only about India and China – there are other players – like Japan and South Korea looking to get better returns as interest off their investment in the form of finance capital. Then there was obviously the 'west'. Here the commentator pointed out how all the seminars in the city of Kolkata in the last six months or so that focused on phenomena like the BIMSTEC or the BBIN have been sponsored by the US Consulate. This need not be accidental. There would be objectives of cutting out BCIM to limit China and develop other corridors and territorialities in the East. And with the new sort of Indian policy that is conceding its strategic autonomy to the US by signing logistics-military agreements, questions, the moderator pointed out, were bound to arise as to whether India was actually pursuing an independent 'Look East' policy or if there was a greater game in motion in which India was a participant less out of her own interest and more to keep someone else happy in Washington. It was thus emphasized that with such logistical-military agreements with the US in place and with the US getting into ports erstwhile under Chinese control in Bangladesh, the status of 'Look East' or 'Act East' in this 'global game' needed serious scrutiny.

The moderator also mentioned that the policies under consideration needed to also be related to the still continuing relevance of the question of security in the North East. The most important manifestation of that was the whole unwritten understanding that while all other countries are welcome by way of investment in the North-East, the Chinese must be kept out. Here an example was given of a recent Oil India case, whereby even with available and unparalleled technological expertise of certain Chinese companies to carry oil rigs across fast-flowing waters, they could not be contracted by the Indian company for similar work. Chinese investment in other states of mainland India was welcome but not in North-Eastern states like Assam. These concerns stem out of an anxiety stemming from security concerns. This was also manifested in how the Assamese segment of the Indian delegation to the K2K (Kolkata Kunming) summit was asked to drop out at the last moment. For the Look East or Act East to be understood, a serious concern thus also had to be extended to Indian security concerns and their continuity in contemporary times.

The second panelist in the Round Table, Prof. **Swaran Singh** from JNU began by responding to the moderator's suggestions. He recounted how in his time as a researcher with a think-tank there was a basic lesson to be learnt by students of India's foreign policy, International Relations and Security Studies, the lesson being to distinguish between what is desirable and what is feasible, between what would be the ambition and what would be the compulsion. The lesson was also to derive and pursue the feasible over and above the desirable. He took this as a vantage point to address the question concerning the specific status of the North-East in the imaginary of India's Look East policy. According to him the case of the North East in India's general policy had more to do with larger currents, both domestic and foreign, along which the North-East has drifted. Thus he brought up how the circumstances of our independence had led up to India being much more engaged on the Western frontier with Pakistan, over the first two, three decades and eventually on the northern frontier with China. The North East has thus been largely absent in these larger currents and in the concerns of other big powers. Tiding over these 'compulsions' only in the 1990s we started talking about 'Look East'. Initially the idea was to extend such overtures with the ASEAN nation-members who existed at that point of time. But, with the ASEAN itself expanding in the 1990s with the CLMV countries joining in, the idea of the North East, a key element of the 'Look East' policy, itself became significant when it was realized that several land borders with ASEAN members were shared through the North East. It is in the course of this realization that NorthEast came to be considered as integral to India's 'Look East' Policy.

Swaran Singh also considered the translation of 'Look East' to 'Act East' as bearing a definite impact of the United States. 2011 onwards the U.S. had developed a special focus on Asia. An event of some importance here was Hilary Clinton's visit to Hyderabad where she spoke of the need to shift India's focus towards the east. According to him through all these initiatives India was coming closer to the North East region. There were of course other kinds of focus in the Act East Policy in between, pertaining to developing closer relations with Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. But lately the focus has shifted closer home, thus reinforcing the concern about the North East in the process. There were also other foreign policy initiatives that focused on keeping Pakistan out of cross-border arrangements. This was for example the focus in India's outreach towards BIMSTEC in the BRICS summit at Goa last year. This was to eschew the involvement of a SAARC kind of formation, thus keeping Pakistan out. But this was also a general resetting of India's relationship with her neighbours with greater focus now on BIMSTEC countries. Now, for example, there is a renewed focus on involving BIMSTEC in maritime governance initiatives – trade, security concerns featuring prominently here. And in all of this there is no escape from focusing on the North East, on making it a stakeholder and a participant. BIMSTEC was something of a dormant concern even two years back. The only time it would be activated was to stop Chinese interest in entering BIMSTEC- thus the whole Ganga-Mekong project to keep China at a distance. The rise of BIMSTEC to primacy in India's foreign policy concern now is thus particularly marked as is also India's new interests in the CLMV countries. Thus India is helping out private companies investing in CLMV countries with additional funds, etc. This according to Prof. Singh was also an example of operating compulsions: both the U.S. and the E.U. were pushing India for a long time the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) – Since India's economy was growing at faster rates,

then the U.S. and E.U. wanted withdrawal of some preferences from at least some sections. Here CLMV thus became an important conduit for investing in manufacture since they would have GSP for longer time periods. There are further competitive advantages that India could enjoy in making this shift. Unlike Singapore, Malaysia, etc. India's 'appropriate technology', forms of technological and other kinds of literacy or education, training, etc. has a greater place of relevance in the CLMV countries. Thus the CLMV becomes of importance to Indian foreign policy for the purposes of boosting India's private industry and its ambitions too. There is of course a strategic concern of competing with Chinese influence too – exemplified by India's relationship to Vietnam with a 100 million dollar credit line and the supply of missiles.

Thus in all of these, what Swaran Singh emphasized in particular was the movement of India's foreign policy concerns closer home and thus the propping up of the North East as an integral cause in all of these. He also brought up in this relation the case of the Sagar Mala project that envisions an investment of 500 crores and above in some 12 ports of India and several islands, to develop them into nodes of trade and disaster management. And with these ports being developed gradually the need has arrived in the last two years of connecting internal areas with these ports via laying new railway tracks. And in all of this the N.E. has to be brought on board. A similar emphasis on the N.E. was also to be found in project MAUSAM

Towards marking an end to his comments, Prof. Singh opined that Chinese schemes were successful because of the kind of money, technology and planning they command. This could make it seem like India had resigned to her fate. But however, India was actually also doing a lot of things through 'Look East', etc. via specific goals also of empowering women, introducing democracy to fight terrorism as well channeling a common cultural, Buddhist past. As a last comment, Prof. Singh mentioned how nation-states need not always consult the regions or border communities for national policies; but in the present there was scope galore for N.E. to rise to the occasion as a participant or a stakeholder.

The third panelist **SujataAshwarya** spoke primarily on the extension of the linkages westwards. With regard to the changing political relationship between India and West Asia, she wanted to draw attention to OBOR and its coming to West Asia and how that might impact on relations between nations. She thought that India of course figures as a competitor with China in all of this. So one instance of this could be Iran, which after the removal of sanctions, has invited international companies to buy stakes in oil and gas sector. 25 such international companies have been called for this, of which only one is Indian, while the number. of Chinese companies is 4. She thus pointed that how in spite of sharing very good political relationship with Iran, India does not get an equivalent share of the economic pie. China has been at the forefront of economic development in Iran much more than India.

Dr. Ashwarya went on to speak of her current project concerning the gas mines and finds in the eastern Mediterranean specifically in Israel. There too the only Asian company that has shown sufficient interest in exploration and investment is a Chinese company. She opined that a part of this 'success' could be attributed not only to policy but also to China's political culture where major decisions are taken more expeditiously. Secondly, the reason for this could also be

China's great financial resources to invest abroad as of now, along with the planning of other kinds of infrastructural components alongside, like the setting up of OBOR. While India has funded certain corridor-type projects in Central Asia, there is nothing in the scale of OBOR. This she attributed this to the vulnerabilities back in India. She continued to point out how Israel invited India to invest in gas finds in the eastern Mediterranean amounting to 164 billion cubic meters of gas. But India's response was unsure and thus against investing. This was then a rather 'shaky' response coming out of India's 'shaky' progress with developing, she thought. This also came at a time when there are newer areas of trade and connectivity being found in the Middle East for example in Northern Egypt that is now becoming a gas hub. But even with gas companies like OVL existing in India for the sole purpose of investing abroad and ensuring energy security, there is no Indian investment in the region.

To sum up, Dr. Ashwarya pointed out how there is great deal of contingency just like other countries in India's foreign policy and its development and selection of priorities. OBOR and India's limitations in comparison thus evince that India has to look inside, both towards its developmental progress as well as towards a different sort of political decision-making to bring changes in its foreign-policy.

The moderator Subir Bhaumik summed up the session by commenting that given the papers since the morning and the roundtable discussions, there is a need to understand what constitutes national interest and regional interest. National interest could not simply be determined unilaterally by the echelons of power in Delhi but rather had to incorporate the regional. The emphasis he thought in nation-building projects as well as foreign policy was to develop cooperation and multiply stakeholders, not limit them and thus the region assumed signal importance.

First question by Prof. SibajiPratimBasu to Subir Bhaumik: If there has been a paradigm shift in the course of India 'Acting' East and subsequent thinking about the North East, how has the new regime of government at the Centre contributed – what has changed since this new regime assumed power?

Second question by Sukanya Mukherjee, PhD candidate to SujataAshwarya: Is there a role of corruption, lack of education and poverty within the country which goes into shaping or limiting India's foreign policy ambitions/initiatives?

Third question by Mithilesh Kumar, TISS Patna to SujataAshwarya: Was the existence of and India's stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict to do with India's limited ambition in gas explorations in the Eastern Mediterranean?

SujataAshwarya replied that the Arab-Israeli contest and its relevance to India's limited interest in gas finds in the middle-east is not entirely explicitly drawn always. India has strengthened its relationship with Israel, also a few gulf countries, for a while now. That can explain that the conflict might not have been a very important factor. It seems more likely that OVL's relative disinterest in the gas finds she spoke about might have had more to do with a general slant in

India's foreign policy of not overscaling its ambitions. India's foreign policy is 'not to miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity'. She also added that indeed the lack of education, corruption and poverty had very much to do with limitations of Indian foreign policy. Specifically corruption and rent-seeking activities had a lot to do with India's developmental limitations. Herein might lie also the difference with China.

Fourth question by Soma Ghosh to Swaran Singh: Can you ignore the border and the border communities in making of national foreign policy? In the north east there are tribes who exist across borders and there is fair amount of formal and informal trade carried out by them...

Swaran Singh answered foreign policy has only recently been a concern for political representatives. It has mostly been a prerogative of officials. The new government has not launched any absolutely new ideas regarding foreign policy. It is just that certain ideas have received greater onus. But the new Prime Minister has been somewhat hyper-active regarding accelerating all segments of foreign policy – that has surely been noticeable. He added about the relevance of border communities and regions to the making of foreign policy that very often the top brass of decision making like the office of the Prime Minister often has very little time to take decisions and thus accommodate variable interests. The border communities thus often quite 'normally' get side-lined in the making of national foreign policy and interest. Thus in certain situations they do become expendable.

Fifth question by Nirmalya to SubirBhaumik: Are anti-dam movements in Arunachal also affecting India's infrastructural expansion projects in the area? 2nd question, the question regarding whether the North East is merely a transit zone, this question has already been raised in Manipur- Can national interest be accounted for without such regional point of views?

SubirBhaumik replied that anti-dam movements are a pan-North East phenomenon. The anti-dam movements were stronger in Assam he thought because in Arunachal the population was sparse, etc. and because Assam has a huge fear of earthquake that might flood its regions in case the dams broke in Arunachal. A significant figure in Assam in such movements was AkhilGogoi. He also thought that there was a crucial question to be asked about why there was no security question regarding the dams in Arunachal given that refineries were not allowed in Assam on same grounds. Was there then certain projects developed to suit the nation's interest/sovereignty concerns in particular ways? The question thus remained as to whether the regions were to remain transit zones or whether these regions could be developed as economic growth zones. He agreed with Prof. Singh that the new government took some serious interest in developing infrastructure especially the broad gauge railways in north-east. But the basic question remained very important. Vis-a-vis the kind of autonomy enjoyed by regional governments in China to develop even their own foreign policy, India's regional governments had hardly any encouragement. If Chinese investment is generally encouraged otherwise, there was a definite double standard in disallowing Chinese investment in the North-East. He thus re-raised the critical question – How does nationalism or national-interest constitute the region as a particular area with its own interests, does it at all think of the region

as a stakeholder as someone to be included in public consultation in a fruitful manner? The exercise cannot be top-down.

4.00pm -5.15pm General Discussions and Comments

Q. Ranabir Samaddar's comments to Paula Bannerjee and Snehashish and Soma– Something that needs to be clarified at the outset when the paper is written is that social governance would basically mean how you would govern the society, from where it derives its name. Earlier it was thought that if conflict can be governed then you can handle the issue. But now there's a change in thinking that the society has to be governed and that if the society is not governed then you cannot do the new things of the present times. Now what does it mean to govern the society? To my understanding it would mean in the current situation, one, the management of democracy. How do you govern democracy? So, managing society means governing society, but how do you govern democracy? If the government of India has a definite plan laid out or not we do not know, but it shows that the government has taken a long time. Secondly, something which has not been there but might have come about, is – governmental migration. Thirdly, which Subir (Bhaumik) has briefly mentioned and which has been brought out in Paula and Sucharita's paper is governmental resources. What are the principles by which this new governance of resources will be managed? Finally, in the case of North-east especially which cannot be ignored is the role of small and medium enterprise. Specially regarding frontier towns. What makes it a frontier town? What is the frontier character that imprints itself on the town itself? Similarly, what is it that makes the government social? Here the economic part becomes extremely important. How do you restructure a market? I think these are some points which need to be clarified a bit more. To do neoliberal economic policy, to bank on free trade, to relax the border controls a bit, one also needs to govern the society in a new way. What are the plans on which this new governance is to be modeled needs to be clarified.

Q. Mithilesh Kumar to Snehashish and Soma – in their whole abstract the word 'labour' was missing. Can you address the question of capital without addressing the question of labour? Precisely in the North-east where there is a history of labour migration during the wars. Also when we talk of cities, where would the labour come from? What would be the processes of migration which would be involved? Is the labour now also looking 'Look East'? If yes, what are the networks and infrastructures which are being created? If you are talking about geopolitical and geo-strategic calculations, then how is the question of labour getting better in that calculation? The enchantment around infrastructure is created by labour power, working under such harsh conditions that it is difficult to imagine.

Q. Ambarish Mukherjee –Suggestion to Snehashish and Soma. In one of the research questions you have mentioned that you will try to understand the changing roles of various actors, and you included the autonomous council as one of those actors, elected urban bodies and local authorities and so on. Existence of this multiple authorities creates a space for contestations. Will that help promote urban development in general and infrastructure development in particular in those cities? For example in West Bengal we have 9 such bodies side and by side

and experience shows that the existence of so many authorities often stalled infrastructure development as there is overlapping of jurisdiction. So I would suggest you focus on this point as well while interrogating the roles of various actors in urban development in general and infrastructure development in particular.

Q. Iman Mitra to Snehashish and Soma. In reference “...the Indian state in recent years have shifted from security-centric to trade-centric governance.” So there’s some kind of separation between trade and security, but isn’t the state tightening its grip over security in recent times?

Answers:

Snehashish to Iman: What I meant is that there is an attempt to shift from security-centric governance to trade-centric governance. It doesn’t mean that there will be less military personnel in the region. I am trying to refer to a change in the governance and not demilitarization as such.

Thank you to Subirda’s suggestions and Ranabirda’s comments.

Authorities – autonomous councils are huge impediments but there cannot be a linear argument. These councils have a deep relationship with insurgencies. Each region within the north-east has its own dynamics.

SubirBhaumik in reply – it’s not a transition from trade-centric to security-centric governance, it’s like a pendulum.

Paula Banerjee to Snehashish – Maybe trade has been securitized.

I agree with Subir about gender being the axis point. We have to find out which is the axis point, of gender, migration, ethnicity, labour, or on other points. Will surely include that. We will also include and mention the four different typologies of management that Ranabir da pointed out while addressing democracy. However, typologies always tend to “sanitize” the “dirty” things I dabble with while dealing with sociology. Thus, I’m not very comfortable in developing typologies of conflict. The two major divisions that Subir pointed out are very welcome. I will completely accept that the new formats, that is the development, displacement, protest resistance, and subversions are very different from the previous kinds. However, let’s leave the doing of typologies part out. Although I will mention different types of conflict, where do they come from, their convergences and divergences. We were referring to how the older formations evolved into the newer formations.

Q. Arup Kumar Sen – I would request Iman to clarify the title of his paper “Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development”. Normally the kind of notion we have of finance capital is that it is decorative but he has connected it with infrastructure development. Do you have in mind some other notion of finance structure or would you justify your position?

Q. Mithilesh Kumar to Iman and Priya Singh – two terms I liked which were mentioned in their abstracts were one, finance capital and two, stage of globalization. I was very intrigued by the use of finance capital and I don’t think it is financial capital; there is a difference between finance capital and financial capital. In this infrastructure driven development, the difference between state capital and private capital is being increasingly blurred. Do you see a change

from the Leninist finance capital where capital is becoming fused into finance capital as private and finance capital work now in tandem? Also, what is this newness of finance capital which gets entrapped into infrastructure? Does it have certain modalities and dynamics of a mercantilist state? Finance capital is not divorced with the idea of imperialism, it cannot function without an imperialist project. So, how does infrastructure of this stage of globalization and reterritorialization feeds into the notion of imperialism?

Q. Sukanya Mukherjee – Will China’s OBOR policy build an obstacle to create a strong relation between India and Central Asia or will it create a positive role?

Answers:

Iman – I mainly work on histories and ideologies of category formation. In the title of my paper I identify three categories: one, finance capital, two, infrastructure development and three, Asia as an infrastructure project. When I talk about connections between finance capital and infrastructure, I take them as two ideological political categories and they are connected in the sense that they both deal with the future, investment in the future. Even going back to the old definitions, finance capital is based on returns which we will get from the future. So there’s a difference between finance capital and other categories for let’s say rent, or investment in land where there are possibilities of getting monthly returns – which is payment received in the present. On the other hand, when there is an investment of finance capital it is basically trying to capitalize the future. Going through the documents of infrastructure development, what struck me was the absence of the present. I would define infrastructure in terms of speculations of the future. In that way, infrastructure is the organizing principle of today’s finance capital.

The second point – dealing with space and time. Whenever we talk about infrastructure development, our discussions are mostly space bound. Now what about time? What about management of time? Going back to the connection I was trying to make between finance capital and infrastructure management, so how can this modality of management of time be related to a notion of national time? What would be the relation between the speculative time of finance capital and the time of the nation? So what would be relation between finance capital which is space bound and bound by the national time and institutes and agencies which govern the time of the future (Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Bank)?

Priya Singh – on next stage of globalization. What I was looking at very simply is the kind of connects it establishes. It is a very massive, intricate web and I too take it with a pinch of salt (the “much maligned title”). So when I talk about this next level of globalization, what I was looking at was whether this infrastructural network or matrix that China has proposed will lead to a sort of connectedness. When I used the word “imperial” right at the end, I was tracing it back to the old imperial urge of the second century, replicating that in a way; sort of an imperialist urge to create connects and establish control.

Anita Sengupta – We really don’t know what kind of networks OBOR will create. These are things in the making. There’s a certain amount of apprehension in the Central Asian region about these connects and these are not new but old apprehensions. They (Central Asia) have

been flooded with Chinese goods for the last 20 years; you don't find Central Asian goods in Central Asia because there are no manufacturing units in the region anyway. So, the markets have been taken over for a very long time. There may be a further use of these markets, if these lines pass through the regions, but I don't see it making a difference to Central Asia's relationship with India. In any case, if you look at trade statistics, it's so low that it really won't make much of a difference.