



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

Calcutta Research Group - 2018

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Introduction

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

The Look East Policy was initiated as part of the country's economic restructuring in the 1990's and raised questions that were largely developmental in their focus. What were the economic resources available in a region known for extractive industries like tea, coal and oil? How would the exploration of new resources transform an unruly, insurgent frontier? And an important focus that emerged from these and other discussions over the last two decades was the question of connectivity. The region's isolation, which extends at various levels – to its relations with societies to its east, between the Northeast and mainland India and within the Northeast--was an issue that went beyond logistics to an understanding of who defines Look East as a policy and how it is lived, a lack of engagement with the structures of power and a consequent legitimation of violence.

A Social Mapping of Infrastructure, Logistics and India's Look East Policy examined the Look and Act East Policy within the larger framework of Asian connectivity. It argued that the 21st century will be a century of infrastructural alliances, which will restructure the nature of global governance as large cross border infrastructural projects will bring into question the sanctity of sovereign national borders. Look and Act East and for that matter, India's larger logistic policies would have to be considered within this framework of new logistical spaces.

Look East (later termed Act East) developed within multiple contexts and envisaged bridging Southeast Asian nations through Northeast India. The policy had several underpinnings for the spaces within the region, as the resources of the region were mapped, allotted and extracted, while infrastructural expansions were planned through construction of railways, roads and airways. It therefore essentially entailed expansion of the government and separate Northeast windows became operational in almost every ministry with the Ministry of Development of Northeast Region (DONER) as the apex body to coordinate various schemes.

Logistical expansion had three components: (a) connecting the East firmly with the Northeast; (b) opening up villages and far-flung areas through new institutions (schools, colleges, banks, offices, communication networks) in the process releasing a new set of conflicts around massive displacements, homeland demands, anti-migrant measures and (c) opening up to South East Asia. Since logistical expansion was seen as a post-conflict measure it impacted upon both logistical governance as well as the 'subject' of logistics as a part of social governance.

The project also took into account the fact that Asia today epitomizes the classic tension between proposed transnational networks that signify a borderless and seamless flow of commodity, information and capital and large scale undocumented immigration that attests to the more complex mobilities that individuals traverse.

The interface of logistics and mobility has therefore been an important topic of discussion in the course of the project with attempted to examine what happens to people beyond logistics. It is a given that social, cultural and material infrastructure shape the attitude of different segments of society and that mobilities in their turn shape logistics thereby indicating a delicate balance where the flow of labour and capital and incidents of social turmoil are often intrinsically linked. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the resultant Baluch protests is a classic recent example of what to expect in case of a disconnect and the resultant identity anxiety of the local population. Similarly, the Rohingya crisis cannot be understood without an appreciation of the infrastructural framework that is being designed for the entire neighbourhood extending across South and South East Asia.

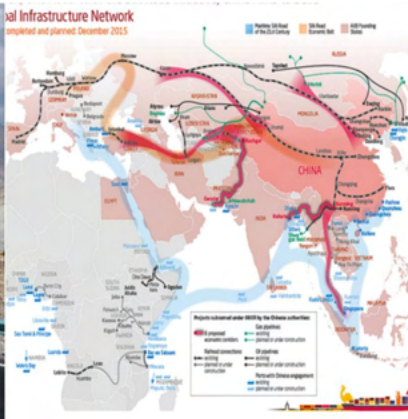
In the course of three years (2016-18) the project examined a number of these issues closely. Beginning with the cartographies of connectivity in the Asian context, it went on to examine regional connectivity corridors, trade partnerships and preferential economic arrangements and the financialization of infrastructure and the construction of a seamless Asia through an examination of Asian infrastructural funding. It included two studies that examined Kolkata and the port of Kolkata as the logistical hub in the Look East policy. It then brought to the forefront possible fault lines that require policy engagement. Within this context it examined frontier towns in the Northeast, emerging conflicts and social governance and the question of mobility. The project was studied under ten themes and was discussed by an eminent group of experts.

This report has been divided into seven parts which includes all the research and publication that CRG has accomplished in the three years' journey. In the course of the three years Calcutta Research Group organised two consultation meetings, three public lectures, five research workshops and an international conference. The target audience and contributors were intellectuals, youth, activists, researchers and scholars. Geographers, area studies specialists, ethnographers, sociologists, gender and indigenous peoples' rights activists, communications and logistics specialists constituted the research collective and contributed through their participation in workshops and events. CRG has published nine *Policies and Practices* on the theme an edited volume entitled *Global Governance and India's Northeast: Logistics, Infrastructure and Society* is forthcoming from Routledge.

The details of the three year research project is available at http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_PML/RLS_PML_Home.asp



Research Briefs



Imagining Spaces through Mobility

1. Cartographies of connectivity in Asia and the Indian response

Priya Singh

Contemporary international relations seem to be fixated with the term connectivity. Connectivity projects that construct new logistical expanses encompass frontier regions and link outlying areas have come to characterize global politics. The magnitude of these ambitious ventures at connectivity encourages comparisons with similar initiatives that exemplified the geopolitics of Europe and the Atlantic in the 20th century. In this context the chapter attempts at engaging in a dialogue with various representations of connectivity with an emphasis on the Chinese and Indian connectivity projects but at the same time keeping abreast of the American, Turkish, Japanese, Korean and the Russian ones. It seeks to locate the region within the larger continental framework with a definite role for India and emphasizes the importance of policy connectivity in complementing infrastructural connectivity. The focus of the chapter is on mapping and analyzing the scope, vision and impact of Indian and Chinese transnational infrastructural projects. The individuality of the projects and their competitive nature is sought to be conceptualized. Attention is given to India's Act East Policy highlighting the interfaces, intersections and overlaps between India's Northeast and Southeast Asia in terms of connectivity projects. Similarly, the Go West Policy advocated by the Indian government is given consideration with its focus on diversifying linkages with West Asia, mapping connectivity projects and the security architecture. The importance of the sub regional-moment in connectivity is sought to be addressed. The gap between rhetoric and reality, the vision and its implementation is kept in mind. While mapping contemporary connectivity projects is the focal point of the chapter the historical backdrop in the form of spontaneous, pre-meditated linkages provide for the framework upon which constructed connectivity projects (with the accompanying disconnectedness) of the age of sovereign nation-states are contextualized and analyzed.

2. Interwoven Realities: Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance

Anita Sengupta

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 prompting the argument that globally there are shifts that are moving towards deterritorialization and reterritorialization at the same time. 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. It is in this background that the article examines the re-interpretation of 'sovereignty' in a 'new world order': logistical connects and new frontiers of governance; the transforming cartographies of 'regional' organizations: how the concept of a 'region' has been transformed by overlapping 'trans-regional' membership and 'regional' institutions that encompass global spaces. It then goes on to examine China as the new 'region' : 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. It then moves on to study connectivity and 'regionalism': how regional connectivity corridors, trade partnerships and preferential economic arrangements are bringing traditional regional arrangements into question and in this context examines economic corridors and social conflict: 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. It concludes by looking into how Indian engagement with 'regional organizations' on the one hand and economic corridors on the other would impact upon its policies.

3. Financialisation of Infrastructure and the Construction of a 'Seamless Asia'

Iman Mitra

The paper looks at the connection between networks of finance capital and infrastructure-led development in Asia, especially in the backdrop of India's Look East (Act East) Policy. It will explore three broad themes: the surge in infrastructure development in the region, the linkages between finance capitalism and infrastructure development, and the working of financial institutions in facilitating infrastructure. In the first section of the paper, I shall discuss the various forms of financial instruments which are thought to be helpful in reducing the gap between demand and supply of infrastructure all over the world. In the second section, I shall describe the working of a particular financial institution which is now being held as the main protagonist of infrastructural funding in Asia – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) based in Beijing. In the last section, I shall focus on the impact of what we may call the 'financialisation of infrastructure' on the development projects in India with reference to the increase of the public-private partnership (PPP) activities in the infrastructure sector. A main thrust of this paper will be on the notion of a blueprint – a diagrammatic design of projects to be realized in future – as most of the proposed infrastructural development is still at the stage of primary dialogue between different stakeholders. The point of this paper is not to challenge the actuality of the vision that propels such activities but to show how vital it is for the architects of these plans to get embroiled in the networks of global financial capitalism.

Geopolitics, Logistical Hubs and Connectivity

4. The Double Look East: Bangladesh, the key to India's Act East

Subir Bhaumik

India's Look East policy, now upgraded as 'Act East' by the government, calls for a double look east. To make it successful and achieve its purpose of situating the countries underdeveloped and conflict laden Northeastern states at the heart of its robust engagement with South-east Asia and possibly China, India needs to first look east from its mainland to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is crucial to India for connecting its mainland to its Northeast, linked by land through a tenuous 21-kms wide Siliguri corridor, often derided as a "Chicken's Neck". It is clear that only if India can firm up its access to Northeast through Bangladesh, the next stage of 'Look East' to link up to south-east Asia and China will work. India's 'Look East' will work not through the Chicken Neck but through Bangladesh. India is therefore prioritizing linking to Northeast through Bangladesh avoiding the 'Siliguri corridor' much as China is seeking to avoid the Malacca straits (that its strategists see as a chokepoint) and trying to develop multiple land-to-sea access through Yunnan into Myanmar and Pakistan. In this background this article examines (a) Why and how is connectivity through Bangladesh key to success of India's Look East! (b) The possible pitfalls in India-Bangladesh bilateral relations that can threaten the forward movement towards Look East (c) The present state of India-Bangladesh relations and the progress in connectivity (d) The crucial role of states in promoting this bilateral relations – the key role of Tripura in promoting this relationship and the gains it has faced as against other states who are yet to warm up to Bangladesh (e) Finally, it explores the linkages between security and connectivity in India Bangladesh relations and its impact on India's Look east (f) The quid pro quo factor – how Bangladesh looks to using Indian territory to link up to the Himalayan nations like Nepal and Bhutan, especially for power, in lieu of allowing India to connect to its Northeast through Bangladesh (g) How can initiatives like 'border haats' help strengthen bilateral relations by widening the ambit of stakeholders to frontier regions which provide scope for wider connectivity but often end up as regions of conflict due to myopic security-driven state policies.

5. Logistical Hubs and the Look (Act) East Policy: The Case of the City of Kolkata and Its Port

Iman Mitra and Mithilesh Kumar

This paper tries to analyze how Kolkata, the capital of the state of West Bengal, emerges as a logistical hub in the vision of India's Look East Policy. The vision of Kolkata as a logistical hub rests on its locational advantage, history of infrastructural accumulation and increasing potential as a transnational nodal point in the new Silk Route. But how far does this logistical vision take account, make use and replicate the colonial political economy of infrastructural networks? In our understanding, this question is important in order to locate the specific modes of accumulation of built-in capital and political will that contribute to the emergence of Asia as the new leader of post-financial-crisis globalization. What are those forces, ideologies and negotiations that signify this shift of focus from trans-Atlantic to trans-Asian trade and political networks? How did this imagination come into being and how does it acquire new meanings in public discourses and gather resounding endorsement from

individual nation states and private investors? As we shall see in the course of this paper, Kolkata, and more specifically its port, often depicted as a hopeless reminder of (post)colonial decadence, transmits useful signals for navigating the murky waters of logistical visions and revisions in South Asia.

Governing Connectivity: Logistics, Infrastructure and Society in the Northeast

6. Bridge of Spaces: East by Rear East, Ah! The Northeast

Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra

Following up on India's Look East policy introduced in the early 1990s, the Modi government announced the Act East policy soon after coming to power, almost simultaneously with the US declaration of its pivot to Asia. The Look East policy evolved into a tool for greater economic engagement with our eastern neighbours, and forging strategic partnerships and security cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia and Far East – such as Vietnam and Japan. Taking this idea forward, the Modi government decided to focus more on improving its relation with ASEAN and the East Asian countries. It was also aimed at eliminating the insurgency problem in the Northeast once and for all by way of opening up the region to Southeast Asia. In this way, the sea and land promised to become interlocked elements in India's eastward thrust. In short, the Look East and Act East policies have had military, political and economic components.

The paper engages with Look East policy with regards to Northeast India, and brings out the different possible fault lines that policy endeavours require navigate in the region. Drawing on the available statistics, the paper details the different socio-economic aspects of the region. The paper concludes by weaving the recent developments in Northeast India with trajectory of capital, and reconfirms how capital moves in different direction in search of more resources and outlets to invest, exploit and accumulate.

7. Frontier Towns in the Spatial Dynamics of Trade, Capital and Conflict: From Look East to Act East

Soma Ghoshal and Snehashish Mitra

India's engagement with Southeast Asia has focused on four major areas: Connectivity, Commerce, Cooperation and of course Critical Constraints. As ASEAN and India attempt to transform the corridors of connectivity into economic corridors, the ground work seems to be progressing on a priority basis. India has made reasonable progress in implementing the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Project as also issues related to increasing connectivity along maritime and flight routes have repeatedly been on the agenda of the joint meetings. There have been discussions on a possible extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. A consensus on finalizing the proposed protocol of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement (IMT MVA) has been reached. This agreement is aimed at facilitating seamless movement of passenger, personnel and cargo vehicles along roads

linking India, Myanmar and Thailand. Overland linkages apart, there is a vision to digitally connect India and the ASEAN. The jugglery of nomenclatures, from Look East to Act East, and the projected vision of the region's development, has somewhere put the frontier towns in the region under duress. This paper would attempt to locate the three frontier towns of Moreh-Tamu and Champhai as gateways to realization of India's Look East and ASEAN's Look West. These three frontier towns have traditionally been zones of contact, yet in the changing regional dynamics it will be interesting to delve into the aspirations and apprehensions that run through them. It would also be of interest to see what is their projected role in the policy decisions of the respective states and how much of it has been translated into reality. Here a comparative analysis with the Greater Mekong Sub-region might be of special interest and whether such a model can be implemented in the northeast and adjoining borders of the region.

8. New Capital, Emerging Conflicts and Social Governance in Nagaland and Manipur

Paula Banerjee

In a post-colonial democratic structure, social governance emerges crucial as a form of governance in relations to conflict management, especially in a conflict economy. With its origin in western style mass democracy and market system, social governance has evolved into a system that has multiple trajectories. The post-colonial states have addressed demands for justice through the axis of development and in a neoliberal world that has meant the growth of market economy, urbanism and capital accumulation in tandem with massive infrastructural changes. That has in turn created occasion for massive transfer of resources necessitating new logistical apparatus. The logistical spaces that were used as conduits were the favoured spaces. This caused massive increase in governmental expenditure and the beneficiaries were a chosen few. In this circuitous mode of development capitalism, induction of new groups became a necessity when older groups were no longer pacified. One can see this phenomena emerging in large sections of the Northeast India. Certain sections of the population became the new beneficiaries with new logistical expansions. This was not without a cost. The new beneficiaries were benefited through new logistical processes of power sharing at the cost of their radicalism in protest movements. It is within this context that the article examines new forms of disruption of new logistical apparatus in the Northeast. Although we will attempt to study the emerging concerns, mostly the societies in Nagaland and Manipur; contemporary techniques of social governance, forms of resistance and negotiation; alliances and interface of multiple organizations with the State – whether this will lead to empowerment or disempowerment?; subjects of conflict governance- women, footloose labour, migrants, role of humanitarian organizations and policy responses in the background of past conflicts and present political mobilizations.

9. Interrogating Migration: Borders, Mobility and India's Northeast

Sucharita Sengupta and Samir K Purkayastha

This article is an attempt to understand the intricacy and dynamics of mobility and migration in Northeast India amidst a transitional economy. The geopolitical location of the Northeast flanked by 5 countries- Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China- makes it

susceptible to a steady influx and outflow of goods and persons, both legally and illegally. In a deprived region torn by ethnic clashes, military insurgency, illegal infiltration, poor infrastructure and massive displacement, peace has remained either elusive or transient. Against this backdrop, the paper will critically explore the dilemmas of a fragile state, the implications of the sudden surge in “development” on population flows across borders- both legal and illegal displacement if any in wake of the new governance and the identity of a migrant labour vis-à-vis the indigenous communities. In two separate sections, the paper would also attempt to map migration from Myanmar and Bangladesh, two extremely important countries in securing India’s ties with the ASEAN countries. Mapping migration [both inflow and outflow] and push and pull factors of migration in the entire region especially following the Look East Policy, with a focus on India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Inquiring into how the issue of migration coupled with issues such as trafficking, smuggling or contraband trade in the region governed so that it does not hinder the new mode of social governance that the state has adopted over the years? Exploring the relationship between two processes- unrestricted flow of goods and controlled mobility of people and labour- whether they go hand in hand or work independently of each other? Will the trade and economic growth be a precursor to peace and security in the region or harbinger of further conflicts?



Consultative Meetings (2016-2017)



Consultative Meeting 2016

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

February 29, 2016

Venue: Sabhaghar 1, Swabhumi

89 C, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sarani
Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

Session: 1

Chair: Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty

- a)** Researcher: Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra (*Resources and Infrastructure in the Northeast & India's Look East and Act East Policy*)

Discussant: Sanjay Barbora

This session was chaired by Prof. Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty, eminent historian and member of CRG. The research theory discussed in this session was authored by Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashis Mitra. The title of their research work is "*Resources and Infrastructure in the Northeast & India's Look East and Act*". Prof. Sanjoy Barbora, Associate Professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Guwahati, was the discussant for this paper. The dialogue initiated with an introductory note on India's Look East Policy which has later changed into Act East policy. This change has brought new policy signals and a more proactive role for India in the region of combining strategic, military, trade, and economic cooperation. It also signalled the collaboration between India and countries like Japan and Australia to balance the increasing influence of China in the Southeast Asian region. The idea was to develop the north east as a frontier for the thrust eastwards both in terms of political imagination and logistical implications.

- b)** Researcher: Subir Bhaumik (*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East*)

Discussant: Atig Ghosh

Subir Bhaumik, Eminent Journalist was the second researcher of this session. He talked about "*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East*". Atig Ghosh Assistant Professor, ViswaBharati University, Santiniketan, was the discussant of this particular research work. The paper mainly dealt with India's Look East policy, which is now upgraded as 'Act East' by PM Narendra Modi. Bhaumik suggested that India needs to first look east from its mainland to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is crucial to India for connecting its mainland to its Northeast, linked by land through a tenuous 21-kms wide Siliguri corridor, often derided as a "Chicken's Neck". He argued Dhaka's decision to allow transit of goods through its territory to Northeast from Indian mainland was a game changer and if India can firm up its access to Northeast through Bangladesh, the next stage of 'Look East' to link up to south-east Asia and China would work. India is therefore prioritizing linking to Northeast through Bangladesh avoiding the 'Siliguri corridor' much as China is seeking to avoid the Malacca straits, Bhaumik stated. He concluded with a suggestion that it is important to look at how initiatives like "border haats" would help strengthen bilateral relations by widening the

ambit of stakeholders to frontier regions which provides scope for wider connectivity but often end up as regions of conflict due to myopic security-driven state policies.

- c)** Researcher: Samir K. Purkayastha and Sucharita Sengupta (*Interrogating Migration in India's Northeast*)

Discussant: Meghna Guhathakurta

Samir K. Purkayastha and Sucharita Sengupta were the last presenters for this session. They presented on “*Interrogating Migration in India's Northeast*”. Meghna GuhaThakurta Executive Director, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh was the discussant for this presentation. The presenters noted that the paper is an attempt to understand the intricacy and dynamics of mobility and migration in the northeast India amidst a transitional economy. It critically explored the dilemmas of a fragile state, the implications of the sudden surge in “development” on population flows across borders- both legal and illegal- displacement if any in wake of the new governance and the identity of a migrant labour vis-à-vis the indigenous communities. They also attempted to map migration from Myanmar and Bangladesh, two extremely important countries in securing India's ties with the ASEAN countries. the paper seeks to explore mapping migration [both inflow and outflow] and push and pull factors of migration in the entire region especially following the Look East Policy, with a focus on India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. It also enquired how the issue of migration coupled with issues such as trafficking, smuggling or contraband trade in the region is governed so that it does not hinder the new mode of social governance that the state has adopted over the years and explored the relationship between two processes- unrestricted flow of goods and controlled mobility of people and labour- whether they go hand in hand or work independently of each other.

General Discussion on the three presentations:

Sanjoy Barborra opened the discussion by arguing that since mapping was an important part of this section the questions revolved around how and where the mapping would be conducted since in the last analysis this would determine the outcome of the final papers. It would also make the difference between public perceptions of issues and a social science one. Paula Banerjee argued that along with this it was necessary to identify the migrant that one was talking about and here it would be particularly important to refer to the ‘woman’ as a migrant. BodhisattaKar argued that one needs to take note of the politics of access when one talks about the development of infrastructure of any region. One would also have to take into account the extent to which infrastructure takes note of social diversity and the directionality of capital. Ranabir Samaddar responded by noting that in any discussion on logistics and infrastructure it would be necessary to take note of the intricacy of capital accumulation. It would also be important to understand that policy making itself is a multi-layered affair where local voices interact with state initiatives.

Second Session:

Chair: Shyamalendu Majumdar

- a)** Researcher: Iman Mitra and Mithilesh Kumar (*Kolkata as a Logistic Hub with special reference to the port*)

Discussant: Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

This session was chaired by Shyamalendu Majumdar, Associate Professor, Shivanath Sastri College, Kolkata. The theme of the presentation was “*Kolkata as a Logistic Hub with special reference to the port*”. Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata was the discussant for this proposed paper. The research proposal attempted to situate Kolkata along the axes of history, infrastructure and location. Calcutta (it became Kolkata officially only in 2001) was the first capital of British India and the oldest riverine port in the country. Its history of urbanization is replete with narratives that explain the centrality of its geopolitical importance in the spread of colonialism. The mercantile networks that specialized in trade of indigo, tea and opium in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries soon led to forceful encroachment and toppling of independent rulers in the surrounding region. Researchers tried to critically explore the recurrent claims that the Kolkata Port is dying because of difficulties in pilotage and drafting. The main emphasis of this research was on the links between realization of the infrastructural networks and built-in capital and geopolitical negotiations that may facilitate or hinder such moments of realization. They made an attempt to situate this issue along the following broader theoretical question: what are the differences and connections between the imagination and materialization of logistical visions in the shared colonial past of the region and the postcolonial Look East Policy that seemingly takes account, makes use and replicates the same vision to an extent.

b) Researcher: Anita Sengupta (*Being Connected: Logistic Visions to the East and West of India*)

Discussant: Binod Mishra and Suchandana Chatterjee

Anita Sengupta, Director at CRG presented her research proposal on “*Being Connected: Logistic Visions to the East and West of India*”. Prof. Binoda Mishra, Director CSIRD, Kolkata and Suchandana Chatterjee, Honorary Associate, China Centre, Calcutta University, Kolkata were the discussants for this research proposal. The presentation began from the point where the last presenter had concluded on the note that Kolkata has the potential to be a transnational nodal point along the new Silk Road. On this point that the presenter intervened to take the argument further by underlining that the materialization of the logistic vision would be dependent on its ability to connect with the broader Asian (sometimes competing) logistic visions to India’s East and West. The ‘Connect Central Asia’ initiative has to be viewed within a context where both the traditional continental trade routes and the maritime multi modal routes would come into play. There also remains the alternative to connect Indian initiatives with other existing (like Turkey-Iran-Pakistan railway) or proposed routes (branches of the Silk Road Economic Belt). A multi modal link to Central Asia through the Iranian port of Chahbahar could then link through existing and newer links to Russia and Europe. These include both transport corridors like the INSTC and pipeline projects like TAPI.

The General Discussion on the two presentations:

The first discussant noted that strategic vision of countries besides logistics needs to be considered. It would also be important to locate the pattern of maritime trade of China’s expansion. India is comparatively less excited than China regarding the maritime trade due to apprehensions about the security of its own ports. The second discussant sent a formal note defining the extension of this logistic and cultural vision to Mongolia, Tibet and the Far East. In the course of the discussions Subir Bhaumik noted that China is looking for land to sea access through India, to avoid the narrow Malacca Straits wherein northeast India can

play a pivotal role. Chinese military heads may not be in the same wavelength as Chinese state. Meghna Guhathakurta suggested that the study may look into the idea of the Chinese state to utilize the Chinese diaspora for its geopolitical imagination and logistical culmination.

General discussion on the theme moderated by Ranabir Samaddar

The round table was an attempt to extend the discussion on logistics by focusing on linkages to the West and East of India.

Priya Singh began the discussion by noting that there have been longstanding historical and economic linkages between India and West Asia. Despite the vital importance of West Asia for India, India has been rather reluctant to offer significant political and diplomatic vigour towards the region. In fact, an 'ignore west,' policy has been practised by the previous political dispensations. A 'Look West Policy' (LWP) like India's well-known 'Look East Policy' has often been articulated, but there has not been formalised in an institutional sense. The present government has proposed that India should not only 'Look East' but also 'Link West.' The region is critical as it accommodates about 7 million Indians, who contribute around US\$ 40 billion in remittances annually. The Gulf countries can offer significant platform for operations of Indian companies, particularly in infrastructure, important for the country's socio-economic development and other national initiatives like 'Make in India' 'Digital India' 'Smart Cities', etc. There is increased air connectivity and India has also been participating in important UN Peace Keeping Missions in the region especially in Lebanon, Syria and South Sudan. Be it trade or energy supply routes, or even national security, the significance of an effective maritime security infrastructure in the Indian Ocean is critical for providing safety and stability in the region. There have been many debates on the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' to boost connectivities between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The two regions already have robust connectivities, but more can be done. Eventually, the LWP and the LEP could lay the foundations for the realisation of the 'Indo-Pacific.'

Srimanti Sarkar argued that as India's Look East Policy (LEP) attempts to improvise itself as 'Act East Policy' under the present political dispensation in India—a careful re-assessment of the same will be interesting. The means the way by which the LEP can be re-'activated' needs to be explored. South Asia is a region of great diversity, which, in spite of being abundantly rich in terms of history, civilization, geographical location and natural resources remains largely under-explored. This calls for a pro-active role on part of the countries of South Asia to transform the region into a cohesive and progressive zone. The need for 'cooperative regionalism' (David K. Hamilton, 2013) finds relevance and significance in this regard. While a range of regional groupings have evolved with the agenda to foster effective regional cooperation—'integration', in true sense of term, has remained problematic. Social, economic and political factors conjugated by strenuous geo-strategic concerns jeopardize the smooth progression of such cooperative measures. As a result, there has been a consistent search for alternative ways of regional cooperation. Instances of regional cooperation in South Asia include South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) or the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) and the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Initiative—which is a new entrant in the group of regional cooperative organizations.

Debarati Bagchi began with the comment that Look East or Act East was essentially about connectivity. And this connectivity was effective at various levels ----roads/rails/air connectivity but also pipelines. She also noted that looking and acting east were also policies on the part of the policy makers. As an interesting example of logistics determining official policy she talked about the transfer of Sylhet between Bengal and Assam and apprehensions about what would happen to rail connections with these transfers. She also underlined that in addition to this legal flux and flexibility one should take note of how connectivity links to intellectual networking and multi directional politics.

Bodhisatta Kar spoke about the perceived tensions between connectivity and security that pervades the political rhetoric. He argued that this was the result of the commodification of security and that it was time to delink this binary. In this connection, the extent to which connectivity undermines securitization is important. A whole set of scales determine the connection between infrastructure and superstructure and it is equally important to take note of events where logistics has faced resistance from people. So the development of alternative logistics at the borders is crucial.

The round table also took note of Ranabir Samaddar' s point of the urban nature of popular movements and he underlined the fact that there is need to take note of the urban turn in protests. In particular studies that connected the protests of the 1950's to the last few years of the left rule in Bengal would be useful.

Consultative Meeting 2017

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

Date 7 March 2017

Venue: Sabhaghar 1, Swabhumi

89 C, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sarani
Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

Session: 1

- a)** Researcher: Snehashish Mitra and Soma Ghoshal (*Trade, Capital and Conflict: Frontier Towns of Northeast India and Myanmar*)

Chair and Discussant: Prasanta Ray and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

The programme began with an introductory note by Prof. Paula Banerjee, Vice Chancellor at Sanskrit University and former Director at CRG. The first session combined five segments where researchers were asked to present their research proposals in the form of a brief abstract. Snehashish Mitra, former research associate at CRG and Soma Ghoshal, Assistant Prof. at SRSVM, Kamarpukur, Hooghly presented their research proposal on *Trade, Capital and Conflict: Frontier Towns of Northeast India and Myanmar*. Prof. Prasanta Ray, President at CRG and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Vice Chancellor at RabindraBharati University chaired and discussed for this session. The first segment attempted 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.

- b)** Paula Banerjee and Sucharita Sengupta (*New Capital, Emerging Conflicts and Social Governance in Northeast India: Nagaland and Manipur*)

Discussant: Subir Bhaumik and Sibaji Pratim Basu

Prof. Paula Banerjee, Vice Chancellor at Sanskrit University and Sucharita Sengupta, Doctoral candidate at IHEID, Geneva were the presenters for this session. They presented on "*New Capital, Emerging Conflicts and Social Governance in Northeast India: Nagaland*

and Manipur". Subir Bhaumik, eminent journalist and Sibaji Pratim Basu, Professor Vidyasagar University were the discussants for this segment. The second segment examined new forms of political mobilizations that could cause obstruction in the flow of the logistical apparatus and bring them into question. Within this context, they examined whether prolonged obstruction of logistical operations had evolved as a strategy of political action in Northeast and what could be the new forms of disruption of the new logistical apparatus in the background of past conflicts and what could be the policy responses.

- c) Researcher: Anita Sengupta (*Interwoven Realities: The Interface of Geopolitics and Geo-economics in Asia*)

Discussant: Swaran Singh

Anita Sengupta, Director at CRG was the presenter for the third segment of this session. She presented an abstract titled "*Interwoven Realities: The Interface of Geopolitics and Geo-economics in Asia*". Swaran Singh, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University was the discussant for this segment. The third segment examined 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' had been transformed by overlapping 'trans-regional' membership and 'regional' institutions that encompass global spaces; and how the inclusion of China in Asian regional organizations had 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; examined 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

- d) Researcher: Iman Mitra (*Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development: The Asian Context*)

Discussant: Sharmistha Banerjee

Iman Mitra, former Research Associate at Calcutta Research Group presented his abstract titled "*Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development: The Asian Context*" in the fourth segment of this session. Sharmistha Banerjee, Professor at University of Calcutta was the discussant for this session. 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.

e) Researcher: Priya Singh (*The New Silk Roads*)

Discussant: Sujata Ashwarya and Arpita Basu Roy

The final segment presented by Priya Singh, Research Associate at Calcutta Research Group. Her abstract titled "*The New Silk Road*". Sujata Ashwarya, Faculty at Jamila Milia Islamia and Arpita Basu Roy, Senior Fellow at Centre for Studies in International Relations & Development, Kolkata were the discussants for this segment. This segment examined 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 up to 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? The researcher also looked into the 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?

Discussion on the Project by Experts

Swaran Singh, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Sujata Ashwarya, Faculty at Jamila Milia Islamia were the speakers for this session. Subir Bhaumik, Eminent Journalist had moderated the session. 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. He 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. 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 communities in Assam. 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. 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 second panellist in the Round Table, 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. 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 North East came to be considered as integral to India's 'Look East' Policy.

The third panellist Sujata Ashwarya 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. 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. 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.



Public Lectures & Special Lectures (2016- 2018)



Public Lectures 2016

Connectivity and Silk Roads

C. Raja Mohan

June 24, 2016

Chair: Paula Banerjee

Professor Paula Banerjee began the session by welcoming C. Raja Mohan, the speaker of the day. C. Raja Mohan, Director, Carnegie India and Professor at JNU delivered a public lecture on “*Connectivity and Silk Roads*”. He made a comparative study about the building up of ports, roads and industries in British Period and in current years. He said India’s respond to economic corridor has been ambivalent. He brought the era of independence and partition and described how economic partition was outweighed by political partition and how two Punjab and two Kolkata formed. Raja Mohan talked about internal connectivities (A connectivity through Northeast i.e. from Manipur to Burma and Thailand) is of no use if there is no roads inside. There are many incomplete roads in Mizoram. External connectivity have no consequence if there is no internal connectivity. In Northeast, they deliberately and strategically do not connect to the frontiers for their own political purposes. Coming on ports, he referred to the Sagarmala Project and the need of Bay of Bengal initiative. On the node of Connectivity, he emphasized the trans Himalayan initiative for trade and growth of the economy.

The lecture can be viewed at the MCRG website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv0prS2BuuE&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv0prS2BuuE&feature=youtu.be>

The Periphery as a Hub? Competing Constructions of Borders in India's Act East Policy

Nimmi Kurian

November 16, 2016

Chair: Paula Banerjee

Professor Paula Banerjee, Vice Chancellor at Sanskrit University began the session with a brief introduction to Nimmi Kurian and her research interests. Nimmi Kurian, Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research delivered a public lecture on “*The Periphery as Hub? Competing Constructions of Borders in India's Act East Policy.*” Her presentation was broadly divided into three parts. In the first section of her study she tried to trace what are the completing construction in Delhi’s Act East Policy where Delhi tried to project a periphery into a hub. In the second section of her study she focused on the deconstructed areas of border region and how realisation of Act East Policy in border lands. In the thirds part of her study she tried to locate at what extend of the Act Policy has been projected into

the border region. Her study showcased that the sub regional turn in Indian diplomacy marks an interesting discursive shift in Indian foreign policy and its engagement of the Asian neighbourhood. The idea of sub regionalism has gained increasing recognition in discourses of development and offers new insights to mainstream theories of regionalism. While regional trading blocs and arrangements have been a common phenomenon, sub regional cooperation represents a novel extension of this larger idea, in that geographically proximate sub regions within two or more countries become sites of trans border cooperation. The idea of projecting Northeast India as a gateway to the wider dynamic Asian neighbourhood has found an increasing measure of rhetorical importance under India's Look East policy and the rechristened Act East policy. Through a host of sub-regional initiatives like the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Initiative for Technical and Economic Cooperation), the Mekong Ganga Economic Cooperation (MGC), and the Bangladesh-China-India- Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM EC) India has attempted to signal the growing priority it attaches to integrating its eastern region with the wider Asian neighbourhood.

The lecture can be viewed at the MCRG website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FqwusLR9o&feature=youtu.be>

Public Lectures 2017

China Pakistan Relationship and CPEC

S Akbar Zaidi

June 9, 2017

Chair: Paula Banerjee

Professor Paula Banerjee started the session with a warm welcome to S. Akbar Zaidi, eminent Economist from Pakistan. He talked about *China Pakistan Relationship and CPEC*. CPEC has been projected as the game/fate changer for Pakistan. It has the capacity to make Pakistan part of the developed world. Although Pakistan have a very critical engagement with IMF and have never come on to any settlement for any project. Pakistan was quite responsible to bring China and US together. Pakistan has free trade agreement with China. He argued that Pakistan is a geographical impediment for China. He showed a map describing the routes of CPEC from Kashgar, China to Godawar, Pakistan. There is very little information about CPEC even from the government side of Pakistan. China has always a desire to get to Godawar in order to have more access on the Arabian Sea. Thousands of acres of agricultural land will be leased out to the Chinese to set up a demonstration project. This engagement will run from one end of the supply chain to all the way to the other. Chinese enterprises will operate their own firms, enterprises will be entering agricultural land and Pakistan will get extraordinary assistance from Chinese government in return (Free loan Policy, Trade Relief etc.) Chinese will establish many processing units for crops and fertilizers. They will invest on minerals like gold, copper, marble and cement & textile. A fibre optic cable will be laid between Kashgar and Godawar for better connectivity through

the corridor. In this process Chinese will correspond to Pakistan to make it a safe city. A surveillance system will be over the Pakistani cities and no visa will be required for Chinese to get into Pakistan. Under this plan China and Pakistan both will be benefited in terms economic and political growth.

The lecture can be viewed at the MCRG website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiUEOfIO3EU&feature=youtu.be>

Nepal: Gateway Into and Out of South Asia

Kanak Mani Dixit

June 9 2017

Kanak Mani Dixit observed that the theme of the lecture was pertinent because the region was in the midst of a game changing infrastructural event to the north of the Himalaya, to be precise, the advent of the railways. At the same time, he expressed his desire to change the theme of his presentation with a more inclusive one, namely, “Central Himalaya as the Gateway to South Asia”. Dixit’s talk followed Akbar Zaidi’s which focused on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and dealt with the Chinese intrusion into Pakistani space and its ramifications for the latter’s sovereign status and it chartered similar territory in terms of raising the question that how does Nepal counter the Chinese encroachment and take advantage of the Chinese interest without bowing down. Tracing the history of the gradual Chinese propensity towards Nepal, which till recently was regarded as India’s sphere of interest, Dixit locates the same in the arrival of the railways and the economic blockade initiated by India against the Himalayan Kingdom in 2015. These two important developments compelled Nepal to look northwards though it remains intrinsically linked to the gangetic plains and its status as a gateway would thus benefit both nations. The term connectivity which is the catchphrase of the contemporary political and economic lexicon was in fact coined by the former Indian foreign secretary, ShyamSharan more than a decade ago and yet India seems to be silent while the Chinese appear to be monopolising the terminology. However, in recent times, with the emergence and consolidation of regional groupings such as BIMSTEC and BCIM, India is apparently displaying a greater proactive stance. Dixit concluded on the note that connectivity through gateways and portals are welcome but in essence, progress through new infrastructure and evolved geopolitics should always be geared towards economic growth and social justice for the largest number of people.

The lecture can be viewed at the MCRG website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgB7nl0NZjM&feature=youtu.be>

Data Centres as Logistical Infrastructure and the Geo-politics of Automation

Brett Neilson

September 1, 2018

Chair: Ranabir Samaddar

Ranabir Samaddar began the session by welcoming Brett Neilson, Professor at Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University and requested him to give his lecture which is on 'Data Centres as Logistical Infrastructure and the Geopolitics of Automation'. Professor Neilson began by introducing the audience to the idea of data centre, the science of its working, the continuities between the forms of power that manifests into facilities and certain customs of power and trajectories of the future. He showed a power point presentation that combines the images of various data centres across the world and also explained the story behind its working. In a slide, he showed the Latin American Data Centre operator which involves many operating systems that comprises the operators of national money company, Santiago's transportation system and many other high-tech data farming technologies. This data centre is a multiuser data centre which serves various different businesses. In other slide he had the picture of Sydney data centre which is the largest in the southern data sphere. It combined five or six data centres in one frame and works under the California Press Company. Another picture he showed had the Singapore data centre, which is again very important for data hub of South East Asia and it is surrounded by many data parks and guided by various government agencies. Neilson thoroughly and broadly explained how data information systems coordinate with logistical movements and emphasised the role of data centres as a storage and transport of goods and not the storage, transmission and the data processor

Neilson made a clear distinction between revenue firm and data farm and explained the need why certain Latin American governments shifts their data entities for the improvement of logistics of the governmental spaces. He explained this by giving an example of political formation to infrastructural transformation of data centres in the colonies of Singapore. Furthermore, he explored the geopolitical implications of how data centres facilitate the amassing of data derived from user activity across wide geographical vistas. Because such data can train artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies with the capacity to displace labour forces, the question of data ownership and control becomes crucial. He examined the role of data centres in geopolitical scenario and also examined the extension of digital infrastructures that reconfigure regions in such a way that conceptualises the sovereign power to the state. In the course of machine learning and automation the speaker added that technological innovation enhances the power of capitalism and downsizes the labour hours to such an extent that it raises the question of humane cut human need. Finally he concluded by suggesting that an emergent sovereign form subsists in the capillaries of power and operational logic of computational machines special to data centres.

The lecture can be viewed at the MCRG website:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OScnHd_ZJ6g&feature=youtu.be

On Infrastructures: The Cosco Container Terminals and the Surrounding Perama Hills

Nelli Kampouri

September 2, 2018

Chair: Brett Neilson

Brett Neilson introduced Nelli Kampouri and her theme of presentation from the standpoint of development of logistics and port services in southern Europe which is intertwined with the protection of the sanctity of Mediterranean people. Nelli Kampouri opened her speech with the history of the construction of COSCO's subsidiary Piraeus Container Terminal. She mentioned that the process of setting up was initiated in 2013, a period that was termed by her as a transitional phase. She highlighted that the container board was divided into two parts - one part run by COSCO after a 2009 consensus between COSCO Board of Safety and the Greek Government, and the other was controlled by OLP - a company previously state-run and later turned into a CA company, operating under labour conditions as the public sector. Kampouri went on to elaborate the subjects of handling national citizenship and labour rights at a time when Greece entered into a debt crisis in 2016. The principles inscribed into the 2016 consensus were framed in order to ensure that new recruits in the port would not be able to unionise and employ the same tactics that were used in the past to secure stable labour conditions. The obligations of the container board's authority did not address labour union rights and were also not documented into collective agreements: this culminated into serious issues of protection of labour rights. Workers in the port have fixed and designated work time-periods, after their work hours sometimes they have to work into overtime due to uncontrollable port traffic hours.

Development in the port area sometimes leads one to the notion that the port has been colonised not by the Chinese but by the new force of machine domination, where instead of humans handling machines, machines and humans work hand-in-hand. Kampouri made an analysis of the consensus upholding a futuristic scenario of economic efficiency with new technologies creating skilled trade personnel and how new research and new infrastructure will transform the port into one of the largest in the Mediterranean. She mentioned the significance of graffiti for expression by labours and leaders alike in Greece in her speech. Photographs by Michael Macgary who explored relationships between China and Africa titled "Chinafrica: under construction" were a part of the presentation, portraying the expectations of possibilities of Chinese investment, leading to a futuristic utopia in the European setting around Piraeus. The paper thus looks into Government efforts in recognising the rights of labours along with development that includes within its purview possibilities of socio-economic development together with enhancement of international political ties that instead of hampering sovereignty of a nation strides to foster harmony.

Nelli Kampouri commented, Georgio Grappi's influence on the research through his work on trans-national social strike, could be an interesting way to follow and take the research forward.

For more details, please look into the MCRG website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUkNB7SbB50&feature=youtu.be>



Research Workshops (2016-2018)



Research Workshops 2016

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

Date: 31 August- 1 September 2016

Venue: Sabhaghar 1, Swabhumi
89 C, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sarani, Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

Inaugural Session:

The first research workshop was held on 31 August to 1st September, 2016 at Sabhaghar, Swabhumi. The workshop titled was 'A Social Mapping of Infrastructure Logistics, and India's Look East Policy' organised by Calcutta Research Group and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. The five segments studied in the workshop examined India's Look/Act East Policy in terms of logistic visions and infrastructural developments but also the many ways in which these failed to examine the larger story of extraction and the various population flows that followed these developments. It expanded the scope of the policy to examine how the location of Bangladesh as a disruption in India's land contiguity towards the Southeast opens possibilities of engagement but also the prospect of Kolkata as a logistic hub which is then examined in the background competing logistic visions in the east and west of India.

Session: 1

Chair: Prasanta Ray

- a) Researchers: Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra (*Bridge of Spaces: East by Rear East, Ah! Northeast*)

Discussants: Debarati Bagchi and Anandaroop Sen

The first session was chaired by Prof. Prasanta Ray, President at Calcutta Research Group (CRG). The panellist for this segment was Prof. Ranabir Samaddar, Distinguished Chair at Migration and Forced Migration Studies at CRG and Snehashis Mitra, Former Research Assistant at CRG. Their research work titled as '*Bridge of Spaces: East by Rear East, Ah! Northeast*'. Their research investigated components of the logistic visions and infrastructural developments related to India's Look East policy in terms of its connect to the Northeast. It argued that it is in the larger story of extraction of resources, logistical vision, and infrastructural (material and social) programmes under postcolonial capitalism and its interface with the neoliberal mode of governance that one finds clues to how spaces are bridged and in the process acquires new identities. Yet and as consequence of this, the paper seeks to suggest, there will be areas and hence spaces excluded from this bridging operation waiting for future logistical operation. That is how capitalism proceeded in the past, and will proceed now.

The discussant for this segment was Debarati Bagchi, Transnational Research Group (Max Weber Foundation) Postdoctoral Fellow based at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Anandaroop Sen, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU. Bagchi argued that by invoking the metaphor of the 'bridge' (which has a very obvious infrastructural connotation), the paper tries to connect some of the crucial questions associated with logistics in general and its implications in Northeast India in particular. It does so by sketching a very detailed account of the political economy of resource extraction (like water, uranium, coal, rubber) and

infrastructural and logistical development (roads/railways and the finance sector) in Northeast in relation to the contentious questions of ethnicity and identity politics. She argued that the study raised the necessity to address issues of 'social governance' in order to grasp the market logic that aspires to 'opening up' a militarised and conflict induced enclave economy. According to her, 'Bridge' serves as a useful anchor for integrating the many issues that the paper aims to address. On the one hand, it enables a critique of policy rhetoric and ADB's imagination of spatial connections by retaining and yet overturning the bridge metaphor.

Anandaroop Sen argued that the negotiations between labour and capital have specific configurations depending on the kind of extraction in question. Questions of ownership, resistance can only be accessed when one is tuned into this reality. What happens if the community decides to deal directly with the resource extraction and actually participate in it? Will that right the wrong? It is impossible to get out of this bind unless one takes recourse to an idea of a vanguard where, if the community decided to get its proverbial hand dirty, it will be 'misrecognizing' the dynamic of capital. Where and when does such a community exist? He also questions where does the post-colonial begin? The bridging idea, the idea of resource extraction, the construction of community, ideas of community property, all of these have their provenance in the British imperial world and how the North Eastern frontier featured in its extractive plantation economy. It is perhaps telling that the categories that organized the colonial imperial world like that of the unsullied tribe versus the rapacious outsider are still the dominant metaphors that control even critical works on the region. This is not to make a facetious point that everything that is happening now has already happened before and thus we should look at history. But to be attentive to the recurrence of certain problematics that have organized the way the region is thought and built as a bridge.

b) Researcher: Subir Bhaumik (*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East*)

Discussant: Gurudas Das

The second segment was presented by Subir Bhaumik, eminent journalist on "*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East*". He examined whether logistic questions in the East can be resolved without addressing various issues like that of Kolkata Port with two ports under its management, achieving synergy between Kolkata and Chittagong Ports, the logistics of water sharing, security cooperation, land corridor of Bangladesh with Nepal, reviving earlier inland water navigation routes as also stabilizing relations with Burma and China independent of US strategic preference. It also examined the tortuous history of settling the "Bengal question" as congealed in the "Chicken's neck" which must then necessarily engage with issues of immigration, trafficking in goods, services, labour and sex, securitization, land grab, and development of Siliguri as a hub.

Gurudas Das, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences National Institute of Technology, Silchar was the discussant for this session. Prof. Das argued that since the Northeast is the bridgehead to South east Asia, her development interest can be dovetailed with the broader policy framework. When we say "Bangladesh is the key to the success of India's Look East Policy", we assign centrality of India's Northeast into India's Look East Policy—which is not the case. This deliberation could aptly be titled as "Bangladesh: Key to national policy towards India's Northeast". Does "Bangladesh Corridor" matter for the success of India's Look East Policy? He argues that the Continental Route to South East Asia is not cost effective for mainland India. As a result, even if Bangladesh Corridor is made

available, Maritime Route will always have cost advantage over the Continental Route. Thus, “Bangladesh Corridor” has nothing to do with the success or failure of India’s Look East Policy.

- c) Researchers: Samir K. Purakayastha and Sucharita Sengupta (*Borders, Mobility and Migration: North East India*)

Discussants: Sanjoy Barbora

Samir K. Purkayastha, and Sucharita Sengupta, were the paper presenters for the third segment. Their research proposal was titled as “*Borders, Mobility and Migration: North East India*”. This segment complimented the first and looked at migration, displacement, insurgency and labour produced as a result of the above mentioned vision of logistical governance. It addressed what happens to population flow and control over resources within the context of the Look East/Act East Policy heralded as being transformative for the region. While deregulation of borders leads to a barrier free integration of regions through trade and communication, there remains the need to investigate whether the same holds for movement of people particularly movements that fall outside the purview of law. How do conflicts surrounding ‘outsiders’ or ‘alien bodies’ unfold? Similarly, what is the complex relation between the inflow of capital and outflow of labour?

Sanjoy Barbora, Associate Professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Guwahati began by focusing on the segment on Colonial History of flows and Races in the Northeast: He argued that the authors have to ask why this section needs to begin with the usual mining of literature on the migration narrative in the region. While on the subject, it might be useful to avoid a very dated historical description of migration by imagining that one were to present this text among communities being written about. He then moves to the section on Migrant: Who? He notes that this is an extremely important section and one suggestion would be to begin the essay with this section. The creative use of quantitative data (NSSO etc.) is a good strategy but the authors might want to explain some of the statistically insignificant, but symbolically profound data that emerges from the data set. This is particularly true in the case of the data that has come from the hill states of the region.

Session: 2

Chair: Gurudas Das

- a) Researchers: Iman Mitra and Mithilesh Kumar (*Kolkata as a Logistic Hub with special reference to the port*)

Discussant: Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

Prof. Gurudas Das had chaired the second session. Iman Mitra, and Mithilesh Kumar, presented their abstract on “*Kolkata as a Logistic Hub with special reference to the port*”. The fourth segment examined ways in which Kolkata (with its location as a port, railway, and road hub) could become crucial for the new logistical vision and how the existence of Bangladesh as a disruption in India’s land continuity predicates the possibilities of Kolkata as a logistical centre. Being one of the most populated and economically developed cities in India, Kolkata possesses a unique advantage as regards realisation of the Look East Policy and the paper examines this advantage along three interlinked axes: history, infrastructure and location.

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research, Mohali started with an argument that Calcutta's logistical future lies in the protracted economic crises and regime instabilities that India's potential South East Asian partners faced since the late 1990s, and could never recover fully in the succeeding two decades. The crisis of the 1990s hit India's look east policy hard. He wanted the authors to take note of this aspect in the revised version of the paper. Second, he wanted the authors to consider explaining the meaning of the logistical hub in the Toyotist regime of capitalist accumulation. This leads to the third insistence that the authors will also study the changing labour process in the port to tease out what the birth of the increasingly containerized logistical hub means to the workers. What is needed, then, is the rigorous politicization of the idea of the logistical hub. After Timothy Mitchell (2014) we can say that its apparent durability could also be the source of its speculative fragility. We need to think how the logistical hub can be a focus of our collective existence.

b) Researcher: Anita Sengupta (*Being Connected: Logistic Visions to the East and West*)

Discussants: Sanjay Chaturvedi

The second segment for this second session was presented by Dr. Anita Sengupta, Director at CRG. Her research proposal was titled "*Being Connected: Logistic Visions to the East and West*". She made a comprehensive assessment of India's logistic visions to the East and the West in the light of other competing logistic visions, the One Belt One Road but also the US strategy of Pivot of Asia and Russian Eurasian visions. It questioned whether a logistical vision on India's East can be realized to any appreciable extent without a complementary design on India's west and northwest.

Sanjay Chaturvedi, Coordinator, Centre of Advanced Study (UGC SAP) Department of Political Science (Centre for the Study of Geopolitics) & Honorary Director Centre for the Study of Mid-West and Central Asia, Panjab University, Chandigarh was the discussant for this segment. He began by questioning what constitutes India's extended --and extending-- neighborhood? After all there is a complex geography (political, social-cultural and economic) and history (e.g. Indian Ocean World) to India's neighborhood and its extensions to north, south, east, west. What kind of logistic visions are emerging in India's extended neighborhoods? Who (i.e. actors and agencies) and what (i.e. logics, hopes, fears) are driving these logistic visions? What is the extent to which they converge or diverge? What is common to them? He stated that Asia is not a part of 'post-Schengen' world --if at all one such world exists-- yet. He extended with a note that the emphasis placed by the CRG project on 'social mapping' of 'logistic spaces' is most strategic in the sense that it insists on not losing sight of place-specific social-political and cultural geographies in the imaginative metageographies of 'Connectography'. India's 'Act East' policy in newly carved out 'Indo-Pacific' space is yet another 'work in progress' that awaits further conceptual clarity and highly desirable policy consensus among a large number of stakeholders including sub-regions, cities, ports, civil society actors and nodal agencies. Beyond the metaphor of 'Tugs of War' lies a rather complex labyrinth of agencies, interests and agendas with entangled logics

The workshop closed with a reminder to the researchers to submit their revised drafts by 15 October, 2016 for a final review and then publication as Policies and Practices.

Research Workshop

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

Kolkata, 15 - 16 November 2016

Venue – Hotel The Sojourn, Salt Lake, Kolkata.

Inaugural Session:

The session started with an introduction to CRG RLS Project 'A Social Mapping of Infrastructure, Logistics and India's Look East Policy' by Anita Sengupta, Snehasish Mitra, Sucharita Sengupta and Iman Mitra. The first Panel Discussion was on Infrastructure and Logistics in Northeast India, chaired and moderated by RajagopalDhar Chakraborty (Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies University of Calcutta). He began the discussion by noting that Northeast India has been ignored since the colonial era. And the postcolonial period has continued with the regime of extraction. But now due to Look East Policy and China's influence, the region is attracting the attention of the Indian policy regime. This has majorly impinged on infrastructural activities. The focus is now on connectivity. This calls for new research on the Northeast region.

Panel Discussion: Infrastructure and Logistics in Northeast India

Chair and Moderator: Rajagopal Dhar Chakraborty

Pradip Phanjoubham (*Security, Commerce and Northeast Infrastructure Development*)

Pradip Phanjoubham (Editor, Imphal Free Press) '*Security, Commerce and Northeast Infrastructure Development*', presented issues of northeast India through colonial history and the current situation. He argued that in his book on the 'Northeast Question' there are several chapters on the historical context of the emergence of what is known as Northeast India today where he has responded to Neville Maxwell's claim that Arunachal Pradesh should be in China. He went on to argue that the interest on Northeast is either for commerce or military activities, with no focus on the local people. 1826 was an important year for Northeast India as the year when the British defeated the Burmese. In the three Burmese wars the British annexed the whole of Burma. Assam was now kept as a buffer zone after the military threat was eliminated. The interest resurfaced after tea was discovered in Assam. Civil militia was raised to provide cost-effective security to British investments. In 1970 this became the Assam Rifles. The incentive to perform well was that good performance would be rewarded with transfer to the military. The Gorkha military regiment found their nursery in the militia regime of the region. The first 5 battalions of Assam Rifles were Gorkha regiments. Today there are 43 battalions of Assam Rifles. Development in the Northeast is very much tied to security. A charter of NEC stated that any development in Northeast needs to be approved by the military.

Monirul Hussain (*Interrogating Infrastructure in Northeast India: Implications on the Politics of the Region*)

Monirul Hussain, Faculty at Department of Political Science, Guwahati University presented a paper on '*Interrogating Infrastructure in Northeast India: Implications on the*

Politics of the Region. He initiated by arguing that the map making of northeast is continuous, it has continued since the British times and has been a source of conflict. The border of northeast India was always fluid where people came in from different regions. He said that Assam was also not a part of the Indian empire in the historical context which resulted in different mixtures of ethnicity in the region. Once borders were demarcated during the British era, the flow of people from different directions also came to a stop. The integration of the region to India has always been contentious. Now that India looks forward to be a global power, northeast is supposed to play a part through Look East Policy. This has several implications for the region. He emphasized that the infrastructure in that region is still not developed. There have been some improvements, but not enough. The aspirations of Look East Policy is yet to materialize. The partition took away a substantial transport network in the region. It is still a difficult task to connect to Southeast Asia through the Northeast. The proposition of connecting the capitals is yet to see daylight. It is very difficult to visit regions like Mizoram. These are also negating factors in business and trade. The project completion rate is very poor in the region. The political unrest, particularly in Bodoland becomes very important in the discussion since the issues of the Bodo people are yet to be solved. There needs to be more emphasis on infrastructure building.

Vijaylakshmi Brara (*Gender Dimension in the New Form of Governance in Northeast India*)

Vijaylakshmi Brara, Faculty at Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University presented a paper on '*Gender Dimension in the New Form of Governance in Northeast India*'. She began with the argument that women in Manipur are not really the subthemes in its history but have occupied a prominent place in the history of struggle against the British, not once but twice, called the nupilans of 1904 and 1939. At the same time mention have been made of various queens who were warriors in their own right. There are things one could locate, such as their institutions and their spaces which remain in an informal sphere from immemorial to the present. In fact it can be stated informality is associated with women and the space of formal economy is mainly handled by the men. Women have been doing well in Manipur on several aspects; they have logistics to deal with economic burdens in the form of marups, they have collectives in economic sphere extending to emotional and physical in the form of imakeithels, the sacred complexities were resolved by the institution of Maibies and political exigencies in the form of MeiraPabis, as well as chiefs in the hills (surprisingly and formal!). Lastly the khutlangs or the 'women farmer helping hands' are keeping the produce of paddy in a self-sustaining mode. These have been the indigenous source of sustenance since time immemorial.

Lipi Ghosh (*India-South East Asia Relations in context of North East Asia & Bay of Bengal: Pre-colonial Connectivity and Contemporary Convergence*)

Chair: Pradip Phanjoubham

Lipi Ghosh, Faculty at Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Calcutta delivered a lecture on "*India-South East Asia Relations in context of North East Asia & Bay of Bengal: Pre-colonial Connectivity and Contemporary Convergence*". PradipPhanjoubham, Editor at Imphal Free Press had chaired this session. Inter-Asian linkages and connectivity are important subjects for modern day research. The presentation examined India- South East Asia land and maritime connectivities in pre-colonial historical past taking in purview their contemporary utilities. In this India South East Asia land

linkages, North East India's route linkages with Myanmar and Thailand are significant factors. Northeast India stands as the bridge of connectivity between India, Myanmar & Thailand. In the annals of Indian foreign policy, Northeast India has always remained a strategic linking point and used to be referred to as the frontier between India and its neighbours. Ethnically, this region is distinct from the rest of India and has strong ethnic and cultural ties with Southeast Asia. As a region, the northeast is demarcated by India's international boundaries with China, Myanmar (formerly Burma), Bhutan and Bangladesh, and internally by the boundary between Assam and a very narrow strip of northern West Bengal known as the "chicken's neck". His presentation talked on the projects of roadway and railway linkages between Northeast India and South East Asia. That being the issue of land linkages, it appears from the writings of historians that in the precolonial era Myanmar and Thailand maintained a significant range of trade in their western edge of the Bay of Bengal which was eventually linked to the Indian Ocean. She mentioned that, it was these trade networks which not only marked trade and exchanges but also characterized the trajectory of the culture of the region. The presentation referred to pre-colonial and colonial literature and identified the trade route between the IO/ Bay of Bengal littorals. In contemporary context, the Bay of Bengal still plays a major role. Kaladan Multimodal Transport Project signed between India and Myanmar is an important parameter of discussion. The project involves a major up gradation of infrastructure at Sittwe, located about 250km from the Mizoram border on the north-western coast of Myanmar where the Kaladan river joins the Bay of Bengal.

Research Workshops 2017

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

Date: September 6, 2017

Venue: Swabhumi, Sabhaghar-I, Kolkata
89 C, MaulanaAbulKalam Azad Sarani, Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

Paula Banerjee welcomed the participants and introduced them to the theme of the research. She also noted that the five segments that would be presented were part of a larger research project that had begun in 2016. The draft papers presented here would be revised according to comments made by the experts and the discussion that followed.

Researcher: Anita Sengupta (*Interwoven Realities: Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance*)

Discussant: Swaran Singh

Anita Sengupta, presented a paper on “*Interwoven Realities: Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance*”. Professor Swaran Singh (Jawaharlal Nehru University) was the discussant for this paper and Professor Ranabir Samaddar, Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, CRG had chaired this session. The paper examined the interface of geo-economics and geopolitics through an examination of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and a proposed economic corridor, the BCIM (EC), which identify logistic and infrastructural as central and involve both India and China. It went on to examine a number issues: 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. It underlined the fact that global dynamics related to the management of infrastructure across borders will contribute to the creation of semi-autonomous governing bodies and to a redefinition of social and labour laws and relations across a number of states. It would also create the possibility of a situation where governance itself moves from traditional sites to the competing sites of economic corridors that coexist on a global scale. Most borders that these corridors would traverse are also by nature arbitrary. However, the malleability of post-colonial borders that the economic corridors and pipelines would negotiate would mean a tension between the fluidity of frontiers that allow cross border movements of people and goods and the ownership of infrastructures like pipelines built by multinational consortiums that these would navigate. The friction between the shared ownership of the infrastructures and national ownership of territory could become a competitive site.

Discussant Swaran Singh found that the paper had several insightful and new ideas to offer. Given his interest in China, he particularly enjoyed reading about logistically China becoming the epicentre. That, in his opinion, was a very strong new argument to make since traditionally the focus is on China's trade volumes, trade figures and foreign exchange which are seen as fundamental issues. But logistically, how China will emerge as an epicentre proved an interesting read. The other important point addressed by the paper is how logistics is emerging as a significant determinant of life, from everyday life to the level of global governance. There are several other reference points in the paper that require substantive discussion. The second important point to be considered is in terms of logistical connectivity which also empowers it in today's world is the shift from global interstate to the global inter societal. That is what makes logistical connectivity more empowered. Professor Singh talked about Gandhi's idea of sovereign citizenship as opposed to sovereign statehood. And the way citizens are empowered today makes states lose track of what citizens are doing. In the limited field of nuclear arms disarmament, which is his area of research, the last inter-state treaty had been signed in 1993. All initiatives and agreements have since taken place at a level of communities or societies. Increasingly, inter-societal linkages have come to dominate both the structures and processes at all levels including global governance.

China and India are emerging economies in terms of their population. 35 million Chinese and 25 million Indians are living abroad. There is a dichotomy between these two rapidly emerging societies which will have a tremendous influence on the way of life, including global governance. How they approach logistics is fundamentally dichotomous. Right from India's technical and economic assistance program of the 1960s, the entire focus of India was on skill building and capacity building. The assumption was that if people connect through skill building, information sharing and knowledge sharing, then that community connect will tell us what kind of physical structures they need. The Chinese have an exactly opposite view of this. The Chinese having for 30-35 years focussed on building up domestic infrastructure very successfully are suffering from what is thought of as overcapacity—overcapacity of experience, skilled workers, machine tools, finances at their disposal. This overcapacity is the compulsion behind OBOR. Compulsions are far stronger in Chinese case. They want to sustain social cohesion, political stability and safety of the regime which is ruling. And over capacity is pushing them to go outside. They are simply replicating what they have done at home. They are creating mega infrastructure projects almost unilaterally, whereas logistics should fundamentally be multilateral. In case of CPEC which is described as a flagship program of the OBOR, it is fundamentally a unilateral program of China. Therefore, because of this dichotomy between two major societies which are influencing the trends including the building of these logistics, the reality is plural corridors. We have parallel corridors. India has India-Japan growth corridor, New Silk Road, BBIM, Trilateral Highway, lots of corridors. China is building six parallel corridors.

Researcher: Iman Kumar Mitra, (*Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development: The Asian Context*)

Discussant: Anjan Chakrabarti

Iman Kumar Mitra, former Research Associate at Calcutta Research Group presented a paper on "*Finance Capital and Infrastructure Development: The Asian Context*". Professor Anjan Chakrabarti, Department of Economics, University of Calcutta was the discussant for

this paper. The paper explored the connection between networks of finance capital and infrastructure-led development in the context of India's Look East Policy (renamed as the Act East Policy in 2014) whose main thrust has been to forge sustainable political and economic relationship with its neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia so that it can compete with China as a regional power, especially in the context of Asia's emergence as the leader of globalization following the economic meltdown in the West. It explored this connection between the idea of a 'seamless Asia' (often mentioned in the documents of the regional conglomerates like ASEAN and the financial institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank as an ideal state of an inter connected continent through transport facilities and specially designated trade routes, border policies and economic liberalisation) and the many infrastructural requirements for its realisation in connection with the emerging networks of finance capital in the region. The concept of finance capital is often reduced to discussions around the figure of the solitary, speculative economic agent and her speculative decision-making abilities. This study, however, sought to bring the concept of infrastructure development at the core of its conceptualisation and looked at the institutional paradigms of regional conglomerates and their conversations with the expansive networks of finance capital.

Anjan Chakrabarti initiated the discussion by exploring the relation between integration, finance and infrastructure in the context of Asia where infrastructure is the key word, is looked at in the paper. It is seen as both the magic pill of shaping connectivity and integration of otherwise disarticulated Asia as also of generating only growth by imparting positive effects of various kinds. In this sense, the author accepts the utopia and associated narrative of the geopolitical ruling disposition and then tries to produce an analysis of how far this narrative is justified and made possible. At times the failures were pointed out but then these were seen as problem areas to overcome so that the dream of an economically and spatially connected Asia leading to virtuous growth everywhere is realised in its full potential. This marked the strength as also the weakness of the paper. The strength of the paper was its clear exposition of its position, its evolution and expansion of arguments made by institutions in terms of policy restrictions and ultimatums. What it gains in terms of descriptive value is lost however in terms of critical reasoning and arguments.

The paper would gain substance if it could bring some of the latter into consideration. First the paper seems to have taken out the aspect of geopolitical tension between India and China from the analysis, even as he claims that the calculation of critical risk is a major actor in investment decision of private players, both in finance and production. There seems to be an unacknowledged economism that is operating here even as the described relation in the context of Asia is said to be containing factors surpassing economic ones. This complicated factor and its nuanced analysis requires to be introduced into the paper. The distinction between privatisation which is the transfer of distinct assets and investments which is the creation of new assets is then drawn on. The presenter seemed to be suggesting wittingly or unwittingly private players have always been the pioneer in investment, particularly infrastructural investment. However, while private players have existed for long, the investment boom in the 20th century was driven predominantly by state-funding and enterprise. Even with 19th century infrastructural investments, Ha-Joon Chang's book, *Kicking Away the Ladder* revisits the thesis of *laissez-faire* dream and investment, arguing that state plays a major role in it. The presenter is requested to look up this book.

Researcher: Priya Singh (*Representations of connectivity: the politics and economics of routes in the Asian context*)

Discussant: Atul Mishra

Priya Singh, Research and Programme Associate at Calcutta research Group presented a paper on '*Representations of connectivity: the politics and economics of routes in the Asian context*'. Atul Mishra, Faculty at Shiv Nadar University was the discussant for this paper. She began with the idea of the contemporary version of the Silk Road, which consists of the land based Silk Road economic belt or corridor as it is commonly referred to that comprises a wide strip of central China, reaching through a large number of Asian countries and extending into the eastern European region. These countries are supposed to be connected by existing or planned railways and roads, with bridges and tunnels, airports, as well as pipelines, energy projects, industrial parks, free trade zones and logistics centres. The Maritime Silk Road or corridor is essentially a sea route from the South China Sea and South East Asia, through the Indian Ocean and the Middle East into the eastern Mediterranean. It also spreads in other directions. Its distinctive characteristic is port infrastructure projects, some connecting with parts of the land-based project. The professed objective therefore is to create a new economic belt of connective infrastructure westward into Eurasia and a new maritime "road" connecting China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The accompanying narrative is one of "a community of common destiny," of "inclusive collaboration," of an Asian enterprise/project not merely a Chinese initiative; of an integrated developmental strategy, aimed at global peace and the pursuit of common prosperity.

The role of routes in establishing and maintaining geographical, political, cultural, educational, economic, military, technological, religious and ideological linkages within and between regions is significant. An analysis of the politics of routes in an extended Asian neighbourhood is crucial for both a historical as well as a contemporary understanding of the relationship between 'security' and 'development.' The competition over routes between rival powers, adds another dimension to the politics of routes. Regional economic connectivity with an emphasis on 'energy', 'trade and transport', 'customs and border operations' along with a connect in the realm of ideas constitutes the nucleus of the 'New Silk Roads' project. Further improvisations and strategization on the 'New Silk Roads' are underway, being primarily undertaken by China and India. As multiple attempts to break the 'bottlenecks in Asian connectivity', make headway in the form of major infrastructural investments, unusual equations between the major players unfold, promising an era of regional reconfigurations. The attempt was to briefly comprehend the various dimensions and political implications of the routes which aim to establish and re-establish connects within Asia, its extended neighbourhood and beyond.

In this framework and context, it examined the following questions: Does the New Silk Road Initiative represent 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?

So what is the New Silk Road Initiative; an imperialist urge, an economic compulsion, a “geopolitical manoeuvre” or a “spatial fix”?

Atul Mishra began the discussion by providing the examples of China and India. How does that representation play off is a query that needs to be pondered? Contrarily, Indian initiatives as far as the region is concerned, are thought of as attempts to match up to the Chinese, even though on the capacity front, the gap between the two might be wide. The Chinese initiatives are thought more dominant in terms of the land domain, while Indian ones project themselves as good in the maritime domain. These representations need to be understood, urges Dr. Mishra. Dr Mishra finds it intriguing that SAARC was in South Asia, yet India had to have the Gujral Doctrine. He said we need to look at what India is doing now with the sub-regional projects vis-a-vis the Northeast and connecting it to Southeast Asia. Local ecosystems are restored, bringing in trade, leading to the thriving of culture. Popular anxieties of those who live at the frontiers of the nation are also alleviated to a great extent. Even though we have this pan-Asia connectivity phase, connectivity projects in different parts of Asia are serving different purposes. We are given the instance of Afghanistan, where connectivity is seen as the way out of the geo-political wars it is plagued by. There is an unfortunate political implication in these Asia-wide connectivity projects. Several of the political systems in Asia through which these connectivity projects are being constructed are either quasi democratic, undemocratic, or democratic in interesting ways. We have seen, as in the case of Gujarat, infrastructure-oriented conception of development is necessarily depoliticising. If people are given a modicum of quality life and good infrastructure, they stop complaining about political injustice. The Chinese and Indian connectivity projects do not expect these regimes to reform themselves and make themselves more accountable to the people. The more integration of this sort happens, the more development that is infrastructure oriented is facilitated, the lesser would be the incentive for these political systems to reform themselves, says Dr. Mishra. It may not just be an outcome of the decline of the West generally but also something that is innate to us as Asian political systems.

Researcher: Paula Banerjee and Sucharita Sengupta (*Conflict and Social Governance in North East India*)

Discussant: Rakhee Bhattacharya

Professor Paula Banerjee, Vice Chancellor at Sanskrit University and Sucharita Sengupta, former Research Associate at CRG were the presenters for this session. They presented on “*Conflict and Social Governance in North East India*”. Rakhee Bhattacharya was the discussant for this paper and Professor Prasanta Ray, President at CRG had chaired this session. Social governance is a form of governance that evolved in relations to conflict management and peace in the last few decades. With its origin partly in western style mass democracy, social welfare and market economy and partly in the evolution of a sense of justice that emanated from struggles against colonialism, social governance has grown into a system that has many trajectories. Postcolonial states have often addressed demands for justice through the axis of development and in a neoliberal world that has meant the growth of market economy, capital accumulation and changes in infrastructure in tandem with a neo-liberal politics and crony capitalism. This has created an occasion for massive transfer of resources necessitating new logistical apparatus. The logistical spaces that are used as conduits are the favoured spaces. This caused massive increase in governmental expenditure

and the beneficiaries were a favoured few. In this circuitous mode of development of capitalism, induction of new groups became increasingly a necessity when older groups were no longer willing to participate, creating new fissures in society. This has resulted in new kinds of governing patterns that has stemmed the radicalism of sub-nationalist demands through development oriented conflict management making logistics intrinsic to conflict resolution. Therefore, logistical imperatives were created that favoured allies to the detriment of those that chose to defy, thereby bringing conflict within the communities that for years opposed the state. In this mode of governance conflict was managed by changing state versus community conflicts into conflicts within communities. One can see this phenomena emerging in large sections of Northeast India. In this background the paper examined 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, what can be the policy responses?

Discussant Rakhee Bhattacharya initiated the discussion by saying that much of the observations here were technical and were made keeping in mind the connection between new Capital, emerging conflict and social governance in Northeast India'. The history of capital in Northeast India from colonisation to globalisation has a linear sequentiality on developmentalism and to locate differences in North East context where some tribal and local economies are seen as remnants of the earlier times. The capital flow and external market connection in the constructed space of Northeast India is not a new phenomenon. The colonial state typically created this frontier for the exportable surplus through external capital with the minimum logistic apparatus. This new construct of colonial capitalist was resisted fiercely by the highlanders and hills were thus sealed and their economies has been un-colonised by their own politics of exclusion and distinction whereas the plains area was the target, a view in contrast to the paper presenter. This has created both hill and plain modern and traditional binaries.

Indigenous capitalist class were formed with state support to reassert the logic of resource excess and land accumulation. This started penetrating the hills of Northeast. State developmentalism got legitimised in the decade of the 70s and 80s. With political geography, there were demands for infrastructure creation. State capital was acceptable for the people of the region for the creation of social and economic provisions. With neo-liberal economic order coming in the 1990s, economic expansion was important to join the global world order. Thus the need for next set of logistical apparatus was felt urgently. India's economic imperatives gave birth to the Look East policy. The need for connectivity infrastructure became essential to explore Northeast India as a potential economic hub and corridor. State capital was multiplied through the policy of resources, ensured grants, packages for infrastructure creation road, railways, etc. The paper has extensively dealt with it. Policies of economic development such as Spatial Accelerated Road Development Program, and Vision 2020 have opened a new chapter for Northeast India. However, hydrocarbon extraction beyond Assam from Tripura, Nagaland and Manipur is a contested area of developmentalism and Government of India has released documents to secure Northeast's hydrocarbon economy.

Researchers: Snehasish Mitra and Soma Ghoshal (*Trade, Capital and Conflict: Frontier Towns of Northeast India and Myanmar: A Case Study of three frontier towns: Moreh-Tamu and Champhai*)

Discussant: Pradip Phanjoubam

Snehasish Mitra and Soma Ghoshal presented a paper titled “*Trade, Capital and Conflict: Frontier Towns of Northeast India and Myanmar: A Case Study of three frontier towns: Moreh-Tamu and Champhai*”. Pradip Phanjoubam, from Imphal Free Press had discussed for this session. They argued that border regions have often been described as a ‘zone of contact’, where they act as areas where enterprise networks and other networks cross the border creating new possibilities and advantages. The border becomes permeable and trans-border activities become the norm. In Asia, in general, and South Asia, in particular, borders had been the constants in the projections of the state’s strategic, economic and diplomatic acumen. Here borders were the frontiers, in the literal sense of the term, where isolation, limited development and perpetuation of regional inequalities were more manifest. However, the geopolitics of economics set the trajectory for creating a “borderless” region in South and Southeast Asia, albeit relying on the existing borders. The need for adequate infrastructure facilities, transportation, communication and other links across borders and removal of the so-called bottlenecks were seen as precursors for bridging spaces between the world’s two fastest growing regions. The border trade between India and Myanmar showcases how development of a border trade can be the precursor to the economic development of the region, in turn, making it a repository of transitory and geopolitical agendas. Over the last few years India’s northeast had witnessed an emphasis on developing the infrastructure through widening roads, expanding air connectivity, extending railway networks, opening new and reactivating old dormant trade routes, and facilitating border trade and transit points. The infrastructural and logistical expansion had therefore infused a new lease of life into the towns and cities of the region, which were mostly serving as administrative centres. In 2015, 7 cities from the region, namely- Guwahati, Imphal, Agartala, Pasighat, Aizawl, Kohima and Shillong were among the ‘smart city’ nominees. Moreh in Manipur, situated on the Indo-Myanmar border was declared a ‘Free Trade Zone’ by the Government of India in 1995 and has developed into a township. Manipur government had taken the initiative to build a market complex in Moreh with a budget of Rs. 22 crores. The number of items to be traded between India and Myanmar had increased from 40 to 62 in November 2012. A report titled “Emerging North East India” published by FICCI proposed 2 similar approaches in Dawki, Karimganj, Akhaura, Mankachar, and few other towns along with similar initiatives on the other side of the border in Bangladesh. Likewise, the Land Custom Station (LCS) in Akhaura near Agartala town is functional now with the facilities of passenger terminal, warehouse, and entry gate.

In this context the paper examined of the frontier towns of India and Myanmar, Moreh-Tamu and Champhai, that are being projected as the gateways to the two upcoming mega projects uniting South and South East Asia, the Trilateral Highway and the Trans Asian Railway Network.

Discussant Pradip Phanjoubam began by saying that this paper is an in-depth ethnographic study. A good picture of the ethnic customs and rules of each of the places has been painted, as been a picture of the inner conflicts and dynamics. The figures provided in the paper on world trading and Indo-Myanmar trading are quite different. But the difference in turnover between border trade and Indo-Myanmar trade is much greater. Interstate trade volume is

high but border trade volume is significantly low. The Look East Policy thus has to be tackled in two ways – one from the point of view of business and the other from the point of view of building connectivity and culture, so that we ultimately think of peace and a natural region consisting of upper Burma, the Northeast, Northern Thailand also perhaps and such areas. Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Yunan province together is a different region altogether. Simply the act of opening up doors and windows instead of just thinking about business can solve a lot of problems. We shouldn't be thinking only in terms of connecting Southeast Asia, we should be thinking in terms of backward regions. The Trilateral Highway, the road that will go from More, through Tamu, to Mesaw in Thailand are helping connectivity, the technical side of which also needs to be looked at. Thus, the Look East policy must be implemented from both angles.

Anita Sengupta finally concluded the session with her remarks on the workshop followed by a vote of thanks.

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Research Workshop

Beyond Infrastructure and Logistics: Reconnecting with the Peoples and Societies in the Northeast

Date: 29 November 2017

Venue: Swabhumi, Sabhaghar-I, Kolkata
89 C, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sarani, Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

Introductory remarks by Ranabir Samaddar:

The Distinguished Chair, Professor Ranabir Samaddar delivered the opening lecture, introducing the theme of the CRG-RLS project “Social and Political Mapping of Popular Movements, Logistic Vision and Infrastructure of India”. He explained that the project has two segments of research – mapping logistical representation of the North East for the last two decades with special focus on the Look/Act East policy, and mapping popular movements in the first two decades’ post-independence in India. Dr. Samaddar talks of reading books on the logistical aspects of the Greek civil war and of the Irish insurgency and its impact on Irish population and politics, which led him to speculate about the logistical aspects of popular politics. This requires thinking on the way infrastructure – social, material - shapes subjectivity, the attitudes of different segments of the population and popular movements, and vice versa. The notion is not very new, avers Dr. Samaddar. Marx talks about how factory mode of production shaped labour subjectivity. He also mentions Tilly’s notion of collective politics and the popular wherein there is nothing intrinsic about what we think of as popular. So, in terms of the Northeast, we have to look at how infrastructure shapes the popular. We need to look at the continuities and discontinuities in earlier and more recent patterns of politics. Migration is one very important aspect to be considered in understanding how social developments impact the popular and vice versa. With the watershed advent of neoliberalism, particularly in the 80s and 90s, the very notion of people is changing and with that, changes in society are being effected such that infrastructures are changing and impacting changes on the population which require thinking about deeply to detect and understand the patterns and discontinuities that are emerging on a daily basis.

Panel Discussion on *Popular Movements and Popular Politics in the North East and North Bengal*

Chair: Paula Banerjee

The first session of the workshop had a panel discussion where the discussants talking about ‘Popular Movements and Popular Politics in the North East and North Bengal’. The discussants were social activist, Abhijit Majumdar, ChitraAhantheman, independent journalist and SoibamHaripriya from TISS Guwahati. Professor Paula Banerjee, Vice-Chancellor of Sanskrit University, served as moderator for the session. Social activist FulanBhattacharji was invited as a discussant, but could not attend at the last minute as she was indisposed. Professor Banerjee spoke a few lines on Tripura in her place.

Discussant: Abhijit Majumdar

Mr. Majumdar opened with the statement that North Bengal was fraught with many popular movements. The Naxalbari movement had a huge impact on popular movements both in North Bengal and the North East. Siliguri is the gateway to North Bengal but whether it is part of North East or not, is yet to be determined, says Mr. Majumdar. Tea is a common denominator shared by the North East and North Bengal with their significant roles in the tea industry and their tea estates. The political economy of tea has evolved over decades, and in the era of neoliberalism, several changes have been brought about in the industry. There has been a mainstreaming of the tea workers' community, but of late they are demanding their indigenous identity back; there has also been a demand for minimum wages. The Minimum Wages Act of 1948 did not see the labourers getting their due. The tea gardens are the second largest labour intensive industry, but the labourers never got any benefits. For the initial decades after independence, tea unions could never garner popular support from tea labourers, nor educate them on the need to demand minimum wages. In the last three years in North Bengal, the tea workers have been mobilised enough to demand that minimum wages be implemented in the tea sector. Food security is a major issue related to livelihood in the tea sector. Numerous tea gardens were being closed down, and between 2000 and 2007, more than 1200 tea workers died of starvation. Captains of the industry have strong lobbying power, and they say there was a market crisis, but Mr. Majumdar vehemently negates his reasoning. Tea from India is sold globally today, produced by the tea industry in North East and North Bengal. There are about 4.5 lac small and big tea gardens and roughly 40,000 small growers in North Bengal itself. Three years back, the government said they would declare minimum wages, stipulated at Rs. 132.5 in Bengal, but with the nexus between government and industry, and the coexistence of military power and neoliberal market regimes, it is yet to be implemented. The struggle however continues, assures the speaker.

Discussant: Chitra Ahanthem

Chitra Ahanthem then took over, talking about popular movements and popular politics in Manipur. The questions that she looks into are those of whether movements can be manufactured, the riots that are happening, and the values and judgements that are being passed on women. There are communication issues in Manipur, where communication is fractured along gender and age lines. Women do not really have a voice, and the younger generation is usually not lent an ear. This makes the feminist question in Manipur complicated. The general assumption is that Manipuri women are very liberated, particularly with reference to the women's markets. However, says Ms. Ahanthem, the women's markets were there from the times of the kings. Visibility of women was never in question, but their liberation is controversial. During the Kangla protest, women were praised for using their body agentially, but when Kanhailal in 2000, staged the play 'Draupadi' where his wife Savitri Bai bared her body for a cause as the titular character, she was disparaged for using her body to sell art. Ms. Ahanthem then talked about the tyranny of the kings and how they embraced Hinduism, forcing *Meitei* community to follow in their footsteps. They did away with their customs and rituals, and embraced vegetarianism, condemning those *meiteis* who ate meat as impure and likening them to the British. She mentions Hjam Iraboth's revolt against the regime, and how he came to inspire farmers and peasants to revolt. During the Insurgency Movement, university educated people took up arms based on Iraboth's ideology, and demanded separation from India. But of late, the romance of the movement has died down, with it turning capitalist, which Ms. Ahanthem attributes partly to the Look/Act East policy. In the 1960s, there was the students' movement against Marwari traders who were hoarding rice. Police opened fire on the students' rally killing 4. But since the 90s, people

have increasingly taken the law into their hands, raising the question of how to distinguish between popular movement and popular agitation or mob justice. These actions are popular, but do they constitute a movement, asks the speaker. She mentions how drug users were the first victims of mob justice in Manipur, and how more recently, schoolgirls were threatened by the military forces for wearing Indian dresses. She expresses concern that the social media influence is increasingly becoming dangerous and abusive, and that factions and leadership questions plague Manipur, and with the change in regime, Manipur's trajectory at this point in time is shaky and uncertain.

Discussant: Soibam Haripriya

SoibamHaripriya, in her turn, talked about three interrelated aspects pertaining to popular movements in the North East- through an analysis of poetry, the anxiety of representation reflected in their literature, vigilante action giving rise to psycho vigilante activism, and the governmental award constituted during the pro- Inner Line Permit activism, being given to mothers giving maximum birth. The poem that she analyses is from the translated anthology *The Valley of Lofty Hills*, and it deals with issues of immigration and anxiety of identity, the nation's antagonism to the local, and the precolonial to the postcolonial. There is the depiction of the Mayang, and his language is incomprehensible to the Europeans, showing how disdain for the spoken gets translated into disdain for the speaker. But the Mayang is also a representation of the postcolonial immigrant into the Northeast and as working class labour, thus reflecting fear of Indianisation. The self is seen as savage, but also the self that grieved the loss of nature caused by the development projects of Look/Act East policy, such as the laying of roads or building of highways. So there persists a continuum in anxiety over immigration to anxiety about nationhood and nationalism. Many of the groups that were part of the Inner Line permit Movement took it upon themselves to drive away the immigrants and therein lies the connect with vigilante action. The ILP and the AMSU (All Manipur Students' Union, who are generally antagonistic forces come together to carry out raids on the trades and shops of immigrant traders, in the name of a collective identity. And women giving birth to maximum children are being rewarded for their contribution to this 'collective identity', thus contributing to vigilante activism. And Ms. Haripriya here attempts to caution against such vigilante trajectories of popular movements and to question notions of the 'collective' that comes out of such fallouts of the popular movements.

Paula Banerjee began with underlining the fractures condition of popular movements in Tripura. In the 60s and 70s, there was the struggle between the indigenous community and the Bengali community, and within the Bengali community, there were tensions between the Hindus and Muslims. Tripura has been a great victory of the Left; Dr. Banerjee recounts how without military deployment of any great extent, violence in the state was controlled. Tripura is generally held up as the epitome of good governance in the North East. But there are all kinds of tensions, violence and subversions simmering under the facade of good governance and peace. Particularly in terms of the feminist movement, Dr. Banerjee talks about how there is no women's movement in Tripura at all. There is a lot of funding available to women in Tripura, and women are encouraged to participate in formal governance. But participation in formal spheres has left no informal space for movements or protests. Such spaces are subsumed within the structures of good governance. So what kind of popularity are we left contemplating in Tripura, questions Dr. Banerjee.

Panel Discussion on *North East in the Post Look East Era*

Chair: Bharat Bhushan

The second session entailed another panel discussion on 'North East in the Post Look East Era' with Mr. Bharat Bhushan, Editor of Catch News, serving as moderator. The four speakers who contributed to the discussion were Dr. Sanjay Barbora from TISS Guwahati, Tongam Rina of the Arunachal Times, Akum Longchari from Morung Express, and Professor Dolly Kikon from the University of Melbourne.

The discussion opened with Mr. Bhushan sharing his own knowledge and opinions about the Look/Act East policy undertaken by the Government of India. With reference to the name of workshop, he comments that the North East is beyond the reach of logistics and infrastructure. In terms of implementation of the policy, he enquires into the conditions on the ground. His own conversations with various people in both Delhi and the North East only served to reinforce his previous assertion. He cites several examples to validate his stand. The road from More to Tamu and beyond does not serve its purpose. According to a citizen of the North East, one cannot go to Champai using that road; one needs to avail a helicopter or it could take two days to get there. Of the proposed India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, the 120 km stretch between Kalewa and Yagyi is yet to be constructed. Of the 71 bridges that form part of the India Myanmar Friendship Road, 2 are being renovated by Myanmar. Renovation work on the rest 69 is yet to be undertaken by India. None of the major projects under Look/Act East are complete and in actuality, there is no looking east at least till 2020, avers Mr. Bhushan. He reasons that sea routes will remain most important in terms of India's connectivity to the East, primarily because of lack of inland connectivity within the North East. He talks of three levels of disconnect – between North East and countries and regions of the East, between North East and mainstream India, and within North East India. Focussing on the policy, he makes certain other salient observations and suggestions. The Look/Act East policy does not meaningfully engage the local actors and there is a need for the development of mechanisms that will foment such engagement, and for involving local actors in foreign policy formulations. Governments and politicians in the North East are far too corrupt, and such influence needs to be checked. North East does not have the entrepreneurial and technical skills to take advantage of the policy, and such skills need to be cultivated in the region. The North East has to discover ways of generating revenue to reduce dependency on central government funds, and find ways to manage insurgency violence within the region which is proving a major hurdle to real development in the North East. No business, no projects can take place in the North East until extortionist taxes are paid to the insurgents. Myanmar traders are reluctant to trade with Indian traders at More; there are no shops on the Indian side of the border not just because of poor road connectivity but because of security reasons. The arteries of trade and commerce cannot be built without control of insurgency in the region.

Discussant: Sanjay Barbora

The discussion was carried forward by Sanjay Barbora who reminisced about his experience as a provincial academic at a Chinese conference on the One Belt One Road initiative undertaken by China. His participation at the event changed his perspective on the Look/Act East policy and he now approaches it from the point of view of building bridges. These bridges have to be intellectual and political ones. When we talk about extending relations beyond logistics and infrastructure, there is a need to rebuild political and intellectual bridges, asserts Dr. Barbora. In the 80s and the 90s, the intellectual connections formed during the human rights and civil liberties movement gave us an idea about the Indian state

and the people who constitute that state. What Dr. Barbora finds most instructive are his fact finding missions, whether in the North east or outside, the first of which was in 1995. It was then that he came across the conceptual categories of semi-feudal, semi-colonial and semi-capitalist within India. He expressed his surprise at his Assamese nationalist friends' identification with the Naxalite movement. For the first time, he states, it felt like India was okay about breaking up. We needed a theoretical idea that made it possible to be okay with the collapse of the state. There is no bridge between the 90s and the present. The question to ponder on at the present is why, despite so many initiatives by the politicians and the government, is it so difficult to construct a road in the Northeast. It is not about extracting one's pound of flesh, says Dr. Barbora; it is a fundamental quarrel between people who seek equality in the eyes of law and people who seek autonomy. While he himself does not have the answer to the question, he has come to realize through experience that our questions have to be more nuanced, that we have to be patient and we must learn to listen when others speak. The settler from the plains is not always the enemy, nor is the army truck; it is the neighbour that turns out to be the enemy, rues Dr. Barbora. Comparing Assam to apartheid South Africa, he talks about how in Assam, people have learned to live together separately. But a fact finding mission in 1998 and a conversation with a *dalit* person led him to also ponder on the question of the Northeast's desire for separation, because of the significant need for solidarity ultimately. No matter where we look, explains Dr. Barbora, eventually what remains most important is human relations.

Discussant: Tongam Rina

The second speaker was Tongam Rina who provided snippets into conditions of Arunachal Pradesh in the post Look/Act East era, admitting openly that she as a resident of the North East did not accord it the same significance that mainstream Indian politics did. The policy is still an enigma of sorts for people in Arunachal in terms of both its implementation and its benefits. The people have to do what the state government tells them to, and the state government in turn, is subservient to the Indian government. Arunachal Pradesh being a sensitive border state has closed almost all its border trade points; of 12, only 1 with Myanmar is functional. In Arunachal Pradesh, people speak Hindi fluently and converse with each other in Hindi rather than in their mother tongue, and while Tongam Rina admits that the situation is shameful, it is how it is. She talks about how resources are wasted every year on building roads over and over again, that are functional only for 4 months in a year, and get washed away in landslides during the monsoons. The biodiversity of the region is adversely affected and there is no recognition of the fact that the terrain is just not suitable to such infrastructure projects, even if faulty engineering is overlooked. While land is community owned in Arunachal, the state government regulates the water resources, and between 2007-2015, a 142 hydropower projects were signed. She mentions how following the Chinese initiation of a hydropower project in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, the Indian and Arunachal Pradesh governments have become keen to initiate similar projects in the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra. These projects also foment violence within the region. The crux of her argument is that the local people have no say in any of the plans and the projects associated with the Look/Act East policy, the benefits of which are yet to be sampled. The local people should be the decision makers, argues Rina, and they need not be instructed what to do with their resources. How they utilize their resources, to what purpose and what extent are matters that they can address for themselves.

Discussant: Akum Longchari

For Akum Longchari, the question of language is important. Are we prepared to engage in a conversation where we try to understand each other's languages, he asks. The Look East policy is confined to meetings and conferences where experts come and talk about our people and resources. Our own people are not sure what the policy means, he says, but the demographics of our region is changing because of it. It concerns us but we have no voices. Who is the policy for and from whose perspective was it framed, enquires the speaker. Nagaland state is a result of war and has created wars. The Indian state has used structures of violence to develop infrastructure to the extent that governments created as security apparatus have become entrenched in violence. However, resolution will come only through engagement with these structures. Through the Look/Act East policy, violence is being legitimised, but there have been parallel alternate initiatives taken by the community. The village republics are reaching out to each other. Love Burma mission is reaching out to people on both sides of the border. People are at the centre of this process, but not at the centre of the Look East policy. Mr. Longchari talks of a community based organisation that provides midday meals for 19,000 children as opposed to the government's provision for 15,000. One initiative is people centred, while the other cares for goals and infrastructure. However, though the people of Nagaland have a shared experience of dehumanization, rehumanization efforts are fractured, rues the speaker, for they are working under the rights based structure of violence created by the Indian state, wherein the contest between state and community becomes a contest between communities. However, such structures are not permanent or asymmetric federalism would not exist. Akum Longchari stresses the need to transcend the framework of competing rights and engage with values of justice that pertain to all of humanity. We must connect with each other in ways that make it viable for us to create a shared imagination such that we ourselves emerge as the makers of a Look East policy.

Discussant: Dolly Kikon

The final speaker to put forth her point was Professor Dolly Kikon. She talked about one of her previous articles, where her anger at the Look/Act East policy was blatantly expressed, for contributing to unsettled political, economic and social conditions of life and violence in the Northeast region. With time, her thinking has become more nuanced, the anger less palpable, but nonetheless, she continues to be critical about the Look/Act East policy. Continuing her previous line of argument, she talks about how development projects in the North East are packaged as economic interventions to improve the lives of people, but are detached from militarised ground realities. These initiatives to rebuild post-conflict societies mainly focus on training entrepreneurs and promoting livelihood schemes while overlooking how violence has transformed the very foundation of these societies. In the name of economic development, the indigenous cultures are being reduced to mere commodities, and even the cultural festivals such as the Naga Hornbill Festival come to signify the purely representational value of such a commodity. Herein Dolly Kikon brings forth an analogy with Susan Buckmore's concept of the 'spectacle' which Buckmore uses to analyse Baudelaire's descriptions of Paris. She explains how the visual aspect of the Look East policy works by transforming development projects into spectacles, with the people of the region are promised pleasure from simply looking at the proposed roads and highways, but reap no actual benefits. Thus, argues the speaker, the phantasmagoria aspect of commerce and capital associated with the Look East policy serves to deceive the people of the region about infrastructural development.

Priya Singh concluded the programme with the vote of thanks.

Research and Collaborative Workshop 2018

Logistics, Global Governance and India's Look East Policy

A Collaborative Workshop in association with
Department of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University

20 March, 2018

Venue: BN Sasmal Hall, Vidyasagar University (Midnapore, West Bengal)

Inaugural Session

Sibaji Pratim Basu welcomed all the delegates of the workshop along with the students and scholars of Vidyasagar University and the members of the Calcutta Research Group. He offered a special welcome to Prof. Swaran Singh from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Professor Gurudas Das from the National Institute of Technology, Silchar for joining the workshop. He emphasized various infrastructural projects currently underway between India, South Asia and Southeast Asia and the significance of the Look East policy. He noted that in the current scenario themes like connectivity, global governance, logistics were of immense significance and that the workshop would provide an opportunity for students to get acquainted with these themes.

Ranjan Chakrabarti, Vice Chancellor at Vidyasagar University started with congratulating the Department of Political Science with Rural Administration of Vidyasagar University and the collaborators – Calcutta Research Group and Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung for organizing the unique workshop. He highlighted that workshops such as this one were encouraged at the University to provide students with the opportunity to be acquainted with themes outside the scope of their syllabus. He also talked about various schemes that were being undertaken at the Vidyasagar University for the students including the developed of student facilities on mobile platform. He welcomed the initiative of organizing the joint workshop which he said would benefit both the faculty and students. He officially inaugurated the workshop.

Anita Sengupta, Director at Calcutta Research Group briefly summarized the project A Social Mapping of Infrastructure, Logistics and India's Look East Policy. She noted that the project examines a specific Indian logistic vision, the Look or Act East Policy within the larger framework of Asian connectivity. It argues that the 21st century will be a century of infrastructural alliances, which will restructure the nature of global governance as large cross border infrastructural projects will bring into question the sanctity of sovereign national borders. Look/Act East and for that matter, India's larger logistic policies would have to be considered within this framework of new logistical spaces.

The Look East Policy was initiated as part of the country's economic restructuring in the 1990's and raised questions that were largely developmental in their focus. What were the economic resources available in a region known for extractive industries like tea, coal and oil? How would the exploration of new resources transform an unruly, insurgent frontier? And an important focus that emerged from these and other discussions over the last two decades was the question of connectivity. The region's isolation, which extends at various levels – to its relations with societies to its east, between the Northeast and mainland India

and within the Northeast--was an issue that went beyond logistics to an understanding of who defines Look East as a policy and how it is lived, a lack of engagement with the structures of power and a consequent legitimization of violence.

Look East (later termed Act East) developed within multiple contexts and envisaged bridging Southeast Asian nations through Northeast India. The policy had several underpinnings for the spaces within the region, as the resources of the region were mapped, allotted and extracted, while infrastructural expansions were planned through construction of railways, roads and airways. It therefore essentially entailed expansion of the government and separate Northeast windows became operational in almost every ministry with the Ministry of Development of Northeast Region (DONER) as the apex body to coordinate various schemes.

Logistical expansion had three components: (a) connecting the East firmly with the Northeast; (b) opening up villages and far-flung areas through new institutions (schools, colleges, banks, offices, communication networks) in the process releasing a new set of conflicts around massive displacements, homeland demands, anti-migrant measures and (c) opening up to South East Asia. Since logistical expansion was seen as a post-conflict measure it impacted upon both logistical governance as well as the 'subject' of logistics as a part of social governance.

The project also took into account the fact that Asia today epitomizes the classic tension between proposed transnational networks that signify a borderless and seamless flow of commodity, information and capital and large scale undocumented immigration that attests to the more complex mobilities that individuals traverse. The interface of logistics and mobility has therefore been an important topic of discussion in the course of the project with attempts to examine what happens to people beyond logistics. It is a given that social, cultural and material infrastructure shape the attitude of different segments of society and that mobilities in their turn shape logistics thereby indicating a delicate balance where the flow of labour and capital and incidents of social turmoil are often intrinsically linked. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the resultant Baluch protests is a classic recent example of what to expect in case of a disconnect and the resultant identity anxiety of the local population. Similarly the Rohingya crisis cannot be understood without an appreciation of the infrastructural framework that is being designed for the entire neighbourhood extending across South and South East Asia.

Session 1: Connectivity and Corridor

Chair: Ambarish Mukhopadhyay

Swaran Singh (*Connectivity as defining future of India's Look East policy*)

Swaran Singh, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University delivered a lecture on '*Connectivity as defining future of India's Look East policy*'. He initiated by examining the fact that India's northeast region that shares over 5,400 km long borders with neighbour nations shares just about 25 km wide corridor (chickens neck) with mainland India. What makes matters complex is their difficult physical terrain and enormous diversity that has resulted in multiple states being formed and several other successions simmering all over. Economic corridor basically seeks to connect investors, entrepreneurs and workforce to markets and resources and then make these nodes part of regional or even global supply chains to achieve rapid but sustainable development for all stakeholders. China unilaterally heralding Belt and Road Initiative by appropriating several existing connectivity projects like those that were being taken by the BCIM Regional Forum has made India stay away from BRI. But this has also resulted in India accelerating some of its own 'connectivity' projects like the Trilateral

Expressway (involving India, Bangladesh, Myanmar) or Kaladan Multi Model Transport project connecting ports across Bay of Bengal. India has also revived its BBIN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal) transport corridor as also to build rail connectivity amongst all its provincial capitals in the Northeast which is slated to be set in motion by 2020. It is the increasing comparison with China that has since come to be the biggest detriment of connectivity initiatives of India's Look East policy even though it has since been upgraded to Act East policy with hyperactive pace of visits both to India's northeastern region as also between India and Southeast. Presence of national leaders of all the ten members of Association of South East Asian National as chief guests for the 2018 Republic Day celebrations this January no doubt reflects this new enthusiasm for connecting people and processes from both sides and these, to broad base these covering a whole lot of sectors as also to ground these in their historical connect of culture and commerce. But China's high speed mega projects often make these India-ASEAN projects look small and slow as also have impacted their shine. But reverse is also true. With forever unpredictable president Donald Trump and increasingly assertive Xi Jinping, India and ASEAN have also found added reasons to come together and that reflects increasing focus of New Delhi in integrating Northeast into its Act East policy and most recent elections results have even removed the old disjunction between different ruling parties being in power in New Delhi and northeastern provinces. It is possible to see increasing number of flights connecting northeast to mainland cities as also infrastructure projects across northeastern region. As regards China, India continuing to stay away from BRI has downed upon Beijing of the critical significance of India in bringing both commercial viability as also political legitimacy which has seen greater cultivation of India by various Chinese interlocutors. There are also voices in India that wish New Delhi would be selective in benefiting from China's BRI by participating where it can and not throw baby with the bathwater. Its likely that coming times will see India joining BRI but on its own terms which is expected to provide a further boost to building India's connectivity, especially of its northeastern region, with much of Southeast Asia. But that may also be far in future and a potential not so easy to harness given the track record of China-India relations.

Raj Kumar Kothari (*India's Asia Pacific Strategy: A Bridge to the Asian Neighborhood*)

Prof. Raj Kumar Kothari was the next speaker. His paper titled "*India's Asia Pacific Strategy: A Bridge to the Asian Neighborhood*". He began by recalling the early 1990s, when globalisation of the world economies intensified international competition and at the same time gave rise to a new wave of regionalism. India's rapid economic growth and international and regional economic challenges motivated the Indian policy makers to forge a policy that aimed to bring the Asia Pacific region closer. In view of China's unaccounted rise in the arena of world politics, India decided to play a greater strategic role in the Asia-Pacific region through deepening links with countries like Japan, Vietnam and Australia along with the whole of Southeast Asia. China's overwhelming presence in the Indian Ocean and her assertiveness in maritime diplomacy in East Asia in recent years have reinforced the importance of an enhanced Indian role in the Southeast Asia in particular and Asia-Pacific region in general. It is in this backdrop, the paper aims to focus on New Delhi's Asia-Pacific strategy with special emphasis on the tenure of Narendra Modi. Prof. Kothari focused on three phases of the Asia Pacific strategic developments. The first phase dealt with the historical background that reshaped the strategic outlook of India's foreign policy to include Look East policy. He mentioned that development of India's relation with ASEAN during the 90s. It introduced a magnificent change in the strategy for Southeast Asian nations leading to Act East policy. The second phase included discussion on objectives behind adopting the policy measure of Look East policy. He emphasized on the maritime security, economic and

cultural relations through strengthening of relations between India and Southeast Asia. He mentioned Islamic radicalism and Chinese expansion over South China Sea as major challenges for India's foreign policy. Myanmar's ongoing crisis is another challenge for Indian leadership to stabilize the region. He highlighted the Sino-Russian relations to be a game changer for the Asia Pacific regional geopolitics. The third phase dealt with India's domestic political development as the reactive measure to promote the strategic importance of Southeast Asian and Asia Pacific stability for India's international security aspects culminating into Look East Policy. He emphasized that Northeast of India should act as the gearing measure for India's foreign policy through Look East policy.

Priya Singh (*India in the connectivity matrix*)

Priya Singh, Research and Programme Associate at CRG presented a paper titled '*India in the connectivity matrix*'. She began by noting that contemporary international relations are fixated with the term connectivity. Connectivity projects that construct new logistical expanses encompass frontier regions and link outlying areas have come to characterize global politics. The magnitude of these ambitious ventures at connectivity encourages comparisons with similar initiatives that exemplified the geopolitics of Europe and the Atlantic in the 20th century. In this context the chapter attempts at engaging in a dialogue with various representations of connectivity with an emphasis on the Chinese and Indian connectivity projects but at the same time keeping abreast of the American, Turkish, Japanese, Korean and the Russian ones. It seeks to locate the region within the larger continental framework with a definite role for India and emphasizes the importance of policy connectivity in complementing infrastructural connectivity. The focus of the chapter is on mapping and analyzing the scope, vision and impact of Indian and Chinese transnational infrastructural projects. The individuality of the projects and their competitive nature is sought to be conceptualized. Attention is given to India's Act East Policy highlighting the interfaces, intersections and overlaps between India's Northeast and Southeast Asia in terms of connectivity projects. Similarly, the Go West Policy advocated by the Indian government is given consideration with its focus on diversifying linkages with West Asia, mapping connectivity projects and the security architecture. The importance of the sub regional-moment in connectivity is sought to be addressed. The gap between rhetoric and reality, the vision and its implementation is kept in mind. While mapping contemporary connectivity projects is the focal point of the chapter the historical backdrop in the form of spontaneous, pre-meditated linkages provide for the framework upon which constructed connectivity projects (with the accompanying disconnectedness) of the age of sovereign nation-states are contextualized and analyzed.

Swatilekha Bhattacharya (*BCIM: Cooperation & Challenges*)

Ms. Swatilekha Bhattacharya, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University continued the session with her presentation on '*BCIM: Cooperation & Challenges*'. She said that proposed Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar-Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) involving four nations has generated much interests as well as concerns. One of the major policy initiatives among national governments in Asia in recent years is directed towards developing sub-regional, regional and trans-regional corridors with the aim to further connect and integrate their economies. The forum sought to create a platform for discussion among the major stakeholders regarding issues concerning trade and growth in the region, strengthen cooperation and institutionalize the arrangements to deepen BCIM ties. Issues relating to ethnic insurgencies, refugee crisis, drug smuggling has the potential to derail the project. The project has not seen much activity

in recent years owing to the reluctance of the stakeholders to effectively address these concerns. The proposed corridor failed to receive the encouragements of the governments that it required and instead remained a Track II (unofficial) initiative for a long time. Within this context, this paper attempts to understand the current status of the corridor and assesses whether it has managed to break the long impasse that has plagued it for so long. Prof. Ambarish Mukhopadhyay (Chair) concluded the session with his remarks on the difference between the Look East policy and Act East policy. He argued that one of the ways of initiating economic development of Northeast India could be by developing the tourism industry, and here connectivity would be crucial. The importance of the Northeast in terms of connectivity would bridge the gap between the mainland and northeastern India.

Session 2: Logistics and Look East

Gurudas Das (Cross-border logistic expansion under 'Act East Policy' in the light of Development Interest of Northeast)

The cross-border logistical expansion under India's Act East policy has assumed an added significance following the declaration of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2014. Although long before the official declaration of BRI, India, along with Thailand and Myanmar, conceived a regional cross-country road connectivity project popularly known as India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Highway in 2002, Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transportation Project (KMTTP) in 2008, Trans-Asia Railway in 2012—with an objective to provide conflict-ridden land-locked Northeastern Region (NER) connectivity outlets across the eastern borders in order to address its development predicaments, the former (BRI) has further opened up the possibility of establishing another overland connectivity in the form of Bangladesh-China India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor. The presentation focused on the impact of IMT Highway and BCIM-EC on the economic development of NER. It also intends to focus on the greatest challenge before the Act East Policy in terms of logistical expansion that will likely to address the development predicaments of NER in a more effective way. It seeks to argue that playing out of a greater role in global governance would likely to enable India to carve out an India-Bangladesh Economic Corridor connecting Kolkata and Northeastern Region which would serve as the best lifeline for NER in terms of reduction of transportation cost that has made the regional products less competitive.

Sevak Kumar Jana (*India's Look East policy: Some aspects of Trade & Logistics*)

India's 'Look East Policy', formulated first during 1991-96, is an effort to forge extensive economic and strategic relations with the nations of Asia-Pacific region. India's relation and trade with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have improved rapidly and dramatically in recent years. With host of bilateral agreements, India has established strong commercial, cultural and military ties with (ASEAN) member states. India has signed Comprehensive Economic and Cooperation Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the Governments of Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Japan. A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in services and investment was signed with the ASEAN in September 2014. The establishment of ASEAN economic community (AEC) in 2015 was a great achievement towards greater regional integration of the economies. Currently ASEAN is India's 4th largest trading partner and India is ASEAN's 7th largest trading partner. On the other hand, logistics sector is now accepted as one of the core pillars of economic development and the logistics in international trade and domestic trade is central to the economic growth and competitiveness of an economy. India ranks 35th in the world in terms of Logistics Performance Index (LPI). East Asian economies have been performing well in terms of LPI. The presentation attempted to define the status of India's international trade with the

ASEAN economies. It also discusses the current situation of logistics in the ASEAN economies with particular reference to India.

Suratha Kumar Malik (*India's Look East policy and the Northeast: Challenges ahead*)

Since the early 1990s, India has been seeking to situate the country's troubled Northeast at the heart of what eventually evolved into its so-called 'Look East' policy. For India, using the Northeast region to link up with the East Asian economies holds an allure similar to that of icing on a cake: it could end the long decades of isolation for the remote region and turn it into a strategic bridge giving India access to the East. The end of the region's multiple insurgencies and violent homeland agitations that led to militarization eating into vital resources that could be more gainfully used for development, is a prospect welcomed by any regime in Delhi: success in conflict resolution in an area 'that looks less and less India and more and more like the highlands of South-east Asia'. The fate of the Northeast appears inextricably tied to the Look East policy, especially in the coming days. Increased trade and connectivity will rapidly transform the region by rescuing it from the clutches of insurgency, ethnic conflict and sub-nationalism, and place it in the broader network of power, capital and markets. This stream of activities would supposedly make the multiple fault lines of the region disappear. However, prior to raising our expectations about the often termed 'troubled periphery', let's first understand the complications and impediments in Northeast India. With this backdrop, this paper focuses on the considerable hurdles and limitations encountered in carrying forward India's 'Look East' through Northeast policy and especially looking the problems caused by the nature of physical terrain, ethnic variations, the history of violent conflicts in the region, the poor state of transport infrastructure and local industries in Northeast India through which India has to access other ASEAN countries by land.

Conclusion

Prof. Sibaji Pratim Basu (Chair) concluded the session with his remarks stating that OBOR has the strength to provide opportunity for widespread economic development; but at the same time, its implementation is hindered by challenges such as great power rivalries, domestic constraints and tensions in China's neighborhood.

Dr. Anita Sengupta shared her experience and views on the research workshop followed by a vote of thanks by Ankita Manna, Research & Programme Assistant, Calcutta Research Group. Dr. Sengupta distributed certificates to the participants.



International Conference
on
Infrastructure across Frontiers
Logistics, Governance and
Society



International Conference 2018

Infrastructure Across Frontiers Logistics, Governance and Society

2 September 2018

Venue: Raas Manch, Swabhumi
89 C, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sarani, Kolkata, West Bengal 700054

The inaugural session commenced with introductory remarks by Anita Sengupta. She began the session by recalling the three year journey of this project. The project examines a specific Indian logistic vision for the Look or Act East Policy within the larger framework of Asian connectivity. The 21st century is a century of infrastructural alliances and which has restructured global governance. Beginning with the cartographies of connectivity in the Asian context, it went on to examine regional connectivity corridors, trade partnerships and preferential economic arrangements and the financialization of infrastructure and the construction of a seamless Asia through an examination of Asian infrastructural funding. It included two studies that examined Kolkata and the port of Kolkata as the logistical hub in the Look East policy. It then brought to the forefront possible fault lines that require policy engagement. Within this context it examined frontier towns in the Northeast, emerging conflicts and social governance and the question of mobility. During 2016-2017, 12 researchers have been part of the project working on 10 themes. More importantly 27 experts have been involved in the project enriching its content.

Ranabir Samaddar, in his inaugural address shared his views on reading infrastructure in terms of social infrastructure unlike the way it has been dealt with in post-colonial West Bengal where development has been the priority. He distinguished between the usual infrastructural studies and social infrastructural studies and proposed questioning the legitimacy of human development reports that caused a disparity between human developmental norms and the actual situation. He discussed the paradoxical situation of West Bengal where in one hand we may find masses of people who values education and on the other hand we may find an exploitative educational system where teacher-student ratio is unequal and many students have been deprived from their educational rights. The social infrastructure also carries the same legitimating concern as educational. He questioned how long this paradoxical situation of governance and society will run and then he brought the age old debate of the need of educational infrastructure at the cost of rent. Samaddar exclaimed that the rent seeking behaviour marginalises the productive capacity of any social infrastructure. The locational choice of any infrastructure should be at the point of production and circulation and the value of rent should not be taken into consideration till the infrastructure hold enormous capacity of production. He concluded with a quote from Marx's volume of capital which emphasises the need of capital for the formulation of productive infrastructure.

Panel Discussion I: **Politics of Infrastructure: Agencies and Interests**

Moderator: Bishnu Mohapatra, Forum on Contemporary Theory, Baroda

China's Belt and Road Initiative: A South Asian Perspective and a Case for Harmony with India's Act East Policy

Subir Bhaumik,

Subir Bhaumik, eminent journalist initiated the discussion of China's Belt and Road Initiative in a global perspective. China's geographical deficiency has been tried to overcome by its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Despite being a vast nation, China has a very small coastline and therefore as the Chinese economy grew, in order to maximise imports and exports, China looked for more access to the oceans. Mr. Bhaumik said that Belt and Road Initiative has evolved out of various interactive processes with the frontier states of China, such as Yunnan. It is not like the "Look East Act East" policy of India, which is largely top down and is not a result of a consultative process. In terms of its scale of infrastructure, nothing can compare to the Belt and Road Initiative. He defined three allegations that have been levelled against the Belt and Road Initiative. Firstly, as part of the BRI, the partner nations have undertaken a number of infrastructural projects which is extremely costly. For example, the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka has turned out to be an extremely expensive project for the Sri Lankan government and also the projects taken up in Cambodia have used up a large part of the GDP and the Malaysian government had to cancel BRI projects as they were failing to fund them. These nations have been driven into a "debt trap". Secondly, various projects under the BRI have a military angle. He gave another example of the Gwadar Port which cannot be seen just for the purpose of trade, it also has strategic significance for China. Thirdly, when the projects are under construction, the Chinese use their own labour, therefore countries like Bangladesh raise the question as to where their own labour would go? China has realised that if its vision to create a New Silk Route is to succeed then these allegations by the other countries have to be dealt with, the process of building the Silk Route cannot be China centric and the problems of the other nations have to be dealt with by use of dialogues. He have another example of South Asia. All South Asian, except India and Bhutan had signed to join the Belt and Road Initiative. Though many problems have been raised by states, Nepal cancelled a project and so has Pakistan, however despite the existence of differences no State has withdrawn from the BRI, which is a problem for India. He noted that India also has serious issues with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it passes through Pakistan administered Kashmir but China is insistent on India joining the BRI. In 2018 after the last Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping summit, the Chinese officially stated that having addressed all of India's issues, India is ready to join the BRI. India is a part of the BCIM Economic Corridor, and the BCIM is a part and parcel of the BRI. The BCIM has not been given enough attention by the countries involved. Bhaumik concluded with a statement of Ram Madhav that "We don't mind allowing Chinese investment in the North East". This could be seen as the operationalisation of the BCIM. He stated it could also be seen as the harmonisation of the BRI with a look of the "Look East Act East" Policy.

The Long Road to Urban Infrastructure Projects

Mouleshri Vyas

Mouleshri Vyas, faculty at TISS Mumbai started discussion from the point of intersection of development practices and community practices and the newer concern of social accountability with regard to social infrastructure. Her paper focuses on three aspects of

huge multi-agency urban infrastructure projects – First, the backdrop of these projects and their fallouts which is termed as internal urban displacement, second, the setup of multi-agency projects and third, the social accountability for these projects. Cities have witnessed expansion of roads, railways and flyovers at an unimaginable scale. She took the example of Mumbai where TISS conducted a Social Impact Assessment study of the Mumbai Transport expansion and its social, economic and political dynamics. The whole idea of these projects was to make the cities clean and shining. As part of these infrastructural projects, people were moved to new locations, nine thousand households were affected by road and railway expansion, as land in the cities was taken over by government agencies for infrastructural projects. People were relocated to colonies in different parts of the cities. The social impact of this displacement was that the entire community had to be rebuilt. The social capital was lost as children dropped out of school and adjustments had to be made with the new neighbours. Political capital was also in disarray as people were delinked from their local leaders. There was generated a complex web of activities as people had to rebuilt their whole lives. She added that the setup of multiagency projects includes the MMRDA, an organ of the state government which coordinates projects, and also includes the Mumbai Municipal Corporation, the contractors and builders who make such projects, the NGOs who maintain close communication with the community and the elected representatives of the people of the respective areas who do not have a say in such projects as these projects are not a consultative effort. However, none of these organisations can work in isolation and have to coordinate and communicate with each other and we must remember that all these agencies are resource bound and time bound. Individuals, who are affected by displacement, generally are left in a confused state as to who they should approach for addressing their problems as there is no single source of authority in these multi agency projects and the fallout of this is that people have to interact with different authorities at different points of time. Then she exclaimed the last aspect as social accountability. She argued the government has to be responsible to the displaced people in order to fulfil democratic and human rights. However, the question remains that how the state can responsible if the while process is fragmented and outsourced. Finally end with the suggestion that the grievances should be addressed affectively at the neighbourhood level by means of sunwai, jaankaari, janatakamanch and prasar, which could be proved as effective principles to maintain social accountability in urban infrastructure projects.

Challenges emanating from Competing International Transshipment Ports in Sri Lanka and India

K. M. Parivelan

K. M. Parivelan, Associate Professor at TISS Mumbai started with the note that India and Sri Lanka are countries which have been historically well connected with each other. Coming to the topic he said that the construction of the Hambantota Port of Sri Lanka as part of the Chinese BRI has drawn a series of problems such as debt trap and displacement of people. However, the Indian government in order to compete with the Hambantota Port planned the construction of the mega infrastructural project, the Enayam Port which was to be an East-West Port, this was resisted by the local population of the region of Kanyakumari as it was a densely populated area and the construction would also be detrimental to the ecological diversity. He pointed to a Social Impact Assessment study that had been undertaken by TISS in twelve coastal villages which would be affected by the Enayam Port and summarised the results of the study.

The people in these villages held houses and had access to drinking water, sanitation and electricity. The population density of these villages were very high, there was unemployment as well as outwards migration. Culturally, there was a religious dichotomy between the Hindus and the Christians of the region. People in the region also believed that if the port was constructed, there would also be impact on agriculture. Natives who supported the construction of the port had favourable arguments such as, creation of employment opportunities, growth of import-export trade of India, improvement in the standard of living of people in that region and improvement in the border security. As the port would be constructed to counter the Hambantota Port, it would be strategically very valuable and thus would improve the security conditions in the region. The arguments against the Port were the deterioration of soil quality, and the loss of social cohesion due to displacement, in the communities which were hitherto well knit. Alternative demands that were raised by the people were that, the location of the port should be altered and people of the region should be consulted before the investment is made. It is the high level of Chinese investment in Sri Lanka which makes India take part in such projects but these projects affect the people in a number of social, political and economic ways is something that is forgotten while these infrastructural projects are planned.

Infrastructure Financing in India, Role of IFIs'

Madhuresh Kumar

Madhuresh Kumar, Activist at National Alliance of People's Movement initiated with a comparison of infrastructure creation with the development. He said, people think if there is growth of infrastructure, there will be development. However, it should not be seen as that. The question should be what is the social impact of these infrastructural projects? He continued with the example, that, in order to fund the infrastructural projects which India has been planning to undertake an investment of 230 billion rupees needs to be made. Every year, 9% of the GDP has to be completely devoted to infrastructure building, 5% of the GDP has been devoted to these projects. A number of Industrial corridors are being planned in India, such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, Chennai-Vizag Industrial Corridor, Bangalore-Mumbai Industrial Corridor etc. Japan, France, Belgium and UK have invested in many of such corridors. Other infrastructural projects are - Project Bharatmala which aims to create a 420,000 kilometre highway. The Project Sagarmala aims to create an amalgam of 150 Coastal Economics Zones projects which have been decided without proper social analysis. These Coastal Economic Zones are not economically viable as there is not enough sea traffic to sustain these planned ports. Another project is the creation of National Waterways which will be an interconnection of 106 waterways in India, however no proper planning has been entered into with regard to this.

Currently, the World Bank has been investing in sanitation, agriculture and education in India. Other IFIs such as IFC, ADB, AIIB, NDB, US EXIM have invested majorly in energy and infrastructure sectors. A mega project which has received a very high investment by Singapore is the building of the Capital City of Andhra Pradesh, Amravati. This project will negatively impact the environment of the region and livelihood of the people. There is expected to be deforestation and involuntary resettlement of the people inhabiting the area. The Bullet Train from Mumbai to Ahmedabad is another major project.

The concerns which he raised with respect to these mega projects are related to the social as well as economic costs. A major environmental threat is posed by these projects- 80,000 trees would need to be cut and the stability of agriculture will be affected. He concluded by saying that the projects are not economically viable as too many projects have been planned in the same place for example, two ports are planned within a distance of 35 kilometres and there is not enough traffic to sustain these ports. The economic corridors and bullet train have also been planned in the same area. Thus, it is the people who will have to declare that they do not need such projects.

BishnuMahapatra opened the session for comments and questions. He reflected the light on the nature of Indian democracy which knows what is really needed and what is perhaps done. He stated that although India's electoral democracy is doing well but the nature of public democracy is oligarchic. The oligarchic nature of democracy on the face of election and institutional mechanism is fairly ineffective. He included the Marxian era of Capital volume- II, where there was a particular way of thinking infrastructure which had concealed labour as a component of infrastructural development. And the final argument that he made is that the way Indian states look at the institution of development which is nothing but infrastructural development is a mere politics and should be depoliticised.

Panel Discussion II: Beyond the Cosmopolitan: Infrastructure, Connectivity and Development

Moderator: Manish Jha, Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure in Rural India

Ishita Dey

Ishita Dey started by saying that infrastructure largely has been an urban question and most of rural India is devoid of infrastructure and it is only the impact on the rural areas which is studied. A question which she raised is the relationship between the rural areas and infrastructural development and why is there a pressure on rural populations to shift to renewable sources of energy while for the urban population there is an attempt to connect to the grids. In rural areas there is a dichotomy between infrastructure and technology- there are bulbs but not electricity, pipes but not sewers etc. these gaps arise due to the politics of infrastructure. The four propositions that she presented are- first, Infrastructure as a method to study the rural, second, the infrastructure in particularly vulnerable tribal groups, third, the poetics around infrastructure, fourth, energy politics and infrastructure. By 'infrastructure as a method to study the rural' she deepened the knowledge of the village as a social base where infrastructure is being developed. She suggested that the villages need to be looked at as the object of inquiry and not simply the subject of inquiry. Researchers will have to understand how the villagers perceive, use and desire infrastructure. There are 75 tribes in India which have been categorised as 'particularly vulnerable tribal groups' and there has been an attempt to 'conserve' them and help them develop by means of infrastructure creation. For example, in a village in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, social

infrastructure such as schools have been built in order to help the tribe develop, however, the generalisation of the tribes across the length and breadth of the country who live in different ecological zones has been a great problem in their development. She added that poetics in infrastructure needs very little elaboration in contemporary times, irrespective of places we are greeted with a pair of glasses carrying the tagline of “Swacch Bharat” under the pet campaign of the current government, we see that toilets and sewer lines are being constructed in the country. A study of a gram sabha in Madhya Pradesh revealed that there is immense pressure in the villages to finish the construction of toilets. In Madhya Pradesh it was also seen that while trees have been cut down in forest to make roads, no investment has been made to increase public transport. Her proposed research aims to study the particularly vulnerable tribal village in Madhya Pradesh with respect to the decentralisation of infrastructural projects on one hand and the connectivity on the other hand.

Building Blocks, Talking about Guwahati's water-logging

Sanjay Barbora

Sanjay Barbora, Associate Professor at TISS Guwahati began with a description of Guwahati during the monsoons. He began by noting that when it rains torrentially, the cyclists, pedestrians and rickshaws try desperately to navigate through the rush of red water mixed with garbage that flows down from the hills to the cities. Sewer lines pretend to be rivers when it rains in Guwahati. He is anxious on the sight of these rains especially while he is driving and like most other citizens and he draw up a list of people who are responsible for maintenance of the city- the greedy builders, the corrupt metropolitan development authority, the Municipal Corporation, the redundant PWD, the useless government and ultimately the citizens who have no civic sense. Assamese intellectuals used to say that water-logging was good for Guwahati as it made us all socialists for a few hours discussing on the faltering infrastructure of the city. His brief talk is divided into two parts, in the first part he tried to suggest why the sight of waterlogged streets become such a compelling metaphor for helplessness of the people of Guwahati and second part, I listed the main actors who are responsible for this state of affairs. Any street which looks mundane on a normal day, takes a sinister shape when it is covered in an inch of water, he added that ‘it is hard to say how deep it can be and what could come a few steps ahead, there is also the possibility of getting stuck in live electric wires, and this worries the people of Guwahati.’ Water logging has also resulted in death for workers and school going children, as was the case last year. Till 2017, the compensation amount for the families of those who died in the city’s water logging was four lakh rupees which make people believe that there is nothing that can be done about it. Most deaths are followed by reprimands, some in the private sphere some in the corporate sphere and others are difficult to define. The public ones are easy enough as newspapers carry reports of people’s anger in Assamese and English. This is often followed by bureaucratic reshuffle. It is generally the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) and the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) that are blamed for the water logging problem in Guwahati. However according to the official mandates, it is the GMDA’s responsibility to overlook the maintenance of water bodies in the city. Moreover, GMDA’s corrupt practices have led to ruthless, illegal constructions in the city further worsening the problems during monsoon season.

Metro-polarities: Siliguri in the Grip of Neoliberal Transformation

Atig Ghosh

Atig Ghosh, Assistant Professor at Visvabharati University initiated the discussion by stating that Siliguri is a city in North Bengal which stands as a gateway to the North East of India. It is a heavily militarised area as it is the only existing land route to Sikkim and the North Eastern hilly regions. Because of its location, it has been a destination for investment not only from Indian sources but also international sources as an Asia Highway is being constructed here. The population of Siliguri is very high, according to the 2011 census, the population density of Siliguri was 11,000 persons per square kilometre. However, Siliguri cannot be taken as a case of sedentary urbanism. Its population mainly comprises of migrants and therefore, it has been termed as a “town in transit”. He included that a large part of the migrant population in Siliguri lives in slums and it has been proposed by the municipal authorities to create colonies in the fringes of the cities in order to relocate these migrants. Migrants in Siliguri range from trafficked persons to asylum seekers and it was proposed by India, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal to create a free trade zone in Siliguri in order to carry out trade without any restrictions. Therefore Siliguri shows characteristics of the North East of India rather than the rest of West Bengal as it is a heavily militarised area which is attracting internationalisation. The trade in Siliguri comprises of goods procured both in a legal as well as illicit manner, the migrant traders make massive profits from the trade that they carry out in Siliguri, however none of this profit is invested back in Siliguri. The Hong Kong market created originally for Partition refugees now is a huge outlet for Chinese made goods. Narcotics and weapons traffic is also carried out in Siliguri. The bazaar economy in Siliguri has not been transformed into capitalist markets. The metropolarities of Siliguri represent the futuristic archetype of a border city.

Politico-Ethnic Mood Swings and Infrastructural Developments in the Hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong

Anup Sekhar Chakraborty

Anup Sekhar Chakraborty stated that the time frame of his paper is from 2011 to 2017 but references from historical and archival sources have also been drawn in order to have a better understanding of the subject. He added, Darjeeling and Kalimpong have got distinct histories. Darjeeling came under colonial rule in the 1830s and Kalimpong came under colonial rule much later in the 1860s. According to archival reports, Darjeeling was called the cleanest city in the entire colonial place. In his paper, there is clear regimentation that had to be followed in Darjeeling. Darjeeling had specific rules for building bazaars, hospitals and houses. In 1884, spaces were worked out for dhobis, which showed that the colonial masters were also regimenting according to native class lines. Anup said that in contemporary times, the Gorkhas claim that hills are theirs but there exist a number of issues of infrastructure. There is a strong tendency to revive colonial regimentation and there is a campaign to “Make Darjeeling queen of the hills again”. There is a sanitisation drive in Darjeeling which the municipality has taken up and notices have been given to shopkeepers in various bazaars to shut down their shops as colonial drains run near these shops. The Tibetan hawkers who carried out their business from the Keventers to the Mall Road were also given notices to vacate the space as they did not pay taxes directly to the municipality. Shopkeepers are charged a hefty amount every month for garbage disposal. These sanitisation drives have

ultimately led to the coming up of malls by private business who are associated with political parties. According to Anup's findings the development in Darjeeling has shown some definite mood swings. Lastly he said that development means different things to different people and it is the society itself that sets up the issue of development.

Rural Infrastructure Connectivity and Development

Dilshaad Hossain

Dilshaad Hossain, Independent Researcher began by noting that infrastructure is generally believed to facilitated better living conditions for both urban as well as rural populations. In recent times however, increasing technological connectivity has led to development which is based on communal terms. She took the example of the recent communal tensions which took place in the Basirhat and Baduria region in June 2017 in West Bengal, which is believed to have been started by a social media message following which the place turned into an epicentre of violence. During this time she had visited the region and found the situation to be polarised. Introduction of technology in rural areas was supposed to help the technology divide and bring about increased connectivity and development. However, in addition to bringing about better communication it has also amplified the existence of rumours which had helped spreading riots throughout history, for example, in the Revolt of 1857, rumours played a very important role in spreading the Revolt against the British. The current trend of circulating morphed pictures and videos on social media has played a very important role in spreading communal violence. She said that during the Basirhat episode, a number of morphed images were circulated, for example, an image of couple being thrashed and taken up by the police was circulated stating that they were the parents of the accused, while in reality no such incident had taken place. She concluded by saying that it has become necessary to study the internet itself as a medium of communication.

Manish Jha opened the session for discussion and he commented on the theme of the panel "Infrastructure Connectivity and Development" which focused on the complicated nature of the political economy and also questioned what has been the role of the stakeholders that broadly looked at state, media, governmental plans programmes and skills. The panel also reflected on the differences of rural and urban infrastructure.

Panel Discussion III: Data Centres in India

Moderator: Brett Neilson

Data, society and the City: Technology, Territory and Population

Manish Jha and Rishi Jha

The rapidly urbanizing world reflects the dynamism of urban agglomeration and city-centred growth. World cities have been traditionally recognized with the dominant economic models and have traversed from being industrial to Fordist to post-Fordist to the technological to logistical cities of today. These cities are now categorized and conceptualized as 'intelligent city', 'information city', 'wired city', 'knowledge city', 'smart city' and 'digital city'. These ideas

and articulations share convergent technological perspectives, information and communication centrality, and dependence on cloud computing, big data, Internet of Things (IoT) and modern techniques of data management. Catering spatiality to these processes, cities like Navi Mumbai represent integrated cyber-physical spaces of institutions and strategic meeting points of extraordinary circulation of technology, operations, logistics, and services, which directly and indirectly caters to governments, businesses and citizens. Through the paper, they examined how specialized landscapes within Navi Mumbai that cater to collection, interpretation, storage, dispersal and control of data and information flows and how it is mediated through dedicated geographies and physiologies of 'data centres'. The paper explicated how data infrastructures as data centres and cities mutually produce an intensified relationship through which function, administration and governance of one-another is operationalised. Through trajectory of Navi Mumbai, the paper connects the city's processes, infrastructure development, patterns of governance, and land use patterns with the genesis of institutionalization, operations, and professional aspects of the data centre. How data centre, its geographical location, and physiological operation can provoke and influence our understanding of the city, its activities, transformations, social fabric, infrastructure, and overall governance? Additionally, they attempted to explore how the city and its various aspects are intertwined or en-meshed in the mega processes of data production, analysis, consumption, and exchange? In an attempt to explore this, they had inquired how the city becomes central to state and corporate governance through processes and operations manifested in the security-finance-governance complex of data infrastructures and how do they made meanings of the emerging forms of governance.

Data Economy, Big Data and the Data Centre: The Early History of the Indian Statistical Institute

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay in his paper followed the anticipations of the 'Big Data' phenomenon in three inter-connected developments in the mid-20th century, i.e., the emergence of algorithm as the science of computation, the birth of the idea of an integrated 'national economy' as a central 'object' of the postcolonial governmentality, and the triggering of the Cold War 'Big Science' initiatives that required data management at a cosmic scale. The project identified the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in Calcutta, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune and the Planning Commission in Delhi in the 1950s as sites where these three developments interfaced in 1950s. He took the year 1951 as a key moment in the history of data in India, and his paper showed how the ISI emerged as a significant player in the science of government. It seek to understand the kind of relation this history may have over the contemporary phenomenon of data centres. This is a key site without which the contemporary arrival and valuation of big data appears unimaginable.

Counting Loss: An Ethnography of Recently Introduced Data Management Schemes in West Bengal, India

Ritam Sengupta

His paper depicted that data is essential for calculative procedures that works to improve the technical efficiency of the network by factoring elements like unaccounted-for usage and theft and that can be potentially debilitating to the 'health' of an electricity distribution system. In significant ways, the kinds of incessant data-fed calculation and consequent, anticipatory technical enhancement/planning support that complements the ambition of providing universal, 24x7, quality power in contemporary West Bengal, even as this power continues to 'leak' through older and new channels of populist and 'welfarist' rule. In light of certain indicative pointers towards the role of data as processed between the headquarters and the Divisional/district levels, his paper makes certain more general observations about the management of loss as might be underway within the scheme of the WBSEDCL. His paper suggested that the data-innovation has also come at a time when an erstwhile paradigm of providing power with provisional checks and balances, like pre-mandated 'load shedding' in areas of low demand/revenue/high AT&C losses. His paper tried to trace an understanding of the management of loss as backed by the new availability of data as might be part of the now Data Centre-led centralised operations of the WBSEDCL.

Brett Neilson observed that all the speakers have brought very interesting histories of city formation. They talked about historical technologies and the old landscape of infrastructure and processing. Data centre as huge energy supplying institution has been successfully established through all the discussion and he open up the panel for further discussion and question-answer session.

Panel Discussion IV: **Infrastructural Alliances and Global Governance**

Moderator: Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

Does Global Finance Matter For Infrastructural Alliances?

Byasdeb Dasgupta

Byasdeb Dasgupta spoke about the relation between global finance and infrastructure alliance. He says that "In order to answer this question, one has to first look at the architect of global finance as it has unleashed it's web across national boundaries and dictates today's market economy, state apparatus and policy planning. Accumulation of global capital today takes place through various circuits of global finance and Infrastructure Alliance is just one of them". Dasgupta spoke of the interlinking relationship between China and Pakistan through the Belton Road Initiative and said that "The network of capital and global finance is different from the point of view of different financial contexts". He also took the example of the Marshall Plan, where grants and fees were given to the developing and third world countries, but the situation of global finance and the following Infrastructural Alliance is not the same for China-Pakistan.

"The flow of global capital between China and Pakistan is not unconditional and the interest rate is quite high. In case of Pakistan, China provides money and global finance for building different infrastructures such as roads and buildings. On the macro-economic scale, the

surplus is divided into two different points, production and social. Production ploughed back to production itself through raw materials and salaries whereas Social Surplus goes to the state in the form of tax through commissions, NGO's and Corporate Social Responsibilities. In West Bengal, for instance, the Social Surplus is distributed through Roads, buildings and loans to students, known as Kanyashree. In case of China- Pakistan, if Pakistan fails to repay the money capital, then ownership of the social capital like railways, roads and buildings or Infrastructure Capital, goes to China. Pakistan has reported high economic growth in the last 4 years but the current account deficit is 5% more than it's GDP. But to repay this debt, Pakistan has run out of its reserves and has taken international loans from organization's such as IMF.

Professor Dasgupta concluded by saying that Global Finance and Infrastructure Alliance are two different things and should not be confused.

Reading the Story of Chinese Capital in Pakistan

Arup Sen

Arup Sen began his discussion by stating that global capital has different trajectories and Britain, France and Germany have dominated the global capital market 80% more than the other countries. He said that "Lenin had pointed out that the International Market and banks are dominated by the developed countries and the rest of the world is dependent on these countries and banks for its resources and finance, to a large extent. In recent years, China has emerges as a big Asian power and in the 1960's and 1970's, countries all over the world were influenced by the Chinese Road to Socialism. In context of China and Pakistan, Pakistan has not been rated positively by the international rating agencies and giants and their parameters included deficits, foreign currency and balancing economic and social sides. The main reason for Pakistan's poor grading is due to the high political instability. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a project worth 62 billion project and has short, medium and long term phases. All over the world, developing countries owe a debt to developed countries and till date, developing countries owe a debt of 90 billion dollars to China that is 1/5th of the world's total debt. Of this, Private capital invested in other countries by private companies in China is an estimated total of 1.5 billion US Dollars".

He took a few examples of Chinese E-commerce giants such as Alibaba owning a 100% equity in Dallas, Texas and international banks. He quoted that "The implementation of the China- Pakistan project requires severe planning and implementation. With the 2015 Constitutional Amendment Act in Pakistan, the military has established an almost parallel government in Sind and Baluchistan, with Executive and Judicial powers. This has led to further displacement – hostile and consensual and enough damage to the economy already" and concluded by saying that the Chinese flow of capital to Pakistan has led to many its for China and subsequent development in Pakistan, although there is a different kind of governance and accumulation altogether.

The Financial Infrastructure of a “Seamless Asia”

Iman Mitra

Iman Mitra in his paper looked at the connection between networks of finance capital and infrastructure-led development in Asia, especially in the backdrop of India’s Look East (Act East) Policy. It explored three broad themes: the surge in infrastructure development in the region, the linkages between finance capitalism and infrastructure development, and the working of financial institutions in facilitating infrastructure. In the first section of his paper, he discussed the various forms of financial instruments which were helpful in reducing the gap between demand and supply of infrastructure all over the world. In the second section, he described the working of a particular financial institution which was being held as the main protagonist of infrastructural funding in Asia – the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) based in Beijing. In the last section, he focused on the impact of what we may call the ‘financialisation of infrastructure’ on the development projects in India which referred to the increase of the public-private partnership (PPP) activities in the infrastructure sector. The main thrust of his paper was on the notion of a blueprint – a diagrammatic design of projects which is to be realised in future – as most of the proposed infrastructural development was at the stage of primary dialogue between different stakeholders. One of his proposition was on the social and geo-political development of a region which is equally important as the economic development and focuses more on regional cooperation than focusing just on strengthening economy. He stated that the United Nation Social Commission focusses on Asia Pacific and infrastructure development in this part of the world has both its advantages and disadvantages and concluded by saying that Infrastructure is not the only way for development of a Seamless Asia because if Infrastructure fails, many investors in different countries would lose their money.

Trade in End-of-life ships: An Inquiry into the Impact of Reverse Logistics in Ship Recycling and Shipping Industry

Gopal Krishna

Gopal Krishna began his speech by stating examples of how the Second World War ships in the 1940’s were damaged and eventually dismantled as there was an urgent need for steel in the United States, United Kingdom and Japan. Gopal Krishna further examined the flow of end-of-life ships from the point of origin to the point of consumption in order to meet requirements of businesses and consumers. Over the years there was a demand for steel across the world, for example, Spain and Turkey in the 1960’s, Taiwan and South Korea in the 1970’s and India, Bangladesh and Pakistan in the 1980’s. He says “End of life ships carry economic values and liabilities. This creates a supply chain that gets extended to incorporate reverse logistics in order to capture value at the end of the value chain and reintroduce it into supply chain. This aspect of global material flow gives birth to a vicious cycle”. His paper questioned how it enabled the beneficial owners of shipping companies to escape the burden of keeping such vessels afloat without sufficient operational value towards the end-of-life of vessels because those end up incurring higher operating costs than their revenue. He stated that the Second World War ships were used to meet the requirements and demands of these

countries. This ultimately led to a global material flow and helped in expanding business processes.

He emphasized that ship recycling helps cater to the national and international marine needs. He claimed that the ship recycling/dismantling industry saves a lot of time and logistics cost. The reverse supply chain reduces the carbon emission and reduces damage to the environment. A life cycle assessment of the ship recycling/dismantling could reveal the environmental and occupational health cost and the impact on communities in the vicinity of sites where ship recycling/dismantling takes place. His paper undertook an inquiry to the veracity of claims about the beneficial impact of ship recycling with regard to foreign ships and also traced the relationship of end-of-life vessels with laws such as UN's Basel Convention on Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, 1989 which is in force, Shipbreaking Code 2013 which is in force, IMO's Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 which is yet to come into force and the proposed Safe and Environmentally sound Recycling of Ships Bill, 2018.

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay opened the session for further discussion to the panellists and the audience and he continued by saying that the panellists have done good interventions with the understanding of neo-liberal conjuncture in international politics. Neo-liberal conjuncture is a moment on which the boundary between the state and the market joined as the state aggressively taking up the market for operations.



Publications

1. Logistical Space I: *Logistics and Social Governance* (PP76) by *Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra*
2. Logistical Space II: *Mobilities and Spaces* (PP77) by *Sucharita Sengupta and Samir Purkayastha*
3. Logistical Space III: *Hubs, Connectivity and Transit* (PP78) by *Subir Bhaumik, Iman Kumar Mitra and Mithilesh Kumar*
4. Logistical Space IV: *The Asian Paradigm* (PP79) by *Anita Sengupta*
5. Logistical Space V: *Representations of Connectivity* (PP84) by *Priya Singh*
6. Logistical Space VI: *Logistics and the Reshaping of Global Governance* (PP85) by *Anita Sengupta*
7. Logistical Space VII: *Finance Capital & Infrastructure Development* (PP86) by *Iman Kumar Mitra*
8. Logistical Space VIII: *Trade, Capital & Conflict* (PP87) by *Soma Ghosal & Snehashish Mitra*
9. Logistical Space IX: *Conflict & Social Governance in Northeast India* (PP88) by *Paula Banerjee & Sucharita Sengupta*

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Forthcoming from Routledge

Ranabir Samaddar and Anita Sengupta(eds) *Global Governance and India's Northeast: Logistics, Infrastructure and Society*



Researchers & Experts



Researchers

Anita Sengupta is an area studies specialist and engages with issues of identity politics, migration, gender, borders, critical geopolitics and logistics from an Asian perspective. She is regular commentator on debates on Asian affairs and is part of Asia in Global Affairs, an independent research forum that looks at a wide range of global issues from an Asian perspective. She is currently Director, Calcutta Research Group.

Iman Mitra teaches history at Shiv Nadar University, New Delhi. He has edited the anthology *Accumulation in Post-Colonial Capitalism* (2016) with Ranabir Samaddar and Samita Sen. He is also a member of the Calcutta Research Group.

Mithilesh Kumar is an Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Patna.

Paula Bannerjee is Vice Chancellor of the Sanskrit College & University and former Director Calcutta Research Group. As part of her work on borders and women, she has authored numerous papers on women in conflict situations in Northeast India. She has published extensively on issues of gender, forced migration and peace politics.

Priya Singh is Research and Programme Associate at the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) and Associate Director and Programme Coordinator (Honorary) at Asia in Global Affairs (AGA). She is an area specialist and has been tracking the West Asian region with Israel as an area of special interest.

Ranabir Samaddar belongs to the critical school of thinking and is considered as one of the foremost theorists in the field of forced migration studies. He has worked extensively on issues of forced migration, the theory and practices of dialogue, nationalism and post-colonial statehood in South Asia, and new regimes of technological restructuring and labour control. He is currently the Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies, Calcutta Research Group.

Samir K. Purkayasta is a senior journalist. He regularly writes opinion pieces on Northeast India.

Snehashish Mitra is a doctoral candidate at the School of Social Sciences, National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru. In his doctoral thesis, Mitra is studying the contestation over land in the city of Guwahati and how the post-1972 expansion of Guwahati has influenced the settlements of the marginalized (mostly tribal) communities.

Soma Ghoshal is assistant professor in Political Science at SRSVM Kamarpukur Hoogly. Her special areas of interest are the strategic and political dynamics of the northeast of India and the bordering areas of Myanmar keeping in view the greater vision of holistic development of the region.

Subir Bhaumik is a veteran BBC journalist and author on India's Northeast. He is a former Queen Elizabeth House Fellow of Oxford University, Fellow at East West Centre in Washington and Eurasian Fellow at Frankfurt University.

Sucharita Sengupta is doctoral candidate at the Graduate Institute Geneva and she is working on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and India through an exploration of their statelessness.

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