



ECONOMIC CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT FOR COMPETITIVE AND INCLUSIVE ASIA

Event Report
26-28 AUGUST 2015

Event Report

ECONOMIC CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT FOR COMPETITIVE AND INCLUSIVE ASIA

REPORT OF A JOINT TRAINING PROGRAMME ORGANISED BY:

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (RSIS),
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB),
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK INSTITUTE (ADBI), AND
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Report of a conference jointly organised by the Asian Development Bank (ADB); Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI); the Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS); and Singapore Cooperation Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Singapore.

This report summarises selected proceedings of the conference, excluding participants' exercises and presentations, as interpreted by the assigned rapporteurs and editors of the RSIS Centre for Multilateralism Studies. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

The conference adheres to a variation of the Chatham House rule. Accordingly, beyond the points expressed in the prepared papers, no other attributions have been included in this conference report.

OPENING REMARKS



Angeline Szeto from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), represented the Technical Cooperation Directorate, thanking the participants and noted that Singapore has been working with the ADB since 1991, and has been involved in the organisation of programmes that have included over 700 officials with technical training programmes. She stated that Singapore learnt from its neighbours when it was still a young nation. The Singapore Cooperation Program (SCP) is one of the vehicles Singapore uses to share its knowledge and experiences, as part of the strategy to foster strong ties with its neighbours and the ASEAN region in general.

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Aladdin D. Rillo from the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), noted that this was the fifth time the it has organised an event with NTU. The ADBI exists to contribute to policymaking with research and capacity-building programmes and policy dialogues, so governments can effectively promote policies within their countries. ADBI is working on regional integration and facilitating cooperation between nations for development.

Economic corridor development was chosen as a theme this year, as economic corridors can take advantage of production networks. To develop economic corridors, more sophisticated skills need to be developed and a capacity-building programme is an excellent opportunity to learn and share among officials and experts.

OPENING REMARKS



Ralf Emmers from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), noted that with the sharp declines in tariff rates all over Asia, non-price components of trading costs such as logistics and infrastructure development have become the key determinants of export competitiveness. Efficient service links including hard and soft infrastructure are also required to link countries to production blocs in supply chains and production networks. Overall, Emmers believed that the workshop would give a chance for public administrators to hone their ideas.

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James Lynch from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), opined that connectivity is necessary for development and though it has improved, there are still challenges. The ADB has prioritised improving connectivity to increase sub-regional cooperation, and their efforts include the GMS (Greater Mekong Sub-region) Program, BIMP-EAGA (The East Asian Growth Area), CAREC (Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation), SASEC (South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation), and IMT-GT (the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle). These sub-regional cooperation programs tie in with ASEAN's push for greater economic integration and greater development and inclusive growth for the whole region.

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Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) in Asia Sub-regional Programs as Building Blocks towards Asian Integration

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progress in regional economic integration. Second, there is a need to set priorities for regional integration, such as minimising the non-tariff barriers (NTB) effects of non-tariff measures (NTM), delivering better facilitation measures, strengthening investment and services liberalisation, strengthening “building blocs” for an integrated market, and leveraging on the benefits of open regionalism. Third, Asian countries should also address the challenge of institutional issues, while promoting reforms and private sector engagement. Finally, development challenges, including competition policy, development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and consumer protection, should also be managed.

Overview of Regional Economic Integration in Asia

Aladdin D. Rillo provided an overview of the trends, challenges and opportunities of regional economic integration in Asia. Globalisation has allowed Asia to realise the potential of market integration, and there is an increasing recognition of the importance of economic integration since the late 1990s. Principally connected through markets and regional productions networks, Asia’s economic integration is market-driven, multi-speed and multi-track. While interregional trade has increased after the Asian Financial Crisis, financial integration has been lacking behind.

Rillo highlighted that in an uncertain global environment, Asian countries faced a number of challenges. First, amid deepening global interdependence and global risks, increasing protectionist measures have stalled further



ASEAN Economic Community: Progress and Beyond 2015

Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit evaluated the progress and various milestones of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The AEC consists of four pillars, including single market

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and production base; competitive economic region; equitable economic development; and integration into the global economy. There are now freer flow of goods, services, investments, capital, and skilled labour. Horizontal measures in 12 priority integration sectors (PIS) have been implemented, on top of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS). The AEC also saw some progress in competition laws, consumer protection, intellectual property rights, infrastructure development, small and medium enterprises development, as well as regional economic integration.

Released in 2012, the AEC scorecard reported that the overall progress was about 71.5 per cent. However, this system is not without limitations, as it relies on self-assessment, functions more like a checklist of things, and may not capture real implementation on the ground. At the same time, **Pitakdumrongkit** explained that technical and political challenges remain. There is insufficient capacity, in terms of capital, infrastructure and human resources, for the AEC to fully realise its potential. The elimination process of non-tariff barriers has also been slow. Furthermore, ASEAN's principle of non-interference could serve as a pretext for non-compliance.



RCI in Asia: The Case of the GMS

James Lynch talked about the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program. It was founded in 1992, with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), to enhance economic cooperation in the sub-region. Countries include Cambodia, People's Republic of China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region), Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Since 1992, the GMS economic cooperation program has provided more than US\$17 billion to finance 70 investment projects in multiple sectors, the largest share being the transport sector. The project consists of three main economic

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corridors, the North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC), East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), and the Southern Economic Corridor, that help to connect the region and facilitate development.

Lynch opined that the 3 C's (Connectivity, Competitiveness, Community) are integral to GMS' realisation of its vision to create a prosperous, integrated and harmonious sub-region. Physical connectivity in the GMS has been increasing, and the program is also committed to improving connectivity "software" to facilitate cross-border transport and trade. There is progress in the areas of institutional connectivity and integration as a community. Furthermore, increased connectivity has helped to improve overall competitiveness in the GMS. Despite significant progress, the program is not without challenges. There is a need to mobilise financial resources to meet the investment requirements of the Regional Investment Framework. In addition, transboundary issues, such as global warming, climate change and the potential negative effects of connectivity must be effectively addressed. Sustaining the GMS community also requires collective efforts to protect the environment and manage public goods.

Open Discussion

Participants noted the difficulties in measuring a country's compliance of the agreed AEC conditions, as the levels would vary from one economy to another. To tackle this challenge, it was suggested that the relevant parties should measure progress at both the country level and the regional level. The evaluation of individual economies facilitates the identification of causes of delay, such as technical obstacles and the need to reallocate resources. At the ASEAN level, the assessment of progress allows a macro view of the degree of compliance to the AEC blueprints, which helps leaders to formulate long term plans and solutions. Nevertheless, implementation on the ground still depends largely on political will.

The discussion highlighted the need for the momentum of economic integration to continue beyond the deadline of December 2015. There would likely be an increasing focus on the non-tariff barriers, on top of plans for further economic integration in the areas of intellectual property rights, public-private partnerships and investment protection. A greater sense of cooperation would also help the region to withstand external shocks.

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The Greater Mekong Sub-region Experience



The Greater Mekong Sub-region Experience

James Lynch pointed out that there is more to successful economic corridors than just transport infrastructure. Good physical infrastructure is an essential backbone of an economic corridor, but other stages are required. Provisions must be in place to make cross-border trade possible, such as efficient border formalities and logistics to facilitate trade, while an urban development corridor could be developed by increasing public-private investment and building the economic capacity of the area. To complete the development as a fully-fledged economic corridor, production chains must be well developed, and an environment must be in place that boosts private investment. This process should be completed while ensuring inclusive benefits beyond the main urban areas of the corridor and mitigating possible externalities.

GMS is one of the earliest planned attempts at planning an economic corridor. The ADB has

continuously been trying to reach their aims of reducing poverty and increasing living standards for all. The GMS is a tool to realise that aim. For this reason, there is a constant effort of evaluation and research to monitor the progress and adapt the strategy accordingly. To formulate a strategy, there are regular consultations with stakeholders, both at local and national level, to gain an idea of the experiences felt on the ground and which difficulties have arisen from developments. The consultations are combined with monitoring of indicators of corridor development, which could include the level of trade at the border, as well as the amount of investment there is in the vicinity of the corridor. By assessing these indicators, the ADB could then implement the next stage of their strategic framework.

Lynch gave an update on GMS' progress and future obstacles to the corridor, with examples of first hand experiences from the local population on how their lives have changed. Cambodians testified that electricity, now sourced from Vietnam via transmissions lines, is now cheaper and more reliable. This benefits local businesses and households. Negative effects have to be accounted for as well, with some in Myanmar noting that there has been heavy migration to the urban hubs, resulting in smaller settlements away from the corridor experiencing a degree of isolation. The tangible effects on the population partly derive from the investments that the ADB have overseen in the region, such as the Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City Highway Improvement Project, with the software and hardware components being completed in 2013. This has resulted in cutting travel time to 5-6 hours and increasing cross-border trade at Moc Bai to US\$708 million, from 9-10 hours and US\$10 million respectively in 1999.

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The Greater Mekong Sub-region Experience

The Strategic Framework (SF) for the period of 2012-22 aims to widen and deepen the existing corridor to spread and entrench the benefits and opportunities available to the population. The aim is to increase the role of private sector investment, while also having a multi-sector focus, to help the region in diversifying its activities. This will require an in-depth analytical research approach to be effective. In terms of infrastructure, the transport projects that are based on road infrastructure are well developed. However, greater improvements are needed for railways, as well as the provision of utilities. The tourism sector has been developing well, and greater benefits could be attained with more consultation and engagement with the private sector to identify areas which are lacking in support.

Open Discussion

GMS was identified as one of the pioneering economic corridor developments in the region. Other parts of Asia can, and do, look at the development of the GMS as a concept which could aid countries and their wider regions. In South Asia for example, a Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor in India is developing, with GMS as an example of a possible strategic plan. While it was agreed that it is not necessary to develop an economic corridor in a linear manner, transport links seem to be the most essential first track. Other tracks can be developed simultaneously such as logistics and communications.

Participants noted that the development of economic corridors needs to be viewed in a

regional perspective as well as a national one. For example in the case of the GMS, most trade is not done within the region but with outside areas such as the rest of Asia and the EU. Therefore, ports become very important. Prioritising the ports will benefit the wider region, even those countries that are landlocked such as Laos, due to the existence of cross-border production networks. Therefore, the more trade with regions outside the GMS, the more intra-regional trade would exist within the region. Further elaboration and discussion on Laos's position suggests that Laos should use the economic corridor to become more than a landlocked transit country. Instead, it should become a 'landlinked' country.

The consensus was that for the corridor to be fully utilised, it must be inclusive and connect outlying regions to produce wider benefits or positive spill overs. Though an economic corridor has its obvious benefits, some could lose out in the short-term due to the diversion of activity and traffic. To mitigate these effects, careful forward planning is required. In the GMS experience, the local stakeholders were consulted in the planning process to address their needs and potential problems. It is the right of the indigenous people, as the people of the land, to have a say in how it is developed. There could also be other negative externalities from the integration of countries, such as the increased trafficking of illicit goods, or the increased labour migration resulting in the spread of diseases. Therefore, countries must coordinate their efforts in order to prepare and tackle these externalities before they have an effect.

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Economic Corridors as Part of Global Value Chains and Production Networks



Economic Corridors as Part of Global Value Chains and Production Networks

Prabir De concentrated on the development of economic corridors in relation to value chains and how they have changed in nature and organisation over time. Value chains have broken up the production process, resulting in different parts being processed in different areas. The trade of parts and components has grown exponentially, especially from developing countries. The intraregional trade within developing Asia is also significant, at 50 per cent, with much of that trade being in intermediate goods (parts and components) particularly related to electronic goods. South Asia is the exception as there is very little trade

within the region, but it is set to grow. The key to increasing the efficiency and productivity of value chains that span multiple countries, is in reducing service link costs according to De. The service link costs arise from the countries' infrastructure as well as regulations, which shape the logistics of intraregional intermediate trade. As the tasks of production are often time sensitive, efficient infrastructure and improved communications technology could allow the value chains to become more flexible and responsive.

De used examples to explain how a value chain operates across borders to reduce costs and be as productive as possible. Foxconn, a Taiwanese manufacturing MNC, is contracted by

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Apple Inc. in America, to assemble their iPhone devices. The production takes place using nine different companies (which build the various necessary components) across five different countries in Asia, and finally assembled in Chengdu, China. Other examples of successful cases of multi country production networks include the manufacture of hard disk drives in Thailand, which involves parts from 11 countries in total. By developing economic corridors that facilitate trade and reduce link services costs, countries can create jobs and economic activity.

To foster economic corridor development, an environment must be created that enables its development. De explained some of the criteria required for such an environment. Countries and regions should facilitate private sector investments, cooperate with neighbours on security, finance cross-border projects that relate to transport, and strengthen the capacity of existing institutions among others. Lastly, De brought up the question of whether countries should manage border customs jointly, or individually.

Open Discussion

Moving from a transport corridor to an economic corridor is a difficult process. One way to increase the sophistication of the corridor is to develop smart cities, which improve the technological and information communication capacity of urban areas to improve connectivity.

Private sector investment and involvement are important to develop smart cities as they could identify areas where greater connectivity is needed. Danang was used as an example of a developing smart city in the Asian region. Europe has all-encompassing production networks such as Airbus where four countries share production, and is assembled in Toulouse, France. The group discussed potential industries that could be developed in Asia that could compete internationally. Thailand's automotive industry was identified as a strong industry that could be developed further. To increase productivity, efficient information dissemination must exist to keep track of timings. However, this will require firms to release information, which not all are willing to do.

To reduce the time and manpower needed at the customs border, some new procedures were shared and proposed. If a record of the companies transporting the goods was kept, it would be possible to determine the companies with a track record of not breaching custom regulations. This will absolve the need for a rigorous cargo check. For this to be effective, however, information of companies must be shared among neighbouring countries. Identifying and differentiating goods that are either set for transit or importing could also help to streamline the process.

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Promoting Connectivity, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth in Asia's Sub-regions - Concepts, Characteristics and Models



Promoting Connectivity, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth in Asia's Sub-regions - Concepts, Characteristics and Models

The term economic corridor is not an easily defined one, according to **Alfredo Perdiguero**, as there lacks a common consensus as to what exactly constitutes economic corridor development. Most agree that economic corridors must be built along a backbone of transport infrastructure. They must also exist to benefit the wider area including rural and urban areas, while also attracting investment and generating economic activity. The development of economic corridors is seen as beneficial for countries due to their ability to generate employment, while improving productivity and competitiveness, all of which could reduce poverty and improve living standards. The key differentiating feature of an economic corridor compared to other types of integration is the linear aspect of its development.

Perdiguero described how economic corridors can be categorised to a certain extent by different characteristics. From a geographical perspective, economic corridors could be an urban-focused project or incorporate rural areas, and they can be based in one country alone or span multiple borders. Economic corridors can also be distinguished by the sectors that they are based on - mono-sectoral or multi-sectoral. The direction given to their development could come from different sources such as governments, international institutions, the private sector or a combination (multi-stake partnerships- Public Private Partnership). **Perdiguero** emphasised that the features and characteristics of an economic corridor could develop over time, and often go from simplistic entities that are limited in scope, to more comprehensive networks.

The process of developing an effective economic corridor can be approached in

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different ways depending on the pre-existing features and environment of the locale. This could include geography, resource endowments, trade destinations and proximity to gateways (ports and airports). There needs to be effective direction from the inception of the economic corridor development plan, noted **Perdiguero**, with leadership that could identify and align the goals of different stakeholders, to be able to develop a sound strategy and 'corridor development matrix' that maps out future projects. To be able to deliver the planned projects, there needs to be financial backing able to fund the necessary projects, as well as soft and hard corridor interventions. It is also ideal that the existence of implementation mechanisms ensure that the delivery is progressing according to the stakeholders' desire.

Due to the differing conditions that exist regionally, current attempts at developing economic corridors encounter unique challenges. **Perdiguero** summarised the current issues faced by Asian regions in their attempts to integrate economically, as well suggesting aims for the future. Southeast Asia is well linked with low barriers to trade and established connections along production networks. However, to develop the region, they must move up the value chain by investing in the right areas. South Asia, on the other hand, is poorly integrated between countries with high barriers to trade; consequently establishing transnational links to increase intraregional trade is their next goal. Central Asia as a region is landlocked, however, it can provide a link between East and West which it should take advantage of. Additionally, in the process of becoming an

effective link, the region should develop itself as a manufacturing and production hub.

Open Discussion

The issue was raised about the difficulties in formulating an effective strategy and direction with such a wide range of views from differing stakeholders. Agendas from the government, private sector and local public are all potentially conflicting. It was agreed that this unavoidable issue of disagreement has no definitive method to resolve it. Instead, a nuanced approach must be taken. All the stakeholders should be identified beforehand and then a platform should be given for the stakeholders to express their opinions. A process for dealing with conflict should also be set up. Overall, however, as with any democracy, a value judgement must be made, which is unlikely to satisfy all parties.

A possible process for developing a successful economic corridor was put forward by a participant. It was suggested that an overall policy aim should be developed by the government to provide clarity for the process. An agreed upon goal could clarify the direction of the development and aid in decision-making along the way. Then, a model can be designed with the policy goal in mind that allows the aim to be achieved. It is important to evaluate resources using data analysis to allocate effectively and ensure the projects can be completed with the acquired resources. Finally, an organisational process must be formulated to efficiently implement the strategy for development. This is one of a number of potential methods to formulate and implement a strategy.

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Global Production Networks and Economic Corridors: Can They Be Drivers for South Asia's Growth and Regional Integration?



Global Production Networks and Economic Corridors: Can They Be Drivers for South Asia's Growth and Regional Integration?

Prabir De examined the role of economic corridors in facilitating South Asian countries' access to global production networks, those based in East and Southeast Asia in particular. He argued that South Asian integration has been slow, but steady. In terms of commodity trade, there is a slight increase intra-regionally. For example, the intra-regional trade as a percentage of total trade in sugars and sugar confectionery has increased from 25.58 per cent in 2000 to 29.63 per cent in 2011. In addition, the region has seen an increase in multilateral, regional, and

bilateral institutional commitments. However, the process of South Asia's economic integration has been mainly inhibited by the lack of trade facilitation, infrastructure and trade support. Illegal cross-border trade has gone up in recent times, and there is a need to motivate businesses to trade legally.

De listed seven elements holding back South Asia at the macro level; namely inadequate infrastructure, the absence of regional transit trade, high NTBs, poor institutions and governance, the lack of coordination at border authorities, and high trade transaction costs. At the micro level, there is a need to simplify and harmonise trade procedures, particularly at the

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borders. Currently, the submission of documents is still largely handled manually. Also, the absence of modern corridor management techniques in selected corridors and the lack of fast track lanes that prioritise goods in cross-border transits contribute to the slow pace of South Asian integration. There is also an inadequate provision of testing facilities, banks, and standard operating procedures, that inflate the costs of border transits.

Having a South Asian economic corridor would link the sub-region together through open borders, developing infrastructure networks and facilitating trade and investment. The region could benefit from cooperation on pooling and sharing resources, improving business environment, networking supply and demand chains. Recent developments on regional connectivity include the Motor Vehicle agreement (MVA) between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, an unilateral initiative by India to implement integrated check posts, on top of a higher use of ICT in trade transactions and customs modernisation, and India-ASEAN connectivity projects such as the Trilateral Highway.

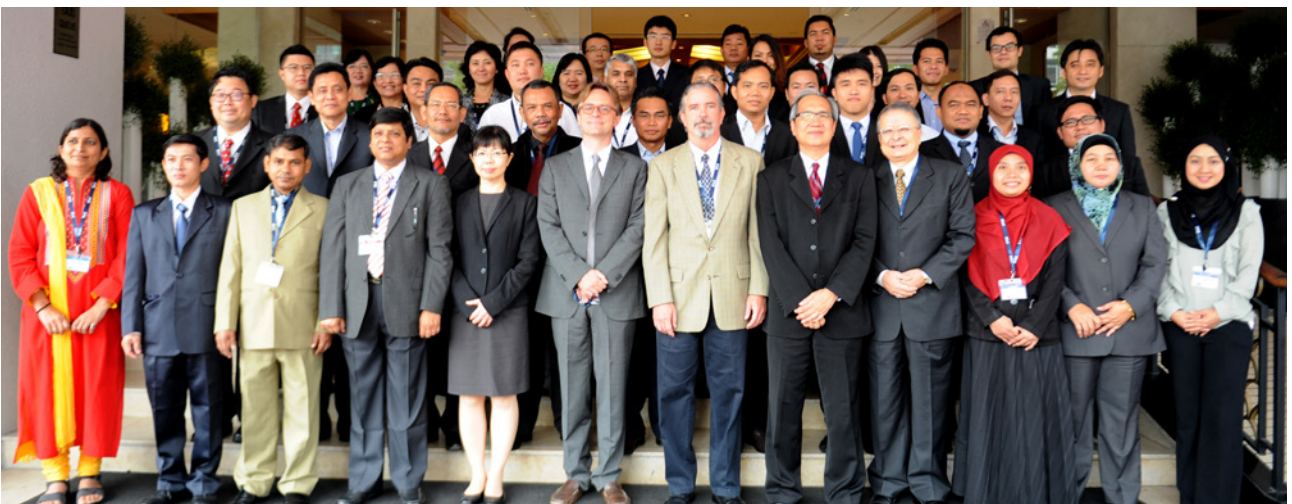
Nevertheless, De posited that there is still scope for improvement. South Asian countries should work together to promote multimodal transportation and logistics, encourage express delivery systems, improve the efficiency of

border corridors, move towards a single customs (one customs) at land border, adopt a paperless trade, enhance investments in infrastructure, and strengthen cross-border infrastructure.

Open Discussion

The participants noted that the development of a South Asian economic corridor has potential linkages with the emerging e-commerce industry in the region. Lessons drawn from logistic and infrastructure planning and development could be used to accelerate the transition into a paperless economic corridor. While India has been developing rapidly in this area, the rest of the region lags behind.

There is also a need for formal communication at the ground level. The discussion pointed to the importance of minimising negative impacts on the environment and the community. For example, there should be more transparent stakeholder consultation procedures locally, and effective resettlement plans to minimise the potential environmental and social impacts. However, these solutions would require strong political will from the top leaders of the region. Political commitment is also necessary to drive further regional integration.





Economic Corridor Development for Competitive and Inclusive Asia

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Operationalising Economic Corridors in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor



Operationalising Economic Corridors in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor

Pradeep Srivastava gave an overview of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation's (CAREC's) attempts at developing their own corridor, with the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor Initiative (ABCI) being the focus of their attempts. CAREC is made up of 10 Central Asian countries. By 2020, they aim to have an effective Economic Corridor Development (ECD) operational in order to increase the pace of economic development throughout the region. CAREC's focus has been on constructing the necessary transport infrastructure as well

as making the transit process across the borders more efficient through soft and hard infrastructure. Efficient transit across the region is seen as crucial due the landlocked nature of many of the member countries. In addition, there is also an emphasis on developing urban agglomerations and nodes in order to have hubs with high levels of job creation. CAREC has looked to the efforts in other Asian regions to develop a strategy noting the political commitment, institutional mechanisms and private sector partnerships needed to be successful. Though the region could look to others for ideas, ultimately 'All roads are the same; Every corridor is unique'.

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Operationalising Economic Corridors in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor

The process that CAREC is following in its strategy for economic corridor development is based on analysis/prioritisation. The prioritisation framework, which comes from the IMT- GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle) experience, gives a methodology to examine which subsectors that should be focused on when developing the corridor. The criteria rates each subsector on their attractiveness (their profitability and potential profitability), along with their strategic fit (includes the sector leverage, job creation potential and potential to move up the value chain). Srivastava explained that by using this prioritisation matrix, it is possible to identify which manufacturing subsectors should be considered high priority and more research can be done on these sectors to discover potential business and investment opportunities. Once the potential sectors and business activity have been chosen to focus on, the feasibility of the projects must be estimated considering the infrastructure that is needed as well as the risks that need mitigating. Finally, an action plan needs to be developed with the relevant key performance indicators (KPI) and potential partners identified.

The Almaty-Bishkek Corridor Initiative (ABCI) is CAREC's first attempt at developing an economic corridor. The corridor stretches from the city of Almaty, Kazakhstan to the city Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, crossing the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border in the process, with the initiative facilitated by technical assistance from the ADB. As Srivastava explained, although the cities are not too large, the potential benefits of the corridor are significant if the urban areas are

linked. An economic corridor between these two cities was deemed suitable for a number of reasons. The proximity between the cities is close, geographically (only 200 km separates them), as well as economically and culturally. This makes the linking process more simplified as a transport spine already exists. Srivastava stated that the strategy of the ABCI is to use urbanisation as a tool to drive economic growth in the region. By strengthening existing linkages while building new ones, economic activity in the urban areas could increase economies of scale, as well as the level of knowledge spillover that comes with increased agglomeration.

So far, the early developments in the establishment of the corridor have been focused on identifying the policy and infrastructure requirements needed for the corridor development. The sectors where most development is taking place are agriculture (including agri-business), education, health service provision, tourism, and trade logistics. While supporting these sectors, efforts have also been made to have a more comprehensive urban planning strategy to help the development of the corridor, though the issue of deciding where the funding for investment should and could come from still exists. In the future, the ABCI will try to expand its scope by encouraging growth in the IT sector, while developing industrial parks and SEZs to stimulate agglomeration. Mitigation plans, particularly for the effects on the environment, will also be drawn up.

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Operationalising Economic Corridors in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor

Open Discussion

It was noted that coordinating city planning across countries can be a very difficult and complex process. Different countries have different rules and regulations that become obstacles to synchronised urban planning along an economic corridor. Srivastava stated that this was the case in the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor development. Although the countries had similar institutions due to the shared history with the Soviet Union, coordination still proved to be very difficult. It was suggested that to be successful, political commitment and ownership is a must, and perhaps domestic urban planning coordination should be implemented along a corridor first as this is slightly more achievable.

After a participant brought up the fact that Thailand has been aspiring to combine and integrate economic corridors to being greater effects, the feasibility of such a feat was discussed. The consensus was that the integration of transport corridors was simple, in that it just required the necessary physical infrastructure. The synchronisation of trade facilitation is slightly more complicated but still achievable. However, the coordination of economic development efforts along a corridor becomes more difficult as more areas get involved, as there are many institutional factors to consider, such as land use regulations and the different labour markets.

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China-Led Economic Corridors and How it's Perceived across Asia



China-Led Economic Corridors and How it's Perceived across Asia

China's 'One Belt, One Road' Policy

Li Mingjiang introduced China's "One Belt, One Road" policy, also known as the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), to build economic corridors to connect East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and even Europe. A long-term Chinese foreign and economic policy, the BRI converges with domestic regional development plans and cross-regional integration schemes. In the short term, the Chinese government has strong expectations that the policy would help resolve the manufacturing surplus problem in China. In the long run, the successful implementation of the BRI would benefit all countries involved.

This concept is not a new one, as the BRI shares similarities with other existing regional integration schemes and connectivity projects. Nevertheless, this initiative received relatively

more financial support by the Chinese government. China would also be taking the lead in its implementation. According to the vision and action plans released by Beijing, the BRI seeks to link the various infrastructure routes, including railways, ports and airports.

At the same time, Li explained that the BRI is neither a premediated strategy, nor one with a clear implementation plan. There are differing views on its viability, and the potential investment risks have triggered voices of challenge from within the country. Furthermore, the BRI has received varying levels of support regionally. For example, countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines have shown some hesitation. This is partly due to deteriorated relations and tensions in the South China Sea. Although the initiative may face challenges in terms of actual implementation, and political risks in some countries, the region can expect new projects and initiatives to happen on a grand scale.

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China-Led Economic Corridors and How it's Perceived across Asia



Factors Responsible for Recent Infrastructure Boom in Asia: Results of a Perception Survey

Pradumna B. Rana assessed the strategic and economic factors in explaining the infrastructure and economic corridor boom in Asia. Although sea transport is expected to be the dominant form of Asian connectivity for the foreseeable future, the case for land connectivity has also increased. Gradual political and economic reform in Myanmar has provided a fillip to improve connectivity between South Asia and East Asia. Also, the potential for parts and components or supply chain trade between the two regions has enhanced the case for improved multimodal connectivity.

China has introduced the “Go West” and “New Silk Road” policies and China-led funding mechanisms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Silk Road Fund and New Development Bank (BRICS) have been established. The “New Silk Road” or “One Belt, One Road” policies announced by President Xi Jinping in September 2013 seek to enhance connectivity with neighbouring countries and beyond. The initiative consists of joint development of infrastructure (energy and transport) with Asia and even Africa. The “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” policy with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean countries was also announced in October 2013. In addition, the initiative will establish “bridgeheads” for sub-regional connectivity such

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China-Led Economic Corridors and How it's Perceived across Asia

as Xinjiang Province for Central Asia (in 2006) and Yunnan Province (in 2009) for GMS and India (BCIM). India under the Modi government has developed the “Look East” and “Act East” policies. Two projects to enhance ASEAN-India Connectivity have been proposed, namely the Mekong-India Economic Corridor and the Trilateral Highway. A Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Cooperation (BCIM) Economic Corridor was also endorsed by the leaders on May 2013.

Rana presented the results of a perception survey of opinion leaders that received a 7 per cent response rate with a total number of 390 respondents. The survey found that the growing importance of supply chain trade is among the most important factors in the revival of land and air connectivity in South Asia and East Asia. Although strategic factors are the major drivers of the infrastructure boom in Asia, economic considerations are also important. Most of the opinion leaders also responded favourably to the various projects that have been implemented or proposed, such as the MIEC and Trilateral Highway projects, and the BCIM corridor. In addition, increased trade between South Asia and East Asia due to reductions of trading costs could be a win-win situation for all countries and revive economic integration in South Asia. Finally, the study highlighted that China’s “One Belt, One Road” policy could be mutually beneficial to countries in Asia; but China should be more transparent and articulate this policy further.

Open Discussion

In the near future, it is likely that China will try to push the initiative bilaterally, particularly with a few key countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Russia, Malaysia and Singapore. It would require more time before the policies could be implemented multilaterally. The participants also recognised that the existence of multiple Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs) could potentially be a stepping stone or a stumbling block for multilateralism to foster, due to administration problems and disputes. The discussion opined that economic corridors have to be designed carefully to improve efficiency.

The discussion noted that the political situation in Myanmar could delay the progress of the BRI. The leaders have pledged their support to the initiative at the official level, however, the actual implementation needs to first tackle challenges such as compensation issues and ethnic minority militia groups. In addition, participants raised the issue of transparency in Chinese policies’ design and implementation. Li opined that Chinese foreign policy is no longer guided by the desire to export its political ideology. Rather, it is one guided by political pragmatism to expand Chinese influence, as well as to promote economic cooperation, good trading relations, mutual security ties, and cultural exchanges.

CLOSING REMARK



Pradumna B. Rana in his closing remarks noted the five main takeaways from the three-day workshop. First, the development of economic corridors is a growing trend in the Asian region that could bring about wide benefits. Second, all economic corridors are unique and need to be tailor made, with detailed analysis. Third, economic corridors are not an end in themselves but a means to an end, which is inclusive development for the whole area. Fourth, economic corridor approaches have mainly been national as well as sub-regional. Finally, the case for “garlanding” national and sub-regional economic corridors into a seamless pan-Asian corridor was made.

Bokhwan Yu reiterated the importance of the development of economic corridors, as they are vital for regional economic integration. This

workshop had provided a good opportunity to discuss both theoretical and political issues concerning economic corridors, and it has facilitated insightful perspectives through the presentations and discussions. ADBI looks forward to further collaborations with RSIS and others in the future. He mentioned that the ADBI conducts three types of capacity-building and training activities, including policy dialogue, training and e-learning programmes.

Alfredo Perdiguero focused on the importance of getting participants from different countries to come together to learn about the development of their economies. The workshop’s significance perhaps was not so much in giving answers on developing economic corridors, but in finding out the right questions to ask.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 1 : Wednesday, 26 August 2015

Day 1 26 August 2015 (Wednesday)

0830hr	Registration	1200hr	Lunch
0845hr	Opening Remarks <i>Angeline Szeto, MFA</i> <i>Ralf Emmers, RSIS, NTU</i> <i>James Lynch, ADB</i> <i>Aladdin D. Rillo, ADBI</i>	1330hr	Session 2 Economic Corridor Development: The Greater Mekong Sub-region Experience <i>James Lynch, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operation Coordination Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB</i>
0915hr	Programme Overview and Roadmap <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan and Jordee Queddeng, ADB</i>	1500hr	Coffee Break
1015hr	Coffee Break	1515hr	Session 3 Economic Corridors as Part of Global Value Chains and Production Networks <i>Prabir De, Professor, RIS India</i>
1030hr	Session 1 Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) in Asia Sub-regional Programmes as Building Blocks towards Asian Integration <i>Chair : Pradumna B. Rana, Associate Professor, RSIS, NTU</i> Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of Regional Economic Integration in Asia <i>Aladdin D. Rillo, Senior Economist, ADBI</i> ASEAN Economic Community 2015 and Beyond <i>Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit, Assistant Professor, Centre for Multilateralism Studies, RSIS, NTU</i> RCI in Asia: the Case of the GMS <i>James Lynch, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operation Coordination Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB</i>	1630hr	Session 4 Sub-regional Programmes Team Exercise (Part 1) <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan, Team Leader and Training Specialist (Consultant)</i>
		1800hr	Welcome Dinner Hosted by ADB

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 2 : Thursday, 27 August 2015

Day 2
Thursday, 27 August 2015

0900hr	Session 5 Economic Corridor Development: Promoting Connectivity, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth in Asia's Sub-regions <i>Alfredo Perdiguero, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</i>	1500hr	Coffee Break
1200hr	Programme Overview and Roadmap <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan and Jordee Queddeng, ADB</i>	1515hr	Session 8 Sub-regional Programmes Team Plenary Presentations (Part 1) <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan, Team Leader and Training Specialist (Consultant)</i>
1015hr	Lunch	1630hr	Session 8 Sub-regional Programmes Team Plenary Presentations (Part 2) <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan, Team Leader and Training Specialist (Consultant)</i>
1330hr	Session 7 Sub-regional Programmes Team Exercise (Part 2)	1800hr	Welcome Dinner Hosted by RSIS,NTU

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 1 : Wednesday, 26 August 2015

Day 3

Friday, 28 August 2015

0900hr	Session 10 Operationalising Economic Corridors in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor <i>Pradeep Srivastava, Principal Economist, ADB</i>	1315hr	Session 12 Visioning Exercise: The Ideal Economic Corridor <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan, Team Leader and Training Specialist (Consultant)</i>
1030hr	Break	1400hr	Session 13 Lecture and Discussion: Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)-North South Economic Corridor (NSEC): Impact Stories <i>Pamela Asis-Layugan, Team Leader and Training Specialist (Consultant)</i>
1045hr	Session 11 China Led Economic Corridor and How It's Perceived across Asia <i>Chair: Bokhwan Yu, Deputy Dean, ADBI</i> China's One Belt, One Road Policy <i>Li Mingjiang, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the China Programme, RSIS, NTU</i> Factors Responsible for Recent Infrastructure Boom in Asia: Results of a Perception Survey <i>Pradumna B. Rana, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the International Political Economy Programme, RSIS, NTU</i>	1500hr	Coffee Break
1215hr	Lunch	1545hr	Session 14 Panel Discussion and Synthesis Session: Economic Corridor Development for Competitive and Inclusive Asia <i>Panellists: Prabir De, RIS India and Alfredo Perdiguero, ADB</i>
		1715hr	Closing Remarks <i>Pradumna B. Rana, RSIS, NTU Bokhwan Yu, ADBI Alfredo Perdiguero, ADB</i>
		1800hr	Welcome Dinner Hosted by RSIS,NTU

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The **Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS)** is a research entity within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. The CMS team conducts cutting-edge research, teaching/training, and networking on cooperative multilateralism in the Asia Pacific region. The Centre aims to contribute to international academic and public discourses on regional architecture and order in Asia Pacific. It aspires to be an international knowledge hub for multilateral and regional cooperation.

The Centre's research agenda includes international and global forms, as well as expressions of cooperative multilateralism:

- **Economic multilateralism**

Research areas include trade, monetary, and financial integration in ASEAN, ASEAN+3, South Asia, and Central Asia; evolving linkages between various Asian sub-regions and with countries/sub-regions outside the region; and developments in the global economic architecture to ensure complementarity between global and regional initiatives.

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