

The New Silk Road

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Discussant: Sujata Ashwarya Cheema (Faculty, Jamia Milia Islamia)

Sujata Cheema emphasised on the need to be precise with the title as there have been other New Silk Road initiatives in the past. The suggestion was to use the word ‘One Belt One Road’(OBOR) instead. She referred to the Silk Road initiative as a ‘metaphor of connectivity,’ and that connections in actuality are more measured. She mentioned that such connects in the past also provided for the dissemination of ideas and was not to be viewed as mere infrastructural or economic linkages. Another suggestion from SujataCheema was to substantiate on the nations involved in the Land and Maritime project, indicating its scale and magnitude and specifically elaborate upon the two aspects of China’s New Silk Road Initiative, that is, the Silk Road Economic Belt Corridor (SREB) and what is alluded to as the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. The intricacies of the project, its operational pattern, its feasibility and the funding agencies need to be examined. Being an expert on West Asia, Sujata Cheema particularly stressed upon the need to specify the west Asian connect within the OBOR referring to projects such as Gwadar and Chabahar as well as the role of new entrants to the project such as Israel. At the same time the security aspect or rather the lack of security of the west Asian region and its implications for the OBOR should be taken into consideration while analysing its overall repercussions for connectivity in the region and beyond. Sujata Cheema also referred to the significant role played by regional associations such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in this Chinese initiative and the need to explore the same. She also highlighted the need to elaborate upon the Indian neighbourhood, particularly the role of Pakistan in the OBOR, referring to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its implications for India. Sujata Cheema had specific suggestions relating to the research questions. Regarding the first research question, “Does the New Silk Road Initiative represent the next stage of globalization...,” the expert recommended a comprehensive explanation for the use of the term globalization in this context and connection. Similarly, with reference to 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,” the expert suggested a thorough clarification of what “certain facets” indicated and connoted as well as the need to expand on the same. An elaboration of the Look East or Act East Policy was deemed necessary in order to situate it in the larger connectivity project. The final suggestion by the expert was to add a substantive bibliography and look carefully into the editing aspects of the final text.