

**Report**

# **The New Silk Road**

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**THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES,  
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## The New Silk Road

Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, hosted an in-house meeting. The guest speaker for the meeting was Dr. Najam Abbas, a Senior Fellow focusing on Central and South Asia analyzing security issues as well as human development.

Dr. Najam started his presentation by explaining the emerging trends of competition among the three super powers of the world, namely, Russia, China and United States around the globe to gain influence especially in the South Asian region. He further elucidated that this competition of influence will either bring these super powers together or the world will witness another cold war which will be in hot pursuit to get control over trade routes around the globe.

He shed light on the fact that today these three super powers are in race to get the maximum hold of the trade routes, especially land routes to gain utmost strategic and geopolitical influence in different regions. Dr Najam Abbas, also highlighted that the main land trade route which the three super powers are thriving to get access to are through Central Asia and through South Asian region. He said that in past few years there have been many activities going on from Beijing, to Moscow and Washington D.C.

In his presentation he referred to many articles which shed light on the importance of these trade land routes predominantly the Silk Road. He explained that the New Silk Road will partially entail the infrastructure build up. It will help to connect all the regions; including Central Asia, South Asia

and South East Asia giving an easy access to the trade markets. The Silk Road, he explained will basically deal with highways, railway lines, and energy supply like electricity and gas to deprived areas.

Dr. Abbas said that, United States sees the Silk Road more in NATO setting as well as an easy entrée to the trade market between the west and the east. Dr. Abbas in his presentation said that State Secretary, Hillary Clinton's has rolled out a 'New Silk Road Initiative,' which will primarily meet with the existing and growing need of gas in the South Asian region particularly to Pakistan. In which Tajik Cotton can be sold in Mumbai, as well as opening furniture and fruit market of Afghanistan to Central Asian states, Pakistan, India and beyond.

Further, quoting an article by Russian President Vladimir Putin, he explained that for Moscow the new Silk Road is more of a geopolitical initiative in the interest of which Russia is seeking to develop ties with the Eurasian Union. He also shed light on the fact that Russia has already started cooperation in terms on economic trade in this respect with countries in the Far East like Vietnam and is looking forward to extend it to military trade as well. Dr. Abbas said that for some international observers this initiative by the Russian President is a veiled attempt to restore the former Soviet Union which will again make it a more contending super power.

Dr. Najam Abbas also presented the Chinese perspective in establishing the New Silk Road, he said that China as a more hard sought strategy. China has laid down, what they call a five finger strategy in its New Silk Road plan:

1. Railways
2. Roads

3. Pipelines
4. Supply chains, and
5. Trade

He said that China plans to build a Eurasian land bridge which will help China export its trade market, goods and products in to East Eurasian market and further into Germany. China is investing millions of dollars in order to develop Kashgar into its trade hub. China on the other hand is also very actively progressing to develop the Eurasian-Transcontinental railway lines which will further decrease the cost of the trade as well as of the freight.

Dr. Abbas underlined four major corridors of the New Silk Road:

- First, corridor linking Russia with Japan
- Second, linking China to Mongolia
- Third, linking Asia with Europe, East Europe and Central Asia, and
- Fourth, linking Southern Europe with Iran, South Asia and South East Asia.

Concluding his presentation, Dr. Abbas said that the China, Russia and United States are scrambling and competing to get an upper hand in the Eurasian and South Asian markets. He said that major powers are seeking hubs and power points in form of the modern Silk Road and looking trade as a new and easy instrument of influence. This in a nut shell, he said, the New Silk Road will shift the existing emphasis from security to trade and to establish new land routes.

*Prepared by  
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