

Abstract

The Silk Route has an important place in history as a network of roads connecting ancient China with Persia, Arabia, Greece, Italy, etc. between the 2nd century B.C. and the 14th century A.D. A lesser known off-shoot of this road network is the Southern Silk Route, which connected Eastern India with Southwest China as well as Southeast Asia. This research focuses on the discourse of development and connectivity with a revival of the Southern Silk Route in the near future. It explores the prospects and implications of connectivity enhancement in the North-Eastern and North Bengal regions of India with the neighbouring countries of Myanmar, Nepal and China. Earlier, the Tea-Horse trade route served as one of the main avenues of development in North Bengal and since its inclusion into China in 1950, these old routes have been studied under the lens of Sino-Indian connectivity in the 21st century. In this regard, the reopening of Nathu-La (pass) on the border between China and India in 2006 serves as an important case study. The North Eastern region in particular houses several such passes which connect to the neighbouring countries. However, several bottlenecks over the years have prevented a proper utilization of these linkages. Under the Act East policy of India,

the region is regarded as the gateway to Southeast Asia. This research also explores the potential of the region in terms of economic development through trade with the neighbouring economies such as China and Myanmar. The intricate connections between logistics and industrial development in these regions have been highlighted with the aim of studying the causes and concerns related to the reopening of these old routes. This research aims to bridge the gap in knowledge with regard to the Southern Silk Route, the factors contributing to the demands for increased connectivity in the region as well as the strategic implications of doing so.