MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

Geopolitics of the Siliguri Corridor: Strategic Space and Regional Connectivity in the Contemporary Global South

Dr. Md Kamal Hossain

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science,
Dr. Meghnad Saha College, Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal, India
Email: hossainkamal171@gmail.com
Page No: 28-38

Abstract: *The Siliguri Corridor also referred to as the Chicken-s neck is one of the most strategically sensitive geographical features in South Asia. This small strip of land in the North West of West Bengal is the only strip of land connecting India as a whole country to the north east states and at the same time being surrounded by international boundaries with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China. The main aims of the paper are to discuss the geopolitical value of the Siliguri Corridor, to determine how it would contribute to the connectivity and Interglobal issues within the area, and to analyze the issue of security, ecology, and city growth in the area. The other aim of the study is to see the impacts of emergent regional initiatives and the development projects of infrastructure in determining the strategic significance of this corridor in South Asian geopolitics. This study takes a qualitative and analytical approach. The secondary data used have been gathered in the form of scholarly literature, government reports, policy documents, and geopolitical studies concerning the borderland regions and development of the region. The results indicate that the Siliguri Corridor is an important strategic gateway linking the northeastern part of India with the mainland and economic and infrastructural access to the countries in the areas. The corridor has however had some challenges which include security vulnerabilities, ecological threats and the mounting pressures of urbanization. The researcher finds that policy planning and regional collaboration is the key to stability, security and sustainable development in this geopolitically sensitive region.*

Keywords: *Borderland Security; Transnational Trade Networks; Strategic Vulnerability; Environmental Sustainability; Infrastructure Diplomacy; Cross-Border Governance.*

1. Introduction

Siliguri Corridor sometimes referred to the Chicken neck, is a geopolitical location that is very sensitive. This is a small strip of land that lies in the north of West Bengal and links the mainland India with the northeast of the country and the only area through which the continuity of land might be experienced. The width of the narrowest segment of the corridor is about 2022 kilometers, whereas its length is nearly 200 kilometers, which is a very vulnerable strategic entry (Datta, 2018; Singh, 2021). Geographically, the corridor is enclosed by Nepal to the west, Bangladesh to the south, Bhutan to the north and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the even further north, which means that it lies at a crossroad of multiple international boundaries and key geopolitical stakes in the area (Pant and Saha, 2021). The Siliguri Corridor has due to this special geographic makeup, emerged as an important strategic space of national security, economic integration and connectivity in South Asia. The Siliguri Corridor has a significant strategic role which has its basis in historical geopolitical restructuring of South Asia after the Partition of British India in 1947. The formation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) changed greatly the transportation networks that used to connect the northeastern region to the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Consequently, the corridor became the only land route linking the eight northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim with the mainland India (Baruah, 2020). These two states collectively form almost 262,000 square kilometres and have close to 45 million people with all of them relying on the corridor to

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

trade, govern and move around (Ghosh, 2017). The Siliguri Corridor is therefore a very important infrastructural lifeline related to transporting goods, energy supplies and other necessary commodities to the northeast. Economically, the corridor is a determinant in the regional trade and development trends. The greater part of the road, rail, and pipeline systems linking the northeastern states with the rest of India cross this slender strip. It has been shown that the largest part of mainland India-Northeast trade flows through the Siliguri Corridor, which makes it a very important part of the internal logistics network of India (Ghosh, 2017; Singh, 2021). They have however reduced economic growth and transportation costs in the region as the reliance on one route has in the past led to high costs and limit the possibility to grow economically. Research has revealed that the logistical congestion in the corridor has been a major cause of the rise in the prices of commodities in the northeastern states, limiting the integration of their economies with the national and international markets (De, 2018). Consequently, the enhancement of connectivity via the corridor has become one of the priorities of the regional development strategies of India.

The Siliguri Corridor too is of enormous strategic significance to India in terms of its national security and defense planning. Since the area is geographically vulnerable, it is generally seen among military strategists as a prospective geopolitical choke point. Any obstruction along this slender route, be it military, natural, or political, would practically cut off the whole northeastern part of India to the rest of it (Pant & Saha, 2021). The channel being very close to the Chumbi Valley, a small strip of Tibetan land that is under Chinese control, which is a narrow wedge between Bhutan and Sikkim, increases the strategic sensitivity of the channel. Researchers have contended that the geographical positioning of the Chumbi Valley towards the Siliguri Corridor heightens security concerns among the Indians since the corridor is now in the proximity of the Chinese military bases (Singh, 2021). These security issues were acutely palpated in the Doklam standoff of 2017, when Indian and Chinese troops had a Doklam standoff at the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction. The event revealed how events in the surrounding border areas may have a direct impact on the strategic stability of the Siliguri Corridor (Pant & Saha, 2021). Therefore, India has intensified its military buildup and military infrastructure in the area to protect this vital route. Road network, railway connectivity and air base investment in the areas surrounding the corridor would be aimed at enhancing the logistical capabilities of India and alleviating the vulnerability of the narrow land bridge.

In addition to the military factors, the Siliguri Corridor has become a key point in the regional connectivity projects in South Asia. The Act East Policy of India focuses on building transportation and trade corridors that connect the northeast part to the southeast part of Asia. In this regard, the corridor has been used as a point of entry between India and its neighbors like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan and thus, economic cooperation between countries (De, 2018). Regional projects like the Bangladesh–Bhutan–India–Nepal (BBIN) subregional cooperation model aim to enhance road and transit connectivity within South Asia, which could turn the Siliguri Corridor into a locus of regional economic integration (Datta, 2018). Nevertheless, the geopolitical landscape of the corridor is in a complicated and disputable state. The expanding infrastructure expansion and competitive strategies in the Himalayan region especially between China and India have fueled the geopolitical importance of this strip. The increased role of China in the South Asian infrastructure networks and the increment of its armed forces in Tibet has been causing alarm among the Indian decision makers about the long-term security of the corridor (Pant and Saha, 2021). Simultaneously, the area has transnational issues, including illegal trade, migration, and insurgents

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

that make it hard to control the border and manage security (Datta, 2018).

In the more general framework of the Global South, the Siliguri Corridor demonstrates how strategic space and regional connectivity are contrived by geography and political boundaries. This issue of territorial fragmentation, legacies of colonial borders, and constraints in infrastructural factors affects many countries in the Global South. In that regard, the corridor becomes one of the remarkable instances of how a very small geographical territory can be both a lifeline of a national integration and the keystone of the geopolitical tension at the same time. The geopolitical nature of the Siliguri Corridor must consequently be understood to understand the regional approach of India as well as trends of connectivity and power politics in South Asia.

2. Objectives

I. To examine the 'geopolitical and strategic importance' of the 'Siliguri Corridor' vis-a-vis the national security of India and the regional balance of power.
II. To study the significance of the Siliguri Corridor for the regional connectivity and economic integration of mainland India, the North-Eastern states with countries.
III. To assess the new geopolitical issues and opportunities around the corridor in the light of the broader context of the global politics of the south and the Indo-Pacific region.

3. Methods

This paper is based on a qualitative and analytical approach to research, the geopolitical importance of the Siliguri Corridor and how it is linked to regional connectivity in the modern Global South. This study will mainly rely on the secondary sources of data such as peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, governmental reports, and policy papers dealing with geopolitics, South Asian security, and connectivity of infrastructure in the area. The analysis has been backed by gathering relevant statistical data on trade flows, transportation networks, and connectivity of a region through scholarly publications and reports issued by different institutions. Another method of study employed in the study is a geopolitical and spatial analyze to get an idea of the strategic placement of the Siliguri Corridor with neighboring nations which include Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and China. The study uses the descriptive and critical analysis to estimate the role of the corridor in the national security, economic integration, and regional cooperation undertakings including cross-border connectivity structures. It is a methodological framework that facilitates a comprehensive description of how the strategic role of the Siliguri Corridor can be described through geographic constraints, political forces and infrastructural development in geopolitics in South Asia.

4 Discussion

4.1 Analysis on the Bases of Objective-1

South Asia the Siliguri Corridor or the so-called Chicken's Neck is one of the most geopolitically delicate areas in South Asia. This thin piece of land that falls within the territory of the country of West Bengal north links mainland India with the states of the northeastern region and is very critical in defining the national security policy in India and the geopolitics in the region. It is a narrow passageway that measures nearly between 200 km in length and can be between 17 km and 60 km wide, narrowing in the middle to around 2022 km and is one of the weakest links in terms of strategic passages in India (Ghising, 2024; Ranade, 2023). The area is also geographically enclosed by various international borders. It shares borders with Nepal to the west, Bhutan to the North and Bangladesh to the South whereas Tibet Autonomous Region, China, borders the country closely through the Chumbi Valley. This position places the corridor at the collapse of multiple geopolitical interests, and it is a

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

strategic space in South Asian geopolitics (Davar, 2024). The fact that the corridor is the sole land route connecting northeastern states of India 201 and India in the mainland is one of the most important dimensions. The northeastern is a region that comprises eight states and occupies a size of about 262 230 square kilometres and occupies almost 8 percent of the total geographical area of India. More than 40 million people live in the area, and the economic and administrative activity is largely based upon this thin strip (Birthal, 2010; Usthadian, 2024).

The Corridor Strategic Reliance:

The geopolitical role of the Siliguri Corridor can be explained regarding the level of interdependence of the northeastern part on this route. Almost 95 percent of the export in various northeastern states like Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya are transited through the Siliguri Corridor, which explains its role in trade and economic integration of the entire India. Corridor is also home to large transportation and strategic infrastructure networks such as national highways, railway lines, oil and gas pipes as well as electricity transmission networks. The networks form the main pathway of the logistical movement of goods, people, and the military stocks between the main land and the Northeast of India.

Table 1: Key Geopolitical and Strategic Features of the Siliguri Corridor

Indicator	Data
Length of the corridor	~200 km
Narrowest width	20-22 km
Area of Northeast India connected	~262,230 sq km
Population dependent on corridor	Over 40 million
Share of Northeast exports passing through corridor	~95%
Neighboring countries	Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China (nearby)

Source: Compiled from Ghising (2024); Birthal (2010); Ranade (2023); Usthadian (2024).

Implication on National Security:

Strategically, security analysts usually define the corridor as the most strategic chokepoint in India. Any obstruction in this small channel, be it a military action, natural catastrophe, or political unrest, may literally cut off the whole northeastern region of North India out of mainland India (Ranade, 2023). The corridor is also characterized by the fact that the area is close to the Chumbi Valley, a narrow strip of land captured by the Chinese between Bhutan and Sikkim which makes it the security sensitive area. This valley goes southwards to the Siliguri Corridor, which can be a strategic point of pressure should there arises a military pressure between India and China. Strategic analysts state that the Chumbi Valley geographic orientation provides China with the hypothetical power to pose a threat to the corridor in the conflict situation (Davar, 2024). This weakness was revealed in the 2017 Doklam standoff between India and China. The confrontation took place around the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction only a few meters away to the Siliguri Corridor. This event proved that the changes in the surrounding border territories might influence directly the capacity of India to ensure safer connectivity with the northeastern part of the country (Usthadian, 2024).

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

Infrastructure and Military Significance:

It has a number of strategic military bases and transport infrastructure, which are used in the defence logistics in India. Some of the important strategic locations in the corridor or in their immediate surroundings are Bagdogra Air Force Station, Bengdubi military cantonment, and major network of rail and highways. Such centers allow fast access to troops and armories to vulnerable border zones like Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (The Tribune, 2024). Besides the military infrastructure, it is also a significant military node in terms of energy and communication networks. The region is featured with oil pipelines and national power grid lines that guarantee the energy supply to the northeastern states. Such infrastructure concentration adds to the strategic significance of the corridor but at the same time adds to the risk of any potential disruption.

Regional Power Dynamics:

Siliguri Corridor also contributes greatly to local politics of power in South Asia. The corridor is geographically near to some of the countries which hold a strategic significance to the foreign policy of India such as Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The ability to cooperate and manage security in a region is offered and challenged by the open or semi-open borders with these nations (Ghising, 2024). Moreover, the growing Chinese strategic presence in the Himalayan region has fueled geopolitical rivalry in the region. This growth of infrastructure and military infrastructure in Tibet coupled with the increased involvement of China in South Asians linking activities has increased the level of insecurity of India concerning this slender land passage (Davar, 2024).

The Siliguri Corridor is an important and strategic functional region in the national security of India. Because of its limited geography, its closeness to different international borders, and the fact that it is the only land route to the northeastern states, it is among the regions with the highest strategic value in South Asia. The corridor plays a significant economic role of connecting and trading economic entities as well as being a logistical pathway in military and the management of borders. Simultaneously, due to the exposure to geopolitical tensions, especially concerning China and the Himalayan border conflicts, the need to reinforce the infrastructure, security systems, and regional relations as the key to the long-term sustainability and stability of the Indian northeastern regions is emphasized.

4.2 Analysis on the Bases of Objective-2

The Siliguri Corridor is a geographic center, which occupies a central place in the geopolitical and economic region of South Asia. This is a thin strip of land in the north of West Bengal that provides links between mainland India and the north eastern states of India in addition to providing links between the Himalayan region and the eastern Indians plains. The length of the corridor is about 200 km and the narrowest side of the route measures about 2022 km, serving as the main transportation, trade, and movement point of the northeast and the mainland of India (Datta, 2018; Ranade, 2023). The strategic location of the region between Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and China is again a plus in that it constitutes a center of regional connectivity and economic interaction. But the advantage of the Siliguri Corridor as an important integrative factor is marred by geographic limitations of the States and infrastructure constraints that undermine structure with the integration of economic growth and regional integration. Critical analysis of this corridor thus matures to looking at its facilitating problem in the regional connectivity as well as the structural limitations that restrict its effectiveness.

Connectedness of the Corridor and Reliance:

The northeastern region of India is made up of eight states, and has an area of about

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

262, 230 square kilometers, which is about 8 percent of the geographical territory in India. Over 45 million people live in the area, whose economic and social interdependence with the rest of India heavily relies on the Siliguri Corridor (Ghosh, 2017). Since the majority of transportation networks, including highways, railways, pipelines and telecommunications systems, are traveling through this rather narrow passage the corridor serves as the main logistical pipeline connecting the region to mainland India. Research has shown that over 90 percent of surface traffic between mainland India and the northeastern states pass through the Siliguri Corridor, proving that it is the main one in supporting the local economic activity (De, 2018). This dependency shows the significance of the corridor in the various agricultural products, industrial and consumer commodities and energy supplies. Due to the example, one of the greatest tea-producing regions on this planet Assam produces about 700 million kilograms of tea per year which is almost 50 percent of the total Indian tea production. The large portion of this production is moved via the corridor to both national and foreign markets (Ghosh, 2017).

Table 2: Key Indicators of Connectivity and Economic Dependence

Indicator	Data
Length of Siliguri Corridor	~200 km
Narrowest width	20–22 km
Area of Northeast India connected	~262,230 sq km
Population dependent on corridor	~45 million
Share of Northeast surface trade passing through corridor	Over 90%
Assam tea production	~700 million kg annually

Source: De (2018); Ghosh (2017); Ranade (2023).

The above data shows how the corridor is at the center of regional economic networks. In the absence of this text, logistical integration between the northeastern States and the mainland India would have been grossly limited.

Organizational Problems and Logistical Problems:

Even though the significance of this situation is critical, a high dependency on the Siliguri Corridor also creates a few economic and infrastructural issues. Since the corridor is the main point of transport route, logistic inefficiencies and traffic jams often hike the cost and time taken in transportation and delivery. Following the example of goods shipped in Agartala (Tripura) to Kolkata, to get access to the Siliguri Corridor, the theoretical distance between two countries is only about 1,600 kilometres, despite the fact that the geographical distance is significantly shorter (World Bank, 2021). According to research, full transit through Bangladesh may decrease this distance to about 450 kilometres and transportation costs decrease by about 6080 percent and greatly increases trade efficiency (World Bank, 2021). These facts demonstrate the weakness of the dependency on the Siliguri Corridor as the main means of the connection of the region.

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

Table 3: Comparison of Transport Routes for Trade

Route	Distance	Estimated Transport Impact
Agartala–Kolkata via Siliguri Corridor	~1,600 km	Higher logistics cost and longer travel time
Agartala–Kolkata via Bangladesh transit	~450 km	Up to 60–80% reduction in cost and time

Source: World Bank (2021).

This comparison shows how despite the fact that the corridor makes the region connected, its geographical limitations present the northeastern region with considerable economic prices. The outcome of this is that the corridor is a factor of integration and a structural bottleneck that restrains the economic competitiveness of the region.

Regional Integrity and Inter-border Economies:

The Siliguri Corridor has also been crucial in terms of regional economic integration in South Asia in addition to domestically. The passage is near a number of global borders and it is a strategic transit route of India to Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. The corridor promotes cross-border trading and infrastructure development of the region through such links. The subregional arrangements like the Bangladesh–Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) subregional integration target enhancing road transport connectivity and inter-regional movement of goods across the borders. Regional trade studies show that intra-regional trade between BBIN countries rose by almost six times between the period 2005 and 2019 which indicates the rising significance of connectivity in the South Asian integration of the economy (Taneja, 2022). The enhanced connectivity of the region via the Siliguri area might be even more effective in boosting the trade flow by connecting the Himalayan area to other main economic centres on eastern India. Meanwhile, the Act East Policy adopted by India focuses on the creation of transport corridors between the northeast states and the southeast of Asia. In this regard the Siliguri Corridor acts as an entry point to the India northeastern market to the rest of the region trade networks. Enhanced infrastructure within this region thus has the potential of making the corridor a locus of economic integration between the South Asia and the Southeast Asia.

Critical View Corridor as a Gateway and a Bottleneck:

Critically, the Siliguri Corridor is an integration gateway and a structural bottleneck at the same time. On the one hand, it facilitates the transportation of goods, services and people within the mainland India as well as the northeastern states and in the process makes the economies operating and the nation to be united. Conversely, the narrowness of the geography of this area and infrastructural constraints limit the number of business transactions and economic growth. Also, the geopolitical and security issues within the Himalayan region hit an extra complexity to the position of the corridor as a regional connector. Borders conflict or interference in the infrastructure might likely impact on the transport systems traveling on this path that is very narrow and it is this that results in the exposure of relying on one corridor to integrate the region.

Siliguri Corridor is very instrumental in connecting the regions of India, the northeastern states and the neighboring countries economically and also in networking. The corridor promotes flow of trade, energy and transportation networks in one of the most geographically compounded areas in South Asia. But this excessive reliance on this slender strip of land

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

also poses structural burdens such as the high cost of transportation, bottlenecks in transportation and insecurity of geopolitical positioning. Critical thinking about the corridor should therefore involve the realization of the integrative aspect of the corridor to regional development as well as the infrastructural constraints that shape its performance in fostering sustainable economic integration.

4.3 Analysis on the Bases of Objective-3

The Siliguri Corridor, often called the "Chicken's Neck," is a crucial geographical point in South Asia because it is the link between mainland India to the north of the region and the eight northeastern states of India. Comprising an area of about 262,000 km², with more than 45 million people, the Siliguri Corridor is critical for the economic activity, transport, and national security of the region (Baruah 2020). Around 90-95 percent of surface trade and movement of supplies from mainland India to the northeastern states pass through the Siliguri Corridor and it is thus vital for maintaining economic integration and administrative connectivity (Singh 2020). From a geopolitical standpoint, the importance of the Siliguri Corridor is not only from a perspective of domestic connectivity but also from a broader geopolitical perspective; meaning that the Siliguri Corridor is located directly between Nepal, west to the Siliguri Corridor; Bhutan, north to the Siliguri Corridor; Bangladesh, south to the Siliguri Corridor; and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, northeast of the Siliguri Corridor, therefore the Siliguri Corridor serves as a major intersection of regional geopolitical dynamics (Das 2019). Therefore, the Siliguri Corridor occupies an important position in the larger strategic geopolitically competitive environment of the Indo-Pacific region, where there is an increased focus on infrastructure, trade connectivity, and strategic competition.

The Siliguri Corridor faces governance challenges due to its geographical features:

The Siliguri Corridor's narrowest point (20-22 km) is at its mid-point, creating a possible chokepoint for the entire Northeast corridor and isolating it from the rest of the country through disrupted transportation routes. Its narrow terrain also creates challenges related to both military and infrastructure security (Pant & Bommakanti, 2019). Furthermore, this vulnerability is exacerbated by the Siliguri Corridor's location adjacent to the Chinese-controlled Chumbi Valley. The Chumbi Valley is a wedge-shaped territory in Tibet that lies between Bhutan and Sikkim and extends southward toward the Siliguri Corridor, creating a potential area of strategic pressure in the event of geopolitical tensions between India and China (Brewster, 2018). The historical example of the 2017 Doklam standoff, which occurred in the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction of the Himalayas, highlights how territorial disputes in the Himalayas may impact the strategic security of the Siliguri Corridor in the event of a blockade (Pant & Bommakanti, 2019).

Transnational threats to security represent another significant challenge. Due to porous borders with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, there are a multitude of transnational activities such as smuggling, illegal migration and human trafficking which take place in the corridor. Regional security reports indicate that each year there are thousands of recorded cases of smuggling and human trafficking taking place along the eastern borders; these indicate the challenges of governance in this complex area (Hussain, 2021). Environmental vulnerability also presents a major challenge to the corridor. The corridor lies in an area that is seismically unstable the Himalayan foothills. Consequently, the region frequently experiences critical transportation disruption from floods, landslides and earthquakes. As a result, there are significant risks to the connectivity between the northeastern states and the mainland of India; this complicates efforts to build sustainable infrastructure over the long term (Das, 2019).

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

Table- 4: Major Geopolitical Challenges in the Siliguri Corridor

Challenge	Strategic Impact
Narrow geographical width	Strategic chokepoint and vulnerability
Proximity to China's Chumbi Valley	Potential military pressure point
Cross-border smuggling and trafficking	Security and governance challenges
Environmental risks	Infrastructure disruption and supply vulnerability

Source: Das (2019); Hussain (2021); Singh (2020).

Emerging Opportunities in the Global South and Indo-Pacific:

Despite Siliguri's vulnerabilities, it has been increasingly seen as a strategic gateway for regional connectivity and economic integration within the Global South. India's foreign policy initiative, the Act East Policy, aims to strengthen economic and infrastructure links between India and the southeastern Asian countries through the northeastern region (Baruah, 2020). A major component of this policy is one of India's most prominent infrastructure projects, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. This 1,360-kilometer-long connectivity project will provide a direct road connection between India's northeastern states and southeastern Asia (via Myanmar) and facilitate increased trade flows and economic integration between South Asia and ASEAN economies once completed (Brewster, 2018).

Enhancing connectivity with Bangladesh, one of India's primary trading partners in South Asia, is another key area. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh reached over US$18 billion, reflecting a growing economic interdependence between the two countries (Rahman, 2022). Improved transit routes through Bangladesh could shorten the distance that goods will have to travel between mainland India and its northeastern states by approximately 1,000 km, resulting in lower logistics costs and more efficient trading. Furthermore, continued infrastructure development within India is changing the strategic importance of the southern corridor. The proposed Kharagpur-Siliguri Economic Corridor, which runs approximately 516 km, aims to enhance logistics efficiency and decrease congestion on eastern India's road system (Singh, 2020). Projects of this nature have the potential to make the Siliguri Corridor a significant economic connection between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Table- 5: Emerging Opportunities Around the Siliguri Corridor

Initiative	Strategic Benefit
India–Myanmar–Thailand Highway	Connectivity with Southeast Asia
India–Bangladesh transit routes	Reduced transport distance and cost
Kharagpur–Siliguri Economic Corridor	Improved logistics and trade
Act East Policy	Integration with Indo-Pacific markets

Source: Baruah (2020); Rahman (2022); Singh (2020)

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

The Siliguri Corridor, as seen from a broader Global South viewpoint, is a vital place which connects security geopolitics to economic regionalism. The Siliguri Corridor has mostly been seen as a strategic weakness for the past, due to the very narrow geography of the corridor and how close it is to national boundaries. However, modern day regional development initiatives are beginning to reframe it as a geo-economic gateway linking South Asia to Southeast Asia, as well as a more extensive Indo-Pacific region. For the corridor to change into an important connectivity hub, it will require a number of components to be successfully addressed, including improving the transportation and logistics infrastructure, establishing stronger diplomatic ties with neighboring countries, and developing better mechanisms for border security. When these elements are in place, the Siliguri Corridor has the potential to be transformed from an area of strategic vulnerability to one of the main hubs for commerce, connectivity and regional collaboration within the evolving Indo-Pacific geopolitical area.

8 Conclusion

The Siliguri Corridor is one of the most geopolitically significant and strategically sensitive areas of South Asia, and is commonly referred to as the 'Chicken's Neck'. The only land connection that links (importantly) mainland India to the North East, the corridor is also critical for political unity, economic interaction and national security for a region of over 260,000 km² with a population of more than 45 million. The geographical context of the corridor (i.e., lying between Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China) creates an area of unique strategic intersection between domestic security issues and broader geopolitical issues within the region. Therefore, the corridor has long been seen as both a strategic lifeline and a potential vulnerability within India's territorial structure. This research highlights that the Siliguri Corridor has many dynamic and multifaceted geopolitical stressors & challenges associated with it. The corridor's very slim width (20 – 22km) creates a key vulnerability for geostrategic access between the as-yet undeveloped north eastern states and mainland India in terms of potential disruption of travel connections due to actual geopolitical tensions and / or the failure of mode(s) of transportation. The contiguous Chumbi Valley adjoining the corridor, combined with both China's incidence regarding its military threats to Indian territory in the vicinity of Doklam in 2017, illustrates how territorial disputes may lead to immediate consequences on the overall geopolitical security environment of the Siliguri Corridor and thus its functionality. In addition, the combination of traditional security issues associated with the corridor and the considerable number of non-traditional security challenges presented through issues of cross-border smuggling, illegal migration and environmental vulnerabilities present further significant governance and infrastructure challenges within the entire region surrounding the Siliguri Corridor. Although the Siliguri Corridor has numerous challenges, it also provides great strategic potential to aid the evolving geopolitical environment of the Global South and the Indo-Pacific. As part of this strategy, India's foreign policies, especially the Act East Policy, have stated that the region is important to use as a doorway into Greater Asia for forming economic and strategic relationships with Southeast Asia. Infrastructure projects (such as the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway) and improved rail and road connections will enhance the region's ability to be a key center for regional connectivity and trade. Strengthened cooperation with adjacent countries, primarily Bangladesh, can also play an important role in reducing logistical constraints through better transportation options that link Northeastern State of India with the rest of the country.

MEDHĀMANTHAN ISSN : 3139-7840
A Premier Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access, Bimonthly, International Online Research Journal
Dedicated to the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Adhering to UGC Guidelines and Quality Mandates
Volume: 1, Issue: 3 (SEP - OCT) 2026

References

- Baruah, S. (2020). India's northeastern region and the geopolitics of connectivity. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 7(2), 123–140.
- Birthal, P. S. (2010). Agricultural growth and regional disparities in Northeast India. *Agricultural Economics Research Review*, 23(2), 155–164.
- Brewster, D. (2018). India and China at sea: Competition for naval dominance in the Indo-Pacific. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 41*(1–2), 226–248.
- Datta, A. (2018). Bordering the corridor: Geopolitics and infrastructure in India's Northeast. *Asian Survey*, 58(4), 642–664.
- De, P. (2018). Connectivity and regional integration in South Asia: Infrastructure, trade, and development. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 56, 1–12.
- Das, P. (2019). Strategic significance of the Siliguri Corridor in India's security architecture. *Strategic Analysis, 43*(3), 221–234.
- Davar, K. (2024). Siliguri Corridor and India's strategic vulnerability. *Strategic Analysis*, 48(3), 231–244.
- Ghosh, P. (2017). Infrastructure, connectivity, and economic development in India's Northeast. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 4(2), 163–181.
- Ghising, A. K. (2024). The Siliguri Corridor: A historical analysis of geopolitical vulnerability in eastern India. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 7(4), 45–56.
- Hussain, W. (2021). Border security challenges in India's eastern frontier. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs, 8*(2), 235–252.
- Lama, M. P. (2018). Border trade and regional cooperation in the eastern Himalayas. *Asian Survey*, 58(4), 642–664.
- Pant, H. V., & Saha, P. (2021). India–China rivalry in the Himalayas: The strategic implications of border conflicts. *International Affairs*, 97(2), 379–398.
- Pant, H. V., & Bommakanti, K. (2019). The Doklam crisis and India–China strategic rivalry. *International Affairs, 95*(2), 321–337.
- Ranade, V. S. (2023). Slender is the corridor: Strategic implications of the Siliguri Corridor. *Journal of Defence Studies*, 17(1), 65–78.
- Rahman, M. (2022). Regional connectivity and economic integration in South Asia: The BBIN initiative. *South Asian Survey, 29*(1), 75–92.
- Singh, A. (2021). Strategic vulnerability and security dynamics of the Siliguri Corridor. *Strategic Analysis*, 45(3), 231–245.
- Singh, A. (2020). Geopolitics of India's northeast and the Siliguri Corridor. *India Quarterly, 76* (4), 501–516.
- Taneja, N. (2022). Regional connectivity and trade integration in South Asia. *Journal of Asian Economic Integration*, 4(2), 215–232.
- World Bank. (2021). Transport connectivity and trade potential in South Asia.

———