



NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY – KENYA

**ROLE OF LAND CONNECTIVITY IN TRANSFORMATION OF NEPAL
FROM LAND LOCKED TO LAND LINKED COUNTRY**

BY

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DECLARATION

I Dhruba Kumar Karki declare that this research project is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor in partial fulfillment on the examination board requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in National Security and Strategy in the National Defense College, Kenya

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Dr. Rotich Chepkirui

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family who believed in me and has always supported me in their own special way. Thank you and God bless you!

ABSTRACT

Landlocked nations, grappling with the absence of direct sea access, face substantial challenges in trade, transportation, and socioeconomic development, disproportionately affecting emerging and less developed countries. Despite these hurdles, numerous international agreements have been put in place to safeguard the rights of landlocked nations and ensure the freedom of transit, all while they contend with inherent and external limitations to enhance their connectivity. In Nepal's case, the role of land connectivity is paramount as the country transitions from a landlocked nation to a land-linked one, fostering economic growth and regional connections. Nestled between the economic powerhouses of India and China, Nepal's unique geographical position positions it as a vital transit route to South Asian markets and beyond, with this transformation depending on three core factors: the geopolitical environment, infrastructure development, and visionary leadership. Acknowledging the absence of a coherent foreign policy vision, Nepal must forge revised treaties and agreements with India and China, increase its engagement with regional and international organizations, and adopt a strategic approach to secure sea access through neighboring nations. Infrastructure development is of utmost importance, with a specific focus on road, rail, and port facilities to reduce trade costs and enhance connectivity. Effective leadership, capable of maintaining balanced relationships with neighboring countries, is indispensable to drive this transformation. Nepal's path forward entails a comprehensive roadmap, prioritizing diplomatic relations, equitable trade agreements, public-private partnerships for infrastructure, strategic transportation development, reinforced border security, and the cultivation of political stability. Through these initiatives, Nepal can aspire to unlock its potential as a land-linked nation, reducing trade lead times and ensuring enhanced food security.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BIPPA	Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement
CONCOR	Container Corporation of Indian Limited
CoO	Certificate of Origin
CTD	Customs Transit Declaration
DFTP	Duty Free Tariff Preferences
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and Far East
ESCAP	Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICCD	Import Containerized Cargo Declaration
ICD	Inland Container Depots
ICP	Integrated Check Post
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Communication technology
IGETC	Inter-Governmental Economic and trade Committee
IGSC	Inter-Governmental Sub-Committee
LCSs	Land Custom Stations
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLCs	Land-locked Countries
LLDCs	Land-locked Developing Countries
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NRN	Non Resident Nepalese
NTBs	Non-Tariff Barriers
NTTFC	Nepal-Tibet trade Facilitation Committee
NTIS	Nepal Trade Integration strategy
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RSA	Rail Service Agreement

SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Agreement
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SER	South Eastern Railway
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nation Convention on Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). A self-executing agreement recognizing free access to and travel by water. This non-rectifiable agreement came into effect on January 1, 1948, 1947. It emphasizes the importance of maritime access for expanding international trade and economic growth. (https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_01_e.htm)

Land-locked State. A State, which has no seacoast (UNCLOS, Article 124).

Line of Communications (LOCs). A route, either land, water, and/or air that connects an operating military force with a base of operations and along which supplies and military forces move (JP-1-02 & JP-5-0).

Traffic in transit. This refers to the transportation of people, goods, luggage, and modes of transport across one or more transit countries' territory. This transit occurs as part of a larger journey that originates or concludes within a landlocked country's borders, and it may involve trans-shipment, warehousing, bulk-breaking, or changes in the transportation mode. (UNCLOS, Article 124).

Transit State. a state between a landlocked state and the sea, with or without a seacoast, through which transit commerce travels. ([Transit State Definition | Law Insider](#))

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Law of the Sea Convention, also known as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is a treaty that provides a legal framework for all maritime activities. It was signed on December 10, 1982, and outlines the rights and obligations of nations concerning their use of the oceans and marine resources. The treaty addresses a variety of topics, including corporate operations, environmental preservation, and the management of natural resources in the oceans. (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC), 1982, United Nations, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, <http://www.un.org/depts/los>).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lack of direct access to the sea, inadequate transport infrastructure and unnecessary transit procedures have direct impact on economic development and their trade competitiveness. Landlocked countries are more vulnerable to transportation risks and hazards than those with direct access to international sea routes. This research paper discusses background for the role of land connectivity in Nepal's transition from being landlocked to being a land-linked country. It offers several viewpoints on the study, a problem statement, a research question, study objectives, a literature review, a conceptual framework, a methodology, a basic chapter outline, and references.

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalization and financial integration have made it possible for all countries to live in a global village today. Countries have found that promoting economic growth and addressing poverty through global economic integration is an effective strategy. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), all countries need to be able to participate in the global market in order to exist. However, owing to geographical differences, not all countries have the same number of advantages when trying to access the world market. Forty-four states are landlocked (WorldAtlas, 2022), with no access to the ocean. Maritime access to these countries is always indirect and they are bound to depend on transit through the land of other countries. The transportation costs of landlocked nations are impacted by the distance and terrain that vehicles must traverse to reach the seaport. As they lack direct access to seaports, all imported and exported goods must pass through neighboring countries, often involving longer distances. The approval procedures, administrative issues, and additional costs associated with transporting goods through neighboring countries are significant reasons why landlocked countries may lose their competitive edge in the global market.

Despite the aforementioned issues, not all nations that are landlocked experience them. In fact, a couple of them rank among the richest nations in the planet. Some of the wealthier landlocked nations in the world are Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic,

Kazakhstan, and Hungary. One of the landlocked nations, Kazakhstan is a prosperous country that is situated in Central Asia rather than Europe.

1.1.1 Global Perspective of Landlocked Countries

Traditionally, Land locked states had to contend for their right of free access to the sea. The states used to fight with coastal states to participate in international trade. Since then, many writes suggested that certain rights and liabilities should be established among nations due to the geographical circumstances. Due to such provision, the neighboring coastal state needed to help Land-locked states to utilize freedom of transit to access to the sea as they do not have any seacoast in proximity (Paudel, 2053). Throughout the eleventh century, several of Europe's landlocked regions were able to obtain the right to reach the sea across adjacent areas by bilateral treaties, particularly through international rivers. Notwithstanding similar provisions in the past, access to the sea was mostly implemented under the auspices of the League of Nations following World War I (Hazal, 2022). Several international laws and treaties have been formed to define landlocked states' access to the sea. Both the High Seas Convention of 1958 and the New York Convention on the Transit Trade of Landlocked States of 1965 created reciprocity-based transit freedom for landlocked nations. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea acknowledged landlocked governments' ability to enter and leave the sea, as well as their right to free passage. These laws and treaties strive to ensure that landlocked countries have access to the sea and freedom of passage in order to foster economic growth and prosperity (Paschal, 2021).

1.1.2 Regional Perspective of Landlocked Countries

The Asia-Pacific region has a total of 12 developing countries that are landlocked, namely Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan is the largest country in terms of area among these landlocked countries, and some of them are categorized as double landlocked, which means that they are completely surrounded by other landlocked countries. For example, Uzbekistan which lies in Asia is not only land locked but is surrounded by five other landlocked nations, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Though some of the developing nations are gradually taking their pace in development, most

nations lack behind the coastal states in terms of development due to their geographical location.

1.1.3 Landlocked Country Nepal

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is a land locked country situated between emerging economic giant neighbours China and India. Its geographical location is confining it within the periphery of the two geographic giants of Asia thereby limiting its access to the other countries beyond its immediate neighbours. Late King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified Nepal, has stated “Nepal is a Yam between the boulders” (Timilsina, 2018) which was the indication of the hardship to grow Nepal as a Yam between two big countries, China and India. His assessment is still considered to be valid till date. It is due to the physical constraints Nepal is still lagging on its socio-economic, political and developmental aspects. Nevertheless, Nepal is being able to maintain its sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and freedom in many ways. Nepal being a land locked country, its dependent on its close neighbours and mostly interpreted as a buffer country which was limited within its boundary and providing cautions to protect the interests of the big neighbours like China and India. It is untrue that the Malla monarchs of the Kathmandu Valley did not retain beneficial commercial ties with both neighbours during the Middle Ages through linking trade routes (Whelpton, 2005). In the past all most all the rulers were willing to have access not only with the close neighbours but also wanted to extend the trade relationship with the countries from East Asia and outer world so that it would be known as a land linked country and take benefits to be an economically prosperous country.

Nepal has enormous resources for hydropower which has not been explored, not even one fourth of its potential. Similarly, Nepal has vast agro product potentiality, availability of herbals, and tourism sector yet to be fully explored. All these potentialities would be fully explored only if appropriate assistance and investment on infrastructure development will be made by the neighbours who would be equally advantageous. In this respect, cooperation from the neighbours in several economic sectors such as connectivity (Railway, waterway, Air and Road), electricity and telecommunications would be vital to redefine Nepal’s identity from landlocked to land linked country in reality. Nepal has always been seeking assistance and raised its voice in various forums whether it is BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) or BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) or RAISIN-2019,

or high-level visits for the cooperation for viable areas of development. But one or other way, it has not been materialised. Some Chinese and Nepali academicians see the Chinese investment in Nepal's connectivity project as a chance for trilateral collaboration between Nepal, India, and China. However, neither academics nor policymakers in India have showed much interest in the issue. India has traditionally seen Nepal as being within its traditional area of influence, and it seeks to restrain Chinese expansion. It is the main justification for New Delhi to oppose the idea of trilateral cooperation (Bhattarai K. D., China India Nepal Triangle, 2018). Despite being a resourceful country, Nepal is deprived in many areas due to lack of development of infrastructures. Such development ambitions have been hindered by the connectivity. In a nutshell, role of geo-political environment, infrastructure development and the role of political leadership has impacted the transformation of Nepal from land locked to land linked country in Asia.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The landscape of any geographic region has a huge impact on its development. Historically, the land masses and their structures imprisoned their commanders, dictated their options to manoeuvre the military forces. The size and location of such lands impacted the conflicts, power, politics, and social development of the peoples that lived there. Nepal was no exception. Its growth has been hampered by its geographical location and severe hilly terrain. On the northern border, Himalayan Mountain range has affected its connectivity. Due to such landscape, development initiatives through this border involved high trading costs, reducing its competitiveness domestically and externally. The southern border of Nepal with India has been porous in nature. Such border has assisted large amounts of unofficial trade. The closest seaport for Nepal's foreign trade is Kolkata port, which is 400 km away from Nepal's border. This port is too congested and the roads linking the port to the Nepalese border are in poor condition. Considering the needs to have access to the sea to achieve economic advancement and the economic viability, connectivity to the Chittagong port through India is one of the most promising options for Nepal. This has been the key reason for Nepal to opt for diversifying its trade by using seaports in Bangladesh. This notion has been against the interest of India and hence invited sensitivities and transit issues with India (Karmacharya, 2014).

Nepal has largely adopted a balanced political approach towards its immediate neighbors; India and China. Its foreign policy is primarily guided by the policy of non-

alignment and Panchsheel principle. However, the political lineage of the ruling party or the government, at most instance dictate the tilt towards any one of those nation. In view of all these concerns, geo-political environment, need for the infrastructural development and the political leadership governing the nation has paramount roles on defining the road of Nepal from a land-locked country into a land-linked country. This research will primarily be focused on these three key domains.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The key objective of the study was to analyze the role of connectivity for the transformation of Nepal from a land locked to land linked country.

1.3.1 General Objective

General objective for the study was to explore the role of the three key tenets of connectivity namely; geo-political environment, infrastructural development and political leadership on the transformation of Nepal from a land locked to land linked country.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1.3.2.1 To evaluate the role of geo-political environment in transforming Nepal from a land locked to land linked country.

1.3.2.2 To examine the role of infrastructure development on Nepal's aspiration to remodel itself from a land locked to land linked country.

1.3.2.3. To investigate the role of political leadership in transforming Nepal from a land locked to land linked country.

1.4 Research Questions

In view of that background, the following research questions were drawn to this research paper;

1.4.1. What is the role of geo-political environment in transforming Nepal from a land locked to land linked country?

1.4.2. How does infrastructure development impact on Nepal's aspiration from a land locked to land linked country?

1.4.3 What role do the political leadership play for the transformation of Nepal from a land locked to land linked country.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study took a broad perspective on the issue of connectivity options for Nepal and examined whether Nepal could become a strategically land-linked country by assessing its current and potential connectivity with neighboring countries such as China and India. Additionally, the study explored the availability of potential seaports and ways to reduce lead-time to address trade deficits and food security concerns. This study is therefore significant for the policy makers / policy advisors of government of Nepal, practitioner of Ministries/Departments/Agencies, especially to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Finance, Physical Infrastructure and Transport. This study is also significant for scholars to understand the connectivity issue and determine challenges in transforming Nepal from land locked country to land linked country.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research project explores on the role of land connectivity in transforming Nepal from land locked to land linked country. Broad scope of the study include;

1.6.1 Role of geo-political environment for the transformation of Nepal from land locked to land linked country.

1.6.2 Role of the infrastructure development on Nepal's aspiration to remodel itself from a land locked to land linked country.

1.6.3 Role and importance of political leadership in transformation of Nepal from land locked to land linked country.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

There were number of factors that had direct or indirect linkages on transforming Nepal from land locked to a land linked country. Nepal has implemented a multifaceted strategy to encourage regional cooperation and integration in order to improve

connections with its neighbours. In view of the time available for the research and quality of composition of the sample, the researcher had limited the scope of land connectivity within the domain of geo-political environment, infrastructure development and the role of the political leadership on transformation. In addition, the study suffered mainly from the time available for research, which limited the quality of composition of the sample.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was carried out using extensive study and secondary sources from many different fields. Numerous publications about Nepal, India, and China, as well as essays and a seminar paper relating to the connection problem between the three nations under consideration. Similar to that, several websites were also visited. The key focus throughout the assessment of the literature was to identify possible connectivity between the nations and determine if Nepal can be connected to its neighbors by land so that it could be linked beyond the region.

Literature Review of ADBI Working Paper Series, No. 498, the most important document "A connectivity-driven development strategy for Nepal: From a landlocked to a land-linked state" written by Pradhumna Rana and Binod Karmacharya which was published by ADBI, Tokyo as a working paper. This is very much essential to have a literature review on it. The working paper presents the argument for Nepal's development plan to be driven by connectivity. According to the study, enhancing connectivity within Nepal and between Nepal and its neighboring countries in South Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the People's Republic of China (PRC) would serve as critical drivers of growth for Nepal's economy. The study further argues that all countries in South Asia and East Asia would benefit from such a development plan for Nepal. The publication reflects a number of landlocked and land-linked Nepali challenges, although it does not go into great length about Nepal's geopolitical situation or its possibilities for infrastructural development.

The article "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Nepal" is written by Dr. Sambhu Ram Simkhada, and has been published by Mrs. Bindu Simkhada in the book named- 'Nepal India China Relations in the 21st Century' in 2018. The Belt and Road Initiative, put forward by President Xi Jinping in 2013, was viewed positively from the start by the people of Nepal. A ray of hope for the Nepalese people looks to be BRI, the massive initiative to connect the entire world. If these large-scale initiatives go forward as planned, Nepal's lifestyle and economy will undoubtedly alter. The growth that the northern area of Nepal will see is unimaginable. In addition to Nepal, China will improve ties with other South Asian nations as part of the BRI. The has covered many

more aspects of BRI and its impacts in Nepal. The following concerns need to be addressed in any way and for this reason, this thesis paper seems more important. Nepal's geo-politics and its challenges in land locked and land linked connectivity mainly to China and India.

2.1 Theoretical Review

There are many actors in the international system who engage with one another. States are commonly viewed as the system's principal actors. States are frequently classified as tiny or weak, medium-sized, or great and powerful states. This classification is mainly on the basis of their extent of influence in the international system. Such imbalance on the distribution of power gives rise to different nexus on the relationships amongst the various nations. The relationship among China, India, and Nepal is similar to other international relationships and can be described as having a mix of positive and negative interactions throughout history, including friendship, animosity, partnership, rivalry, and cooperation. These interactions can be analyzed through three widely accepted international relations theories, namely Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism.

Political Realism is a school of thought that looks at international relations in terms of power (Tickner, 1988). According to this theory, the relationship amongst the nations is influenced by the value of state survival and national security (Sorensen R. J., 2013). Similarly, to this, China and India, the two growing global powers with the largest economies in Asia, are both interested in expanding their influence across the Asian continent. Both India and China have a long, open border with Nepal, which is why both of these neighbors are quite interested in Nepal, mostly because it allays their security concerns.

Liberalism focuses on the progress of the states and the capitalist economy (Keohane, 2002). This perspective has a more positive outlook and sees China and India as two significant emerging markets. It recognizes that both countries are mutually dependent on trade and commerce for their prosperity. They understand that they cannot become global players without collaborating with other nations, including neighboring countries such as Nepal that are situated between their borders.

A newly emerged theory of Social Constructivism too, is equally applicable on this triangular relation between China, India and Nepal. As per this theory, internal construct

of the states affects their behavior towards other nations in the international system (Sorensen J. a., 229.). According to this theory which is primarily constituted by ideas rather than the material forces, all these three states have strong belief on the principle of Panchasheel. They are bound by the value of mutual respect and co-existence. All three countries adhere to the norms of international law and world peace because they place a strong emphasis on the non-alignment policy. They respect each other's geographical integrity and national sovereignty.

In the current setting of globalization, nations want collaboration, particularly for economic development. Despite having minimal role smaller countries like Nepal too have some importance on the international system due to its strategic location. In view of the above-mentioned theoretical bases, the researcher will explore some of those key features of land connectivity mainly; geo-political situation of Nepal, it's infrastructural development and the political leadership that drives the nation towards the aspiration of transforming land-locked to a land-linked prosperous nation.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is “arranged in a logical structure to provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study related to one another” (Osanloo, 2016). It offers a platform for the presentation of the research question based on the problem and issue statements that outline the subject matter and study's objectives (Ngulube, 2015). In this study several factors influence in transformation of Nepal from land locked to land linked country. The key factors are geo-political environment; infrastructure development and role of political leadership (Independent Variables) and Transformation of Nepal from land locked to land linked country (Dependent Variable) as show in the figure below.

Role of Connectivity in Transformation of Nepal from Land Locked to Land Link Country

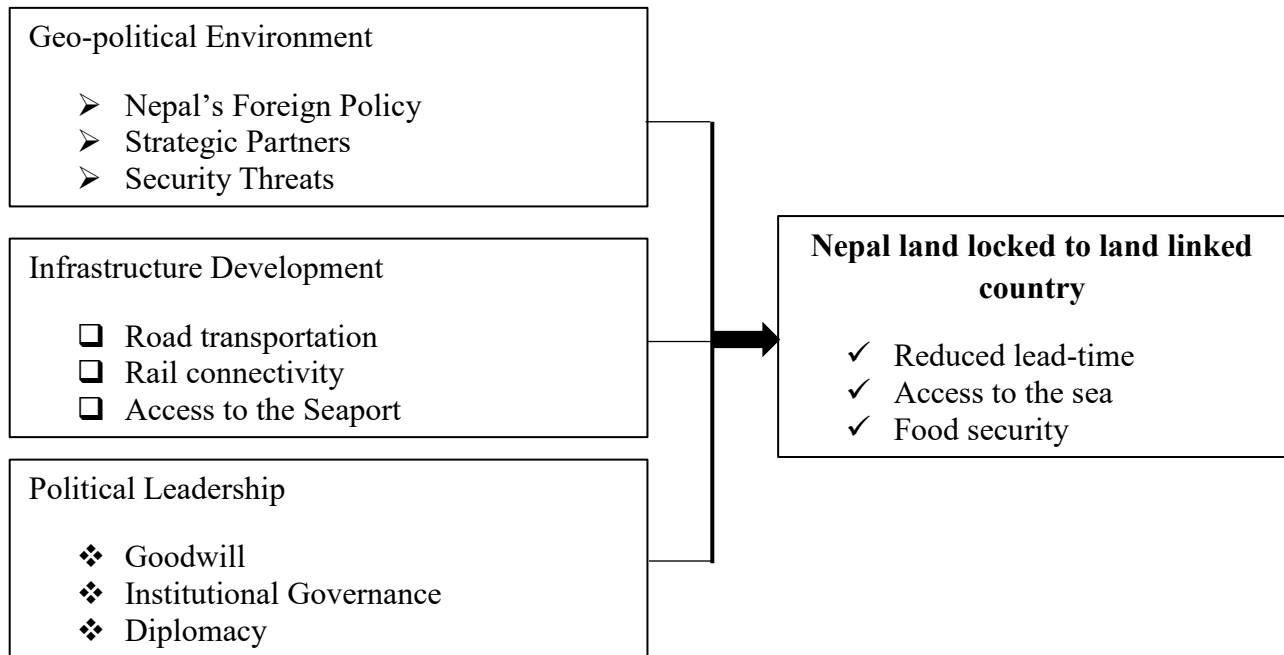


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

United Nations has classified 32 countries as the landlocked developing countries. Out of them, 16 lie in Africa, 14 in Asia and Europe, and another two in Latin America. All these nations share some characteristics; all of them are developing countries having no direct access to a sea. Generally, we will expect that having abundance of natural resource will have a great advantage in fostering economic development. In reality it is not the case. All the developing countries should ensure that their geo-political reality, infrastructural development, and the effective policy along with the correct institutional, and regulatory environments should support productive and transformational development. Hence the conceptual framework developed by the researcher identifies the three dependent variables namely, geo-political environment, infrastructural development and the political leadership provides independent variable – the connectivity that will assist in transforming Nepal from Landlocked to land linked country.

Moreover, moving onto the dependent variables, Nepal's Foreign Policy, the Strategic Partners, and the underlying Security Threats will be determining the geo-political

realities of Nepal. Similarly, infrastructural development in terms of the road transportation, rail connectivity along with the access to the seaport will also enrich the prosperity of the nation. Likewise, Institutional Governance, Diplomacy, and good Will of both the political leadership and the people will institute correct policy making in Nepal. Consequently, all these variables along with their factors need to work on tandem to lead Nepal from Landlocked to land linked country.

2.3 Empirical Review

The empirical literature review focused on a desktop evaluation of secondary sources related to the subject of the study. It was examined in light of the study's objectives. The goals of gaining access to the role of the geopolitical environment, development of connectivity infrastructure, and political leadership would help Nepal transition from a landlocked to a land linked country.

2.3.1 Role of Geo-Political Environment in Transformation from Land Locked Country

European landlocked countries are not too far away from the coast despite being landlocked countries. One of the main factors contributing to the success of these wealthy landlocked nations is having strong and supportive neighbors. The nations also have cordial connections with their neighbors and strong commercial ties. Political stability and internal tranquility are also commonplace in these nations. In the case of Luxembourg, which has cordial ties with its neighbors France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, doing business with them to import and export commodities is both simple and cost-effective (Web, 2022).

Asia has a long coastline since three of the world's oceans surround it. Indonesia has the world's longest coastline, reaching 95,176 kilometers (59,140 miles). Nonetheless, the continent's twelve landlocked states have no coastline. Landlocked countries include Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for sovereignty in Nagorny Karabakh (Zourabian, 2006) and Afghanistan's Taliban-led government are both attempting to develop good relations with their neighboring countries.

Nepal and Bhutan are the only two landlocked countries in South Asia. Bhutan is a semi-enclave country since it is wedged between two countries, China and India, with whom it shares a 1,136-kilometer (706-mile) land border (drishtiiias.com, 2022). Nepal and Bhutan are founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), an organization that aspires to further the South Asian region's economic, social, and cultural growth. Both countries maintain friendly relationships with their neighboring countries in order to achieve socio-economic progress.

Nepal lies between China and India, two extremely significant political and economic powers. Nepal's foreign policy with China and India is not clearly autonomous but rather mutually interdependent because of their proximity geographically and historically, as well as their long-standing multifaceted links. Nepal has not been benefited from both neighboring countries which are in pace to become emerging powers in the world's order.

2.3.2 Role of Infrastructure Development in Transformation from Land Locked to Land Linked Country

Landlocked European countries do not have a lengthy history of colonialism and exploitation at the hands of colonial powers. These countries acquired independence a long time ago and have since stabilized their economies, increased literacy rates, and built high-quality infrastructure. These countries acquired independence a long time ago and have since stabilized their economies, increased literacy rates, and built high-quality infrastructure.

The total per capita GDP, geographical area, population density, level of infrastructure development, and infrastructure finance capability of the Asian landlocked nations varies. These nations must face severe infrastructure, transportation, and financial challenges because of their particular geographic circumstances, which are unique to the area. All of these obstacles frequently hinder economic growth by restricting access to regional and global markets, as well as severely impacting export competitiveness and foreign investment inflows. Because of the greater transportation expenses brought on by a lack of infrastructure, product costs are inadvertently increased by 30 to 60 percent. These landlocked nations are likewise physically reliant on their transit neighbors' infrastructure, peace and stability, administrative procedures, political ties across borders, and economic development (unescap.org, 2022).

The borders of Nepal's three major topographic regions—Himalayan, Hills, and Terai (plane region)-which are located side by side, merge together. 16% of Nepal's area is covered by the snow-capped Himalayan Mountain range, which also serves as the nation's northern boundary. The region is home to eight mountains that rise beyond 8000 meters, including the well-known Mount Everest. 65% of Nepal's land area is comprised of hills. Between 500 and 3000 meters above sea level, there is a huge variation in elevation in the area. The Terai makes up 17% of the land area of the nation. The flat grounds in the area are between 100 and 300 meters above sea level, making it perfect for agriculture (Nepal.com, 2022). Due to the geographical constrains, Himalayan range in the north restrict Nepal to connect with China through limited choke points. East and West border with India consists with high hills obstruct to have viable connectivity. Nepal's border in South with India is generally plain area provides opportunity to develop sustainable and resilient infrastructure for land connectivity. These characteristics have also impacted Nepal's infrastructure, which has gaps between the plains and the mountains. Building roads and offering inhabitants' necessities services might be challenging in certain places. The mountain and plains areas have different levels of communication infrastructure. The lowland regions of Nepal, notably Terai, hold a majority of the country's roads, accounting for more than 60% of the total network. An earthquake that happened in 2015 had an effect on Nepal's infrastructure. 250 000 homes were destroyed, and there were almost 8 million impacted individuals. Even Nevertheless, efforts are being made to improve Nepal's infrastructure by the government and the business sector. During 2015, the government's infrastructure investment spending has surpassed 4% of Nepal's GDP. This money has gone towards water, communication, transportation and electricity infrastructure (borgenproject.org, 2022). Nepal's transit corridors with neighboring countries are not capable to hold the traffic of goods and commodities due to lack of proper infrastructure. Trade and transit corridors in the south are of with traditional nature, which has been obstructing the flow of import export traffic. Transit corridors with northern border pass through mountainous terrain are subjected to affect by altitude, weather and climatic condition.

2.3.3 Role of Political Leadership in Transformation from Land Locked to Land Linked Country

Historically, a landlocked state or region had several disadvantages especially in terms on the nation's prosperity and development. It prevented direct access to maritime trade

and the nation was basically cut off from major sea resources like oil reserves, fishing, etc. All of such resources were an integral component for the economic and social advancement. Landlocked states grew slower than those coastal countries which had access to the sea. Contrarily, those areas had some advantages too. For instances, landlocked countries are protected from natural hazards like flooding, tornados, tsunamis etc. and often are away from harsh weather conditions Likewise, they are also safe from any sort of invasion through sea as they lack sea border access.

Most landlocked nations faced difficulty with the constraints of the geography. They demonstrate lower per capita income than the coastal states due to their dependence on transit neighbors' market. This difficulty can however be mitigated through effective policy making by the political leadership. For instance, compared to most of its coastline neighbors, landlocked nations like Switzerland and Austria enjoy far higher levels of economic growth and public wellbeing. Additionally, Kazakhstan, one of the largest landlocked nations bordered by the Caspian and Aral Seas, is gradually prospering under the leadership's political vision, which effectively takes advantage of the nation's position at the geographic center of Eurasian continent, which foreshadows its geopolitical function as a link between Europe and Asia (Lama-Sharif, 2014). Despite having severe geographic restrictions, Bhutan has an advantage over most other landlocked countries because of its extraordinarily robust government structures. In terms of institutions, Bhutan was placed 33rd, even ahead of China (42nd) and India (43rd) (45th). All of these encouraging signs are a result of strong institutions that strictly police violence, rule of law, and corruption (UNCTAD, 2020).

Similarly, the recent initiative of Lao-China railway as part of Belt and Road Initiative which aims to connect the government of Lao to vast BRI network. This initiative could aggregate income to Lao government if the policy makers of the government handle the issue with precision and vision. Hence, the geo-political reality or infrastructural development may not be the only available options for the transformation of a Land-locked state into a Land-linked state.

Nepal has already faced the challenges of three blockades from India since India's independence from the British Raj in 1947 A.D. The three blockade that occurred in 1969, 1989, and the recent one in 2015 A.D. came as the back lashes of the Political leadership's vision which was against India's vested interest. During such blockades,

Nepal had challenges in getting petroleum products along with other commodities of urgent necessities. The political leadership tried to open up another avenue of accesses to sea through the northern border, China as well as South Eastern coast of Chittagong, Bangladesh. As yet, there has not been concrete agreements on the issue. The two countries signed their first Treaty of Trade and Transit in 1950 which has been revised in 1960, 1971 and 1978 AD (Baral, 1992). These treaties have not served the interest and the vision of Nepal's accession to the seaport. Similarly, Kingship and the various governments post the establishment of Federal Democratic republic of Nepal has not been able to develop infrastructures that augments Nepal's prosperity goals. One of the crucial factors that has impacted Nepal's aspiration from landlocked to land linked country has been the political leadership or the effective governance.

2.4 Critique of the Literature

The reviewed literature provides valuable insights into the multifaceted factors impacting Nepal's transition from a landlocked state to a land-linked one. Nevertheless, a more in-depth critique of the literature reveals several avenues for further exploration and consideration:

Firstly, while the existing literature offers a comprehensive examination of the challenges encountered by landlocked countries, such as Nepal, pertaining to geographical constraints and transit access, there is a need for a more granular analysis of these challenges. The challenges faced by landlocked nations vary significantly based on their unique geopolitical contexts and historical factors. Therefore, it is imperative to emphasize the necessity for customized solutions that account for Nepal's specific circumstances.

Secondly, while the reviewed literature rightly underscores the pivotal role of infrastructure development in the economic growth of landlocked countries, it often provides only a high-level overview of infrastructure issues, rather than a comprehensive assessment of Nepal's specific infrastructural challenges. A more thorough investigation into the infrastructural inadequacies and bottlenecks within Nepal is vital to formulate context-specific strategies for improving connectivity.

Furthermore, the role of political leadership in the context of Nepal's transition is acknowledged, but its impact requires further scrutiny. A critical analysis of how

historical political decisions have shaped Nepal's aspirations for improved connectivity and the influence of different administrations is indispensable. This approach will help identify the strengths and weaknesses in governance and policy implementation over the years.

2.5 Research Gap

In summary, the existing literature provides a solid foundation for understanding the complexities surrounding Nepal's transition from a landlocked to a land-linked nation. However, several gaps persist, which necessitate further exploration to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective:

Foremost, a considerable research gap lies in the need for an extensive examination of Nepal's geopolitical environment, encompassing its intricate relationships with neighboring countries, and the profound impact of these dynamics on its transformation. While the current literature offers valuable insights, it primarily provides an overview and lacks the depth required to thoroughly dissect the unique geopolitical intricacies that underpin Nepal's aspirations to become land-linked.

Furthermore, while the significance of infrastructure development is well-established, a comprehensive study is lacking concerning the specific infrastructural challenges unique to Nepal and the formulation of tailored solutions. In light of Nepal's diverse terrains and geographical disparities, a deeper investigation into the readiness and capacity of infrastructure to facilitate enhanced connectivity is warranted.

Lastly, the literature does not delve adequately into the intricate role of political leadership and governance in Nepal's transformative journey. A robust and in-depth investigation into how political decisions, governance structures, and administrative processes have contributed to, or hindered, Nepal's progress toward achieving land-linked status is vital.

In conclusion, this literature review has elucidated the existing gaps within the current body of knowledge. Subsequent research efforts will be directed toward addressing these gaps, with the ultimate goal of fostering a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of Nepal's evolution from a landlocked to a land-linked nation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology used for this study and is structured as follows: Research methodology, the study area, the intended audience, sample size estimation and sampling techniques, data collection techniques and procedures, data analysis, and ethical issues all need to be taken into account.

3.1 Research Design

Research design is “a blueprint or a detailed plan of how research is to be completed. It involves forming a broad search question, deciding upon a unit of analysis, operationalizing variable, collecting and analyzing data from a selected sample giving result of interest” (Thyer, 1993). How land connection helped Nepal transition from being a landlocked to a land linked country was investigated using a descriptive study methodology. using both qualitative and quantitative data from in-depth, semi-structured inquiries, this approach was able to shed light on the study themes by identifying the shape and structure of the examined occurrences by examining the correlational link between pertinent variables. Utilizing surveys and secondary data sources, the design assisted in the data collecting process.

3.1.1 Population

The research was carried out in several locations, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Home Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Defense Nepal, Ministry of Finance Nepal, and Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Nepal, which were particularly important. The researcher also conducted interviews with the relevant individuals from the aforementioned ministries.

3.1.2 Target Population

The key personnel in Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Home Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Finance Nepal, Ministry of Defense Nepal, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Nepal, government officials, subject matter experts and security analysts of Nepal are considered as target population.

A sample consists of 30 respondents will be selected from Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Home Affairs Nepal, Ministry of Defense Nepal, Ministry of Finance Nepal, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Nepal, subject matter experts due to their experience, exposure to the job and knowledge on the subject matter.

Target Sample	Sample Size
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	4
Ministry of Home Affairs	5
Ministry of Finance	4
Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport	4
Subject matter Experts	5
Ministry of Defence	8
Total	30

Figure 3.1: Target Population and Sampling Size

Note. Adapted from *Example Book*, by J. Smith, 2016. Copyright 2016 by Scribber.

3.1.3 Sampling Frame

Non-probability sampling plan was used to obtain sample for the study, not every element of population had the opportunity for selection. This process saved cost and time for the study.

3.1.3.1 Sampling Techniques

The researcher used Quota sampling method (similar to stratified random sampling) to gain reliable and less biased response from the respondents. This method allowed the researcher to make deliberate attempt to include subject from the population in order to replicate the proportion of group present in the population.

3.1.4 Data Collection Procedure

Various techniques of data collection were employed to obtain different types of primary information which are as follows:

3.1.4.1 Questionnaires

To achieve the goals of the study, several questionnaires were distributed among the target population to gather the necessary information. Moreover, interviews and engagement with key leaders were conducted to confirm the accuracy of the data obtained from the samples. To accomplish this, subject matter experts from the relevant field, as defined by the scope of the study, were selected and interviewed accordingly.

3.1.4.2 Secondary Data

There are number of studies on the Nepal's aspiration for the Connectivity-Driven Development Strategy to transform itself from a Landlocked to a Land-Linked State. They explicitly highlight the laws and conventions of the land locked countries with primary focus on the developing countries. However, not much have been explored on the overall role of geo-political situation, infrastructure development and the political leadership. Secondary data was collected through the books, journals and articles related to the subject in order to augment and validate the primary data received through questionnaires and Key Leader Engagements.

3.1.5 Pilot Study

The data collection technique began with the piloting of the data collection equipment. A pilot study offers the researcher the possibility to get some initial research experience as well as the chance to carry out study reliability and validity testing (Roche, 1999). As a result, the researcher in this study did a pilot using a different target group that was similar. Five respondents—one from each of the aforementioned line ministries—were given the instruments in order to collect feedback and improve any ambiguous or perplexing sections. On the basis of the pilot study's findings, more data collecting was done.

3.1.5.1 Validity

To assure the validity of instruments for data collection and shaping of the questionnaires, expertise opinions were sought from different professionals.

3.1.5.2 Reliability

The reliability of the study was ensured by conducting a pilot study analysis. The questionnaire and guidelines were developed with careful attention to making them conform to standard practices. The resources were tested and refined multiple times before being utilized to collect data. Furthermore, appropriate triangulation methods were put in place to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the data.

3.1.6 Data Analysis

The two types of qualitative data analysis and quantitative data analysis were used for research purpose. Qualitative data, referred to as non-numerical information, includes things like interview transcripts, notes, videos, audio recordings, photographs, and text documents. As quantitative data, specific piece of primary data findings and secondary data were integrated in data analysis in a logical and unbiased manner.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Role of Geo-Political Environment in Land Connectivity

Geo-political environment plays a crucial role on the prosperity of any nation. Geographic location of the state and its international relations influenced by the geographical factors, determine its geo-political status. Nepal's geographical location, size, population, culture, religion, political orientation, and natural resources are some of the key factors defining its character in international relations. Nepal lies between the Asian giants; People's Republic of China (PRC) and India. It stretches roughly 1,800 km from east to west and approximately 300-400 kms from north to south. Its northern border with the PRC is mostly mountainous whereas other remaining three boundaries with India are largely porous in nature. Both neighbours together house almost one third of world population amounting to approximately 2.8 billion people. Likewise, they are also amongst the fastest growing economies in the world. Nepal's cultural and religious orientation is more inclined towards India whereas the political orientation especially with the relationships of the major political parties are influenced by both the north and the south neighbours. All these factors have been some of the reasons that have influenced the formulation of the strategy for survival, defence and development of Nepal (Bhattarai R. , 2005).

As shown on the figure below, Nepal is strategically located. It is land locked and is largely dependent on India for its access towards the sea. Despite being land locked geographically, it does have the potentiality to become a land link nation especially between India, PRC and other countries of South Asia. Moreover, Nepal, along with Bangladesh, some part of India, and China can act as a land link between South Asia, Southeast Asia Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asia. Historical evidence show that Nepal had been an entrepôt for the trade between India and the PRC (Chia, 2014). The trade declined post 18th century as the Great Britain which was ruling India, diversified their trade and used ports of the east coast of China to sell opium. As this trade was more lucrative, the trade link via Nepal diminished. Since that time, trade through India has been largely focused whereas the northern Himalayan border has been perceived as a barrier (Pandey, Developing Infrastructure Connectivity between India and China through Nepal, 2010). Nepal has become largely dependent on the sea coast

of India for its external trade. Similarly, the trade related foreign policies too have been more inclined towards India. Meanwhile, PRC continued to use Nepal's land to trade with India.

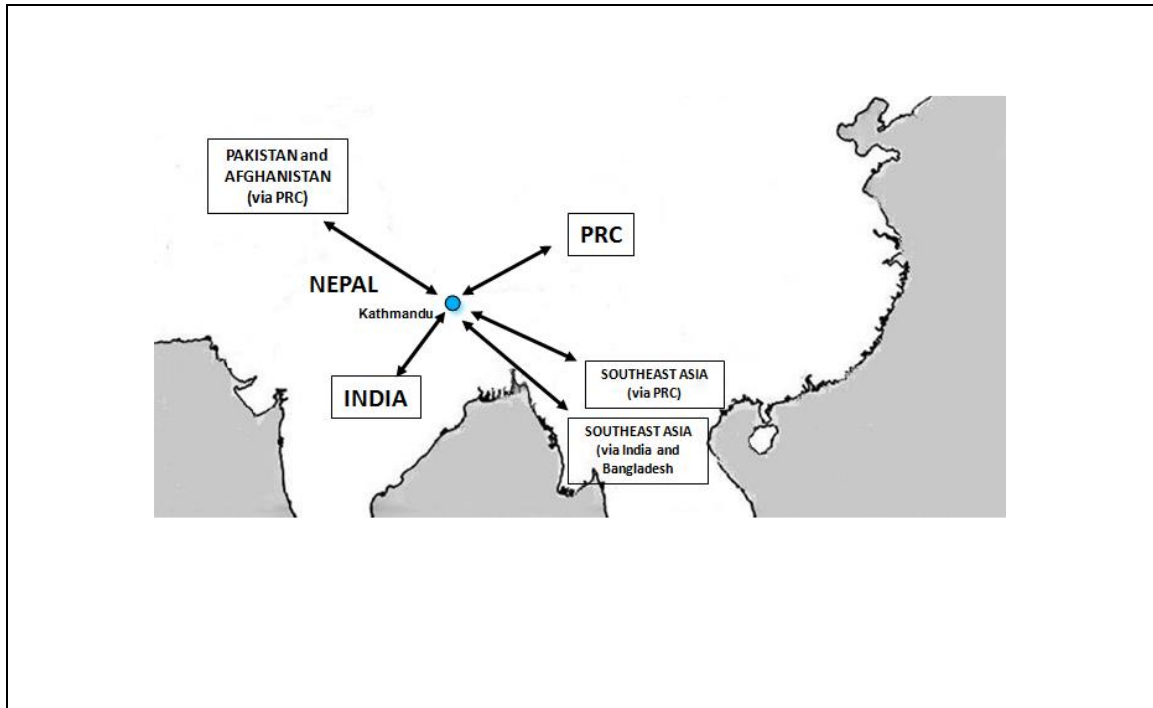


Figure 4.1: Strategic Location of Nepal

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

4.1.1 Foreign Policy of Nepal: An Analysis

Nepal's foreign policy is guided by the basic principles of mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respect for mutual equality and cooperation for mutual benefit (Affairs, 2022). Nepal has maintained a balanced relation with both its neighbouring states namely, India and China. However, the relations have not always remained the same. Due to Nepal's open and porous border with India, Nepal has witnessed various challenges in terms of its relations and the trade between the two nations. The trade embargo in 1989 and the economic blockade in 2015 by India being some of its examples. In the case of China, Nepal has always shown its strong commitment to 'One China Policy' and has assured not to allow Nepal's soil to be used for any inimical activities against China. Moreover, Nepal's internal affairs has not largely been impacted by the political interactions of PRC. Both the neighbours however have been using Nepal as a playground for their strategic interests. In view of the Nepal's geo-strategic location, both neighbours have always been competing

to enhance their influence in Nepal. Perversely, Nepal has not been able to cash such opportunity and develop its strong foreign policy on the issue. In this background, a survey was conducted to find the opinion of the scholars and concerned government personnel on the issue. As per the figure shown below, out of the 30 respondents, approximately 80% either strongly agree or agree that there is a need to review the foreign policy of Nepal, primarily to address Nepal’s aspiration to transform from land locked to land linked nation. Most respondents also expressed that Nepal’s current foreign policy does not explicitly indicate any visionary thought or expression on its wish for such transformation.

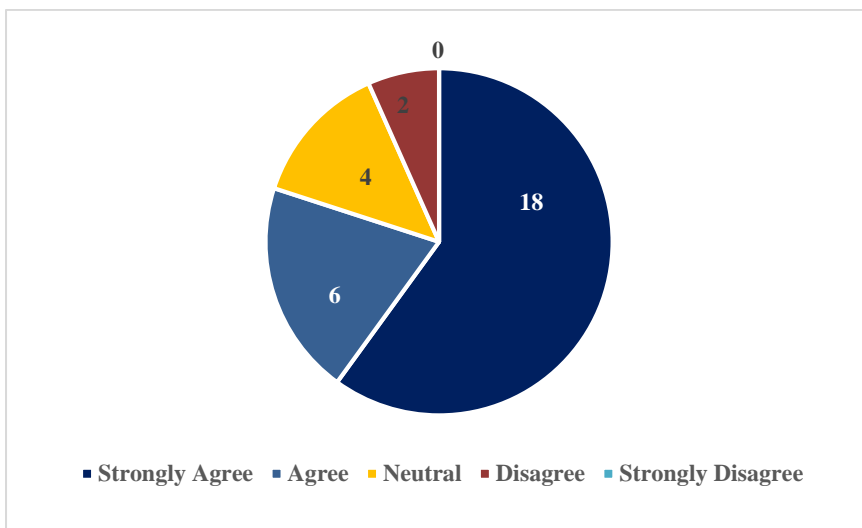


Figure 4.2: Opinion on the need to review Foreign Policy of Nepal

Small states have difficulty on influencing larger neighbours. Having a visible impact on them is even difficult when such states are mountainous and land locked. In defining the relationship between the smaller states with their bigger sized neighbours, Barston offers various situations. Some of his definition seem to be applicable to Nepal. He mentions that smaller states have the power to bargain if a stronger nation perceives its territory to be strategically important largely in providing some sort of military assistance. His second illustration reflects that a smaller state’s bargaining power could increase if the great powers have distinct threat to it through them. He further adds that small states could use an international organization as a means to generate support for their policies (Barston, 1973). Nepal’s geo-strategic importance lies on the similar feature. Nepal, which is almost 65 times smaller than China and 22 times smaller than India, needs to have a balanced relationship with its neighbours. For this, many scholars opine that such challenges can be

mitigated with a well-crafted foreign policy. Considering the importance of Nepal's geopolitics and the illustrations mentioned above, Nepal also needs to formulate an effective foreign policy with well pronounced goals and interests.

4.1.2 Support from Key Strategic Partners and Regional / International Organizations

Land locked nation are mostly dependant on their neighbours for access to the sea/ocean. Most of the thirty land-locked nation in the world including Nepal, are economically dependent on their neighbouring countries and their economic development is conditioned by the transit countries. In the case of Nepal, its access to the sea and its bulk trade is largely done through the railways utilising Indian territories. Realising the over dependence on India for its trade with third countries, Nepal is exploring an approach to foster its connectivity with its neighbours and the rest of the world. For this, it has to identify key strategic partners and regional/international organisation which could assist Nepal to transform from a land locked to a land linked nation. In the scope of the study, the researcher has chosen India, China and USA as Nepal's key strategic partners where SAARC, BIMSTEC and EU have been chosen as influential regional/international organisation. In the scope of the study, the researcher solicited the opinion of the scholars and the subject matter experts on Nepal's goal of transformation from land locked to land linked nation. The questionnaire was intended to identify the level of support from the key strategic partners and the regional/international organisations. It also explored the adequacy of the existing bilateral agreements and treaties.

4.1.3 Support from the Key Strategic Partners

In view of the Nepal's goal to transform from Land-locked to Land-linked nation, a survey was conducted to identify the level of support from the Strategic Partners. As shown on the figure below, almost 50 % of the respondents feel that India will not provide any support and assistance on the subject whereas approximately 26 % of the respondents are neutral on their opinion. Contrarily, around 60 % of the respondents opine that China will either strongly or partially support or assist Nepal's goal for transformation. Similarly, 66 % of respondents discern that USA will also either strongly or partially support Nepal on the approach. On overall, approximately 25% of the respondents however opted for a neutral decision and therefore seem to be unsure on the level of support that Nepal may receive from its strategic partners namely, India,

China and USA. In view of the survey, it's crucial to excavate gaps within the bilateral relationship and the existing treaties/agreements.

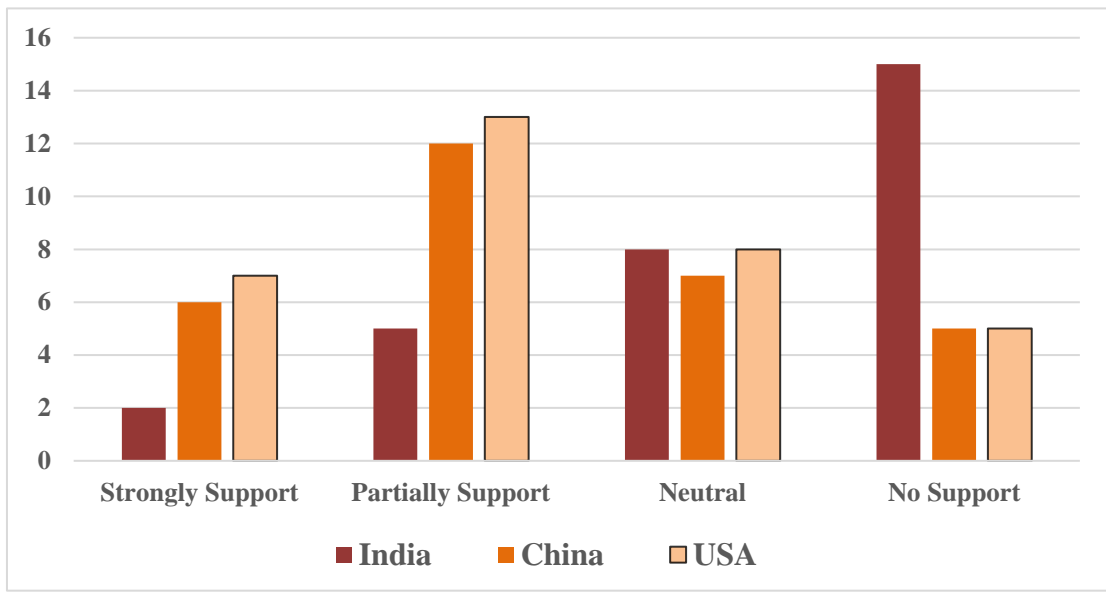


Figure 4.3: Opinion on the level of support by the Strategic Partners

4.1.4 Nepal- India Relationship

Nepal and India are linked together by age-old geographic, cultural, social, and economic ties. Historical records show the extensive trade relations between Nepal and India dating back to the golden age of the Guptas beginning in 320 AD. Such trading relations remained during the British colonial rule over India and exist till date too. Nepal and India's formal relationship was established on 13 June 1947. Religion, socio-cultural bonds, people- to- people interactions and political and economic ties have contributed to strengthen the relations. The unfathomable commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and understanding of each other's aspiration and interest have been the firm foundations on which existing relations have been moving to a new height. Both countries work in tandem in the United Nations, Non-aligned movements and other international forum on most of the important international issues. The open border between the two countries has been a unique paradigm about ties that rarely exist around the world. Frontier without restriction has greatly facilitated the free movements of people to each other's country. Although relations between India and Nepal are intimately intertwined, there are occasional frictions between these

neighbouring countries primarily based on the asymmetric power relations between them.

4.1.5 Nepal-China Relationship

Historically, Nepal's cultural and economic ties with its northern border Tibet were also quite extensive. The bonding and the historical interfaces between them are clearly depicted by magnificent centuries old Hindu and Buddhist paintings that lie inside the various caves in the upper Mustang Valley of Nepal. Most of the paintings highlight movement of pilgrims from Tibet and India. On the economic front too, Nepal and Tibet traded salt, rugs, and spices. Nepal used to have a strong business presence in Lhasa which is still seen hundreds of Nepalese being currently settled in Tibet (Panda, 2010). In the past, Nepal also used to be an entrepôt or a gateway for India and PRC during their bilateral trade. Due to this strategic location, Nepal also prospered immensely during much of the Moghul era and the Tang dynasty. The Licchavi and Malla kings in the 14th and 15th centuries, encouraged Nepalese businessmen to arbitrage between the two countries. This relationship was further augmented when the King Angsuverma married his daughter Bhrikuti to the emperor of Tibet during the Licchavi Dynasty. However, in the span of time Nepal and Tibet fought three wars during the Shah regime which gradually weakened the relationship of Nepal with its northern neighbour. Instead, the ties with India got stronger due to its geographic proximity and the open border. After the declaration of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 01 October 1949, Nepal's relationship with China gradually got stronger again.

Nepal and India have various treaties determining their roles and obligations on trade between the nations. Likewise, Nepal has also signed various treaties on the trade issues with China. However, scholars and political analysts opine that such treaties are not adequate to address the Nepal's goal of transformation from land locked to land linked nation. In this context a survey was passed to the concerned scholars and respondents from various related ministries. As shown on the figure below, almost 73 % of the respondents disagree on the opinion that existing bilateral treaties with India support Nepal's goal for transformation. Similarly, around 63 % respondents also feel that the bilateral treaties between Nepal and China do not support Nepal's aspiration for the change. In comparison however, more respondents opine that the bilateral treaties between Nepal and India are biased and hence need to be reviewed at the priority.

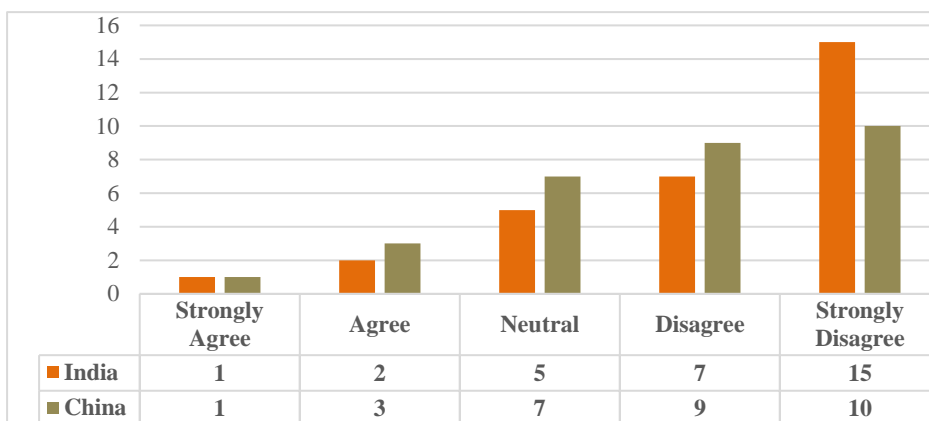


Figure 4.4: Opinion on the bilateral treaties of Nepal with India and China supporting Nepal’s goal for transformation

4.1.6 Nepal- US Relationship

Nepal has received various kinds of support and assistance from USA since both the nations formally established their friendly relationship in 1948. Despite being geographically a distant nation, USA has two key objectives to interface with Nepal. Firstly, it intends to assist Nepal for its stability, regional security, strengthening of democratic values and economic prosperity (U.S.Department of State, 2022). Secondly, it wants to have footprint in Nepal for better visibility on two economic giants of Asia; China and India. USA has consistently engaged Nepal to further these interests. It has established various platforms like United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) coordination and implementation mechanisms, security and defense cooperation etc. to assist and thereby oversee their interests in Nepal.

Nepal has also signed a trade and investment framework agreement with the United States. It has also become one of those nations with a single-country trade preferences with the United States of America. Likewise, it has also provided market to Nepalese carpets, handicrafts, jewelries, and various garments. With the annual total bilateral trade of approximately \$300 million, US stands amongst ten biggest trade partners of Nepal. Moreover, both the nations belong to some of the important international organizations like the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). All these agreements and preferences have clearly provided Nepal a platform to discuss specific trade issues including the land connectivity issues of

Nepal. Furthermore, the geo-strategic location of Nepal has also given Nepal an opportunity to bargain with the US thereby asking it to promote trade and investment in Nepal.

4.1.7 Support from the key Regional and International Organisations

Nepal is the member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which was formed on 08 December 1985. It played key role during the formation of the regional organization as economic development forum and also hosts the secretariat within its capital. Similarly, Nepal is also the member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), a regional organization which was established on 6th June 1997. Furthermore, it also has many economic as well as political interactions with other regional and international organizations including the United Nations, World Trade Organization, European Union, International Monetary Fund, World Bank etc. Though each organizations will have strong role on the transformation of Nepal from a land locked to a land linked nation, for the purpose of this research, SAARC, BIMSTEC and EU have been chosen as key regional and international organizations under the scope of the study.

In order to identify the existing relationship of Nepal with the regional and international organizations, a survey with the concerned respondents was conducted. As per the tabulation shown below, almost 53% of the respondents feel that BIMSTEC will either strongly or partially support Nepal's goal of transformation into a land linked nation. Despite less interface on political interactions with Nepal, around 50% of the respondents feel that EU will support Nepal's aim on the transformation. Interestingly, only 30% of the respondents think that SAARC may either strongly or partially support Nepal's goal. Moreover, 50% of the participants solicited to remain neutral on SAARC's likelihood of support on the cause. According to the responses received from the respondents, it is identified that both BIMSTEC and EU will undoubtedly support Nepal's goal for the transformation whereas for SAARC, due to its inefficacy and the interests of some members, it may not be possible for it to fully assist and support the goal.

Strategic Partner	Strongly	Partially	Neutral	No Support
SAARC	4	5	15	6
BIMSTEC	6	10	10	4
EU	6	9	11	4

Figure 4.5: Opinion on the level of support by the Regional /International Organisations

In the case of SAARC, Nepal including other six original members namely, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka signed the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) in 1993. The key objective of the agreement was to further and sustain mutual trade and economic cooperation through exchange of trade concessions among its member states. In addition, Nepal is also a member to the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) signed in 2006. It also signed the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) in 2010. All of these forums do exist to liberalize trade amongst the member states of SAARC and foster economic integration. Nepal should utilize these forums to gain access to a larger market. For this, it should exploit every opportunity through its ties with its immediate neighbour, India.

Likewise, in the case of BIMSTEC which consists of five of the SAFTA members namely, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka along with other nations like Thailand and Myanmar of ASEAN region, has also pointed out 13 broad sectors for cooperation. These sectors include trade and investment, technology, transport and communication, tourism, agriculture, energy, fisheries, poverty alleviation, counterterrorism and control on transnational crimes. In addition, member states of BIMSTEC also agreed to establish Free Trade Area Framework Agreement on goods, services, and investment. Though there are some issues on the modalities of trade liberalization framework being discussed amongst the nations, Nepal could also utilize this forum to foster its economic development once it transforms into a land linked nation.

4.1.8 Security Threat Associated with the Transformation

Both India and China have their deepening security and economic interest in Nepal. The geo-strategic location of Nepal offers a favorable location for the international players opting to destabilize the two emerging Asian powerhouse, India and China. In this background, only a stable, peaceful and prosperous Nepal will be able to assure the security of India and China. Hence it is the one of the key reasons for India to set the enhancement of security within the region as one of the key determinants of India's foreign policy for the subcontinent (Bhattarai D. , 2018). Due to the under marketed and porous border, there are several issues of security concern between Nepal and India. Drug trafficking, Smuggling, cyber threat, trans-border crimes, terrorist activities, fake currency etc are some of the key security concerns between the two nations (Pyakurel, 2018). Furthermore, the increasing influence of the northern neighbour in Nepal could also become a threat in terms of security and the commercial aspect of India.

Similarly, China also has various facets of security concerns in Nepal. It wants Nepal to strictly adhere to 'One China Policy' and not allow its land to be used against the Tibet issue. Chinese are always skeptical that Tibet issue could be one of those issues that can be used to destabilize China's rise (Poudel B. R., 2016). China suspects that various international players who base their offices at the capital of Nepal could use the location to checkmate their rise. In this context, Nepal's aspiration on transforming to a land-linked nation should take all these security concerns of both its neighbours cautiously. The survey conducted on the similar line also ascertains the subject.

Nepal's aim to transform from a land locked into land linked nation may have inherent challenges. Some of them could be associated with the vested interests of the neighboring nations largely based on the power tussles intended to have an influence on the geo-strategic location of Nepal. Most challenges however will be linked with the security threats. In this regard, a survey was passed to the concerned scholars and subject matter experts to identify their perception on the impact of the transformation to the security threats. The survey reflected that its ambition is likely to invite increment on most of the substantial security threats. As per the chart below, about 73% of the respondents either strongly or partially agree that threats due to neighbourhood interests will escalate with the Nepal's new approach. In addition, roughly 65 % of the respondents feel that trans-national threats, trans-border crime and the cyber threat may

escalate once Nepal adopts the objective for the transformation. However, considerable number of the participants feel that the alteration will have less impact on the threat of migration and drug trafficking.

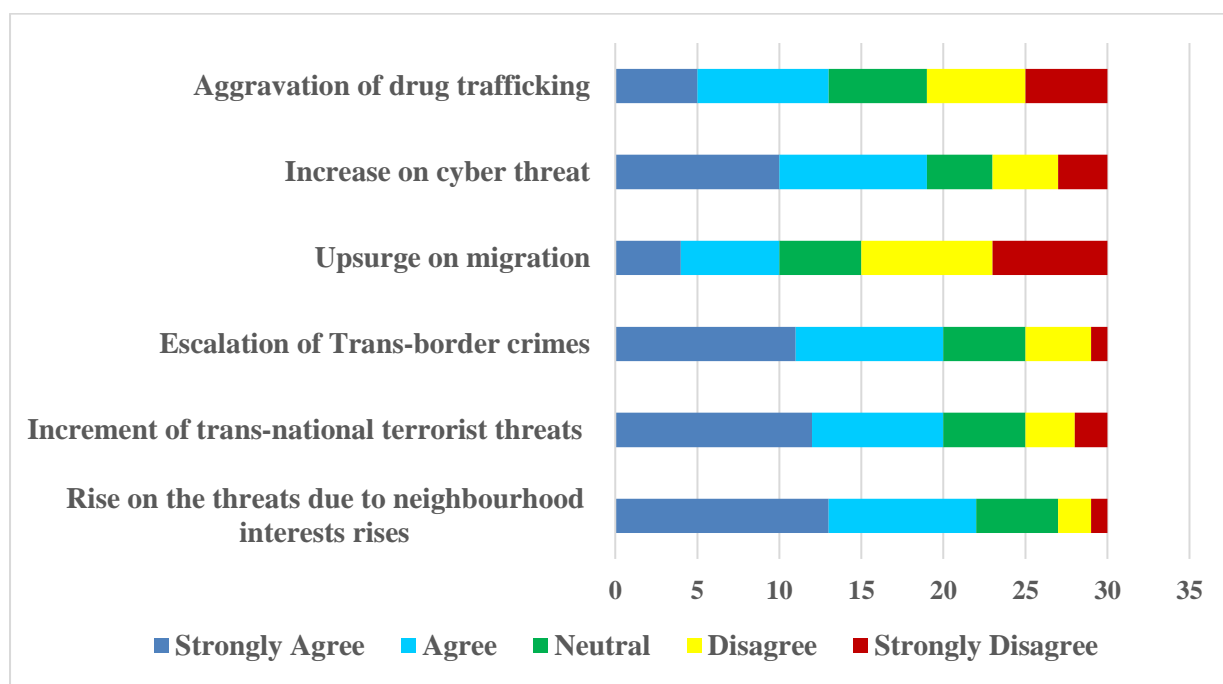


Figure 4.6: Opinion on the impact of Nepal’s goal to transform from land locked to land linked nation on the major security threats

4.2 Role of Infrastructure Development in Land Connectivity

The landscape of any geographic region shapes the infrastructural development of the country. In the past, structural aspect of the land was one of the crucial factors that imprisoned commanders, giving them very less choices or rooms to maneuvers. It shaped the wars, the power, politics and the social development of the peoples inhabiting in those areas (Tim, 2015). The mountainous terrain along with the landlocked structure of Nepal has deeply impacted trading costs and its competitiveness both domestically and externally. On one hand, Nepal faces acute connectivity problems on its northern border with the People’s Republic of China due to the rugged Himalayan Mountain range, while on the other it has immense challenges due to the porous border with India on other three sides. Nepal has not developed infrastructures on its northern border due to the inaccessibility of the terrain and the associated environmental factors. Likewise, Nepal also doesn’t have adequate infrastructures especially the roads, the railways, transit facilities and other essential infrastructures on its border with India.

Nepal was considered as the entrepôt for trade between India and China. The land corridor of Nepal was used by both the neighboring nations to trade their indigenous products for each other. This provision however has significantly declined since late eighteenth century. Some scholars opine that the trade reduced as the British, who used to colonize India during that time, mostly used the ports on the eastern coast of China to trade various stuffs, mainly opium. Some experts are of the opinion that such diversification of the trade through another route was a mere strategy to get Nepal more inclined towards British India (Pandey, 2010). Since then, Nepal has largely used the congested port of Kolkata in India for her external trade. Contrarily, China has continued to use Nepal's land corridor mainly Kodari highway through Khasa entry point to trade their commodities to the northern Indian cities. Due to rugged terrain on the northern border and the inadequate infrastructure available with India, Nepal's trade has not been able to diversify till date. In this context, this chapter will analyze the existing infrastructures available on either side of the Nepal's border thereby to identifying approaches for transforming Nepal from land locked to land linked nation.

4.2.1 Status of Road Transportation in Nepal

Infrastructural Development is a crucial component for the transformation of Nepal into a land linked country. There are various means of transport however, Nepal is limited to air and land transportation due to the lack of sea access. Among them, it largely relies on road transportation for its connectivity especially in terms of trade with third countries. Despite its reliance, the status of road transportation in Nepal is poor. On a survey conducted on the level of satisfaction with the services provided by the available road transportation, almost 87% of the 30 respondents are unsatisfied, 13% are partially satisfied whereas none are fully satisfied with the services as show on the figure below.

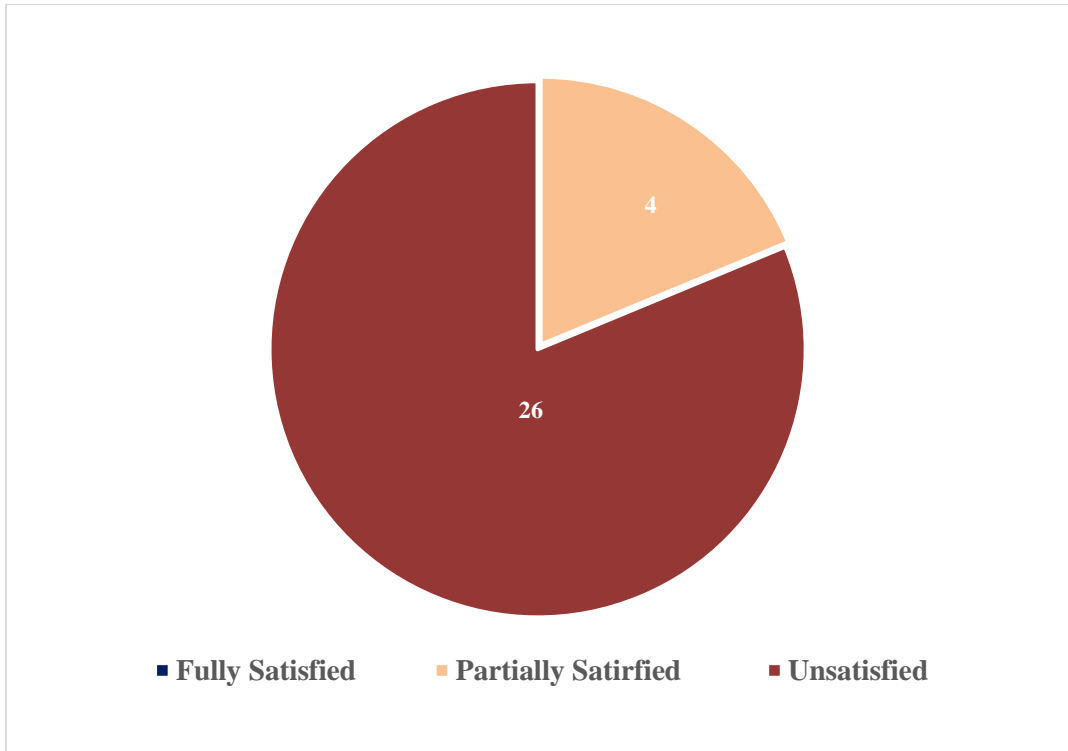


Figure 4.7: Opinion on the Level of Satisfaction with the Services Provided By Road Transportation

4.2.1.1 Road Transportation through the Southern Border

Road connectivity with India was begun in early 1950 by connecting Kathmandu via Birgunj/Raxaul border with the assistance of India. East-West Highway including several postal roads in the plain is also constructed with the assistance of India. Nepal and India has been connected with road mainly from check points; Kakarvitta (Mechi from West Bengal), Biratnagar (from Joghani, Bihar), Birgunj (from Raxaul, Bihar), Bhairahwa (Sunwauli, Uttar Pradesh), Nepalgunj (Laknow/ Rupedia, Uttar Pradesh) and Mahendra Nagar (Tanakpur/GaddaChwoki, Uttarakhand). From the movement of trade transports point of view, Birgunj, Nepalgunj and Bhairahawa are the busiest check points.

Nepal's southern border with India is under marketed and porous in nature. Due to such open border, there are large amounts of unofficial trades between the two nations. Along the 1800 km long border between India and China, there are approximately 22 mutually agreed entry or exit points as shown on the figure 02 below. Among these points, Birgunj and Bhairawa points are the crucial ones for the connectivity between the two nations.

In view of the significance of these points, both the nations agreed to build Inland Container Depots (ICDs) at these points along with the additional one in Biratnagar at the eastern part of Nepal.

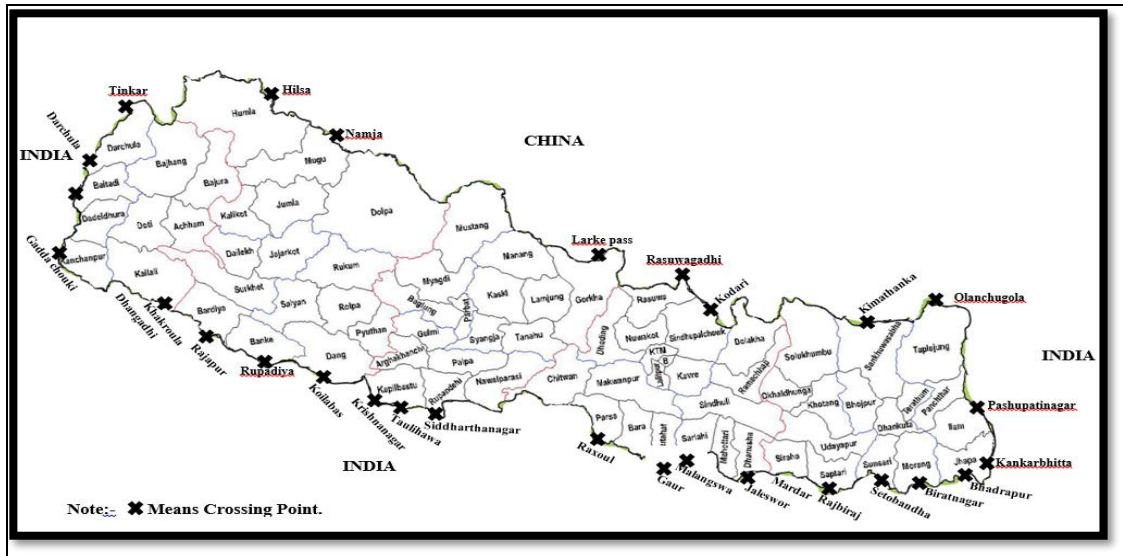


Figure 4.8: Map of Nepal depicting major land crossing points to its bordering nations
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

4.2.1.2 Potential Road Connectivity

There are 27 routes for mutual trade and six immigration points between Nepal and India that are connected by road. As mentioned in the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study conducted in 2006, in the road sector, a total of 18 regional road corridors (both existing and potential) were identified under Phase I of SRMTS. After careful application of the criteria established earlier, the 10 road corridors amongst the 18, were identified as greater regional significance and recommended for further detailed assessment. Out of those 10 corridors, the followings as in Appendix “A” are related with Nepal and have been considered and selected for priority attention (Rahmatullah, 2012). Some important corridors are as follows:

- i. Delhi–Siliguri–Guwahati–Imphal (all India)–Tamu (Myanmar) with feeder linkages from Nepal at Kakarbhitta and Birgunj, and from Bhutan through Phuentsholing.
- ii. Varanasi–Mumbai (both India) with linkages from Nepal via the Nautanwa (India)– Sunali (Nepal) border.
- iii. Birgunj (Nepal)–Kolkata/Haldia (India).

The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) has taken initiative and formalized the procedure to develop intra-regional trade and investment, tourism, communication and energy resources. Particular areas of collaboration are targeted to channel growth and complementarity (Wikipedia, The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal initiative, 2022). Over years its objectives expanded to incorporate land and port connectivity. The BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) was signed on 15 June 2015 at the BBIN transport ministers meeting in Thimpu, Bhutan. The agreement will permit the member states to ply their vehicles in each other's territory for transportation of cargo and passengers, including third country transport and personal vehicles.

In addition, one of the new dimension on the road connectivity has been added by the development of Kathmandu-Terai-Madhesh Expressway. This Expressway runs from the Kathmandu to Terai and is expected to reduce substantially the distance, time and cost of transport between Kathmandu and the border with India. A 72.6 km direct route will reduce the road distance by over 100 km and reduce travel time by up to five hours and may improve transport reliability. This expressway is being considered as one of the most prioritized national pride project of Nepal. Accepting the given responsibility by the government of Nepal, the Nepali Army has almost completed constructing the pilot tracks and is in process of completing the project within 2-3 years (Army, 2019). This road once completed will not only facilitate to promote the core road network of Nepal but also will significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

4.2.1.3 Road Connectivity in Northern Border

From ancient time, Nepal has been a transit routes to Tibet. During the medieval period the Malla Kings of Kathmandu valley maintained good trade relations and King Prithvi Narayan Shah also maintained the same. After three wars amongst the nations on which two of them were with Tibet in 1788 and 1855 and next was China in 1791, trade patterns reduced drastically with the north and more options to the south were explored by the Nepali traders. Due to the easy access and suitable geography trade ratio became high with India. However, when Tibet became a part of China in 1951 Nepal pursued a neutral policy and established a diplomatic relations with China in 1955. A significant 'Nepal- China Treaty of Peace and Friendship' was signed in 1960 followed by Nepal-China Boundary Treaty in 1961. Since then China has started treating Nepal with

consistent levels of respect. At present, China is working to link Nepal and Tibet by improving access and connectivity (Subedi, 2016).

The border line between Nepal and China extends along the Himalaya ranges, extending from the Lipulekh Pass in the west to the Jiangshang Mountain in the east. The range also passes through the highest peak in the world, Mount Everest. In this rugged terrain, there are eight of points of land connectivity between these two nations which have been identified, of which some are operational whereas others are not yet in use as they are economically not feasible to be operational at present. The details of the points of entry are mentioned in Appendix 'B'. Among them, the land connectivity that has been frequently used for trade with China is the Kodari – Barhabise - Kathmandu Road that connects Kathmandu with Lhasa. This road can then be linked to India through Kathmandu - Hetauda - Birgunj road. Despite the land connection however, there are very limited open space in this pass thereby delimiting possibility to set up a dry port for handling large volumes of traffic. Second point of land connectivity which has been lately operational is the Rasuwagarhi–Syaphrubeshi road which links the three nations through the road corridor Rasuwagarhi–Syaphrubeshi–Kathmandu–Hetauda–Birgunj. This newly operationalized corridor has been analysed as having better potentiality in terms of trade exchanges. Due to this availability, the government is putting efforts to build a bigger dry port along this trade route. However, much efforts are needed to develop modern highways along with appropriate border points to ensure that this connectivity transforms into a proper transport corridor. Other points of connectivity with China are under being explored and under consideration.

The only highway, Kodari Road also known as the Araniko Highway, was constructed in 1963-67 to connect the Tibetan Plateau to Lhasa. 130 km of this highway is considered as a strategically important connectivity from Nepal to China. After the earthquake 2015 in Nepal the highway is yet to be fully functional. Since it was only highway to connect Nepal and China, it had significant contribution to the trade and commerce between Nepal and China. At present, up-gradation of Saphrubeshi – Rasuwa – Trishuli –Baireni (Dhading) road is under progress.

The northern Himalayan part is full of rugged mountains and difficult terrain which is limiting the accessibility to Nepal. Both the neighbors share 1414 km long border which consist of several passes along the mountainous range. As per the Transit Transport

Agreement 2018 Nepali traders will be allowed to use any mode of transport rail or road to access the sea ports as well as dry ports. Both sides also agreed on access to Chinese territory from six checkpoints in Nepal; Rasuwa, Tatopani (Sindhupalchok), Korala (Mustang), Kimathanka (Sankhuwasabha), Yari (Humla), and Olanchung Gola (Taplejung). It is believed that Kathmandu-Syabrubesi road will be one of the most viable commercial routes to Nepal from China. The Government of Nepal has planned to develop connectivity with Indian and Chinese road-railway network by identifying eight potential north-south road corridors (Adhikari, 2012) as in Appendix “C”. It is believed that the connectivity with India and China would be more efficient and effective after the completion of construction of those roads.

4.2.2 Status of Rail Connectivity in Nepal

Railway transportation is considered as an energy effective means of transportation. It has the capability to transport more number of passengers and cargo compared to other forms of transport. Nepal was initially exposed to the railway transportation in 1927 AD and is currently linked with India with limited railway services. It has not however initiated any such means of transport with its northern border. Despite initiating it almost a century ago, the railway transport has not been able to prosper in Nepal. Though considered as more capital-intensive and less flexible, it can be one of the means of transportation that may augment Nepal’s goal to transform from a land locked to a land linked nation. According to the survey conducted amongst 30 respondents of the related fields, 86% of them feel that Nepal should initiate railway transportation to augment Nepal’s goal for transformation.

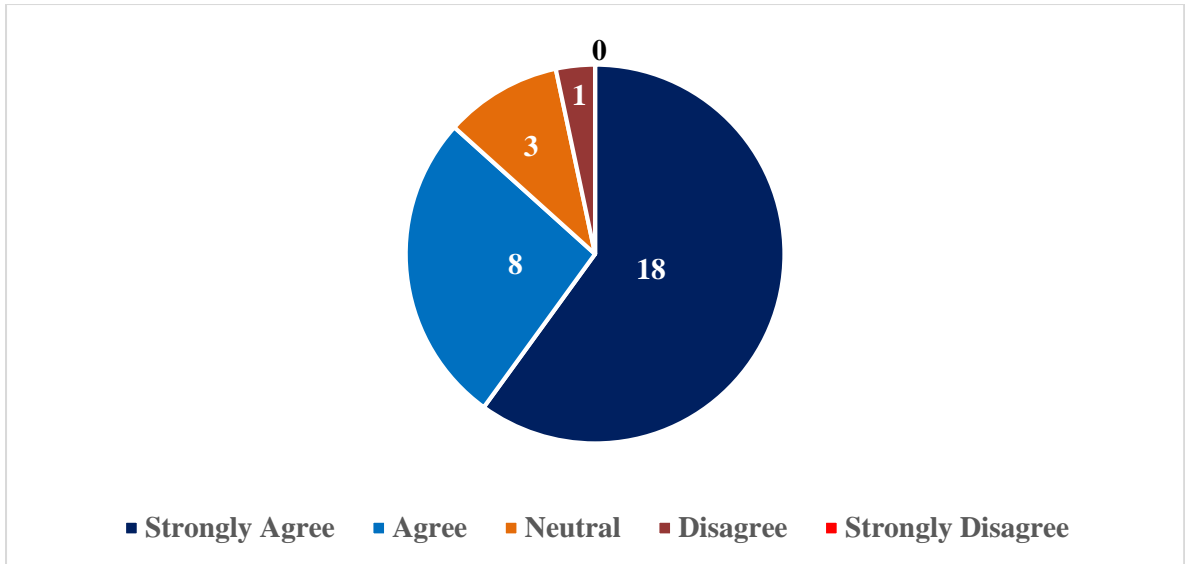


Figure 4.9: Need for Operationalization of Railway Transportation to Augment Nepal’s Goal to Transform from Land-locked to Land-linked Nation

4.2.2.1 Rail Connectivity in Southern Border

First railway service with a length of 48 km from Amalekhagunj of Nepal to Raxaul, India got closed in 1960 AD. The second railway service from Jayanagar in India to Janakpur and Bijalpura in Nepal commenced in 1937 AD and has minimal service till date. Nepal maintains and operates above mentioned two railway lines in the country; one is Raxaul- Sirsiya which is 6 km long leading to Sirsiya Inland Container Depot (dry port) near Birganj. The other one is Jainagar (India) to Janakpur which is 28 km, being primarily used for passenger transport. Between India and Nepal, rail movements are entirely on broad gauge railway link connection from Kolkata port and other destination in India. Similar to the road corridors, SAARC Multimodal Transport Study (SRMT) 2006 has identified some 15 existing and potential rail corridors for further consideration. After applying the selection criteria similar to those in road corridors, the five rail corridors of greater regional importance have been identified, out of which two rail corridors for Nepal as shown in Appendix “D” is being indicated for priority attention. Meanwhile, some of the scholars like Jayanta Ray and Pritam Banerjee has recommended to develop overland railway routes connecting three key routes as mentioned below in the South Asian Region for better connectivity (Pritam, 2012):

- i. Kathmandu - Nepal – Siliguri - India via Birgunj - Nepal
- ii. Kolkata - India – Chittagong via Dhaka (both in Bangladesh).

- iii. Kolkata – Imphal (both in India) via Dhaka-Bangladesh and Agartala India.

Having limited direct railway lines with India, Nepal has great scope and possibility to develop and improve current rail connectivity. A four-lane rail link from Raxaul in India to Simara in Nepal is being planned and following projects as in Appendix “E” have already been sanctioned but has not been materialized due to the various reasons (Basu, 2017). Anasua Basu Ray Choudhary also recommends the following railway connectivity to and from India – Nepal when analyzing BBIN and Myanmar connectivity initiatives for surface transport;

- i. Jaynagar – Bijalpur – Bardibas Rail link project.
- ii. Jogbani – Biratnagar Rail Link.
- iii. Kakarvittaa – New Jalpaiguri Rail Link.
- iv. Bhairahawa – Nautawna Rail Link.

4.2.2.2 Rail Connectivity in Northern Border

Recently China has a widespread road and rail network connectivity along its border. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway was extended from Lhasa to Shigatse in 2014 which will be extended to Kerung/Rasuwagadhi on Nepal border and Yatug/Dromo which is close to the Indian and Bhutan’s border. It is the part of Beijing’s plan to expand westward which is also referred to as the ‘go west strategy’. It is also argued that creating connectivity across the Himalayas is in line with China’s objective to ‘transforming mountain passes into trade channels’ (Jiwan, 2017).

The China-Nepal Railway Link from Kerung (Gyirong) to Kathmandu has been proposed as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and is now undergoing Detail Project Report (DPR) investigation. This train link across the high Himalaya Mountains would increase not just tourism to both nations, but also economic and social relations, allowing Nepal and China to trade more effectively. As the first international railway connecting Nepal and China, it has drawn the attention of the general people as well as businessmen. The distance from Shigatse to Kerung (Gyirong) port, only crossing point between Tibet and Nepal will be 540 km. Completion of the proposed route from Kerung to Kathmandu 120 km distance would be more cost effective in compare of the long and winding road transportation currently in operation from Kathmandu to the border.

A survey on the level of support by the neighbouring nations for operationalization of railway transportation in Nepal shows that approximately 60% of the respondents agree that both India and China will support Nepal’s goal. However, the survey result depicts that China will be less hesitant to provide the support than that of India.

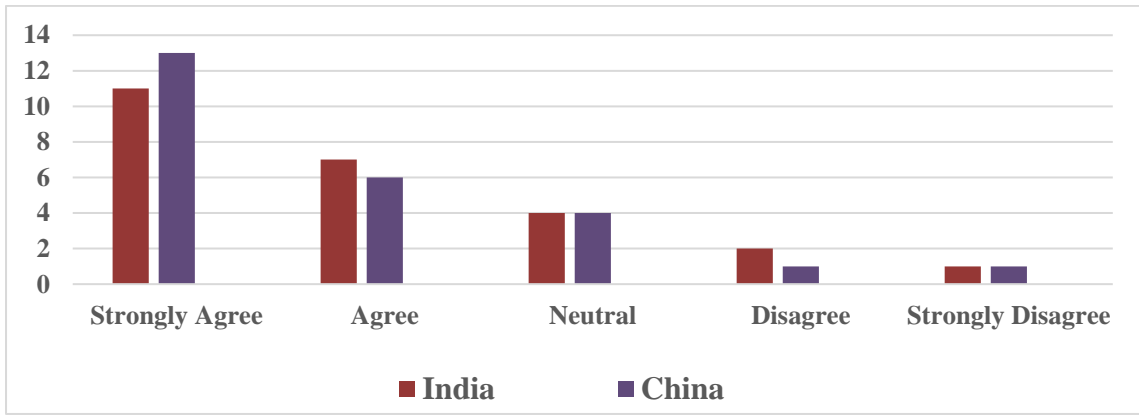


Figure 4.10: Opinion on the Level of Support on Operationalization of Railway Transportation to Augment Nepal’s Goal for Transformation

Initiation of railway transportation is not just a means for prosperity. It may have inherent challenges of security concerns. In this regard, a survey was done to identify if commencement of the railway transportation in Nepal would have any associated security challenges. Almost 80% of the respondents feel that the initiation of railway transportation will escalate various security threats in Nepal.

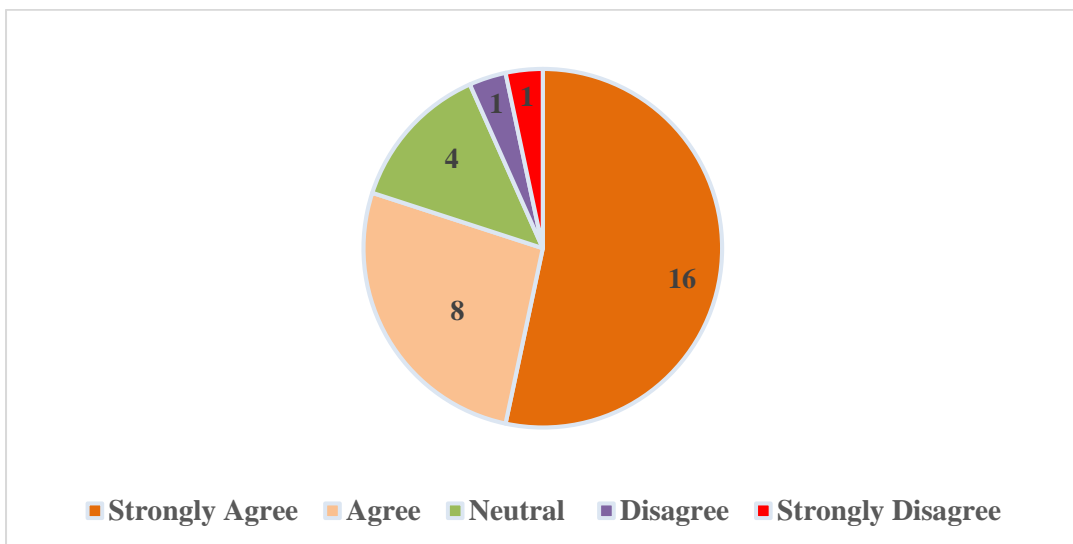


Figure 4.11: Opinion on the Likelihood of Increasing Security Threats with the Commencement of Railway Transportation in Nepal

4.2.3 Status of Seaports for Nepal's Land Connectivity

Nepal uses seaports of both in India and China to trade various commodities to the outside world. According to the survey shown on the table below, most of the respondents feel that there needs to be a significant improvement on the seaport's facilities of Nepal at both its neighbouring nations. Almost 60% of the respondents are not happy with the available facilities in both the nations. Moreover, the survey also displays that the status of access to the seaport and the trading facilities along with the routes in China seem to be slightly better than that of India. However, almost 90% of the respondents feel that Nepal's trade with third countries is much cheaper through India in comparison to China.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Nepal's transit facilities and Routes through India is effective	1	3	7	7	12
Nepal's transit facilities and routes through China is effective	2	5	6	6	11
In view of Nepal's trade with third countries, trading through India is cheaper than from China	14	8	4	3	1

Figure 4.12: Opinion on the Nepal's Transit Facilities in Indian and Chinese Seaports

4.2.3.1 Nepal's Seaports in India

Nepal's closest seaport for foreign trade is the Kolkata port in India, which is approximately 700 km away from the border. Nepal depends largely on this seaport due to its proximity and the ease of transport. This port however is too congested along with inadequate infrastructures for trade and transits. The roads leading to and from the port too are in poor condition. Nepal has only one Inland Container Depot (Dry Port) at

Sirsiya near Birgunj to connect India. This dry port is linked with Raxaul by train and is connected to Kolkata and Haldia Ports for cargo freights. The existing dry ports are as given in Appendix “F”. Due to all these issues, Nepal is having diplomatic maneuvers to solicit for diversifying its trade through sea ports of Bangladesh. This move however has several associated sensitivities and transit concerns with India.

The SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS) has identified 19 maritime gateways that are important for conducting the international trade of SAARC nations. India's Kolkata and Haldia ports have the capacity to handle intra-SAARC cargo and are able to give landlocked nations access to the sea; Nepal has long used these ports. Bangladesh's Chittagong and Mongla ports can also give landlocked nations and areas access to the seaports. From Nepal’s perspective, ports in Bangladesh are closer from Nepal than the ports in India. If Nepal is permitted to use the ports in Bangladesh through Phulbari - Banglaband route Nepal would be benefited for its trade. Similarly, Land Ports have also been identified. These ports are also equally important for Nepal to maintain trade with India and Bangladesh. New Delhi & Vaanasi in India, Birgunj–Raxaul (Indo -Nepal border), Benapole (Indo- Bangladesh border), Kakarbhitta (Indo–Nepal border), Nautanwa–Sunuali (Indo–Nepal border), Phulbari (Indo–Bangladesh border) and Banglaband (Northern Bangladesh) are some of those land ports being identified. These are to be developed considering the trade intensity and volume between the countries.

Nepal’s connectivity with India is likely to be further strengthened in years to come. The progressive connectivity within India along with its effort to enhance ASEAN–India connectivity have also provided assurance to such assertion. India has completed the crucial nodal link between the four major cities namely; Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata. This project which is also referred as the Golden Quadrilateral Project, has changed the dynamics of land connectivity in India. Furthermore, as per India’s “Look East” policy, it has actively promoted its connectivity with Southeast Asia. There are other projects like the Mekong–India Economic Corridor and the Trilateral Highway which connects India and Myanmar with Thailand enhancing the land connectivity.

Nepal is not directly linked with Bangladesh by roads. However, Nepal does have a possibility of diversifying its trade through Chittagong port of Bangladesh utilizing small portion of Indian Territory. For this, both Nepal and Bangladesh have established

friendship relation to facilitate the road and port linkage with a view to enhance their mutual trade facilities and other activities. This has not been able to materialize as India is reluctant to support the project.

4.2.3.2 Nepal's Seaports in China.

Nepal and China signed a transit transport pact on September 7, 2018, in which China officially pledged to provide Nepal with seven transit destinations, including three land ports (Lanzhou, Lhasa, and Xigatse) and four sea ports (Tianjin (Xingang), Shenzhen, Lianyungang, and Zhanjiang). Nepal may conduct commerce with other countries with the assistance of these ports. Similarly, Nepali traders would be allowed to reach dry and marine ports using any mode of conveyance, including rail or road. The two sides also agreed to set up six checkpoints in Nepal: Rasuwa, Tatopani in Sindhupalchok, Korala in Mustang, Kimathanka in Sankhuwasabha, Yari in Humla, and Olanchungola in Taplejung (Nayak, 2018). Besides the BRI in which Nepal has signed, this bilateral connectivity initiative is expected to enhance the trade potential between the two countries and has provided alternatives for the trade dependency with its southern neighbor India. The existing dry ports are as given in Appendix "F". It is believed that Nepali cargo from Japan, South Korea and Other north Asian countries could be routed through China by cutting down time and cost significantly.

In this context, a survey to identify the likelihood of support from India and China to enhance the current seaport facilities, was conducted. The survey as shown on the table below demonstrated that more than 50% of the respondents are skeptical that both India and China may easily and unconditionally provide sea access to Nepal. According to their opinion, approximately 66% and 50% of respondents in the case of India and China respectively feel that they may not easily provide sea access to Nepal. In addition, 70% respondents feel that India may not easily facilitate and support Nepal's approach for the sea access from Bangladesh seaport.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
India will easily and unconditionally provide sea access to Nepal	2	2	6	9	11
China will easily and unconditionally provide sea access to Nepal	4	6	5	6	9
India will facilitate and support Nepal's approach for the sea access from Bangladesh	2	2	7	9	12

Figure 4.13: Opinion on the Nepal's Transit Facilitation from Indian and Chinese Seaports

4.2.4 China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Nepal

Nepal had proposed during the Second South Summit in Doha in 2005 that Nepal be developed as a land bridge linking Central, South, and Southeast Asia. On May 12, 2017, Nepal and China also agreed to a framework for BRI. This accord was considered as having a strong likelihood of creating passageways between the three nations for their respective purposes (Jha, 2017). Former Deputy Director of the Institute of South Asia, Mr. Di Fangyo, Xizang Minzu University, China, has once stated in his paper on "thinking in building the China-Nepal-India economic corridor" that the corridor might lead to substantial changes in South Asia and South East Asia. He went on to say that its implementation might help millions of people in the area who are in poverty. Additionally, this may boost the region's degree of tolerance, respect for one another, camaraderie, and most importantly, investment.

India's perception on the aspect of BRI is different. It has not yet agreed on the concept and has not taken part in the BRI forum so far. India does not feel comfortable with the china's plan to develop railway via disputed border with china. It has the stance that the dispute needs to be addressed prior initiating the plan. Furthermore, India perceives that

China is trying to exploit the Indian markets through Nepal hence does not want to encourage Nepal to be part of BRI. It also thinks that BRI will lead to India's weakening influence in South Asia. Contrarily, Nepal takes BRI as means of economic agenda for the economic advancement of the country.

4.3 Role of Political Leadership in Land Connectivity

Political leadership plays a crucial role in transforming a nation from landlocked to land-linked nation. Political leaders have the power to negotiate and establish agreements with neighboring countries to open up trade routes and improve infrastructures. Throughout different eras in Nepal, political leaders have taken different approaches on addressing the challenges of being a landlocked country. For example, during the 1990s and 2000s, political leaders focused on building relationships with India and China to open up trade routes and improve infrastructure, such as the construction of new highways and bridges. This led to the establishment of several border points for trade with these countries. This helped to reduce Nepal's dependence on a single trade route and improve the country's economic situation (Raj, 2017). In recent years, political leaders have continued to work on improving relations with neighboring countries and have sought to diversify relationships to reduce dependency on any one country. The government of Nepal has also signed various agreements to improve transportation infrastructure and connectivity.

In the context of Nepal, political leadership is one of the important components that impacts Nepal's goal on transforming from a land-locked to land-linked nation. In order to furnish the vision on supporting Nepal's goal for transformation, it is crucial to ensure good will of the key strategic partners of Nepal namely; India, China and USA. A survey in this line was conducted to find out the opinion of the experts on the likelihood of support from the strategic partners. As shown on the chart below, more than 50 % of the respondents feel that US will have positive gestures on Nepal's aim for the change. Likewise, in the case of China, almost 50% of the respondents feel that she will have good faith for the transformation whereas in the case of India, less than 40% of the respondents feel that India will be positive for the transformation into a land linked nation. It is interesting to note that approximately 30% of the respondents in the case of India and China seem to be neutral on the opinion. The survey clearly demonstrates that

the political leadership of Nepal should invest time and resources to ensure good will from the strategic partners primarily India and China.

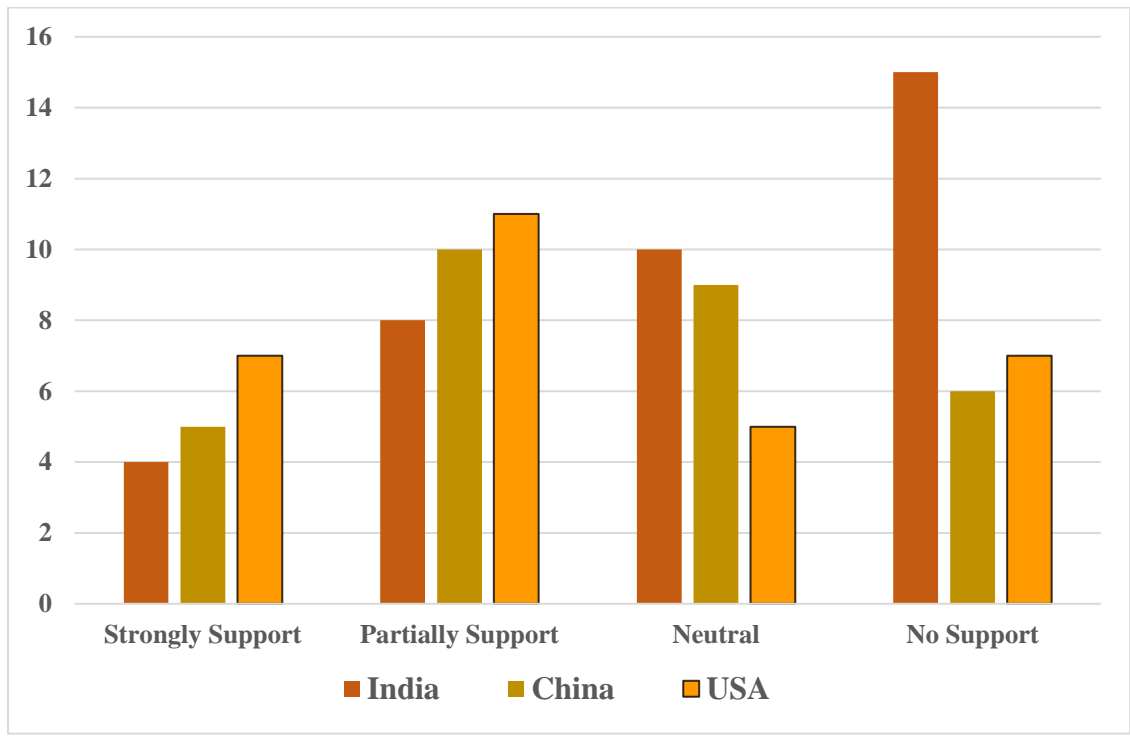


Figure 4.14: Opinion on the level of support by the Strategic Partners

Similarly, a survey was conducted to identify the opinion of the respondents on the influence of political leadership in Nepal by the external influences primarily from India and China. According to the survey as shown below, almost 80% of the participants of the study were of the opinion that the leadership were largely influenced by external factors. Moreover, it was alarming to find out that approximately 60% of the respondents strongly opined that Nepal’s leadership are mainly affected by the external influences of the immediate neighbours.

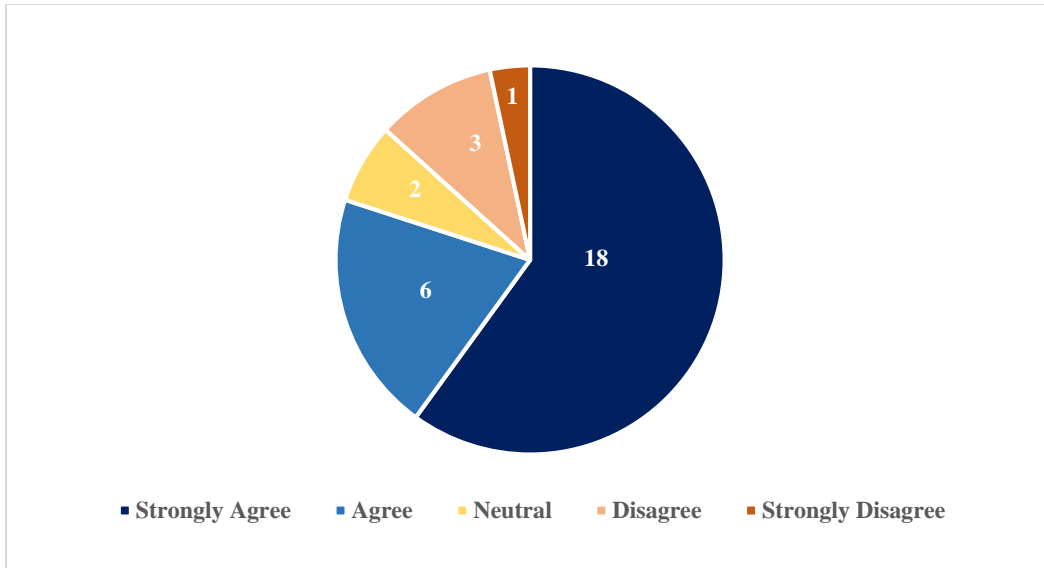


Figure 4.15: Opinion on the level of agreement that Nepal’s Political leaderships are influenced by the external influences primarily of India and China

4.3.1 Significance of Institutional Governance on Land Connectivity

Institutional governance mechanism are important for transforming Nepal into a land-linked nation. They provide the framework for implementing policies and programs that support economic and social development. These mechanisms can include government agencies, regulatory bodies, and other organizations that are responsible for coordinating and managing various aspects of the country's infrastructure, such as transportation, trade, and investment. They also play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for private sector investment and growth, and in promoting regional integration and cooperation. Additionally, these mechanisms are necessary for ensuring accountability, transparency, and good governance, which are essential for maintaining stability and building trust in the country's institutions.

As mentioned on the previous paragraphs, many scholar feel that Nepal’s existing institutional mechanism are not adequate in fulfilling the Nepal’s goal for transformation. In this context, a survey was conducted to identify the opinion of the respondents of the related fields on their level of agreement that Nepal’s existing institutional mechanism are sufficient for Nepal’s goal for transformation. According to the survey as shown on the chart below, almost 70% of the respondents do not agree that that Nepal’s institutional mechanism are adequate enough.

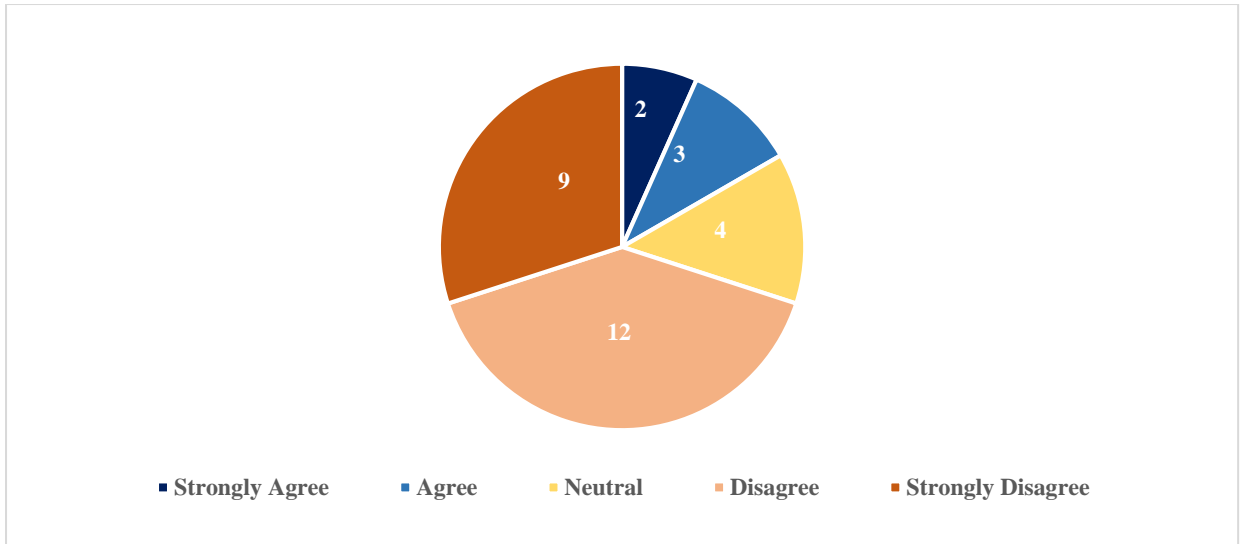


Figure 4.16: Opinion on the level of agreement that Nepal's existing institutional mechanisms are sufficient for the goal of transformation

4.3.2 Significance of Political Diplomacy on Land Connectivity

Nepal's diplomacy has played an important role in its efforts to transform itself into a land-linked nation over time. In the past, Nepal's leaders have focused on strengthening relations with neighboring countries, particularly India and China, in order to improve transportation and trade connectivity. This has included signing agreements on cross-border transportation, such as the construction of new highways and rail lines, as well as agreements on transit and transshipment. In recent years, the leadership of Nepal has been focusing on expanding its diplomatic relations with other countries in order to diversify its trade and investment partners and to promote regional integration. This has included efforts to join regional organizations such as the Bay of Bengal Organization for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (Madhavji, 2073).

Visionary leadership can play a crucial role in the development of Nepal. Their efficient leadership and the political diplomacy will provide a clear direction and purpose for the country's progress. Efficient leaders would also be able to develop a vision for the future that takes into account of the factors that will meet the national objectives. Additionally, they would be able to develop and implement effective policies and strategies that promote sustainable development, such as those intended to make Nepal a land-linked nation rather than a landlocked one. To market Nepal as a land-linked country and draw

foreign investment in infrastructure development, the government of Nepal has also been actively engaging in international forums like the UNFCCC and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In order to facilitate the country's transition into a land-linked one, Nepal's leaders have also been seeking to enhance the business climate and draw international investment in infrastructure development. This has included efforts to improve the legal and regulatory framework, as well as to increase transparency and accountability in government.

Nepal has undergone various political changes in the span of the last two centuries. The autocratic regime of the Ranas lasted more than a century from 1846-1951 A.D. It was then followed by the Panchayat System with few years of democratic frictions. Approximately forty years of the autocratic monarchy was then followed by the Multi-Party System in 1990 A.D. During this system, Nepal was still a kingdom with the role of monarch been reduced significantly. The system in Nepal did not last long after the nation was declared a Federal Democratic Republic on May 28, 2008. The freshly elected constituent assembly removed the monarchy that had existed for 240 years and created the President as the leader of State, with the Prime Minister acting as the executive leader of the government. As a result of these frequent political upheavals, Nepal has been unable to maintain a consistent strategy to its diplomatic relations over the years (Wikipedia, 2023). Various systems had different skill set of the leadership and a different focus on the development. Their political diplomacy too was varied with different ways of dealing with the strategic partners primarily India and China.

Nepal has had a number of visionary leaders who have contributed to the development of infrastructure in the country. One notable example is late King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who ruled Nepal from 1955 to 1972 A.D. He implemented policies that promoted the development of transportation infrastructure, including the construction of new roads and highways. He also established the Nepal Oil Corporation and the Nepal Telecommunications Corporation, which helped to improve access to essential services such as energy and telecommunications (L.S., 2016). He also played a key role in the construction of the East-West Highway, which connects the eastern and western regions of Nepal and improves access to markets and services. Another leader is late Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who ruled Nepal from 1991 to 2008 A.D. He played a crucial role on establishing the Nepal Electricity Authority, which expanded access to

electricity to rural areas. Likewise, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli in the recent years have also been credited for promoting infrastructure development in Nepal. He has initiated a number of mega projects such as the construction of the Budi Gandaki Hydropower Project, the construction of the Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track and Kathmandu-Rasuwagadhi Tunnel Road.

In this context, a survey was passed to the respondents of the related field to identify the extant of visionary leadership, focus on the infrastructural development and the relations with the neighbouring countries. According to the survey as shown on the chart below, more respondents opined that there was efficient leadership with wider vision during the Panchayat system. In the case of infrastructural development too, more participants of the survey felt that Panchayat System had more development than other political systems. It was interesting to see that more respondents felt that there was better infrastructural development during the autocratic Rana Regime in comparison to the democratic systems namely; Multi-Party System and the period post establishment of federal republic of Nepal.

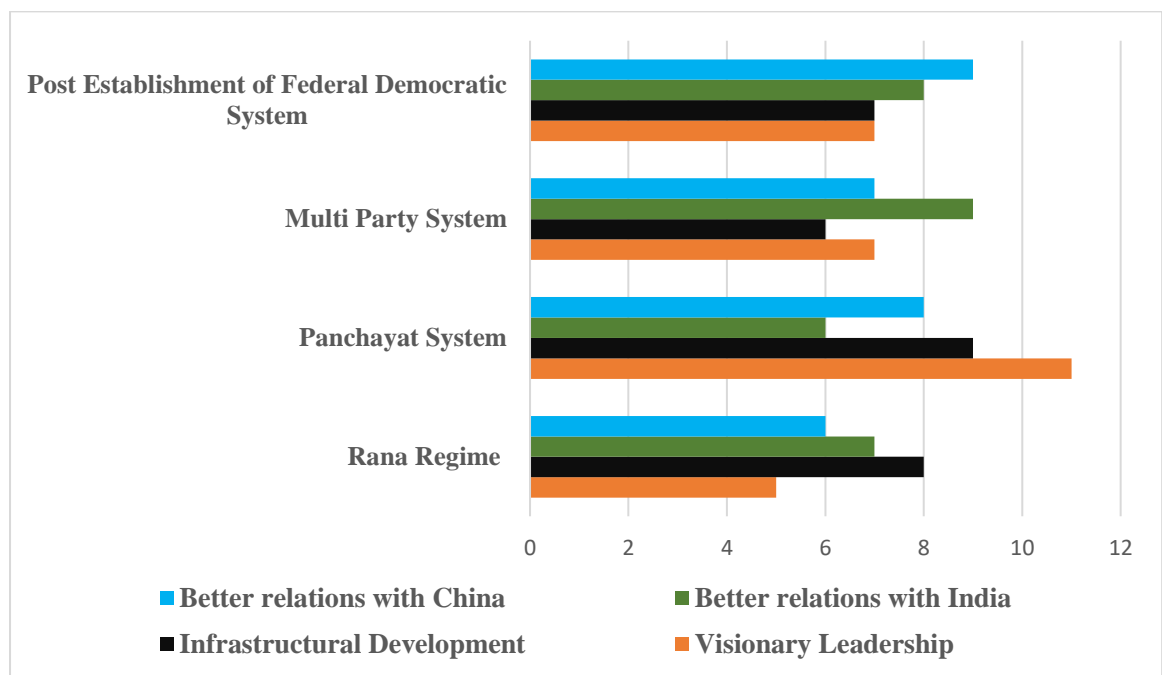


Figure 4.17: Chart depicting the comparison on the opinion of the respondents on visionary leadership, infrastructural development and relations with India and China on various regimes/political systems

Better relations with India and China is crucial for transforming Nepal into a land-linked nation. India and China are both major economic and political powers in the region, and Nepal's economy and development is closely linked with both of its neighbouring nations. Better relations with them would allow Nepal to take advantage of the economic opportunities that exist in India and China. India is the largest market for Nepalese goods, and improving trade relations with India would provide a significant boost to the Nepalese economy (Poudel D. B., 2017). Additionally, China is also investing heavily in infrastructure development in the region, and Nepal could benefit from these investments through increased connectivity and access to new markets. In addition, better relations with India and China would also improve Nepal's security and stability. In fact, it would allow Nepal to reduce its dependence on any single country and thereby assisting Nepal to maintain a balanced foreign policy. In this background, a survey was conducted to identify the status of Nepal's relations on various political systems of Nepal. As shown on the chart above, it is interesting to find that more respondents feel that bilateral relations of Nepal with China have been improving lately. In the context of India, the relations seem to be better once Nepal adopted Multi-Party System. It seems to be declining lately in the recent years post establishment of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The reason for the strained relations with India in the recent years according to Mr Ghimire is primarily due to the political hassles that both nations faced during the promulgation of the constitution and India's blockade to Nepal in 2015. The relations further worsened once Nepal provided legal status to a new map housing the land that India debated with the constitutional amendment of 2077 B.S (Ghimire, 2020).

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

Geo-political location of Nepal is strategically important. It's location in between two Asian economic giants; India and China provides additional leverage to Nepal's goal for transformation. Enhanced relations with India, China, the US, and regional organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC can play a crucial role in helping Nepal transform from a landlocked to a land-linked nation. Nepal's long-standing relationship with India provides opportunities for closer economic cooperation and integration. India is Nepal's largest trading partner, and by working together, Nepal can benefit from India's vast economic resources and strategic location. Similarly, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the development of its ports in the Tibetan Autonomous Region

offer Nepal an alternative route to access global markets. By developing closer ties with China, Nepal can leverage its geographic location to become a hub for trade and transit in the region.

United States of America is a key player in the region and has expressed interest in working closely with Nepal to promote economic growth and regional stability. Through closer relations with the US, Nepal can gain access to financial and technical assistance, which can help to transform its economy and improve its infrastructure. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a regional organization that brings together South Asian countries to promote economic cooperation and integration. By working with SAARC too, Nepal can access a larger market and increase its economic competitiveness. Likewise, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which aims to promote regional cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, and connectivity, and can equally help Nepal to increase its access to global markets. In overall, by building stronger relationships with India, China, the US, and regional organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC, Nepal can leverage its strategic location and transform from a landlocked to a land-linked nation.

Status of Nepal's infrastructural development is inadequate to address its aspiration of transforming from a land locked to a land linked nation. Despite Nepal's overreliance on road transportation for its trade with third countries, the status of road transportation are poor. Hence it should optimize its priority to enhance such facilities. Likewise, railway transportation too is at the incipient stage or non-existent. Initiation of effective railway linkage to both of Nepal's neighbours; India and China may likely augment Nepal's goal for transformation. Though India and China may have certain reluctance on initiating railway transportation, Nepal should optimize its diplomatic maneuvers to commence railway transportation linkage with both the countries. Similarly, the seaports facilities of Nepal too needs significant improvement on both its neighboring nations. Since Nepal's trade with third countries is cheaper through India in comparison to China, the diplomatic relations with the southern border need to be maintained in such consideration. However, Nepal's reach to sea access through Bangladesh is beneficial in comparison to its immediate neighbours. Therefore, Nepal should intensively engage India to support Nepal's approach for the sea access from Bangladesh seaport. In addition, it is to be noted that the commencement of railway transportation may most

likely invite various security threats in Nepal. In this context, Nepal should explore on the likely challenges and plan for their mitigation at the inception.

Visionary leadership plays a critical role on the Nepal's objective for transformation. They provide vision and a direction to the plan. Similarly, they can conduct diplomatic maneuvers as per the geo-strategic location of Nepal. It is however to note that leadership alone cannot lead the nation to the desired development unless it is complemented by the good governance and effective institutions.

There has been some efforts to transform Nepal into a land-linked nation, with a focus on strengthening relations with neighboring countries, diversifying trade and investment partners and attracting foreign investment in infrastructure development. As yet, the efforts has not been adequate. Hence, political leadership of Nepal should invest adequate effort in order to ensure good will from the strategic partners; primarily India and China.

Institutional Governance is crucial to materialize Nepal's goal on land connectivity. The current institutional governance mechanism is ineffective to prosper Nepal's aspiration to transform from a land locked to land linked nation. Nepal needs to maintain a good balance in its relations with India and China to achieve its goal of becoming a land-linked nation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Nepal is sandwiched between economic, military and geographic giants; India and China. Having served as a buffer between India and China for several decades and considering its geo-political and geo-economic importance, Nepal can play a pivotal role as a transit route for China to penetrate into South Asia, and likewise India to open up its market in China especially towards its mountainous western region. There could be various factors but three key ones that may have a significant impact on Nepal's goal for the transformation are geo-political environment, infrastructural development and the political leadership.

5.1.1 Role of Geo-Political Environment

Nepal's goal for transformation is largely influenced by the geo-political context of Nepal. Study of the features of geo-political environment suggest that the key feature, the foreign policy of Nepal, has not been able to address Nepal's goal to transform from land locked to a land linked nation. In view of the discussion on the previous chapters, following findings were made;

Nepal's current foreign policy does not explicitly indicate any visionary thoughts nor expresses clear thoughts on such transformation. Considering the geo-strategic importance of Nepal, its existing treaties/agreements between its immediate neighbours; India and China do not discretely explain Nepal's objective for the transformation.

India has always enforced asymmetric power relations with Nepal. Though the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 is still regarded the core of the two countries' unique relationship, it is more skewed towards India and should be revised. In the case of China, it has taken Nepal at a reasonable stake in order to ensure its security toward its western region; Tibet. China adopts neutral posture unless its security is at stake.

Nepal's foreign policies has not been able to attract other important global actors; US and the international organization. Though US, EU and other global actors generally

scrutinize Nepal's affairs especially due its location between China and India, Nepal's foreign policies have not been able to address the same.

Though, regional and international organizations like BIMSTEC and EU could support Nepal's goal for the transformation, engagement with such organization has not been adequate. Moreover, Nepal has not been able to utilize forums like SAFTA, SAPTA, SATIS in order to gain access to a larger market.

Nepal's goal for transformation may not be a smooth ride. It may invite various security challenges. Its geo-strategic location will offer an ideal ground for the international players; especially those opting to destabilize the two emerging Asian economic giants, India and China. Some security concerns like drug trafficking, smuggling, cyber threat, trans-border crimes, terrorist activities etc. are going to escalate once Nepal adopts robust approach for the transformation. Likewise, the power tussles intended to have an influence on the geo-strategic location of Nepal too, will have significant impact on the security concerns of Nepal.

5.1.2 Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is one of the crucial factor for Nepal's goal for the transformation. In the last two decades, there has been a considerable infrastructural development in Nepal. Though the access and the quantity of the roads have increased, the services they avail in terms of trade facilities has not been sufficient enough. Railway transportation of Nepal is at the incipient stage. There are no railway networks on the northern border and the ones available on the southern border too is minimal. In view of the discussion on the infrastructure development of Nepal, following findings have been identified.

Due to the rugged mountainous terrain, development of road in Nepal will always have inherent challenges. Currently, Nepal's road transportation is inadequate and poor. In view of its goal for the transformation, Nepal should optimize its priority to enhance such facilities.

Nepal has minimal exposure on railway transportation. Initiation of effective railway linkage to both of Nepal's neighbours; India and China will augment Nepal's goal to transform from a land locked to a land linked nation. Though India and China may have

certain reluctance on initiating railway transportation, Nepal should optimize its diplomatic maneuvers to commence railway transportation linkage with both the countries.

Commencement of railway transportation may most likely invite various security threats in Nepal. The challenges need to be mitigated at the inception of the plan.

There needs to be a significant improvement on the seaport's facilities of Nepal at both its neighboring nations.

Nepal's trade with third countries is cheaper through India in comparison to China. Hence, the diplomatic relations with the southern border need to be maintained in such consideration.

Nepal's approach for the sea access through the Chittagong Port is short and less intensive in terms of expenditures. Nepal should intensively engage India to support Nepal's sea access from Bangladesh seaport.

5.1.3 Political Leadership in Nepal

Visionary leadership plays a critical role on the Nepal's objective for transformation. Their engagement and the policies they devise will garner support on the objectives of Nepal. Despite such importance, Nepal has not been able to harness such leadership since long. It has been one of those reasons that has delayed Nepal's goal to be a land linked nation. In defining the role of the political leadership in Nepal, following findings have been identified.

Nepal's leadership has largely been inclined to either of the bordering nations. They have not been able to adopt a balanced approach.

There have been some efforts to transform Nepal into a land-linked nation, with a focus on strengthening relations with neighboring countries, diversifying trade and investment partners and attracting foreign investment in infrastructure development. As yet, the efforts have not been adequate.

Political leadership of Nepal should invest adequate effort in order to ensure good will from the strategic partners; primarily India, China and the United States.

Though visionary leadership has significant role, it alone will not be able to drive the country's goal for the transformation. It should be complemented by good governance and effective institutions. Institutional Governance is crucial to materialize Nepal's goal on land connectivity. The current institutional governance mechanism is not effective to prosper Nepal's aspiration to transform from a land locked to land linked nation.

Nepal needs to maintain a good balance in its relations with India and China to achieve its goal of becoming a land-linked nation.

5.1.4 Enhanced Geo-Political Environment, Infrastructural Development and the Political Leadership and its Impact

Geo-political environment, infrastructural development and the political leadership are the crucial components for the transformation of Nepal into a land linked nation. Each factor is interdependent and intertwined. Visionary leaders should adequately engage the strategic partners of Nepal to establish relations and agreements in order to enhance the infrastructures, primarily roads, railway transportation and the port facilities. They should fully understand the geo-political context and plan accordingly. Once all of these factors work in tandem, Nepal will undoubtedly gain access to sea and adopt security measures especially on food security thereby ultimately reducing lead time.

5.1.4.1 Reduced Lead Time

Nepal's revival as a land-linked state is being further augmented with the distances between cities of India and the inner cities of China being greatly reduced with the development of land route through Nepal. For instance, the distance from the capital of India i.e. Delhi to Kunming via Hong Kong, China is approximately 10,345 km, whereas its distance through Nepal is only about a quarter of that distance. Similarly, the distance from Chennai to Kunming through Hong Kong, China is almost 6,841 km whereas the distance through Nepal is only 3,540 km. This clearly signify that once Nepal enhances its land connectivity with both India and China, the lead time for trade will undoubtedly decrease.

5.1.4.2 Access to Sea

As a landlocked country, Nepal faces significant challenges in accessing sea routes for trade and transportation. There are various treaties and agreements to facilitate Nepal's access to sea routes. But these existing agreements are not adequate. Further diplomatic engagements to amend the existing treaties will allow Nepal for free transit of goods to and from its territory through Indian territory, including access to the Indian ports. Nepal can also work on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its transit routes through India by building better infrastructure, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and improving logistics management.

Likewise, better relations with China too will avail better opportunities for Nepal primarily on availing access to sea routes. Nepal's additional protocols that has been signed in 2016 and 2019 A.D. has allowed Nepal to use four Chinese sea ports namely Shenzhen, Tianjin, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang. Similarly it has also got access to three land ports in Lhasa, Shigatse and Lanzhou which will facilitate third-country import. Moreover, China has developed its ports in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and has expressed interest in building a railway line to connect Nepal's capital Kathmandu with the Tibetan city of Shigatse. This railway line could provide Nepal with access to Chinese ports in the future. In summary, there are several ways that Nepal can increase its access to sea routes through closer cooperation with India and China. By working collaboratively and building strong partnerships, Nepal can overcome the challenges of being a landlocked country and unlock new opportunities for trade and economic growth.

5.1.4.3 Food Security

Improving infrastructure and visionary leadership can play a crucial role in augmenting food security in Nepal. Improved transportation infrastructure such as roads, railways, and airports can help to connect rural areas with urban centers, improving access to markets and reducing food wastage. This can also enable farmers to transport their products more easily to urban areas, increasing their income and boosting food security. Likewise, increased investment in irrigation systems will help to increase agricultural productivity and reduce the vulnerability of crops to droughts and other climate-related risks. This can help to ensure a steady supply of food throughout the year. Similarly,

promotion of sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and crop rotation which can be initiated by the visionary leadership can improve soil health, increase productivity, and reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Furthermore, investing in research and development through improved infrastructural development can help to identify new and innovative ways to increase food production and improve crop yields. This measure too can help to develop new varieties of crops that are more resilient to climate change and pests. Visionary leadership can focus on improving storage and distribution systems for food products. In conclusion, improving infrastructure development and visionary leadership can play a critical role in augmenting food security in Nepal. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, investing in research and development, and developing transportation and storage infrastructure, Nepal can ensure a steady supply of food for its population and reduce the risk of food insecurity.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, transforming Nepal into a land-linked state requires a combination of factors, including a favorable geopolitical environment, infrastructure development, and visionary leadership. A positive geopolitical environment that fosters cooperation with neighboring countries can help Nepal expand its connectivity and access to global markets. Infrastructure development, including transportation, energy, and communication networks, is critical to improving connectivity and reducing the cost of doing business. Visionary leadership can provide the necessary direction, resources, and policies to achieve these goals.

Transforming Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked nation is a complex and multi-faceted challenge that requires a coordinated effort from all sectors of society. While Nepal has made some progress in improving its relationship with its neighbours and the infrastructure development, much more needs to be done to fully realize its potential as a land-linked nation. Nepal requires significant investments in transport infrastructure, as well as improvements in the regulatory environment to attract foreign investment and support the growth of domestic businesses. . By leveraging these crucial factors, Nepal can transform from a landlocked state to a land-linked state, increasing its economic

competitiveness, improving the livelihoods of its citizens, and realizing its full potential as a regional hub for trade and investment.

5.3 Recommendations

To transform Nepal into a land-linked nation, it is imperative to focus on three key areas: infrastructural development, visionary leadership, and better foreign policies. Firstly, Nepal needs to invest in developing its transportation infrastructure, including roads, railways, and ports, to facilitate better connectivity with neighboring countries. Secondly, visionary leadership is essential to devise policies that encourage foreign investments and partnerships to harness the country's potential in areas such as hydropower, tourism, and agriculture. Lastly, Nepal needs to strengthen its foreign policies to cultivate stronger partnerships with neighboring countries and leverage their strategic locations to establish trade routes and transportation corridors. By focusing on these three areas, Nepal can create a more prosperous future for its citizens and unlock its full potential as a land-linked nation. The following recommendations can help facilitate the transformation of Nepal into a land-linked nation.

Enhancing Foreign Policy for Connectivity: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal should formulate and execute a comprehensive foreign policy centered on enhancing trade and connectivity with neighboring countries. A primary focus should be the reinforcement of diplomatic relations and fostering cross-border cooperation in trade, transport, and energy. The Ministry should take the lead in initiating discussions with the Ministry of Finance Nepal for revising the 1950 Treaty between India and Nepal to ensure mutual benefit and fairness.

Negotiating Equitable Trade Agreements: The Ministry of Finance Nepal is tasked with the responsibility of addressing trade agreements. Collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is essential in negotiating fair trade agreements with neighboring countries. Additionally, the Ministry must tackle the issue of Indian concessions to Nepal concerning duties and customs while actively working on the removal of non-tariff barriers that obstruct trade. To create an environment conducive to foreign investment, the Ministry should coordinate with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies to establish business-friendly regulations.

Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure: To promote public-private partnerships vital for infrastructure development and Nepal's evolution into a land-linked nation, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies should play a pivotal role. The Ministry must actively encourage and facilitate these partnerships, ensuring they effectively harness the strengths of both the public and private sectors.

Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Development: The Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Nepal should develop and execute a strategic plan for transportation infrastructure, focusing on constructing new roads, bridges, and ports, as well as enhancing existing infrastructure. Investment priority should be given to sectors that foster trade and connectivity. Additionally, it's imperative to explore the feasibility of the Quadrilateral Corridor for improved access to sea ports, with coordination between neighboring countries.

Strengthening Border Security and Control: In the domain of border security and control, the Ministry of Home Affairs Nepal should collaborate closely with the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This collaboration should primarily focus on enhancing border security and effectively curbing criminal activities in border regions, which include arms and goods smuggling and the trafficking of women and children. Moreover, fostering cooperation and understanding among the government, police, and intelligence agencies of Nepal, India, and China is crucial.

Cultivating Political Stability and an Enabling Environment: The leadership of Nepal must prioritize the cultivation of political stability. This entails not only encouraging it but also ensuring transparent and accountable governance dedicated to the transformation of Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked nation. Effective coordination with stakeholders representing diverse sectors of society, including civil society, political parties, and international partners, is not just advantageous but fundamental to this endeavor. Furthermore, the leadership should take proactive steps in investing in comprehensive capacity-building programs. These programs are specifically designed to empower Nepali officials, business leaders, and other key stakeholders, thereby enabling their active and influential participation in regional and global trade and connectivity initiatives.

By implementing these recommendations, Nepal can take significant steps towards achieving its goal of transforming from a landlocked to a land-linked nation. This will not only support the country's economic growth and development, but will also help to create new opportunities for its people and to build a more prosperous and sustainable future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction

RESTRICTED

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10 November 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

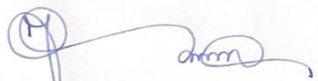
**FACILITATION FOR COL DHRUBA KUMAR KARKI ADMN No.
ND601/0026/2022**

The above Senior Officer is a course participant at the National Defence College and has been admitted for Masters of Arts in National Security and Strategy, under the National Defence University- Kenya Programme.

As part of academic requirements, Col Dhruba Kumar KARKI is required to undertake a research project in partial fulfillment of MA degree programme he is enrolled in. His approved research topic is **“Role of Land Connectivity in Transformation of Nepal from Land Locked to Land linked County”**.

The purpose of this letter is to kindly request your office to facilitate the Officer as he conducts his research project.

Submitted for your kind consideration and facilitation.



Mr F M MABEYA
Head of Programme
for Commandant

Dear Sir/Madam,
Heartiest Greetings.

RE: QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE RESEARCH

I am Col Dhruva Karki currently a student in the National Defense College, Kenya. I am conducting the research on the title *“Role of land connectivity in the transformation of Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked Country”* in the fulfilment of the examination board requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in National Security and Strategy. This questionnaire intends to collect first-hand information / data from its respondents on the subject. There are a total of 14 questions primarily focusing on the role of geo-political environment, infrastructure development and the political leadership in the transformation of Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked Country.

In this regard, I would appreciate your sincere feedback on the questionnaire which will be used confidentially for the purpose of the research only. It will not be diverged for any other use. In addition, please note that it would be optional to identify yourself and thus can remain anonymous.

Thank you.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

This questionnaire intends to collect data mainly for academic purpose. The study explores the *“Role of land connectivity in the transformation of Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked Country”*. All information provided on the questionnaire will be treated with strict confidence. Please do not put any name or any sort of identification on this questionnaire. Answer all questions objectively as indicated by either filling in the blank or ticking the options shown on the question.

SECTION ONE: INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Ministry
2. Department
3. Service Period ... Year, ... Month

3. Age Bracket

- 18-25 []
- 26-36 []
- 36-45 []
- 46-55 []
- Over 56 []

4. Academic Qualifications?

- i. PhD Level []
- ii. Masters Level []
- iii. Diploma []
- iv. Higher Secondary (10 +2) []
- v. Secondary []
- vi. None []

SECTION TWO: ROLE OF GEO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. The key objective of Nepal's foreign policy has largely been to enhance the pride, wellbeing and prosperity of Nepal. What is your level of agreement with the following statements relating to the foreign policy of Nepal? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree)

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
In order to transform from land locked to land linked nation, Nepal has been reviewing its foreign policy					
Existing bilateral treaties with India supports Nepal's goal for transformation					
Existing bilateral treaties with China supports Nepal's goal for transformation					

2. In your opinion, what will be the level of support that the following Strategic Partners/Regional Organisations will do to support and assist Nepal's goal to transform from Land-locked to Land-linked nation? Please rate the level of support as follows; 4- Significantly High, 3- High, 2-Modrate, 1-Low.

STATEMENT	4	3	2	1
India				
China				
USA				
SAARC				
BIMSTEC				
EU				

3. What is your level of agreement with the following statements relating to the security threats that may be impact Nepal’s transformation from Land-locked to Land-linked nation? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree)

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
Threats due to neighbourhood interests will escalate					
Trans-national threats of terrorism will increase					
Trans-border crime will increase					
Migration will escalate					
Cyber threat will increase					
Drug trafficking will increase					

4. In your opinion, how should Nepal’s Foreign Policy be in relation with its Strategic Partners/ Regional Organisations and the security threats that may impact Nepal’s aspiration to transform from land locked to a land linked nation?

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SECTION THREE: ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

5. Nepal is limited to air and road transportation due to the lack of sea access. In view of the services provided by the available road transportation, please tick the appropriate box on the level of satisfaction you have with the services provided by the road transportation.

Means of Transportation	Level of Satisfaction		
	Fully	Partially	Unsatisfied
Road Transportation			

6. What is your level of agreement with the following statements relating to the operationalization of railway transportation to augment Nepal's goal to transform from Land-locked to Land-linked nation? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2- Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree)

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
Nepal needs to initiate railway transportation					
India will support Nepal's goal to establish railway transportation					
China will support Nepal's goal to establish railway transportation					
Initiation of Railway Transportation will escalate security threats in Nepal					

7. Infrastructure development is also considered as one of the factors for the transformation of a land locked nation into land linked nation. What is your level of agreement with the following statements relating to the status of access to the seaport and the trading facilities along with the routes of the immediate neighbouring nations

namely; India and China? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree)

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
Nepal's transit facilities and routes through India is effective					
Nepal's transit facilities and routes through China is effective					
In view of Nepal's trade with third countries, trading through India is cheaper than from China.					

8. In order to transform Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked nation, Nepal will require easy and unconditional access towards the sea. In this prelude, what is your level of agreement with the following statements? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree).

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
India will easily and unconditionally provide sea access to Nepal.					
China will easily and unconditionally provide sea access to Nepal.					
India will facilitate and support Nepal's approach for the sea access from Bangladesh					

9. Do you have any additional comments on the role of infrastructural development on the transformation of Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked nation?

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SECTION FOUR: ROLE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

10. Political leadership is one of the components that impacts on Nepal's goal on transforming from a land-locked to land-linked nation. In this backdrop, which among the following Strategic Partners will have good will towards Nepal on its goal to transform from Land-locked to Land-linked nation? Please rate the level of good will they have as follows; 4- Strongly, 3- Partially, 2-Neutral, 1-No support.

STATEMENT	4	3	2	1
India				
China				
USA				

11. What is your level of agreement with the following statements on the existing institutional governance mechanism in transforming Nepal from land locked to a land linked country? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree).

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
Nepal's existing institutional mechanism are sufficient for Nepal's goal for transformation					
Political leaderships in Nepal are influenced by the external influences primarily by India and China					

12. Which among the following regime in Nepal had visionary leadership, better infrastructural development and good relations with neighbouring nations? Please tick the appropriate regime for each factors on the left.

FACTORS	Rana Regime	Panchayat System	Multi-Party System	Post establishment of Federal Republic of Nepal
Visionary Leadership				
More Infrastructural Development				
Better Relationship with India and China				

13. In your opinion, please rate your level of agreement with the following statement. Nepal has effective political diplomacy with the following Strategic Partners/Regional Organizations in order to fulfil its goal to transform from Land-locked to Land-linked nation? Please rate the level of agreement as follows; 5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

. STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
India					
China					
USA					
SAARC					
BIMSTEC					
EU					

14. Do you have any additional comments on the role of political leadership on the transformation of Nepal from Land-locked to Land-linked nation?

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SECTION FIVE: TRANSFORMATION FROM LAND LOCKED TO LAND LINKED NEPAL

15. What is your level of agreement with the following statement once Nepal gets transformed from land locked to land linked country? (5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3- Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree).

STATEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
Lead time forwill get reduced					
Nepal will get easy access to the sea.					
Food security in Nepal will be significantly improved.					

16. In your opinion, what may be some of the other impacts once Nepal gets transformed from land locked to land linked country.

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Thank you for participating in this study. Once again please be reassured on the confidentiality of this information. The feedback you have provided will not be diverged for any other purpose other than this research. If you are interested in receiving the findings of this research, please provide your details as shown below: -

Contact

Person.....

Email

Address.....

Signature.....

Date of returning the questionnaire.....

**Appendix A: NEPALESE ROADS IN SAARC REGIONAL MULTIMODAL
TRANSPORT**

S.No	Road Details	Considerations For Connectivity
1.	Kathmandu-Birgunj/Raxual- Kolkata-Haldia	Nepal and India Access to Landlocked Nepal to Indian Ports
2.	Kathmandu – Kakarvitta – Phulbari- Banglabandha-Mangla/Chittagoun	Nepal-India- Bangladesh Access to Landlocked Nepal to Bangladesh Ports
3.	Kathmandu-Nepalgunj –New Delhi	Nepal – India – Pakistan Potential of the corridor to coming future traffic
4.	Kathmandu-Bhairahawa-Sunauli- Luknow	Nepal – India Potential of the corridor to coming future traffic

Source: Transport Issues and Integration in South Asia,

Appendix B: MAJOR LAND BORDER CROSSINGS IN NEPAL

Along the Nepal-India Border

S.No.	Crossing Point/Area	District	Presence of Customs Office	Presence of Security Force
1.	<u>Pashupatinagar</u>	Ilam	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
2.	<u>Kankarbhitra</u>	Jhapa	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
3.	<u>Bhadrapur</u>	Jhapa	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
4.	<u>Biratnagar</u>	Morang	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
5.	<u>Setobandha</u>	Sunsari	Yes	Nepal Police
6.	<u>Rajbiraj</u>	Saptari	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
7.	Mardar	<u>Siraha</u>	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
8.	<u>Jaleswor</u>	Dhanusha	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
9.	<u>Malangawa</u>	Sarlahi	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
10.	<u>Gaur</u>	Rautahat	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
11.	<u>Raxoul</u>	Parsa	Yes	APF & Nepal Police

12.	<u>Siddharthanagar</u>	Rupandehi	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
13.	<u>Taulihawa</u>	Kapilvastu	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
14.	<u>Krishnanagar</u>	Kapilvastu	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
15.	<u>Koilabas</u>	Dang	Yes	Nepal Police
16.	Rupadiya	Banke	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
17.	<u>Rajapur</u>	Bardia	Yes	Nepal Police
18.	<u>Khakroula</u>	Kailali	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
19.	<u>Dhangadhi</u>	Kailali	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
20.	<u>Gadda Chouki</u>	Kanchanpur	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
21.	<u>Jhulaghat</u>	Baitadi	Yes	Nepal Police
22.	<u>Darchula</u>	Darchula	Yes	APF & Nepal Police

Along the Nepal-China Border

S.No.	Crossing Point/Area	District	Presence of Customs Office	Presence of Security Force
1.	<u>Olanchungola</u>	Taplejung	Yes	Nepal Police
2.	<u>Kimathaka</u>	Sankhuwasava	Yes	Nepal Police
3.	<u>Kodari</u>	Sindhupalchowk	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
4.	<u>Rasuwagadhi</u>	Rasuwa	Yes	APF & Nepal Police
5.	<u>Larke pass</u>	Gorkha	Yes	Nepal Police
6.	<u>Namja</u>	Mugu	Yes	Nepal Police
7.	<u>Hilsa</u>	Humla	Yes	Nepal Police
8.	<u>Tinkar</u>	Darchula	Yes	APF & Nepal Police

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal

**Appendix C: EIGHT POTENTIAL NORTH-SOUTH ROAD CORRIDORS IN
NEPAL**

S. No	Transit Road Corridors	Total Length (km)
1.	Mohana- Dhangadi- Atari-Baitadi-Darchula-Tinker	415
2.	Nepalgunj-Surkhet-Jumla-Hilsa-Yari- Purang	581
3.	Bhairahawa-Pokhara-Jomsom-Lizhi	467
4.	Raxual-Trishuli-Rasuwa	265
5.	Birgunj-Naubise-Kathmandu-Tatopani-Nyalam (Already existing)	393
6.	Janakpur-Dolakha-Lamabagar-China border	295
7.	Rani- Itahari – Hile-Kimathanka- China border	419
8.	Kechana-Taplejung-Olangchungola	460

Source: Department of Road, Nepal, 2017

Appendix D: NEPALESE RAIL CORRIDORS IN SAARC REGIONAL MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT

S.No	Road Details	Considerations For Connectivity
1.	Birgunj(Nepal) /Raxual-Kolkata-Haldia (India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nepal and India - Access to Landlocked Nepal to Indian Ports - Potential Corridor for third country and bilateral traffic
2.	Birgunj (Nepal) – Raxual–Katihar (India)- Rohanpur- Chittagong (Bangladesh) with links Jogbani (Nepal) and Agartala (India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nepal-India- Bangladesh - Access to Chittagong port for Indian and Nepali traffic. - Shorter route for north eastern states of India through Bangladesh.

Source: Transport Issues and Integration in South Asia, p.181.

Appendix E: NEPALESE RAILWAY PROJECTS FUNDED BY INDIA

Names of railway links	Estimated cost	Status of the Project
Jogbani (Bihar) – Biratnagar (Nepal) rail link	INR 241 crore (Approximately US\$ 3.5 millions)	Funded in 2010-11 but due to problems in land acquisition on the Nepal side, progress has been delayed.
Jainagar (Bihar) to Bardibas (Nepal) and extension to Bardibas rail link	INR 470 crore (Approximately US\$ 6.7 millions)	Delayed due to land acquisition issues for the past five years. However, work has started on the Bardibas rail track. The previously existing narrow gauge rail link between Jainagar and Janakpur is being renovated into a broad gauge track
Bangladesh – Bhutan -India - Nepal (BBIN) Rail link		Will be a welcome step for Nepal in establishing links and improving connections with its neighbours. This also has a chance to speed up the completion of other unfinished railway projects

Source: Chaudhury, 2017,

Appendix F: DRY PORTS IN NEPAL

Along the Nepal – India Border

S.No.	Dry Port	District	Status of the Port	Funded By
1	Biratnagar	Morang	Operational	Indian Government
2	Birgunj	Parsa	Operational	Indian Government
3	Bhairahawa	Rupandehi	Operational	Indian Government
4	Kakarvitta	Jhapa	Operational	Indian Government

Along the Nepal – China Border

S.No.	Dry Port	District	Status of the Port	Funded By
1	Syafrubensi	Rasuwa	Under Construction	Chinese Government
2	Tatopani	Sindhupalchowk	Under Construction	Chinese Government

Source: Development and operation of dry ports in Nepal,

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/6.7.Nepal_.pdf