The Silk Road Migration Trend: Past & Present

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The fabled Silk Road commenced its activity as a major global mercantile highway around 138 BC. Incipiently, it began as a means for China to export its silk fabric as a high-value commodity to the rest of the world. It was utilized as a trans-Asian trade network linking the Mediterranean region with East Asia, the Chinese silk fabric found its way to ancient Egypt and Europe through the Silk Road travellers and traders. It not only promoted the trade of the Chinese silk fabric, but also facilitated the exchange of other products, artistic culture, and religious practices between the Southeast Asian and Western Civilizations. The exchange was not limited to material commodities but also extended to ideas and people. It also led to blossoming of cosmopolitan cities like Ladakh and Samarkand, which attracted a lot of people, who migrated from the adjacent regions. The migration along the Silk Road serves as a fine example of rudimentary globalization. In contemporary times, the region is beset with multiple problems. Today, there is outward migration from the Silk Road countries due to war, conflict, economic reasons and lack of good governance in the entire region. The findings of Budapest Process Secretariat, which focuses on migration trend of Silk Road countries, are important to mention herewith. For example, migratory movements have been propelled by economic reasons, which include labour migration among the countries in the region. After several decades of protracted refugee situations in the region and with increasing flows of irregular migration from and along the Silk Route, return migration and irregular migration have increasingly become serious issues. Against this background, this paper attempts to analyse various reasons associated with the migration trend - the general economic and political turbulence in Silk Road region and historical faultlines casting an impact on the contemporary scenario.