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CPEC and Regional Connectivity in Pakistan's Tribal Areas: The Road to Prosperity

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Abstract

This research paper emphasizes the benefits of improved connectivity in Pakistan's tribal belt and the impact OF CPEC on economic growth, social development and regional integration. This qualitative study explores the extent to which CPEC improves mobility and infrastructure and can act as a catalyst for long-term economic growth and development in the local communities along CPEC and help to enhance the socio-economic quality of life of the people. Keen focus areas includes job opportunities, access to education and health, enhancing agriculture, manufacturing and services. It further discusses how enhancing trade and people mobility with Afghanistan from Pakistan can be possible through regional connectivity and calls for balanced, equitable and sustainable development of infrastructure. Findings indicate that through CPEC, Pakistan's tribal regions can be uplifted by linking to larger markets and industries, with a stress on inclusive development and environmental sustainability. The paper also points at the potential of tourism, and highlights various possibilities for tourism development in different socio-economic sectors, including those associated with private capital. The study also concludes with recommendations to maximize the gains of CPEC, ensure equitable distribution of resources and promote long term socio economic development in the tribal areas based on these insights.

Keywords: CPEC, Regional Connectivity, Tribal Belt, Socio-Economic Development, Conflict Zone, Competitive Advantages



Introduction

The Pakistan Tribal Belt comprising of erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), has historically been known for its under-development and poor connectivity. Marked by rugged geography and a largely tribal structure, the region has been on the outside of Pakistan's national development approaches for decades (Ahmad, 2019). Traditional governance systems, ingrained tribal traditions, and a long history of weak state presence have characterized the socio-political landscape of the region (Khan & Ali, 2020). Due to these factors along with weak infrastructure and limited economic opportunities, the Tribal Belt has been prone to poverty, illiteracy, and the growth of militancy (Yousef, 2018). In addition, the region's location at the frontier of Afghanistan and the involvement of the frontier in numerous geopolitical conflicts, particularly the post-9/11 era, have sequentially solidified its marginality and volatile (Rizvi & Zaman, 2017). As a result, it has been left orientated, and drained from Pakistan's overall economy, leading to a vicious cycle of deprivation, insecurity, and instability (Shah, 2021). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is now an opportunity of a lifetime to break this cycle. COMCEC, as a trilateral initiative is based on a multi-billion dollar CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), being one of the most salient projects under the ambit of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to build an integrated network of roads, railways, and energy projects linking China's far western Xinjiang with Gwadar Port in Pakistan's southern Balochistan province (Siddique, 2021). Its focus is on expanding trade routes, fostering economic cooperation, and increasing regional connectivity in and out of Asia (Malik, 2020). CPEC is not just another infrastructure program for Pakistan; rather, it is a transformative project and an opportunity to uplift underprivileged areas, with the Tribal Belt in particular benefiting through socio-economic integration and development of inclusive growth (Ali & Iqbal, 2019).

The Tribal Belt is also at a juncture and can gain immensely from the regional connectivity envisaged under CPEC. CPEC can also serve as a flagship catalyst to connect the tribal areas to urban and economic centers within and outside of Pakistan because of the big infrastructure projects intended in the KP province and its adjacent tribal districts. (Khan, 2022) The planned roads and railways will connect the Tribal Belt to other regions of Pakistan, improving access to services and markets, and providing opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs (Ahmed, 2019). In addition, there is a prospect of job creation, skills development and better livelihoods through CPEC-related development in a region with a heavy reliance on informal and subsistence economies (Zafar, 2020). Apart from the economic prospectus, the geopolitical and strategic importance of CPEC in the Tribal Belt cannot be ignored. CPEC can be a stabilizing force by integrating the region into national and international trade routes while luring the local populace away from non-state elements and militancy by providing them with tangible economic alternatives (Bashir, 2021). Like the provision of modern education and healthcare facilities, the construction of energy projects can result in significant, long-term improvements in the quality of life, addressing longstanding complaints about infrastructure deficits and neglect at the hands of the central government (Hassan & Malik, 2021).



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Problem Statement

Pakistan's tribal region, known for its limited infrastructure, education and lack of industrialization, remains underdeveloped. Moreover, the most serious problems including terrorism and extremism are also deeply entrenched. These regions lie next to the Afghanistan border but have not been able to achieve their socio-economic potential. While CPEC provides a potential avenue for strengthening regional ties by developing infrastructure and trade networks across the region, the potential of CPEC to provide sustainable and inclusive socio-economic dividends to the tribal belts is yet to be fully explored. The purpose of this study is to analyze the potentials of CPEC to serve as a catalyst for social development avenues through connectivity in the region including job creation, economic growth, and access to essential services by transparent planning and community approach for equitable benefits through sustainable social development goals persisted in CPEC projects.

Research Objective

To analyzed the impact of CEPC on the enhancement of Regional Connectivity within Pakistan and its tribal belt ex FATA.

Significance of the Study

The study provides value regarding policy for future projects, community input and engagement, economic development and regional collaboration. This paper provides policymakers with insights into the socio-economic benefits that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor can hold for further regional connectivity and identifying strategies promoting sustainable development in tribal areas. The research underscores the importance of equitable and inclusive development by advocating for the active involvement of local communities in the planning of local projects. It suggested benefits of better infrastructure in induces industries, provides jobs, and grants access to basic needs, thereby creating socio-economic mobility. The results also tentatively suggest enhanced trade linkages with Afghanistan and thus regional stability. Moreover, the study emphasizes environmental sustainability, contributing to the broader dialogue on responsible development within conflict-affected areas and paving the way for future research within similar context.

Literature Review

CPEC Scope

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the main initiative of China under Belt and Road Initiative enhancing trade route, economic cooperation and regional connectivity. Covering more than 3,000 kilometers, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan province to the Xinjiang region of China, making it a strategic trade route linking the Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia (Siddique, 2021). However, the extent to which these agreements would be implemented depended on the relations between the two nations as well as the approval of local authorities (Malik, 2020). Pakistan looks forward to addressing similar problems towards the completion of CPEC as the project is expected to bring massive economic dividends through infrastructure development, energy security and foreign investments. According



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to estimates, upon completion, CPEC will raise GDP growth in Pakistan by as much as 2.5% per year, giving a substantial lift to sectors such as transport, logistics, and energy (Ahmad, 2019). Moreover, it is anticipated that it would create jobs in both the direct construction of the corridor and building Special Economic Zones along the corridor (Ali & Iqbal, 2019).

Geographical Dynamics

CPEC's economic dynamics are thus a paradox for Pakistan. The corridor also cuts through some of Pakistan's most deprived and traditionally neglected areas including Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the so-called tribal areas (Yousef, 2018). These areas have had rugged terrain, low population density, and limited state presence, which have obstructed their socio-economic growth over the decades (Khan & Ali, 2020). These regions become part of a national and international trade chain that could upgrade local economies and tackle history-based problems like poverty and underdevelopment (Ahmed, 2019). CPEC is of huge strategic worth from geopolitics point of view. Through Gwadar Port, it gives China direct access to the Arabian Sea, minimizes its reliance on the Malacca Strait for oil imports, and promotes accelerated trade routes with Europe and Africa (Shah, 2021). For Pakistan, CPEC is a mode for cementing its role as a key player in regional connectivity from South Asia to Central Asia and the Middle East (Rizvi & Zaman, 2017). CPEC passes through Pakistan's northwestern regions, the region of focus unnecessary, very close to contested zones such as Afghanistan, and also poses a strategic security challenge. But according to those in favor of CPEC, the economic upliftment it is bringing with it can act as a unifying stabilizer in the stated regions, where the alternative is terrorism and militancy (Bashir, 2021). Additionally, the geographic location of CPEC enhances the regional power of Pakistan and enables it to collaborate with various global powers as well as China, Russia and the Central Asian states. This may cause regional power structures to realign by providing alternative trade routes that circumvent traditional strategic points (Malik, 2020). Similarly, energy projects undertaken as part of CPEC include initiatives to alleviate Pakistan's perennial energy shortages, with multiple power plants already active in advancing the nation's energy capacity (Zafar, 2020).

Opportunity for Pakistan

With a collaboration of two brotherly countries, the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor is going to bring revolution in the socio-economic development of Pakistan's tribal belt, which has been filled with deprivation since its inception. Scholars have discussed the potential opportunities emerging from CPEC, including regarding regional connectivity and economic uplift, in detail. The infrastructure development is one of the major opportunities CPEC presents. According to Ahmad and Khan (2020), the development of highways and railways in the tribal areas will help reduce the distance to markets and cities, thus promoting trade and economic integration. In addition, such infrastructural investment will act as a catalyst in these areas, making it possible for local businesses to access wider markets and hence become economically viable (Bashir & Malik, 2021).



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Special Economic Zones

Abundant land and the establishment of Special Economic Zones along CPEC provide a unique prospect for industries across tribal belt as well. According to Ali and Iqbal (2021) pose, these favored territories are capable of attracting foreign sponsored investment, inducing job creation and nurturing local entrepreneurship. These SEZs will be well- positioned to thrive by being in proximity to major trade routes and by giving a much-needed kick start to economic activities that could pull the local population out of poverty. According to Zafar (2021), the CPEC will boost the economy, as it will create job opportunities that will stabilize the region eventually. Moreover, CPEC is anticipated to benefit energy availability in tribal regions through infrastructure and economic growth. As highlighted construction of energy projects under CPEC, including power plants and renewable energy initiatives will help alleviate chronic energy shortages that have stunted development. Reliable electricity supply is significant for industrialization and as well as comprehensive improvement in the quality of life, as local communities can be engaged in productive economic activities (Hassan et al., 2021).

Human Resources & Employment Generation

This is another important aspect of the human resource development potential being created by the CPEC initiative. According to Bashir (2021), the training programs which are not just limited to engineering are essential especially for employment in construction and service industries that are growing due to CPEC. Therefore, CPEC should be seen as an investment in human capital and a focus on the local youth can equip them with alternative prospects of prosperity that can ward off extremism and militancy from society (Rizvi & Zaman, 2020). From a geopolitical perspective, it is hoped that CPEC emerges as a stabilizing force in the tribal belt, through facilitating economic development and by diminishing the attractiveness of non-state actors. According to Ali and Khan (2021), economic upliftment with CPEC can help in removing the underlying causes of militancy as localities become implicated with economic activities which are herb forth considered euphemized. Integrating the tribal areas into the national and regional economies can foster stability and security in what has historically been a volatile region (Malik, 2021).

Research Methodology

Research Design

This paper employs an interpretivist research perspective, emphasizing the importance of understanding the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences to grasp the complexity of social processes. An abductive perspective is adopted, whereby theory and empirical insight co-produce each other through their engagement. The study also adopts qualitative research methods to generate in-depth, nuanced data that illustrates participants' inhabited experiences and attitudes towards the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the tribal belt. It is crucial that such an approach build mistrust among participants, it also directly inform regional connectivity and socio-economic development in the tribal areas in Pakistan.



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Population of the Study

This cross-section of the population involves different groups associated with CPEC and the tribal regions ensuring a holistic perspective on the interplay of factors at work. These are law enforcement agencies including the Pakistan Armed Forces, District Police, Frontier Constabulary, and Pakistan Rangers in the provision of security for the tribal regions and CPEC projects. The study also comprises government officials, chief executive officers (CEOs) of joint Chinese-Pakistani firms, representatives of provincial governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, bankers and ministry officials from different sectors. Lastly, tribal Maliks and local people in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are also represented, with 15 respondents selected from each tribal agency (Wazir, Dawars, Utmanzai, Mehsud, Tarkani, Shinwari, Afridi, Mulagori, Mohmand, and Orakzai). This wide-ranging demographic enhances the research by ensuring that it takes into account a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Source of Data

The data collection methods were primary data methods that provide information from original sources like interviews, focus groups, and surveys. For this qualitative study, the researcher employed the interview method since it could help in exploring various dimensions of the subject matter in optimizing the competitive advantage of CPEC for Pakistan's tribal regions.

Data Collection Procedure & Data Analysis Technique

Respondents were contacted using a snowball sampling method, where initial respondents recommended other respondents to the researcher to achieve saturation within the population. Interviews involved personal visits to the Pakistan tribal belt, making the interaction with participants direct and engaging. Respondents were fully informed about interview questions during the interviews, leading to rich conversation about their experience and the barriers they face. For data analysis, thematic analysis techniques were utilized, whereby interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to derive common themes that emerged with respect to Pakistan's tribal areas in particular.

Results & Discussions

Overview

This chapter describes tabulation of interview data collected from Group 1 (Law enforcement on CPEC and tribal area security), Group 2 (Government department officials, CEOs of joint Chinese-Pakistani firms and investors), and Group 3 (Tribal Maliks and FATA residents). Data were collected from 15 x participants in each group. Responses of subjects during the interviews from this investigation were transcribed and reported verbatim for each statement as follows:

Statement 1: Can enhanced mobility and reduced travel times along the corridor increase the social impact in Pakistan's tribal areas by making urban nodes more attractive for manufacturing, agriculture, value addition, and service industries?

For the above-mentioned statement, all the 45 participants of the study replied in



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affirmation that *“the CPEC project has the potential to provide a substantial economic and social boost to Pakistan’s tribal regions through improved regional connectivity. The project will make urban nodes along the corridor attractive sites for a diverse range of industries like manufacturing, agriculture, value addition and service sectors by shortening travel times and improving mobility”*. G1-R1 went on to add that *“this enhanced connectivity may have a positive effect on the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan’s tribal regions”*. In other words, it could lead to the creation of new job opportunities, particularly in emerging or low-income regions. And in addition, improved access to primary services such as health, education, and other basic needs can make the lives of local inhabitants there significantly better”. G2-R36 said *“the social effects of enhanced connectivity will heavily depend on the distribution of benefits from CPEC project among the different segments of society.”* Thus it is essential that steps are taken to ensure that people from stereotypes in the tribal belt are not left behind and benefits of the project are shared equally. Moreover, it is essential to ensure that the project is carried out from the point of view of environmentally sustainable development and local communities are notified and involved in the decision-making process”. According to G3-R33, *“a greater demand for workers would reflect the needs of new companies emerging along CPEC and the growth of existing industries along the CPEC corridor. Members of the tribal communities who have been previously unemployed or underemployed may now find new employment opportunities and because of this improved mobility it can help to increase access to healthcare facilities and services in remote places of tribal regions. The CPEC project can enhance access to education by enabling student mobility, building more schools and colleges, and making vocational training opportunities available.”*

Statement 2: How do you think enhancing regional connectivity encompassing roads, railways, energy lines, communication networks and people-to-people links can activate economic growth and trade in Pakistan’s tribal areas and in other provinces?

For the above statement, all the 45 participants of study agreed *“that regional connectivity like road, train, energy, communication, aerial, and people-to-people links within the Pakistan’s tribal regions and other provinces emerged as a potential for economic growth and trade”*. G3-R32 said, *“Besides strengthening regional connectivity a key consideration is to give local populations in tribal areas topmost priority. It requires ensuring that local opinion is sought in the planning and execution of infrastructure projects, and that local traditions, customs and environmental issues are taken into account. Boosting the capacity of regional businesses and tribal enterprises and entrepreneurs is central to securing the benefits of improved connectivity; this involves fostering ties with firms in different parts of Pakistan and abroad, access to training, technology, and financing”*. *“Regional connectivity can only be achieved in its fullest sense through cooperation amongst different regions of Pakistan and with neighboring countries.”* G1-R3 said that *“regional connection improvements must be sustainable and consider long-term impacts of the infrastructure on environmental, social and economic aspects. Building trust and collaboration is vital to building close-knit networks and joint organizations and*



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infrastructures.” G3-R42 said, “To ensure that the benefits of enhanced connectivity are distributed equitably, it is essential to promote transparency and accountability in the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects.”

Statement 3: Do you think, the development of the transit sector in the tribal areas of Pakistan under the Urban Mobility Section of CPEC is going to accelerate the growth of the economy of the country?

All the 45 respondents of the study agreed that *“transportation accessibility through highways, public transport, and infrastructure can help connect different regions and develop the local economy in tribal communities. New infrastructure can also create jobs and open doors for local businesses”*. G2-R23 stated that, *“enhancing mobility will also assist with trade among different places, within Pakistan and with neighboring countries. This could lead to increased economic growth and job creation, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and services.”* G3-R35 stated that *“development of urban nodes along transportation corridors can contribute to stimulating economic growth. These nodes can become centers of economic activity, attracting businesses and entrepreneurs and creating jobs. But it is important to ensure that these urban nodes are built equitably and sustainably with the needs and interests of surrounding communities in mind”*. G2-R36 stated that *“transit infrastructure creation can also have adverse ecosystem impacts, such as increased pollution and habitat fragmentation. In tribal areas, transportation infrastructure can enhance access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets. It may improve the standard of living in the neighborhood and create opportunities for economic development”*. G1-R7 stated that, *“Improved mobility can also help businesses and consumers save money on transportation costs, which can make goods and services more affordable and accessible. Building transit infrastructure in tribal communities can drive economic development that encourages travel and hospitality and tourism sectors. It can generate income and job possibilities” that benefit local communities.”* G2-R21 stated that *“Tribal connectivity and improving transit infrastructure, especially in the remote tribal areas, can be key to their integration with regional economy, especially with the neighboring countries like China and Afghanistan, which will help in expanding commerce and economic growth opportunities”*.

Statement 4: Will CPEC projects in the tribal areas boost trade ties with neighboring countries, especially the Afghanistan?

All 45 participants of the study agreed the *“Regional connection created by CPEC projects in tribal areas may enhance trade ties with other nations, especially Afghanistan”*. G1-R8 stated that *“the improvement of trade relations can be achieved through enabling the flow of people and goods between countries through construction of roads, trains and communication networks. Better connectivity makes it easier to transport goods to and from Afghanistan, which will increase trade”*. G3-R34 said *“the expansion of CPEC projects in tribal areas can also open new avenues of regional trade. The upgraded infrastructure can also enable businesses in Pakistan and Afghanistan to access each other’s*



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markets more easily. Growing economic integration and cooperation between the two countries.” “Security issues have continued to remain a major obstacle in trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan”. G1-R5 stated that “CPEC projects launched in tribal regions can offer to alleviate these problems by creating economic opportunities and increasing local security. Consequently, the trade relations may enhance and mutual confidence and cooperation may increase between the two countries”. "G2-R30 stated that, "Better connectivity also enables people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and Afghanistan which can help increase cultural exchanges and build a deeper understanding between the two nations. This should help to strengthen trade ties by fostering a more hospitable environment for cross- border trade. Pakistan and Afghanistan are “logical commerce centers” by virtue of their geographic importance at the intersection of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.” G3- R45 stated that “Pakistan can capitalize on its strategic position and deepen economic links with Afghanistan and other neighboring countries by developing the CPEC projects in the tribal areas. Furthermore, enhanced connectivity will also help in bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.” G3-R45 stated that “the bilateral trade now relies heavily on a limited number of commodities, such as fruits and vegetables. Improved infrastructure allows firms to experiment with new markets, and to exchange new products, to diversify trade. The establishment of CPEC projects within tribal areas may also create new job opportunities, particularly in the transportation and logistics sectors. This can help to build the economy and alleviate poverty, especially in areas with higher unemployment rates”.

Statement 5: Do you think the upcoming regional connectivity projects in Pakistan tribal areas will give boost to tourism in the region?

In response to this statement all the 45 respondents of the study agreed that “regional linkages in Pakistan's tribal regions have the potential to strengthen the local tourism sector. With improved road, rail and aviation infrastructure, the tribal lands could be more accessible to domestic and foreign tourists. This could lead to an increase in tourism to the area, which could support the growth of tourism-focused companies and services such as lodging, dining and travel companies”. G3-R42 stated that “the most attraction of tourists can be the tribal regions of Pakistan which has a lot of cultural and historical value. Similarly, connectivity will make it easier for tourists to visit significant historical and cultural sites”. G1-R10 stated that “to attract more tourists, the need to promote the unique cultural and historical heritage of the tribal areas of Pakistan, it can achieve by building visitor-friendly infrastructure such as museums, tourist attractions, information centers, and by promoting regional celebrations and events.” G2-R29 said “Tourism-linked facilities like hotels, restaurants, and transport infrastructure need to be built in order to stimulate tourism development. Therefore, it is advisable to promote sustainable tourism practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of the industry. These include developments in eco-tourism and ethical travel practices as well as the protection of the environment and places of cultural value in tribal regions of Pakistan.” G3-R41 stated that “the government can galvanize the private sector to invest in the tourism sector. This can be achieved by developing attractive



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investment packages, providing tax break-offs, and simplifying the investment process". G1-R2 stated that "a trained workforce is required to grow tourism businesses and services. Investing in vocational and skills training programs will help local communities gain the necessary capabilities. Tourism at home could be a big money earner for the region. It is necessary to promote tourism in the local area by arranging events and festivals, promoting local food, and developing travel packages that meet local needs. The natural and cultural legacy of Pakistan's tribal regions is a precious resource that must be maintained". G3-R44 stated that "Local communities can play a significant role in the development of tourism in the region. Local communities should be included in the planning and decision-making and they need to benefit from the development of the sector."

Recommendations

1. Enhanced connectivity for improved social development in Pakistan's tribal regions.
 - a. Equitable Distribution of Benefits: In order to maximize the social impact of improved connectivity, it needs to be ensured that the CPEC project is beneficially meaningful to all and there should be equitable distribution of benefits. Through this, not only tribal organizations and local community members are involved in the decision-making process, but the benefits of the project can also be extended to marginalized groups in tribal areas.
 - b. Infrastructure Development: Though CPEC project is likely to result in the much- required infrastructure development, ideally, the expected infrastructure in the Pakistani tribal areas should be sustainable and meet local needs. Roads and bridges, should be resilient to the extreme weather events that are often experienced in the tribal areas, while energy projects should be implemented with environmental sustainability prospects.
 - c. Job Generation: New job opportunities should be generated in the tribal areas to enhance the social impact of the CPEC project. This can accomplish by promoting investments in sectors with potential for high job creation such as agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors. Furthermore, also creating vocational training programs to train the locals for these industries.
 - d. Education and Healthcare: The CPEC project can enhance education and healthcare emphasis in different tribal areas of Pakistan. This requires new schools and healthcare facilities, and investments in transportation infrastructure, to ensure people can access them.
2. Boosting economic progress and trade through regional connectivity in Pakistan with CPEC projects.
 - a. Road and Rail connectivity: The movement of goods and people to different parts of the country can be significantly improved by the use of road and rail connectivity. This can be achieved by building new highways and railways, upgrading existing infrastructure, and creating new linkages between different regions. This will not only reduce the transportation costs but also facilitate the movement of goods and people, thus increasing



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- economic activity and trade.
- b. **Energy Lines:** The importance and necessity of modern energy infrastructure renovation, include smart power plants, frequent transmission and energy loss lines. The untapped energy potential of Pakistan's tribal areas and other provinces can also be utilized to enhance energy supply and cut down energy costs. The government can create public policies that help and to motivate private investors in the sector.
 - c. **Communication Network:** In the current era, for economic development, communication networks are very important. Fixed-line broadband connection, mobile networks, and other telecommunication infrastructure can increase access to information, transaction costs, and facilitate remote work and e-commerce. The government can invest in building communication infrastructure in remote areas and also provide incentives for private investment in this sector.
 - d. **Air Connectivity:** Enhanced air connectivity can improve transportation and logistics, thus boosting economic activity and trade. The government can construct new airports and improve the functionality of old airports. They can also provide a catalyst to increase private investment in airlines and airports adding to connectivity and competition.
 - e. **People-to-People Linkages:** Ultimately, people-to-people linkages from both sides are essential for the future of economy and trade. The government can channel resources into cultural and educational exchanges, language training programs, and other initiatives that foster cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. This encourages the flow of people, ideas, and expertise, which drives further economic exchange and trade.
- 3. Importance of transit sector as potential economic growth in tribal areas of Pakistan as part of urban mobility under CPEC.**
- a. **Sustainable and Equitable Development.** The growth of transit infrastructure in tribal areas must follow the principle of sustainable and equitable development, taking into account the interests of local people and the ecosystem. Engaging local communities in the planning and decision-making process, and embracing sustainable technologies and practices, allows for this goal to be accomplished.
 - b. **Build Capacity for Maintenance and Operation:** Development of transit infrastructure in tribal areas should be accompanied with efforts to build local capacity for maintenance and operation. It can encourage long-term sustainability and durability of infrastructure, as well as the creation of new job opportunities for the local population.
 - c. **Integration with Regional and National Networks:** Investment in tribal transit infrastructure should connect into broader regional and national networks. That makes the travel of goods and people more convenient, and trade and economic growth.
 - d. **Local Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Development of transit infrastructure in tribal areas can generate opportunities for local entrepreneurship and innovation. We need to empower the local businesses, entrepreneurs, and innovation in transport, logistics, and



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- supply chain management.
- e. **Transparency and Accountability:** Projects in tribal areas must reverence the rights and livelihoods of tribal communities, ensuring that transit infrastructure either does not displace nor on the compensation and consideration of tribal rights. This can help in ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively, and that the benefits of infrastructure development are equitably distributed among all stakeholders.
4. **Importance of regional connectivity in improving economic ties with neighboring countries.**
 - a. **Security Concerns:** Security situation in tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan is a great concern for trade and investment. Due importance should be given to enhance the security landscape in order to attract foreign companies and private investment. Greater cooperation, will be only be possible through joint efforts in areas like border management, intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism between the two countries.
 - b. **Better Governance:** Good governance attracts investment and promotes trade. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance business climate by streamlining procedures, cut red-tape, predictability and accountability in decision-making.
 - c. **Encourage Regional Integration:** Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has enormous potential, which can be unlocked with regional integration. Non-tariff barriers should be eliminated, rules and standards harmonized, and cross-border movement of people and goods made easy. This can be done through regional trade agreements as well as transport and energy infrastructure development.
 - d. **Value Addition:** New avenues should be opened here by making value added goods which will help in diversifying trade. This is possible through the growth of manufacturing and processing industries and the encouragement of entrepreneurship and innovation.
 - e. **Promote Social Sustainability:** CPEC project development should be socially and environmentally sustainable. It must be ensured that the fruits of improved connectivity reach everyone while preserving the region's natural resources and cultural heritage.
 5. **Roadmap for tourism development in Pakistan's tribal area.**
 - a. **Tourism Infrastructure:** The government needs to invest in setting up tourism infrastructure like hotels, restaurants, transport facilities and tourist attractions in the tribal areas. This will attract additional tourists as well as assist in job creation in the area.
 - b. **Cultural Tourism:** Pakistan's tribal areas are culturally and historically influential. With the region rich in its traditional arts, crafts, music, and dance, will help to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the tribal areas.
 - c. **Safety and Security:** Safety and security are major considerations for tourists when selecting a tourist destination. Government must provide full proof security arrangements and maintain law and order situation to



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- ensure safety and well-being of tourists in tribal areas.
- d. **Ecotourism:** Pakistan's tribal areas are rich in flora and fauna and have some of the most beautiful places in the country. The government can encourage ecotourism by supporting responsible tourism and conserving the ecosystem.
 - e. **Private Sector Investment:** The government can attract private sector investment in the hospitality sector in the tribal areas through incentives and enabling environment.
 - f. **Tourism through Marketing and Branding:** The government can encourage the tourism industry in the tribal areas by developing a strong brand image and marketing the area as a unique and attractive tourist destination.

Conclusion

The importance of regional connectivity and the transformative potential of CPEC in the tribal areas of Pakistan, can elevate these historically less developed areas through the augmentation of travel time, infrastructure, and access to essential social services like healthcare and education. They have the potential to spur the growth of manufacturing, agriculture and services, thereby providing jobs and improving the quality of life of tribal people. Importantly, other regions will also be linked to Afghanistan, leading to enhanced trade which in turn will spur mutual economic benefits which can transform into greater regional integration. Further, the development of transportation transit systems will foster growth in tourism both cultural and eco-tourism bringing in much-needed revenue to the region. The study emphasizes the need for equitable and inclusive development to capture these benefits fully. All of these socio-economic measures require transparent planning, active involvement from local communities, and environmental sustainability in order to ensure that upliftment is widespread and sustainable. With effective management, CPEC could be instrumental for economic springs and ensure long-term peace and stability in Pakhtunkhwa and tribal belts of Pakistan to make them forerunners in the game of regional development.

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