



## Connectivity of CPEC with Afghanistan and its Implications for the Region

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### Abstract:

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which would span a distance of 2700 km and link the Chinese city of Kashgar with Pakistan's deep-sea port of Gwadar in Baluchistan, bordering Afghanistan, is the centerpiece project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Due to its political, economic, and security interests in Afghanistan, China has a great interest to connect CPEC with Afghanistan. The regional states will have great economic opportunities in this connectivity. CPEC project is a blessing for the whole region especially for landlocked central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Furthermore, it will promote regional integration, which will increase trade and economic activity within the region. This study tries to examine CPEC's connectivity with Afghanistan and its implications for the area while keeping in mind how significant it is. In this study, both descriptive and analytical approaches have been used. The current study is qualitative in nature and secondary sources have been used for the completion of this research paper. This study came to the conclusion that CPEC's link with Afghanistan is crucial and will support the local economy.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, CPEC, economic development, connectivity, region, industrial development

### INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in southern Central Asia which share border with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, and Pakistan. The western and northern borders are shared with Iran. Afghanistan had a significant role in the historical Silk Road, which connected Asia, Africa, and Europe through trade, culture, and religion. The ancient Chinese civilization's economy and culture benefited greatly from the Silk Road. When sea routes were discovered, this road's significance diminished. But in order to boost the region's economy, China now wants to reopen the Silk Road. In the process China announced Belt and Road initiative in 2013.

BRI is a comprehensive initiative for the economic growth, trade and industrialization of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Nearly 4.4 billion people will be impacted by BRI globally. In the project, 4-8 trillion dollars are being invested by China in BRI (Business and Outlook, 2018). The purpose of this massive initiative is to economically link sixty-three (63) countries. The China-Mongolia-Russia

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Economic Corridor, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, the China-Indo-China Peninsular Economic Corridor (CIPEC), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (B-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor), and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor are six of the economic corridors that make up the BRI. All of these corridors are crucial for the growth of China's economy as well as the entire region, but because of its geostrategic and economic significance, China places a greater emphasis on the CPEC project and views it as the core of the BRI initiative (Hali, 2017).

Main interest of China in the project is to connect South Asia, Africa, and Central Asia on a regional scale on the bases of win-win situation. CPEC would advance not just the economic interests of Pakistan, China, and Iran but also those of Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries, which are landlocked. China intends to connect CPEC with the central and western BRI project routes via Afghanistan in order to economically interconnect the whole region (Masood et al., 2016). There are several projects that can connect CPEC with Afghanistan. Among these projects, most significant are the 265-kilometer Peshawar-Kabul motorway, the Peshawar-Kabul railroad, the Chaman-Spin Buldak railroad, the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor (KPEC), and the Gwadar-Termez motorway. For the economic stability of China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other regional countries, a railway track will be built between Torkham and Jalalabad (Abrar, 2019).

CPEC project is a blessing for the whole region especially for landlocked central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Furthermore, it will promote regional integration, which will increase trade and economic activity within the region. This study tries to examine CPEC's connectivity with Afghanistan and its implications for the region while keeping in mind how significant it is. In this study, both descriptive and analytical approaches have been used.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The social and political growth of a state is significantly influenced by its geographic location. Some states play a significant role in world affairs based on their geographical location. While Pakistan is possessing crucial geostrategic and geo-economic location. Although Pakistan's topography is a blessing and offers tangible advantages, it also frequently creates problems for Pakistan. Pakistan is a gateway for Afghanistan and especially for Central Asian Republics (CARs), which are landlocked states. Pakistan has suffered as a result of the geostrategic consequences of the game of power and the war against terrorism. However, the situation is gradually shifting, and Pakistan is taking advantage of its strategic location. The "Radcliffe line" separates Pakistan from India, the second-largest economy in Asia; the "Durand line" from Afghanistan, which separates Pakistan from the Central Asian states with the richest natural resources on the Whakhan strip; and the "Goldsmith line" from Iran, a country with an 800-kilometer oil-rich border. The Arabian Sea and Pakistan's significant southern border are contiguous. Pakistan serves as the geographic intersection between west Asia, south Asia, and central Asia (Gul, n.d.). Due to its geostrategic geo-economics location, Pakistan has the potential to connect South Asia with energy-rich Central Asia. Pakistan's geostrategic position allows for regional connections within the area. The wealthy states of central Asia have excess energy resources that they wish to sell to the rest of the world. During this process, Central Asian states have two options for getting access to regional markets: through Iran and Afghanistan via Pakistan's Gwadar deep sea port and Iran's Chabahar port. Central Asian

countries do not choose to conduct business through Chabahar due to Western sanctions on Iran; hence, Pakistan (Gwadar port) is their best option (Saad, 2018).

On the other hand, China can use Pakistan's Gwadar deep-sea port, through which China will easily get access to the essential markets of South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, and the warm water of the Arabian Sea (Kamal and Malik, 2017). The existing China's trade route is through South China Sea and Strait Malacca, where Indian and American warships keep a presence and can create problems for Chinese shipments between China, Africa, and the Middle East, while this route is also costly and dangerous for China's shipments. While using Pakistan's land to travel to the Middle East, Africa, and beyond can reduce the distance from 10,000 to 2,500 km. As a result, China can access these significant markets through Pakistan by taking advantage of Afghanistan's important geostrategic location (Khalid, 2009).

After completion of CPEC project, it will be able to connect 3 billion people of the regional states, which would lead to economic growth and prosperity. It will also enable landlocked Afghanistan to establish profitable operations in the Indian Ocean which is the core interest of Afghanistan. (Khan, 2019). CPEC connectivity with Afghanistan will ensure regional trade openness, counterterrorism and extremism, regional connectivity, regional integration, cultural interaction, and so on (Huasheng, 2016).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The current study is qualitative in nature and secondary sources have been used for the completion of this research paper. The available books, articles, research reports either in print or electronic form have been utilized to accomplish this study. Thematic analysis method has been used to scrutinized the date, generate patters, and draw the conclusions.

## **CPEC AND ITS CONNECTIVITY TO AFGHANISTAN**

Afghanistan is located at a significant geostrategic and geo-economic point in the region. It has the potential to become a transit and cross-route between East Asia, West Asia, South Asia, and North Asia. During the old Silk Road era, Afghanistan was an important part of the route that connected South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, China, and Europe. Afghanistan is once again becoming the heart of Asia through CPEC while connecting the region to restore its prior position as a regional trade and commercial hub, which it enjoyed under the Old Silk Road. BRI is the new version of Old Silk Road and Afghanistan is ready to fully engage in the BRI. Basically, the BRI supports economic and infrastructural development in its member states. Afghanistan, as a war-torn economy, must play an active role in the BRI project for its own and the region's economic development (Cowan, 2018).

CPEC is the best option for Afghanistan to take an active part in the BRI project, which is considered the most important part of BRI. CPEC can be connected with Afghanistan on different points, including the following:

### **Gwadar-Termez Motorway**

CPEC can be connected to Afghanistan on several points. The Gwadar-Termez Motorway is one of the key routes connecting Afghanistan's province Termez with Gwadar which is the backbone of CPEC project. The Gwadar deep-sea port keeps importance for energy-producing countries in the

area, including Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and others. As the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said, "The Gwadar-Termez road links Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, with the Gwadar deep-sea port. The Gwadar-Termez Motorway begins in Gwadar and travels to Chaman before continuing on to Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, and finally Termez and the central Asian republics ("Routes to Central Asia", 2015).

### **Khyber Pass Economic Corridor**

The Pakistan National Highway Authority (NHA) planned to enhance the transportation program to connect CPEC with Afghanistan via two border crossing sites at the Chaman border and the Torkham border. These networking initiatives would improve relations with Afghanistan and other countries. This strategy still places a lot of emphasis on the Khyber Pass economic corridor. The Peshawar-Kabul motorway, which would connect Peshawar, the capital of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), with Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, is 281 kilometers long. The Gateway to Central Asian States is the name of this expressway.

There are three parts of the Khyber Pass economic corridor which are following:

- Peshawar-Torkham Motorway 50 km
- Torkham-Jalalabad Motorway (76 km)
- Jalalabad-Kabul Motorway, 155 km

**Section 1:** Starting from the ring road, this is close to Hayatabad town and extends for a total of 50 kilometers.

**Section 2:** This section's development is still ongoing. This stretch, from Torkham to Jalalabad, is anticipated to traverse a total distance of around 76 kilometers. Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan would be facilitated by the development of this segment.

**Section 3:** This stretch travels 155 kilometers before arriving at Kabul, the Afghan capital city, which it links to via the Laghman Valley. To help the local market, a variety of secondary and connection expressway, including bypasses, will be built along the sides of the superhighway. By June 2024, the 50-kilometer, 4-lane motorway connecting Torkham and Peshawar will be completed.

### **Peshawar-Kabal Railway Track**

The Main Line 1 (ML-1) railway track from Peshawar to Karachi will be built as part of the CPEC project, and new railway lines will be built throughout the country which will boost trade and economic activity. An important part of the Main Line 1 (ML-1) railway track, which will be extended from Peshawar to Torkham Pakistan-Afghan border, then to Kabul, and finally to Mazar-e-Sharif, which is known as Peshawar-Kabul railway line. Central Asian republics will be connected to the Peshawar-Kabul railway network which will play vital role in boosting the regional trade and economic activity (Abrar, 2019).

### **Chaman-Spin Buldak Railway Track**

The Chaman-Spin Buldak railway line is an important point and gateway between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In order to improve bilateral trade, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in July 2010 to build a 12 km railway track between Chaman and Spin

Buldak. The Chaman-spin Buldak railway route would stretch towards central Asian republics in the context of regional connectivity (Ahmad, 2016).

### **Implications for the Region**

Twenty-first century is the century of cooperation and collaboration which ensures interdependency of interests. Regional collaboration, mutual developmental projects and economic cooperation become more important as a result of globalization and regionalism. These changes have increased the world's interdependency in terms of bilateral trade and regional trade. The region, as well as the rest of the world can get benefits from the economic integration of the regional states. But unfortunately there is a lack of regional integration in South Asia. Regional trade between the regional states takes place for only 23 billion dollars which makes only about 5percent of the regional GDP (gross domestic product). Due to a lack of regional trade, South Asian nations are less developed and experiencing poor economic growth. Economic development of every state depends upon the regional integration and regional development. So China's aim of dominating the global economy would remain a fantasy without regional cooperation and integration. Therefore, China is serious about the economic situation in Pakistan especially about Afghanistan ("Regional Trade and Connectivity," 2022; Javaid, & Javaid, 2016).

The significant project of BRI, CPEC will change geopolitical and geo-economic environment of Asia's and regional and extra-regional players will get benefits from this important project which will ensure economic prosperity in the region because this project has potential to promote socio-cultural connectivity, boost trade, technical collaboration and will generate new trade opportunities in the context of regional connectivity and integration (But & But, 2015).

### **Economic Implications for the Region**

Being the centerpiece of BRI, CPEC is crucial for the regional states in the following ways:

#### ***Growth in Trade Activities***

Trade liberalization and open market concept, ensures economic prosperity and development. Economically developed states have embraced trade openness or liberalization in an effort to foster progress and sustainable economic growth. The CPEC project can provide opportunities for China, Pakistan, and the CAs states especially for Afghanistan to boost their trade relations with the rest of the region. This project is called a "game changer" for Pakistan-China and for the rest of the region. This project deals with the phenomenon of economic interdependence and integration in the region (Jaleel, Talha, & Shah, 2019; Rabbi, 2017). Central Asian states have enormous energy reserves, whereas South Asian states are passing through energy crises to meet their demands for their massive industries (Khetran, 2019). Pakistan has always desired access to the sizable markets of central Asia. Pakistan aspires to develop a favorable climate for trade between Pakistan and the Central Asian republics to increase bilateral trade with those countries. In 2018, a group from Central Asian nations visited Pakistan to attend a conference about bilateral trade. Both parties provided ideas at the conference for enhancing trade ties between Central Asian countries (Altaf, 2018).

Along the historic Silk Road, Central Asian countries and India had a common economic interests. This routes were used for the transportation of goods, people, and ideas. But unfortunately these

two region were cut off from one another once the old Silk Road was abandoned. But now these two regions have the opportunity to reconnect with each other through CPEC project in the process of CPEC's connectivity with Afghanistan and beyond (Rajiv & Menon, 2019).

The CPEC project would increase trade between India and Central Asian republics by providing access of CARs to Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. Currently, 851.9\$ million dollars bilateral trade exchanged between India and Central Asian countries. With a total trade volume of US 328.14 million dollars, Uzbekistan is India's largest trade partner in Central Asia. Trade between India and Turkmenistan comes in second at US 66.27 million dollars, followed by trade with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan at 32.60 million dollars each (Stobdan, 2015).

Huge amounts of hydroelectric energy produced in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, but they require markets to export those extra energies. They will lose a lot of money if they cannot find markets for the export of power. Through Afghanistan, CPEC enables Central Asian states to sell extra electricity to South Asian countries that are facing energy crises. On the other hand, China, as the world's economic power, requires a large amount of energy for its industries. As a result, China expects CPEC to improve its energy partnership with regional states, particularly CARs, in order to meet its energy needs. Along with this, other regional countries will have opportunities to get access to the markets of CA countries via CPEC to fulfill their energy needs.

### ***Regional Connectivity***

Regional connectivity is defined as the level and effectiveness of a regional network's ability to facilitate flows of goods, services, people, and knowledge in the region. The economic development and prosperity of the state are dependent on regional connectivity. For the economic development of any state, it is necessary to be economically connected with regional states. Without regional connectivity, the economic development of the states is a difficult task (Sheikh & Mehboob, 2020).

The BRI's flagship project, CPEC, has the potential to connect the region's infrastructure projects, such as ports, railways, roads, and oil and gas pipelines. CPEC can serve as the shortest route for the energy transportation for China and is called the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Due to its geographical importance, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor should be connected with the infrastructure, energy sectors, and trade of the whole region of Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, and beyond. According to former foreign policy adviser for Pakistan, Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan is at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and Europe. CPEC will make Pakistan a key player in the economic growth of the region. Furthermore, it was predicted that Asia would contribute 50percent of global GDP (gross domestic product) by 2050, with Gwadar serving as the region's transshipment hub. CPEC will serve as a game changer for the economic prosperity of the whole region (Khan, 2018).

The CPEC is expecting to increase interdependence in the regional states to promote industrial development, agricultural growth, trade, and the exchange of information. Being the shortest trade route connecting South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, it will boost economic activity, ensuring the region's economy and growth (Rabbi, 2017).

### ***Regional Integration***

Request of the regional trade enhancement, integration and regional economic stability, primarily states should focus on interdependence, infrastructure development, collaboration, and regional communication amongst the regional states. To enhance regional trade and development, there is need of reducing tariffs and other trade obstacles. So, CPEC can potentially bring interdependency and regional integration which will ensure concept of protection of common interests. It will also ensure peace and economic prosperity throughout the region. The regional states have the opportunity to use the CPEC platform for their economic development, regional trade and integration (Wang, 2017).

According to the liberal school of thought, when a state's economic and trade interests are interdependent, these process promotes peace and cooperation among the states and reduce the fear of conflicts. Another significant theory "Complex Interdependence Theory" developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, asserts that integration and interdependency of states bring peace and cooperation (Jaleel, 2019). In the modern day, no state can exist without cooperation with regional states particularly with neighboring states because no state can fulfil its demands on its own. Every state is collaborating with one another to meet their needs for economic growth and stability. The globalization period has compelled to strengthen their economic ties and dependence on one another. The complex interdependency theory, which encourages collaboration and interdependence can be analyzed in the context of China Belt and Road Initiative. The political and economic interdependency of two or more states ensure peace and prosperity and reduce chance of War and power politics but encourages economic growth and economic development for which European Union is the best example (Jaleel, 2019).

### **Political Implications for the Region**

#### ***China's Strategic Advancement in the Region***

Geographically, China continues to get a high strategic position in the region especially in Afghanistan through the BRI, also known as the new Silk Road. The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road are the two components of the BRI, which was announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping. More than 65 countries will be economically connected by land, air, and sea under the BRI umbrella. About one-third of the world's population will be covered under this mega project. Due to geographic location, Afghanistan has the potential to serve as a crossroads and transit point for people travelling between East Asia, West Asia, South Asia, and North Asia. Afghanistan is on the central part of several regional megaprojects, such as the BRI, which would use ports, roads, and trains to link China with Europe, Asia, and Africa. CPEC connectivity with Afghanistan presents China a strategic opportunity to secure their interests in the region. CPEC is an economic program but China also has strategic interests from CPEC Project. Through CPEC connectivity with Afghanistan, China will get access to geo-strategic and geo-economic position of Afghanistan to keep eyes on the region (Asia, 2020).

#### ***New era of Cordial Relationship in the Region***

Afghanistan claims on Pashtun regions on their shared border with Pakistan, known as the Durand Line, which resulted in a contentious relationship from the very beginning. This issue is a bone of

contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan was the first state to oppose Pakistan's entry to the UN. The Durand Line is still not recognized by Afghanistan as a physical boundary between two countries. Another issue between the two countries is Pakistan's interference in Afghan internal affairs, which Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of doing in the form of backing the Afghan Taliban which creates problems for Afghanistan. Now both Pakistan and Afghanistan is serious about their economic problems. In the process Zabihullah Mujahid was speaking at the Pak-Afghan Youth Forum's (PAYF's) International Conference titled "Rebuilding Afghanistan Together." He said that the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by linking it with Afghanistan was significant. Zabihullah Mujahid also assured Pakistan that there would be no threat from Afghan side (Grare, 2006; "Taliban say CPEC linking with Afghanistan", 2021).

Because of its connection to Afghanistan, CPEC continues to be important for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It gives both states a platform to transform their frequently tense ties into a solid bilateral partnership. Strong bilateral ties between these two states are essential for both of them and the whole area (Khan, 2019).

On other hand India and Pakistan are most significant states in the area, having a contentious relationship that has been a significant contributor to the region's instability. India views CPEC as a method of containment, but very soon they will understand how important is CPEC for the regional economy. Both China and Pakistan want India to become part of CPEC project. Some economic experts are asking their government to be a partner in CPEC and reap the benefits of economic development which has enormous benefits for India. Shyam Saran, ex-Indian diplomat pointed out that looking at the economic situation in India, it is wise for India to be part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and CPEC presents golden opportunity in the process (Ramay, 2019). In terms of regional economic development, prosperity, and conflict resolution, Pakistan views CPEC as a game-changer because conflict resolution results when economic interests become interdependent. It will help Pakistan and India work towards a solution to the Kashmir problem. Former Indian diplomat and foreign policy expert Phunchok Stobdan says that CPEC should not become an issue between India, China, and Pakistan but should be taken as source of economic prosperity in the region (Shah, 2017). India's participation in CPEC may provide her access to Afghanistan's sizable market where they have invested billions of dollars (Shah, 2017; Wagner, 2016).

### **Counter Terrorism and Extremism**

Over the past forty years, people of Afghanistan have seen war, terrorism, extremism, and conflicts. In 1979, the Soviet Union began a ten-year aggression against the people of Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan went through an 11-year of civil war, and now they faced American war against terrorism. Every area of life has been damaged by these wars and conflicts, including Afghanistan's economy, stability, and peace. These problems of Terrorism and extremism are an issue for BRI as well as Afghanistan and the rest of the region, especially China's stability. For the stability of Afghanistan as well as the entire region, it is crucial to combat terrorism and extremism there.

China's most significant interest in Afghanistan is to ensure security and stability in the region. The western Chinese province of Xinjiang shares a short border of 76 kilometers with Afghanistan. This narrow strip border has generated many security problems for China. For many years, the leading



insurgent organization the Taliban, al Qaeda and the Islamic State in Afghanistan have threatened regional stability as their operations have spilled over to neighboring states. On the other hand, Turkistan Islamic Movement, led by Uyghur Islamic extremists, has launched several attacks in Chinese cities like Beijing and Kunming from its Afghan bases, severely undermining China's domestic security. China defined "three evils" terrorism, separatism and religious extremism as its primary concerns in talks and meetings with Afghan officials. Unless Afghanistan stability, China's interest in Afghanistan will continue to prioritize security and self-protection. The beginning of the withdrawal of US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization combat forces in 2014 was probably the catalyst that propelled China to expand its diplomatic influence in Afghanistan and mediate in the Afghan conflict. The US shift away from Afghanistan and the emergence of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have caused China's policy on Afghanistan to change "from calculated indifference to strategic engagement" (Pandey, 2019).

China's BRI will suffer significantly if terrorism and extremism in Afghanistan are allowed to grow. BRI is facing serious problems from extremism to terrorism in Afghanistan. If terrorism expands to Central Asian states, it will directly affect China's regional economic interests. China is engaged in a number of energy-related projects, including Central Asian oil and gas pipelines. China has built two oil pipelines and four natural gas pipelines between China and Central Asia. China's vision of "One Belt, One Road" (BRI) will be challenged, if the Central Asian states faced problems of instability as a result of terrorism and extremism. So economic stability and economic activities can challenge the problems of terrorism and extremism (Huasheng, 2016).

### **People-to-People Contacts**

People to People Connectivity is the central tenet of the BRI project. So for the BRI's execution, it is important to ensure people to people connectivity on easy way in regional countries. These include staff exchanges, media partnerships, youth and women's exchanges, cultural and educational exchanges, and volunteer service exchanges. Under the umbrella of Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese government started a program of people to people connectivity in order to share their culture and technological experiences. Human connections foster peace and cross-cultural cooperation. It enhances interpersonal trust, which fosters cross-border commerce and economic activity. To achieve this goal, the Chinese government offers tens of thousands of scholarships to students from BRI member countries so they may study in China, share their culture, and foster intercultural understanding. The Chinese government promotes various initiatives, including cultural festivals, book fairs, and collaboration in science and technology, with the goal of fostering people-to-people connectivity (Safi & Alizada, 2018).

### **CONCLUSION**

The BRI is China's largest economic endeavor. The CPEC, which has the potential to connect south Asia, central Asia, western Asia, and beyond, is the most significant corridor of BRI project. It is called the "flagship project" of BRI because it passes through crucial geostrategic geo-economic region. The Gwadar deep-sea port, which is the centerpiece of CPEC becoming hub of regional trade and commerce, provides opportunity to the landlocked Central Asian states to access the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean for their international commercial operations. The original silk route, which was established 200 years ago as a commercial route connecting China,

Arab nations, and central Asia, is being revived by BRI project. Integration of the region and the rest of the world for economic growth is China's primary objective in BRI project. Landlocked central Asian states will be able to reach the enormous markets of Asian countries as a result. These countries can exploit this opportunity through CPEC connectivity to Afghanistan and beyond. The Gwadar-Termez Motorway, the Peshawar-Kabul Motorway, the Peshawar-Kabul Railway Track, the Chaman-Spin Buldak Railway Track, and the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor are important spots through which CPEC can be connected with Afghanistan. This mega project will have great implications on the region like Regional connectivity, regional integration, people-to-people connectivity, and trade openness among regional states and so on. Therefore, CPEC will significantly contribute to the economic growth of the whole area.

The CPEC project is crucial for the regional economic prosperity. Some suggestions for the further advancement of the CPEC project are given below.

- The regional connectivity is dependent upon the security situation in Afghanistan, so the regional states should play a positive role in Afghanistan's rehabilitation.
- The CPEC project is important for economically unstable Afghanistan; therefore, the government of Afghanistan should technically as well as mentally train the people of Afghanistan as part of their home work to play their role in the economic development of their country.
- Power politics and trade activities in the regional countries should be separated from each other. Even in difficult circumstances, economic activity should continue. European Union is the living example for us. A lot of ups and downs exist among European countries while they do not stop trade and economic activities. So our regional states should adopt this approach regarding trade relations.
- Pakistan should facilitate all the Central Asian countries to open consulates and other important infrastructures like hotels etc at Gwadar port to better manage their trade activities.
- The government of Pakistan should remove the trade barriers and promote good neighborliness for the development of regional trade.
- The Taliban should ensure a peaceful environment for China's investment in Afghanistan.
- For the betterment and economic stability all the regional states should accept and recognize Taliban government in Afghanistan.

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