

Socio-Economic Impacts of CPEC on Hazara Region: A Suburban Perspective

Nazim Rahim*

Assistant Professor/Deputy Registrar
Department of Political Science
University of Chitral, Seenlasht, Chitral, KP, Pakistan
Email: mnazim.rahim@uoch.edu.pk

Assad Mehmood Khan**

PhD International Relations
Senior Analyst (China Affairs), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

Azra Amir***

Lecturer, Department of Political Science
University of Chitral, Seenlasht, Chitral, KP, Pakistan

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Abstract: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been perceived as dynamic not merely by authorities however also by suburban populaces since its portrayed socio-economic impacts on individual's livelihood. However, CPEC proposals are yet in the developing phase, thus academics and authorities have consistently substantiated upon impacts of CPEC developments over socio-economic prospects. Moreover, contemporary studies, particular to Hazara region have too been interested to enquire about the question like in what way CPEC would impact individual's livelihood in suburban areas across Hazara region and what it perceives? as appears unanswered. Therefore, this research paper remains the foremost endeavor to disclose the observations proffered by a suburban of Hazara region. I gathered empirical data through personnel visits and interaction with suburban populace as being settler in closely located city Wah, Hasan-Abdal¹, the junction and start point of Hazara Motorway (or M-15²), a road way project of CPEC. The foremost conclusions have been illustrated through realists' approach and descriptive analysis technique; thus, include significantly perceived innovative opportunities through CPEC by suburban in Hazara region; yet, consider development as primary reason. Moreover, the outcomes of the research paper will help authorities and academia to recognize the perspective of suburban in Hazara region, thus, offer adjustments towards CPEC implementations.

Keywords: CPEC, Hazara region, Suburban, Socio-Economic, development, Perspective.

¹ Situated 40 km nor-west of Islamabad, the capital city.

² 180 km of motorway commencing from Burhan Exchange at Hasan-Abdal situated province of Punjab and connecting province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) through Haripur, Havelian, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Shinkhari, Battagram, and Thakot cities.

Introduction

Pakistan's socio-economic challenges in predominating globalized environment provide various explanations towards developing local substructure ventures across the land (Mangi, Yue, Kalwar, & Lashari, 2019, pp. 1-18). By leading substantial sub-structuring thus connectivity, the resident population anticipate economic reimbursements through work opportunities, commercial openings, combined with availability of educational prospects (Saad, Xiping, & Ijaz, 2019, pp. 1-20); (Kanwal, Pitafi, Malik, Khan, & Rashid, 2020, pp. 1-16). Evidently, over the last few decades, Chins has been a vital source, hence following economic upsurge across Pakistan. However, the initiation of "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC), has augmented mutual relations, thus would be an economic expansion venture valuable for both states. Therefore, in due course of time, the local communities all along the EPEC connectivity including Gwadar, sea port in Baluchistan province of Pakistan to Hazara, a region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan drive through perceived advantages (Ghani, Islam, & Pitafi, 2020, pp. 605-624).

Evidently, denoted through earlier studies on the subject that CPEC is not merely an alone venture, however it includes numerous affiliated developmental schemes ranging from energy ventures, hospices projects, educational institutions and organizational developments, road and railway networks, industrial sectors, and transportation sub-structuring (Mahmood, Sabir, & Ali, 2020). Sino-Pak representatives have acknowledged that CPEC will address socio-economic concerns of Pakistani localities including the suburban of the areas. Moreover, Chinese will augment their peripheral influence, thus support its inter-continental existence in emerging order, therefore, will achieve added gain towards safeguarding impending petroleum and manufactured goods trade routes linking worldwide (Kanwal, Pitafi, Malik, Khan, & Rashid, 2020, pp. 1-16).

Moreover, during recent years, the response of resident societies toward mega-projects establishment has invited academic consideration, consequential to substantial research over aforementioned concern (Nunkoo, 2016, pp. 588-596); (Kanwal, Pitafi, Malik, Khan, & Rashid, 2020, pp. 1-16). Moreover, it too has been recommended by scholars including Untong and others that the individual perspective aspects concerning host countries communities are significant components aimed at supportive towards CPEC developments (Untong, Ramos, Sangkakorn, Kaosa-Ard, & Maquieira, 2010, p. 14). Styliadis and others (2014), while accomplished study concerning support towards tourism venture, thus, specified such provision from resident populaces remains connected just before reimbursements (Styliadis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014, pp. 260-274); (Untong, Ramos, Sangkakorn, Kaosa-Ard, & Maquieira, 2010, pp. 1-21). Mahmood and others (2020) examined and discovered the impact of infrastructural expansion projects then maintainable development projects underneath CPEC on resident stakeholders concerning developments aimed at well-being, edification, work prospects, livelihood values, combined with skill accessibility, amongst others (Mahmood, Sabir, & Ali, 2020, pp. 1-17).

Furthermore, representatives generally exploit the consequences of resident populace attitude towards estimating communal requirements, receiving, besides standard of living (Green & Haines, 2015, pp. 78-110). Thus, conduct of such scholarly endeavors suggest implication of comprehension with regards to the opportunities and challenges of resident population about the developmental ventures. It remains an established reality that once resident populace earn reimbursements through progress over CPEC expects, moreover, once it achieves optimistic perception, confidence over plans offered by CPEC, thus afford added encouragement. Consequently, the approaches rendered by host population concerning the development ventures through CPEC endeavors besides the local populace generally while Hazara region community particularly, aimed at shared reimbursements constructed methods stand generally accepted within the current research.

Moreover, academia exploring the mega-projects' perception by local communities as beneficial towards its socio-economic development thus offered evaluative approaches concerning the opinions regarding insensitive outlandish behaviors (Shackleton, et al., 2019, pp. 10-26); (Harun, Chiciudean, Sirwan, Arion, & Muresan, 2018, pp. 1-13); (KARACAOĞLU & BIRDİR, 2017, pp. 53-61). The CPEC perceived perception towards local communal socio-cultural and socio-economic includes way in

towards education sectoral developments, wellbeing amenities, workplaces, occupational potentials, besides mutual interactive opportunities through enabling communal behaviors. Researchers have too anticipated that this project will facilitate general public all along the route to congregate respective acquaintances and relations through rail, road then transportation public services expansion (Kanwal, Shamsa ; Chong, Ren ; Pitafi, Hameed, 2018, pp. 1-12); (Awais, Samin, Gulzar, & Hwang, 2019, pp. 1-11).

Evidently, the earlier research has exclusively considered the character aimed at social-cultural influences over resident societies' opportunities over commemorations along with tourism industry expansions (Partal & Dunphy, 2016, pp. 1-13); (Liu, 2014, pp. 983-998); (Zhuang, Yao , & Li, 2019, pp. 1-19). However, CPEC projects influence over suburban communal generally and Hazara region populace particularly has been usually ignored. Therefore, this research will particularly include such particular study gap through emphasizing primarily on exploring the suburban's view over socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Hazara region. Thus, through evaluation with this regard since consequence concept, conclusion will permit to ascertain the extent, thus positioning of the connection amid socio-economic impacts on Hazara region. Therefore, research focuses over social interface through a suburban view of Hazara region within the context of CPEC ventures, hence CPEC even if prospective, yet carries numerous challenges too.

Moreover, the findings and conclusions aimed this research will effort for making comparative inputs towards academic literature through fostering acquaintance over the subject, hence might affect the particular impact of CPEC over Hazara region in numeral manners. Fore mostly, affording this research as leading research focused over socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Hazara region within CPEC framework. Since, existing studies mainly centered around commemoration and travel development contexts (Teo, 1994, pp. 126-136); (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009, pp. 715-734). Then, existing research have emphasized over social cost-benefit analysis aimed CPEC groundwork expansion, thus its consequences over the independent welfare of populaces. Furthermore, this research too affords responsiveness amid populaces of Hazara region linked with CPEC through underlining the socio-economic impacts of CPEC, yet constructive influence over suburban's perspective.

Research Background

Study understanding, driven through personal appearances and experience over real study settings, thus marked encouraging and inventive. As suburban because of native resident and frequented interactive visit experiences of Hazara region particularly after conception of CPEC projects in Pakistan and precisely towards aforementioned region, I established certain attraction, thus concern over CPEC development projects through Hazara region. Moreover, an overall perception being followed by suburban of particular region with special focus over socio-economic prospects.

Data was collected through several integrative and opinion-based discussion sessions, interviews through varying groups and areas over Hazara region, stayed at different places in Hassanabdal, Havellian, Haripur, Abbottabad, Shinkiyari and Mansehra to measure local views and perception over CPEC, visited communal centers. Thus, info-data collected during interactions and observation through diverse body of opinion with regards to socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Hazara Region, provoked contribution of such research.

Moreover, Hazara region situated along eastern flank of mighty river Indus and mainly consists seven districts including Abbottabad, Haripur and Mansehra too (KP-BOIT, 2020). Reason for choosing Hazara region among many other CPEC projects operating in different regions of Pakistan includes: Firstly, general perception among locals along CPEC considers it beneficial, while secondly, Hazara is comparatively under developed suburban region, and CPEC projects are anticipated towards change in region.

Theoretical Settings: A Socio-Economic Framework of CPCE

Traditionally, Sino-Pakistan relations have history expanded over about seven decades, thus labelled akin to determined associates aimed at local communities (Akhtar & Javaid, 2018, pp. 201-211). Moreover, such matured and reliable relations have been concluded over record of shared synchronization proceeding evident attitude, that consist of bilateral engagements over leisure industry, business exchanges, financial security, then learning contributions (Ali , 2016, p. 43). However, such

shared synchronization and execution has profited every two. Evidently, China has munificently reinforced Pakistan inside socio-economic, assistance in technology, supportive learning, and education, and even also aimed nuclear performances (Gul, Ahmad, & Fernald, 2020, pp. 159-174).

Moreover, the commencement of “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC), thus developed owing to such extended along with dependable association. Indeed, president of China Xi Jinping visit during 2015, affirmed through statement that endorsed relations saying that he has visited Pakistan for the first time but seems visiting his own brothers’ home (Khursheed, Haider, Mustafa, & Akhtar, 2019, pp. 1-15). Moreover, recent visit by Imran Khan, the Pakistan’s Premier to China during late 2018, also affirmed mutual relations (Khan, 2019, pp. 69-78). Therefore, experience of Sino-Pakistan responsive behavior, and developments associated through CPEC appeared foremost venture which too formulated an augmented design to cooperate further mutually dependable association (Ali, et al., 2017, pp. 191-198). Yet, primary motive led through state own interest following developments of the project would not be disregarded. However, central concern towards this particular research article intended at establishing socio-economic impacts of CPEC developments over suburban from Hazara region.

CPEC remains one of the significant elements of “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), initiated by Chinese designed for regional networking aimed 21st millennium (Chen, Joseph, & Tariq, 2018, pp. 61-70). However, contrarily intended politico-economic reasons, BRI received an enormous identification since initiated during year 2013 (Rolland, 2017, pp. 127-142). Though, BRI measured as Chinese mega initiative that connects over 65 states on different continents (Islam, 2018, p. 8). However, the CPEC stands important blueprint to Chinese initiative, thus establishing linkage through BRI. Moreover, CPEC refers to supreme importance, thus frequently discussed as “game-changer” towards such economic development expansion aimed Pakistan. The CPEC was officially launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Pakistan in April 2015 with budget amount about US\$46 billion (Malik, 2018, pp. 69-83); (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015, pp. 142-169); (Chaziza, 2016, pp. 147-161).

The methodology employed to conclude such study has been primarily, qualitative approach for analyzing discourse observations; hence, qualitative technique remains descriptive and explanatory by character (Aspers & Corte, 2019, pp. 139-160). Moreover, descriptive analysis process has been sourced to deliberate prevailing perceived impacts of CPEC through socio-economic prospects over Hazara region, thus contextualizing Hazara region suburban perceptions concerning CPEC through its lands. Therefore, substantial information gathering, study and explanation has been counted. Furthermore, in order to gauge the socio-economic impacts of CPEC, issue concerning resident perception and response, socio-cultural intercourse, health, education, and livelihood opportunities and impacts of infrastructural developments over Hazara region have also been considered.

Socio-Economic Impacts of CPEC on Hazara Region

Indeed, support in terms of perceived response towards mega development appears obligatory towards efficacious application besides functioning of CPEC ventures (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009, pp. 715-734). Moreover, provided resident people have constructive perceptions aimed CPEC developments, formerly will afford encouragement besides eagerness towards contribution in expansion stages. Likewise, there might have problems from resident populace offering negative impacts on overall project bearings including supply matters. Therefore, socio-economic impacts of CPEC project particularly through Hazara region might experience both towards implementation phases. Moreover, suburban from Hazara region populaces perceives socio-economic impacts including opportunities for workplace employment, creation of small businesses like roadhouses, shops, labor besides institute Agri-developments all-along the CPEC passage through Hazara region.

Realistically, while referring to opportunities of mega projects towards the locals, measures resources accessible over socio-economic expansion, thus addresses actual communal prospects (Newman, Lyon, & Philp, 1986, p. 17). Therefore, might include: respectable earnings and reimbursements aimed at labors; capitalizing resident substructure including markets and education institutions; engaging resident populaces, thus generating socio-economic impacts (Raffol, 2012, pp. 28-40); (Yalnizyan, 2017, pp. 1-32). Evidently, CPEC projects overall in Pakistan and to some extent

Hazara region has created an environment of perceived opportunities, however, with inbuilt challenges towards execution and implementation within Hazara region.

There are few projects that have direct bearings over the region, however, there are some projects and extensions that too offer an opportunity of perceived benefits through socio-economic impacts in the region. Predominantly, road and rail linkages projects are attracting attention of suburban in the Hazara region, it includes major direct project of developing motorway M-15, most commonly named as Hazara-motorway. Its lengths 180 kilometers, thus provides controlled entrée-exit through Burhan intersection nearby Hasan-Abdal inside Punjab province in Pakistan towards Thako, intersection in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP); thus, connects Haripur, Hevelliann, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Shinkiari and Battagram over Hazara region.

Moreover, it has five passage ways including two near Abbottabad, thus one each near Battal, one at Karmong and lastly one at Mansehra. Moreover, also offers controlled access through six-tracks passage till Haripur, added four-tracks passage through Hevella towards Mansehra and further two-tracks passage concluding Mansehra at Thakot. Furthermore, it offers mainly three openings and too linkages towards local communities or suburbs: First, 60 kilometers stretched opening of Hassan-Abdal towards Shah-Maqsood; Second, 40 kilometers stretched opening of Shah-Maqsood towards Mansehra; while third, 80 kilometers stretched opening of Mansehra towards Thakot. Outwardly, the foremost perception in Hazara region turned to be job and employment opportunities all along the CPEC route including labor services, skill employments and too administrative work options.

Moreover, equally perceived and projected through international institutions and academia, particularly the World Bank report over employment creation in Middle-East then North-Africa (too referred as MENA), hence recognized one-fifth local employment. Thus, denoted above 18.2 million regional employments and that too endorsed over 7.5 million regional employments directly offered opportunity through infrastructural development ventures. Hence, Hazara region too perceived an infrastructural development related opportunity including direct employment options under infrastructural investment schemes; or else indirect employment options through other sectors investments thus offering way to new business and job creations; however, it can be an offer towards Hazara region unemployment but might not be the only option or solution to eliminate the unemployment in the region.

Moreover, structures building favoring Dry-port at Hevellian with added facilities of cargo management is too part of direct implications towards socio-economic prospects in Hazara region. Construction and development efforts have been undertaken by Pakistan's Railway ministry while the supervising unit will be from communication ministry. The perception of surrounding are a deviations remains constant factor over land, thus largely recognized and reformed into dry-port concepts across continents (Khaslavskaya & Roso, 2019, pp. 1-14). Therefore, CPEC has identified such projects and one is under way in Hazara region utilizing US \$ 65 million to endure requirement aimed containerized passage over CPEC. Thus, offers opportunity towards utilizing rail-network, existing upgraded terminus amenities, broad band bulk supply, and particularly probable extremely conventional off-dock terminus presented towards importation and exportation. Moreover, local populaces are too perceiving direct as well as indirect socio-economic impacts of Hevellian dry-port towards region. However, job creation opportunities along with socio-economic uplift might also reach in the region through road and track access in the region.

Furthermore, another major venture being offered through CPEC in Hazara region is proximity towards Special Economic Zones (SEZ), partially connecting Punjab on one side while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on other side. Though, SEZs coexist to generate massive job opportunities aimed market place. Thus, augmented engagement expands socio-economic environments surfacing means to eradicate poverty since regions. However, SEZ in proximity of Hazara region is situated near Rashakai intersection under plan Rashakai SEZ or else formally REZ. About area covering 1000 acres, includes 702 acres to develop industry while 76 acres designated for business marketplaces in the region. It offers proximate linkages through M-15 towards M-1 and dry-port. An accessible opportunity being perceived by the suburban in the region of Hazara with optimum socio-economic impacts, yet under challenging environment of politico-economic situation.

Moreover, Chinese investments towards infrastructure development remains among foremost and prominent investments across the globe, hence contributed about US\$ 686 billion in it against the vital required economy of US \$ 830 billion, thus forming an interlude aimed US\$ 151 billion. However, infrastructure development towards Pakistan stands US\$ 355 billion, against the vital required economy of US \$ 480 billion, thus forming an interlude aimed US \$ 124 billion. Though, Pakistan's economy suffered low progression proportion even starting 0.4 percentage during year 2008-09 towards 4.24 percentage during year 2014-15. However, owed to infrastructure development aimed CPEC, its economic expansion indicators displayed encouraging drifts in overall leading socio-economic divisions since years 2014-18. Thus, its GDP development revised through 5.2 percentage during year 2018. Yet, significantly, during Covid-19, the GDP development proportion was anticipated discouragingly aimed years 2020-21.

Following, continual socio-economic development locally, thus offered revisiting towards policy making procedures, hence aimed particular substructure, population analysis, combined with workforce possibility in suburban areas even Hazara region that might contribute vital character aimed formative towards socio-economic prospects within Hazara region. Therefore, REZ through innovative industry trade design perceived prospective factor towards socio-economic uplift of the region including realistic workplace employment opportunities, development of trade-industries beside commercial activities substructures, thus linked locally also nationally or globally. Moreover, it is also perceived to address considerably desired incentive through direct or indirect measures to inspire socio-economic accomplishments amid Hazara region and beyond.

Particularly, the perception through suburban over socio-economic impacts aimed SEZs towards Hazara region includes: Firstly, durable socio-economic inducement through expanded local commercial settings, thus predominantly administrative conduct, industrious measurements, besides improved market able captivation in the region. Moreover, industrial development stands prospective for employment opportunities for considerable yet unemployed populace. Secondly, it offers perception aimed attracting Hazara region suburban through their skillfulness and familiarity as a massed investment towards further lucrative prospect aimed CPEC. Thirdly, an opening to bring about local labor assembling, thus reducing expenditure besides addressing employment challenges afforded by Hazara region particularly. Lastly, through operationalizing of SEZs (proposed in 2020-25), offered perception of likely connections with mainstream market and workplace opportunities with regards to maintainable professional amalgamation aimed Hazara region suburban.

Implications

Significantly, research based on a suburban perspective made an endeavor to afford endorsements aimed CPEC authorities with regards to socio-economic prospects vis-à-vis general perspective of Hazara region. Moreover, conclusions would also contribute understanding and adjusting information, perception, and response of suburban socio-economic order towards CPEC schemes constructed over substantial indication through interactive discourse analysis. However, the expansion expected in CPEC is yet managing through its development period aimed Hazara region; thus, further study remains vital. Though, endeavored to reach out such gap will serve foremost study on the subject with suburban prospective on Hazara region.

Limitations

Even though, this research has offered numerous implications, however, necessitates further studies as socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Hazara region remains an emergent study subject. Furthermore, as CPEC endures an augmented development venture, thus, abundant opportunities aimed socio-economic impacts are offered and perceived through suburban community from major portions of three main districts, however, it is recommended to organization study by involving all seven districts of Hazara region. Moreover, this research as a whole predominantly highpoints the optimistic impacts aimed CPEC projects, however further study must consider certain adverse impacts aimed CPEC.

Conclusion

Predominantly, the overview of this research learning aimed at analyzing socio-economic impacts of CPEC developments in Hazara region suburban populace. Moreover, based on prospects,

analyzed over perceived perspective of a suburban populace concerning CPEC. However, further most assumptions are substantiated through recently obtained and maintained data collected through several integrative and opinion-based discussion sessions, interviews through varying groups and areas over Hazara region to measure local views and perception over CPEC. Precisely, the findings confirmed that suburban community from major portions of Hazara region perceived realistic optimal impacts of CPEC over socio-economic domains in Hazara region. Moreover, resident populace provision remains connected through socio-economic impacts, thus, Hazara region suburban advantages aimed CPEC developments conforms positive perspective and substantial participation. Consequently, this research article recapitulates that suburban populace in Hazara region be able to acquire receive perceived socio-economic impacts of CPEC in the region.

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