

# The role of Cobalt Road in development of economic, social and cultural relations of Afghanistan

Nabila Khuram

Assistant Professor Nabila Khuram, Dari Department, Languages and Literature Faculty  
Balkh University, Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan  
Email – Nabilakhuram@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** *Economic, social and cultural relations have been present amongst world's nations for a very long time for having a better life and currently continues with various and better forms. Capital and wealth are at the core of economic bonds; and they are the foundation of people's life, development and welfare. The ones who are alone can never accomplish a task just by themselves; there is a desperate need for specialists and professionals. Thus, the capitalist with cooperation of economic specialists and professionals can import and export their capital by buying and selling goods which there is a demand. Or, they found production companies that meet society demands. This is the way traders make money. Investment, whether it happens inside or outside a country, for generating money requires careful planning. Of those planning, marketing is the essential part of it. Traders seek the safest, shortest and securest ways to market their goods. The commercial and cultural relations have been present from very early ages till now and remained stable in political, military and social reformations throughout the history. The commercial, economic and cultural relations of Afghanistan have been with neighboring countries, Far East and overseas. Trade doesn't only make the economic situation of countrymen better, it also improves the social and cultural relationships between our countrymen and foreigners. Culture is at the core of social life of a country. To make it clear, culture is the national legacy of people which is a heritage from the past generations. It is altered by the present generation and will be transformed to upcoming generations. Or, culture is a set of values defined by a specific group of people. It's the a set of norms that people obey; the goods they produce; and it shows the ethnic and religious beliefs as well as social bonds, convergence, knowledge, values, art and literature. In cultural relations, the interrelationship of roads is highly crucial. The commercial roads that Afghanistan was able to connect itself with other countries in the past are: Silk Road, Cobalt Road, Chabahar Harbor and Kleft Harbor. The contemporary commercial roads which are also called commercial harbors are: Turkham Road, Spin Buldak Road, Sher Khan Harbor, Hayratan Harbor and Turghondi Harbor. The mentioned roads and harbors have had an undeniable impact on social and cultural bonds as well as in economic development of Afghanistan. To develop the commerce and trade, the government should seek secure and save ways for traders. Due to intervention of some countries especially Pakistan, Turkham commercial road became unsecure and people of Afghanistan experienced economic chaos on their investment with roadblocks forced by this country. Having seen the economic chaos, the government of Afghanistan began to seek securer and more assured trade roads for traders and investors. In doing so, the government of Afghanistan decided to reopen the Cobalt Road, which have been used for nearly two thousand years, to be utilized for commerce and trade practices by traders and investors. In spite of positively affecting the economic development and commercial bonds, it also massively affects the cultural and social interrelations.*

**Key Words:** *commerce, capital, commercial relations, economic social and cultural development of commercial roads, cobalt road, commercial specialty.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

It's crystal clear for every one that trade plays a vital role in economic development. Social, cultural, political and economic reformations happens through economic development. It takes a unique form based on people's ideology, beliefs, traditions, culture and religion. Enhancing people's common knowledge, mind growth and variation in taste and tact, increasing of income, increasing population, inclination and enthusiasm to spending and living better are all influenced by economic development. Therefore, a country will never be able to bring prosperity and welfare and reach to its predetermined and solid sustainable development goals without focusing on commerce and economic development.

In addition to production and economic development, every society demands social development infrastructure. Social infrastructure, from a cultural point of view, facilitates healthcare, education and economic development.

Generally, the investment which amplifies the social infrastructure is called social and cultural investment. In particular, investment on healthcare services, healthcare centers, culture development, construction of universities and schools, construction of public parks and construction of public libraries are all called social and cultural investment. These investments have been done based on the countries relationships considering shared benefits from the very early times.

“The issue of economic, social and cultural relations, and identifying appropriate ways to measure social, cultural and economic bonds requires efficacious, deliberate and science-backed efforts which by conducting foundational and useful research and utilizing the experiences of other countries on this issue is the ultimate guide for scientists, economists, cultural and artistic foundations and statesmen to enter to this debate, and the ground work and 5 ways to be sought” (Hadian, 2007, p. 2).

## 2. RESEARCH HISTORY:

The importance of commercial relations amongst nations, economic development and social and cultural bonds have been affirmed by thesis and research papers published by economy and commerce researches such as; Definitions and Concept of Culture by Daryosh Ashori, “The Culture of Social Sciences” by Alan Peru translated from English by Baqir Rohani, “Culture Relations” by Anne Kerry-James translated from English by Tahira Faizi and Akram Hadi. Though, the topic of the present article “The Role of Cobalt Road in development of Economic, Social and Cultural Relations of Afghanistan” have never been published nor researched previously. Every research conducted by the researcher owns a unique and important topic containing a goal and a research plan to reach the predetermined goal. The topic which the researcher has decided to research is the economic importance and development of commercial, social and cultural relations of the Cobalt Road. For researching the mentioned topic, researcher utilized the first-hand websites resources. Since the topic of the article relates to social issues, it is a library research.

Our beloved country Afghanistan has been commercial intersection connecting Asia with Europe, Africa and America for a long time. Silk Road connected China and Middle Asia with India, Turkey, Asia Minor and Arabic countries from the east and south, Iran and Russia with European countries from the north and west. “In Kushan era, commercial relations between central Asia and Rome, China, India increased unprecedentedly. Since Kushan territory was the intersection of commercial roads and the important commercial road such as Silk Road crossed from it, the empire benefited first-hand from this opportunity” (Farhang, 1992, p. 9). Mer Mohammad Ghubar in his precious book described Afghanistan’s historical period characteristics describe as “one of the Afghanistan’s historical period characteristics is that it’s acquaint with most civilizations of the world. It means that, Mesopotamia, Eastern Mediterranean Shores, Egypt, Iran, Greece and Rome civilizations are acquaint and even excerpted with each other. However, China and India civilizations have been more separate and independent. In between, Afghanistan is acquainted with Mediterranean civilization as well as it is in commercial bonds with India and China” (Ghubar, 2010, p. 33). For the first time in its history, Afghanistan in contemporary times achieve its greatness with reopening Cobalt Road and reviving commercial transactions and cultural bonds with those civilizations once again.

Ghubar describes the social situation of Afghanistan in Greece and Bakhlo as “the commercial road to China crossed from Wakhan valley, Badakhshan province to Yarkend. Another one crossed from Farghana to Kashghar. The commercial relations between Afghanistan and China initiated in 2,000 B.C. Afghanistan exported dishware, precious stones and jewellery, and imported silk, lac, animals’ skin, iron, gold, silver, and nickel from and to China. In western zone, the commercial road passed through Herat and Parthian to Iran. Additionally, Amu River which has been sailable like Indus River runs to Aral Sea and natural canal, and connect Aral Sea with Caspian Sea. This river made a commercial road to Black Sea” (Ghubar, 2010, p. 47). It is the happiest times seeing the commercial road which passes through Herat and Parthian reopening again, and is utilized one more time in this contemporary era. Also, it has a massive impact on rebuilding the commercial, economic, social and cultural relations with other countries.

Ameer Abdul Rahman Khan in his book Taj-ot-Tawarikh wrote “strength and authority of a government is in its foundation. If the government employees are knowledgeable, intact, experienced and useful, the prosperity and growth of that country is inevitable. That’s why governments and states hire responsible individuals and feels enriched at the presence of them in governmental positions” (Khan, 2011, p. 298). The government Afghanistan, considering and recognizing the present harsh conditions, prepares strategies to reach to economic goals and bring prosperity to countrymen’s life for betterment of economic, social and cultural situation of Afghan society. The government of Afghanistan is keenly seeking the appropriate ways to make the economic, social and cultural conditions better. In doing so, the government of Afghanistan implemented hundreds of economic, industrial, developmental and service-based projects. Besides, it founded social and cultural infrastructures. Twenty first century is the century of renovated, better and faster transformation of cultures that get the world and its countries close with evolution of science and technology. It is greatly delicate which the smallest quark and accident in a country can affect the lifestyle, way of thinking, rules and regulation, and social behaviours of other countries. “The evolution and development of mass media such as; radio, television, internet, satellites, joint filmmaking companies and political and economic borders do not only inform us from the hottest events, they also made the globalization process to step ahead for development so that they do not

remain isolated from political, economic and mental exchanges. Therefore, globalization and international relations becomes possible by cultural exchanges in any level” (Faizi, T, 2003, p. 239).

“The development of mass media tools in science and technology is effective for strengthening the commercial, economic, social and cultural relations. Moreover, it affects the thought, beliefs, traditions, feelings, inclinations of a nation, and it also impacts the developmental aspect of shared social life of a society. In spite of acquainting with thought, beliefs, traditions and other social affairs of prior individuals through mass media, it highly affects the development of international agreements and acquaintance with other nations’ culture. The more the mass media develops, the more citizens’ bonds of a society behaviour will improve morally and mentally. Furthermore, above mentioned tools is used for studying a nation’s thoughts, beliefs, traditions and behaviours. If they are used for development of concrete rules and regulations, they will be beneficial for unity of thoughts and acquaintance with other nations” (Lisaezada, A, 1988, p. 236). Culture helps the citizens of society to overcome the difficulties of life in a specific place and time. The government of Afghanistan reopened the Cobalt Road in Herat province to break down the monopolization of commercial roads by neighbouring countries especially Pakistan. It was possible through use of prior experiences and deliberate planning, researching and monitoring the present conditions, and figuring out the problems and seeking the solutions. By doing so, Afghanistan is able to solve the upcoming problems and strength the prior commercial, economic, social and cultural relations.

One of the important issues in economy is marketing. The influential factors in marketing are; knowing the market with potential customers and actual sellers with actual ways to selling, the present businesses, products and service-based competitors in service facilitations like; banking, insurance, transportation, consulting and advertisement companies. Another factors are business regulations, politics, society, culture, economy, technology and climate are the factors which the government is responsible to bring facilitation in people’s lives and seek the suitable and professional ways to solve the problems and provide ground for people to invest especially for investors and traders. “Inauguration of Cobalt Road took place in Herat province in October 31st, 2018 by Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani the president of Afghanistan. This commercial road begins from Afghanistan and runs through Turkmenbashi Harbor. Then, it will be joined in Bako City route to Tafles Area in Georgia. From Tafles Area, it crosses Persian Gulf and Turkey. Then, it continues through Europe. This commercial road is consider to be the shortest and safest commercial road of Afghanistan. Cobalt Road as a commercial road carries Afghanistan products to Europe by passing from Aqina Harbor border in Faryab province and Turghondi Harbor in Herat province. This commercial road is called Cobalt Road because nearly two thousand years ago people used to export cobalt from north east zone, especially Badakhshan province, to Middle Asia countries and Europe” (BBC, 2018).

Inauguration of Cobalt Road has the benefits below:

1. Strengthening commercial relations
2. Developing economy
3. Increasing Investment
4. Building social relations
5. Strengthening cultural relations
6. Strengthening friendly relationship between the countries on trajectory of Cobalt Road
7. Strengthening patriotism
8. Acquainting with and realizing the nature and its values.

The Cobalt Road can encourage people to visit the historical destinations of Afghanistan, and provides the sightseeing opportunity. As a result of it, the income level of the government will utterly increase. It also paves the way for the jobless, the poor and the addicts to work, and prevents the social and ethical deterioration. Lastly, it will have a huge impact on bringing peace and security in Afghanistan.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

The right leadership and management is possible when they are used in gaining specialized knowledge and learning from prior experiences to fulfill citizens’ expectations and solve the present problems with creativity, innovation and decisiveness. Specialized knowledge is highly effective in recognizing, organizing, transforming and using prior experiences to figure out problems. It is said that knowledge is intellectual wealth and capital. Additionally, challenges will be discovered and solved through specialized knowledge. It is conditioned to conscious, influential and organized leadership for serving people and bringing welfare into their lives and leading them to the right direction with creativity and innovation. Fortunately, the mentioned characteristics are present in personality of president of Afghanistan and he has been utilizing the specialized knowledge and prior experiences in solving the current problems with creativity and innovation. One of the problems Afghan traders have been facing was monopolization of commercial roads by neighboring countries especially Pakistan. The president managed to liberate Afghanistan from monopolization of land surrounded commercial roads by reopening the Cobalt Road and connecting it with sea roads and European countries. Thus, Cobalt Road can pave the way to build cultural and social relations amongst countries in this trajectory.

Culture in broader perspective is a set of wisdom, beliefs, values, manners, arts, literatures, political systems, ethnic lifestyles and tools of a society which is gained through evolution and will be transform to the next generations. Culture is a social and historical phenomenon that makes the foundation of social life. It means that, it is a national heritage which is remained as a legacy from the past generation, changed by present generation and transmitted to future generations. Culture gives identity to values. The scale of values is acquainted by culture. Moreover, cultural elements of every society is correlated. Change in one element can provides the opportunity of change for other elements. However, culture of every society is different from each other. Cultures have something in common, too. In Afghanistan, China, Tajikistan, Iran, India and other Central Asian countries people believe in the same religion and have a common ideology. So, they utilize it for communication. When a culture is learned and acquired in a society, it will remain stable. The members of a society will withstand in alteration of culture when the change factors are weak.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Hadian, S, K. (1994). *Economy Culture and Cultural Development*. Kabul: Ayendanegar Press.
2. Farhand, M, S. (1992). *Afghanistan in recent Five Centuries*. Kabul.
3. Ghubar, M, Gh, M. (2010). *Afghanistan in History Route*. Kabul: Sarwar Sa'adat Press.
4. Khan, A, A, R. (2011). *Taj-ul-Tawarigh*. Kabul: Maiwand Press.
5. Faizi, T. (2003). *Communication and Culture*. Kabul: Ministry of Higher Education.
6. Lisaezada, A. (1988). *The Birth of Sociology*. Kabul: Markaz-e-Danish Osha Press.
7. <http://bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-46552665>