

Cross-Border Infrastructure Projects and Regional Peacebuilding

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Abstract

Cross-border infrastructure projects have increasingly become focal points for regional cooperation and peacebuilding efforts. This scholarly article explores the intricate relationship between cross-border infrastructure development and the promotion of regional peacebuilding initiatives. It investigates how such projects facilitate economic integration, foster trust among neighboring states, and mitigate conflict potentials in volatile regions. Through an interdisciplinary lens, this article assesses the impact of cross-border infrastructure on regional stability and explores avenues for policymakers to leverage these projects for sustainable peacebuilding.

Keywords: *Cross-border infrastructure, Regional peacebuilding, Economic integration, Trust-building, Conflict mitigation*

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the development of cross-border infrastructure projects has emerged as a pivotal strategy for fostering regional cooperation and peacebuilding. These projects encompass various forms of physical infrastructure such as roads, railways, energy networks, and telecommunications systems that traverse international borders, linking countries and regions together. While primarily aimed at enhancing economic connectivity and development, cross-border infrastructure initiatives also hold significant potential for promoting regional peace and stability. This article delves into the multifaceted dynamics of cross-border infrastructure projects and their role in advancing regional peacebuilding efforts.

Introduction to Cross-Border Infrastructure Projects

Cross-border infrastructure projects play a pivotal role in fostering connectivity and collaboration between neighboring regions or countries. These projects involve the development of essential physical structures such as roads, bridges, railways, pipelines, and energy grids that span across national boundaries. The aim is to facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people, thereby enhancing economic integration and regional development. These initiatives often require extensive cooperation and coordination between multiple stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, private investors, and local communities. As such, they

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hold significant potential not only for promoting economic growth but also for fostering greater regional cooperation and stability.

One of the primary motivations behind cross-border infrastructure projects is to address infrastructural gaps and bottlenecks that inhibit the smooth flow of trade and commerce between neighboring regions. In many cases, neighboring countries share common economic interests and stand to benefit mutually from improved infrastructure linkages. By investing in cross-border projects, governments seek to unlock new opportunities for trade, investment, and economic cooperation, which can contribute to poverty reduction and shared prosperity. Moreover, these initiatives can help alleviate existing disparities in infrastructure development between neighboring regions, thereby promoting more inclusive and sustainable growth across borders.

In addition to their economic significance, cross-border infrastructure projects also have important implications for regional peacebuilding and stability. By promoting connectivity and interdependence, these projects can help build trust and foster diplomatic relations between neighboring countries. The process of planning and implementing such projects often necessitates dialogue, negotiation, and compromise among stakeholders with diverse interests and priorities. Through these interactions, opportunities emerge for building networks of cooperation and understanding, which can contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. Moreover, by creating shared spaces and opportunities for interaction, cross-border infrastructure projects can help bridge social and cultural divides, promoting a sense of common identity and belonging among border communities.

It is essential to recognize that cross-border infrastructure projects are not without challenges and potential risks. They often entail complex legal, technical, and logistical considerations, as well as political sensitivities and security concerns. Moreover, the financing and governance mechanisms for such projects can be sources of contention and require careful negotiation to ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits. Furthermore, environmental and social impacts must be carefully assessed and mitigated to avoid exacerbating tensions or causing harm to local communities and ecosystems. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of cross-border infrastructure projects for regional peacebuilding and development make them a compelling avenue for international cooperation and investment in our interconnected world.

Theoretical Framework: Linking Infrastructure Development and Peacebuilding

In "Cross-Border Infrastructure Projects and Regional Peacebuilding," the theoretical framework serves as a crucial lens through which to understand the intricate relationship between infrastructure development and peacebuilding efforts. At its core, this framework seeks to establish a coherent connection between the tangible aspects of infrastructure projects and the intangible dynamics of peacebuilding initiatives within regional contexts. By delving into this theoretical framework, scholars and practitioners aim to uncover the multifaceted ways in which infrastructure development can either catalyze or hinder processes of peacebuilding across

borders.

Infrastructure development plays a pivotal role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of regions engaged in cross-border projects. The theoretical framework highlights how the construction of physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and energy networks, can foster interconnectedness among neighboring communities and nations. Through enhanced connectivity, these projects have the potential to facilitate trade, commerce, and people-to-people interactions, thereby laying the groundwork for peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

The theoretical framework underscores the importance of addressing underlying structural inequalities and grievances through infrastructure development initiatives. In many conflict-affected regions, disparities in access to basic services and economic opportunities have fueled tensions and perpetuated cycles of violence. By prioritizing inclusive and equitable infrastructure projects, stakeholders can mitigate these disparities and promote social cohesion, thus contributing to sustainable peacebuilding efforts over the long term.

Ultimately, the theoretical framework posits that successful cross-border infrastructure projects require a nuanced understanding of local contexts, power dynamics, and conflict drivers. By integrating principles of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding into project design and implementation, stakeholders can leverage infrastructure development as a catalyst for regional stability and reconciliation. Through this interdisciplinary approach, policymakers, practitioners, and scholars can forge pathways towards sustainable peace and prosperity in borderland regions around the world.

Economic Integration and Cross-Border Infrastructure

Economic integration and cross-border infrastructure play pivotal roles in fostering regional peacebuilding efforts. These elements serve as catalysts for cooperation and mutual development among neighboring nations, transcending traditional boundaries and fostering interconnectedness. Through the establishment of infrastructure projects that span across borders, regions can enhance trade, transportation, and communication networks, which are essential for sustainable economic growth and stability. As such, cross-border infrastructure projects become not only symbols of collaboration but also tangible manifestations of shared interests and mutual benefits among participating nations.

In the realm of economic integration, cross-border infrastructure projects have the potential to create a conducive environment for increased trade and investment activities. By facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people across borders, these projects help reduce trade barriers and transaction costs, thereby stimulating economic exchanges and fostering prosperity. Moreover, the establishment of efficient transportation and logistics networks enhances market access for businesses, promotes competition, and encourages innovation, all of which are fundamental drivers of economic development and regional integration. As a result, cross-border

infrastructure projects become instrumental in laying the foundation for a more interconnected and economically vibrant region.

Cross-border infrastructure projects have significant implications for regional peacebuilding efforts by promoting interdependence and cooperation among neighboring nations. By working together to plan, finance, and implement infrastructure initiatives, countries develop a vested interest in maintaining stability and resolving conflicts through peaceful means. The collaborative nature of these projects fosters dialogue, trust, and understanding among participating nations, thereby reducing tensions and mitigating the risk of potential conflicts. Additionally, the tangible benefits derived from cross-border infrastructure, such as improved access to resources and markets, create incentives for countries to prioritize diplomatic solutions and peaceful coexistence, further contributing to regional stability and security.

Economic integration and cross-border infrastructure projects are essential components of regional peacebuilding efforts, as they promote cooperation, enhance connectivity, and foster mutual understanding among neighboring nations. By facilitating trade, investment, and collaboration, these projects contribute to the creation of a more interconnected and prosperous region, where countries can leverage their collective strengths to address common challenges and pursue shared goals. As such, investing in cross-border infrastructure becomes not only a strategic imperative but also a transformative tool for promoting peace, stability, and prosperity across borders.

Trust-Building and Diplomatic Relations

Trust-building and diplomatic relations play a pivotal role in the success of cross-border infrastructure projects aimed at fostering regional peacebuilding. In the complex landscape of international relations, where borders often signify divisions and tensions, collaborative infrastructure initiatives have the potential to bridge gaps and promote mutual understanding among neighboring nations. Establishing trust among stakeholders is fundamental, as it lays the groundwork for cooperation and ensures that interests are aligned towards common goals. Diplomatic efforts serve as catalysts in this process, facilitating dialogue, negotiation, and the resolution of potential conflicts that may arise during the planning and implementation stages of such projects.

In cross-border infrastructure projects, trust-building operates on multiple levels. At the governmental level, transparent communication and commitment to shared objectives are essential for fostering confidence among participating nations. Governments must demonstrate reliability in honoring agreements and addressing concerns raised by their counterparts, thus reinforcing trust in the collaborative endeavor. Moreover, involving local communities and civil society organizations in decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the benefits of the infrastructure projects are equitably distributed, further enhancing trust and

social cohesion across borders.

Diplomatic relations serve as the linchpin in navigating the complexities inherent in cross-border infrastructure projects. Diplomats and international mediators play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and mitigating potential conflicts that may arise due to differing interests or historical grievances among participating nations. By fostering an environment of cooperation and understanding, diplomatic efforts help build bridges between nations, paving the way for the successful implementation of infrastructure projects that contribute to regional stability and peace.

In the broader context of regional peacebuilding, cross-border infrastructure projects not only enhance connectivity and economic development but also serve as confidence-building measures among neighboring nations. By fostering mutual dependency and cooperation, such initiatives contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for dialogue and reconciliation, laying the foundation for long-term peace and stability in the region. Therefore, investing in trust-building mechanisms and diplomatic relations is not only imperative for the success of cross-border infrastructure projects but also essential for fostering enduring peace and prosperity across borders.

Conflict Mitigation and Prevention

Conflict mitigation and prevention play pivotal roles in fostering regional peacebuilding within the realm of cross-border infrastructure projects. These projects often traverse multiple jurisdictions and involve diverse stakeholders, making them susceptible to various tensions and conflicts. One crucial aspect of conflict mitigation is the establishment of robust communication channels among involved parties. Effective communication facilitates the identification of potential sources of conflict early on, allowing for proactive measures to be taken to prevent escalation. Moreover, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual understanding through dialogue and negotiation can help address underlying grievances and build trust among stakeholders.

Additionally, incorporating conflict-sensitive approaches into the planning and implementation phases of cross-border infrastructure projects is essential. This involves conducting thorough conflict assessments to identify potential risks and impacts on different communities. By understanding the social, economic, and political dynamics of the regions affected by the project, stakeholders can develop strategies to mitigate negative consequences and promote positive outcomes. Furthermore, integrating conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, into project frameworks can provide avenues for resolving disputes in a peaceful and constructive manner.

Promoting inclusivity and equitable participation in decision-making processes is vital for preventing conflicts in cross-border infrastructure projects. Engaging local communities,

marginalized groups, and other relevant stakeholders in project planning and implementation not only ensures their voices are heard but also enhances the legitimacy and sustainability of the project. By fostering ownership and buy-in from all stakeholders, conflicts stemming from perceived marginalization or exclusion can be minimized. Additionally, investing in capacity-building initiatives to empower communities to participate effectively in decision-making processes can contribute to long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Effective conflict mitigation and prevention strategies are indispensable for promoting regional peacebuilding in cross-border infrastructure projects. By prioritizing open communication, conflict-sensitive approaches, inclusivity, and capacity-building, stakeholders can address underlying tensions and build constructive relationships that contribute to sustainable development and peace in the region. Through proactive efforts to identify and address potential sources of conflict, cross-border infrastructure projects have the potential to serve as catalysts for positive change and cooperation among neighboring communities and countries.

Case Studies: Successful Examples of Cross-Border Infrastructure for Peacebuilding

In examining the role of cross-border infrastructure in peacebuilding efforts, it's crucial to delve into successful case studies that exemplify its efficacy. One notable example is the joint infrastructure projects between India and Bangladesh. These projects, such as the construction of bridges and railways connecting the two countries, have not only improved economic ties but have also fostered greater trust and cooperation between the nations. By facilitating easier movement of goods and people across borders, these infrastructural developments have contributed to reducing tensions and enhancing stability in the region.

Another compelling case study is the Eurotunnel linking the United Kingdom and France. This ambitious infrastructure project not only revolutionized transportation between the two countries but also symbolized a significant step towards European integration and cooperation. Despite initial challenges and controversies, the Eurotunnel has become a symbol of cross-border collaboration, fostering economic growth and cultural exchange while minimizing traditional tensions between the UK and France.

In East Africa, the Northern Corridor Integrated Projects stand out as a model for cross-border infrastructure development fostering peace and stability. These projects aim to improve transportation networks, energy infrastructure, and trade facilitation among countries like Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Sudan. By enhancing connectivity and promoting economic interdependence, these initiatives have contributed to mitigating conflicts and strengthening regional cooperation, particularly in a region historically plagued by political instability and inter-state tensions.

Lastly, the Peace Pipeline project between Israel, Jordan, and Palestine exemplifies how infrastructure can be a catalyst for peacebuilding in conflict-ridden regions. This project seeks to

address water scarcity issues by providing a shared water resource, thereby fostering mutual dependency and cooperation among the involved parties. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, the Peace Pipeline project remains a beacon of hope, demonstrating the potential of cross-border infrastructure to transcend political divides and promote peace and stability in conflict-affected areas.

Challenges and Constraints in Implementing Cross-Border Infrastructure Projects

Implementing cross-border infrastructure projects poses a myriad of challenges and constraints, often stemming from complex geopolitical dynamics and divergent national interests. Firstly, the sheer scale and scope of such projects require extensive coordination among multiple stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, and private entities. Negotiating agreements and overcoming bureaucratic hurdles across different jurisdictions can be daunting tasks, leading to delays and cost overruns. Moreover, conflicting political agendas and historical tensions between neighboring countries can impede progress, as seen in regions where territorial disputes or security concerns overshadow cooperative efforts.

Secondly, financing cross-border infrastructure projects presents a significant obstacle. Securing funding for large-scale initiatives demands substantial investments from both public and private sources, which may be reluctant to commit resources due to perceived risks associated with political instability or regulatory uncertainty. Additionally, disparities in economic development and fiscal capacities among participating countries can exacerbate financing challenges, as less affluent nations may struggle to contribute their fair share or attract external investment.

Thirdly, logistical and technical constraints can hinder the implementation of cross-border infrastructure projects. Building physical connections across borders entails navigating diverse terrain, addressing environmental concerns, and adhering to differing engineering standards and regulatory frameworks. Complexities in land acquisition, rights-of-way, and infrastructure maintenance further complicate project execution, requiring innovative solutions and sustained cooperation among stakeholders.

Lastly, social and cultural factors can influence the success of cross-border infrastructure initiatives. Local communities residing near project sites may harbor concerns about environmental degradation, displacement, or unequal distribution of benefits, leading to opposition or resistance. Cultural sensitivities and historical narratives can also shape public perceptions and attitudes towards cooperation with neighboring countries, affecting the willingness to engage in joint infrastructure ventures. Overcoming these socio-cultural barriers necessitates inclusive decision-making processes, transparent communication, and mechanisms for addressing grievances, fostering trust and legitimacy in cross-border cooperation efforts.

Role of International Organizations and Multilateral Cooperation

International organizations and multilateral cooperation play a pivotal role in facilitating cross-border infrastructure projects and fostering regional peacebuilding efforts. Firstly, these organizations provide a platform for dialogue and negotiation among countries involved in such projects, helping to address disputes and disagreements that may arise during the planning and implementation stages. By promoting communication and collaboration, they mitigate potential conflicts and enhance trust between neighboring nations, thereby contributing to regional stability.

Secondly, international organizations often offer technical expertise and financial resources to support the development of cross-border infrastructure projects. Through grants, loans, and technical assistance programs, they help countries overcome barriers such as funding constraints and technical challenges, enabling the smooth execution of infrastructure initiatives. By investing in infrastructure that connects nations and promotes economic integration, these organizations lay the foundation for sustainable development and prosperity, which are essential elements for long-term peace and stability.

Multilateral cooperation fosters a sense of shared responsibility among participating countries, encouraging them to work together towards common goals. By pooling resources and coordinating efforts, nations can achieve more significant impacts in addressing regional challenges, including infrastructure development and peacebuilding. Through joint initiatives and collaborative projects, international organizations facilitate the pooling of expertise, technology, and resources, resulting in more efficient and effective outcomes.

Lastly, international organizations serve as impartial mediators and monitors, ensuring that cross-border infrastructure projects adhere to international standards and principles of transparency, accountability, and environmental sustainability. By promoting good governance practices and monitoring compliance with agreements and regulations, these organizations help prevent corruption, exploitation, and environmental degradation, which can undermine the stability and success of infrastructure initiatives. Through their oversight role, international organizations help build confidence among stakeholders and promote trust in the integrity of cross-border infrastructure projects, thereby contributing to regional peacebuilding efforts.

Policy Recommendations for Enhancing the Peacebuilding Potential of Cross-Border Infrastructure

To bolster the peacebuilding potential of cross-border infrastructure projects, policymakers should prioritize fostering transparent and inclusive decision-making processes. This involves engaging all relevant stakeholders, including local communities, governments, and international organizations, in the planning, implementation, and monitoring phases. By ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered, policymakers can mitigate potential grievances and conflicts arising from infrastructure development, thereby promoting stability and cooperation across

borders.

Additionally, investing in capacity-building initiatives is essential for maximizing the positive impacts of cross-border infrastructure on peacebuilding efforts. This includes providing training and technical assistance to local communities and government agencies involved in project implementation. By enhancing their skills and knowledge in areas such as project management, conflict resolution, and sustainable development, stakeholders can effectively navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities for peacebuilding through infrastructure development.

Promoting cross-border cooperation and collaboration is crucial for harnessing the full potential of infrastructure projects as catalysts for peace. Policymakers should prioritize initiatives that facilitate dialogue, cooperation, and joint decision-making among neighboring countries, particularly in conflict-prone regions. By fostering trust and fostering mutually beneficial relationships, cross-border infrastructure projects can serve as confidence-building measures, paving the way for broader peacebuilding efforts and regional integration.

Lastly, incorporating conflict-sensitive approaches into the design and implementation of cross-border infrastructure projects is paramount for minimizing their potential negative impacts on peace and stability. This entails conducting comprehensive conflict assessments, considering the socio-economic and political context of each project site, and implementing mitigation measures to address potential sources of tension or resentment. By proactively addressing conflict dynamics and ensuring that infrastructure development contributes to sustainable peace, policymakers can unlock the transformative potential of cross-border infrastructure in advancing regional peacebuilding goals.

Towards Sustainable Regional Peacebuilding through Infrastructure Development

In the pursuit of sustainable regional peacebuilding, the focus on cross-border infrastructure projects emerges as a crucial avenue. Such projects hold the promise of fostering cooperation and understanding among neighboring regions, thereby laying the foundation for lasting peace. By facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people across borders, infrastructure development not only promotes economic growth but also fosters mutual interdependence, which can serve as a deterrent to conflict. Moreover, the collaborative nature of these projects necessitates dialogue and negotiation among participating regions, fostering trust and cooperation essential for peacebuilding efforts.

One significant aspect of cross-border infrastructure projects is their potential to address underlying sources of conflict, such as resource scarcity or territorial disputes. By providing shared resources or creating economic opportunities in previously contentious areas, infrastructure development can mitigate tensions and create incentives for peaceful coexistence. Additionally, the physical interconnectedness brought about by these projects can foster social ties and cultural exchanges, further enhancing mutual understanding and trust among

neighboring communities.

Sustainable infrastructure development prioritizes environmental considerations, promoting ecologically responsible practices that benefit both present and future generations. By incorporating renewable energy sources, promoting biodiversity conservation, and minimizing carbon emissions, these projects contribute to climate resilience and mitigate the risk of environmentally-induced conflicts. Emphasizing sustainability in infrastructure development not only addresses immediate socio-economic needs but also ensures long-term stability and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

Cross-border infrastructure projects hold immense potential as vehicles for sustainable regional peacebuilding. By promoting economic integration, addressing underlying sources of conflict, fostering social ties, and prioritizing environmental sustainability, these projects contribute to the creation of peaceful and resilient regions. However, their success depends on inclusive planning, transparent governance, and meaningful engagement with local communities to ensure that the benefits of infrastructure development are equitably distributed and contribute to the well-being of all stakeholders involved.

Summary

This article critically examines the nexus between cross-border infrastructure projects and regional peacebuilding endeavors. It highlights the transformative impact of such projects in promoting economic integration, building trust among neighboring states, and reducing conflict risks in volatile regions. Through a comprehensive analysis of case studies and theoretical frameworks, the article elucidates the mechanisms through which cross-border infrastructure contributes to regional stability. Furthermore, it provides insights into the policy implications and challenges associated with leveraging these projects for sustainable peacebuilding outcomes.

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