




Original Article

China-Pakistan Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation under Belt & Road Initiative

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Abstract

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, the CPEC's construction has gone smoothly; with clear effects on the economic growth of Pakistan and the Sino-Pakistan relationship, some significant transportation and energy projects are in the finishing stage of development. However, it is discovered that cooperation in other areas is given more priority throughout this process than exchanges and cultural understanding between two nations. Thus, the focus of this essay is on the cultural exchange between Pakistan and China. In order to execute CPEC, strengthen the year-round bilateral tactical cooperative association, and further foster a healthy and comprehensive development of bilateral alliance, it is argued that China and Pakistan should greatly increase their cultural exchanges. In order to increase the collective exchange of culture at various levels, a more effective mechanism must be set up, as well as some appropriate and useful measures. This paper will provide some helpful suggestions to address the aforementioned problem.

Keywords: Cultural Exchanges, CPEC, Belt & Road Initiative, China-Pakistan

1. INTRODUCTION

Let's take a quick look at the cultural exchanges between Pak-China. This will be helpful for us in assessing our current situation and developing our long-term strategy. The Embassy of PRC in Islamabad claims that the two nations' historical ties to one another through cultural exchange date back thousands of years (Jiqiong & Keyu, 2017). Since 1949, numbers of actions have been taken by both countries to promote two-way cultural exchange. The signing of Cultural Cooperation agreement between China and Pakistan on March 25, 1965, represents the key milestone in the advancement of reciprocal interactions between the two nations. Because of this, "exchange of cultures and collaboration has advanced regularly since the two nations' foreign-policy ties were established". A cultural delegation of the Chinese government visited Pakistan under the supervision of the former minister of culture Zhu Muzhi, in May 1983; likewise another delegation in November 1991, led by Xu Wenbo, who was former culture minister, comes upon Pakistan. In 1981, a Pakistan delegation of culture led by Niaz Mohammad Arbab, visited China to promote cultural exchange between the two nations (Hussain, et al., 2020).

In addition, Islamabad and Beijing have engaged in different fruitful cooperation & exchanges in art, education, sports, youth affairs, information, cultural relics, publications, archives, women affairs and health etc. Chinese art troupes paid visits to a number of Pakistani cities, where they gave performances of traditional instrumental music, dance, acrobatics and folk song (Asif, et al., 2021). Official sources claim that exchanges have also occurred in puppetry, painting, and handicrafts in both nations. Many literary works have been translated into one another's languages from both sides, over the years. The both governments signed special agreement to encourage collaboration in the film and TV industries,

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and in the middle of the 1980 many TV shows were produced cooperatively by the TV channels of the two nations (Kataria & Riaz, 2020). Education exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan have grown significantly over the past few years. Pakistani students have access to hundreds of scholarships from China, including ones for studying other subjects as well as the Chinese language (Afzal & Anwar, 2023). Over 19,000 Pakistani students are currently pursuing studies in China across a variety of fields, according to the Pakistani education attaché in Beijing. This number is constantly increasing (Akram, et al., 2020).

It's also important to note that Pak national language Urdu and Chinese national language are rising in popularity (Thaker & Goel, 2015). The history of promoting Urdu, particularly in China, is extensive. China in 1950 set a department for Urdu at Beijing's Peking University. Since then, the Urdu department has educated many China's scholars who became fluent in Urdu language. The department has also translated a number of crucial books. The first comprehensive Chinese-Urdu dictionary has been published, as well as translations of Urdu literature (Khan, et al., 2020). Different universities currently offer Urdu language, indicating the language's popularity in China (Abbas, 2020). In Pakistan, the Chinese language is much more common. Chinese has been introduced in Pakistan at a very elementary level. Chinese is now being taught in more kindergartens across the country (Shum, et al., 2011). Pakistani Government is intend to make Chinese language course mandatory at institutions serving the public sector as well private sector, despite the fact that this trend is primarily in the private sector. At various universities in Pakistan, China Study Centers are mushrooming at the same time.

Confucius Institutes, which were established with Chinese government assistance, have been crucial in this regard (Ibrar, et al., 2016). The China-Pakistan culture exchange and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is part of a broader collaboration between the two countries in various fields, including culture and people-to-people exchanges (Gui & Arif, 2016). The BRI is a massive infrastructure and economic development project initiated by China that aims to connect China to Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia through a network of roads, railways, ports, and other infrastructure projects (Shen & Chan, 2018). As part of this initiative, cultural exchanges and cooperation have been encouraged to strengthen the ties between China and Pakistan. Both countries have organized cultural events and festivals to showcase their traditions, arts, and heritage. These events often include music and dance performances, art exhibitions, and culinary exchanges. Media organizations in both China and Pakistan have worked together to promote cultural understanding through television shows, documentaries, and news reports that highlight each country's culture and traditions. Look for official agreements and memoranda of understanding between China and Pakistan related to cultural exchange and cooperation under the BRI. These documents can provide insights into the specific initiatives and projects that have been undertaken.

The aim of this study is to explore China-Pakistan culture exchange and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, highlighting its significance in the broader context of the BRI and emphasizing the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening the bonds between these two nations. In the subsequent sections, we will delve deeper into the various dimensions and specific initiatives of this cultural exchange, shedding light on its impact and potential for further enhancing the rich and dynamic relationship between China and Pakistan.

The Most Popular Sport Exchange Program

China already knows about all sport games; however Pakistan is assisting China in introducing cricket as part of their cordial relationship (Næss-Holm, 2007). International Cricket Council now has the Chinese national cricket team. Rashid Khan, a former Pakistani bowler, has been appointed by the Pakistan Cricket Board in conjunction with the Asian Cricket Council to coach young cricketers in China. Due to this collaboration, two Chinese cricket players are competing in the Pakistan Super League (PSL): The law and order situation in Pakistan had a significant impact on international cricket there (Yongmei & Afzal, 2023). China may be used by Pakistan as its home ground for test matches of cricket in the future. This accurately captures the nature of the close ties between the two nations. These are merely a few instances; the reciprocal interactions covered by the term "culture" can be expanded in the ways that are described below.

Indicator of Progress in Bilateral Cultural Cooperation

Under BRI, six corridors being developed, the CPEC is the "flagship" project, as it was previously mentioned. The CPEC, encapsulating a multitude of infrastructural and development projects funded

primarily by Chinese investments, holds the promise of transforming Pakistan's economy. Sino-Pakistani relations are set to advance dramatically under this project in the fields of trade, politics, and economics (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). The two sides must now take decisive action to promote cultural exchanges. The publics of the two nations will be better able to comprehend one another's cultures, sensibilities, and fundamental facets of society. It will also aid in the two-way relationship's overall development. Given this context, this study offers three key recommendations for advancing cooperation and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan (Butt & Butt, 2015).

First and foremost, a more efficient system of cooperation and cultural exchange between two nations needs to be established. Culture exchanges and collaboration between Pak-China currently take place primarily on an official level. Non-governmental levels of cooperation and exchange are unable to effectively engage all facets of society. Governments should play a few key roles in the new mechanism given their dominant role in cross-border cultural exchange and cooperation. As a result, the coordinators and implementers of this mechanism should continue to be chosen from a variety of governmental bodies, such as the local and national sectors of culture (Khan & Liu, 2019). Additionally, this system should be provided the authority and funding necessary to plan for exchanges of culture and collaborative projects. The mechanism should be in charge of establishing the goals of projects involving bilateral cultural exchange and cooperation, monitoring and resolving issues that arise during project implementation, and assessing, verifying, and accepting the projects' efficacy. Meanwhile, new organizations must be set upon under this system.

Second, China-Pakistan cultural cooperation and exchanges are relatively insignificant in both quality and quantity, which makes them insufficient to match the two nations' unwavering friendship. According to a proverb from ancient China, interpersonal relationships and communication among two nations' citizens serve as the base for their mutual understanding and contacts (Khan & Liu, 2019). Since under BRI there are numerous opportunities, it is crucial to high the number of participants in bilateral cultural cooperation and communication. The contributor may be notable individuals from different, educational institutions, universities, cultural enterprises, film, media, entertainment, tourism television, catering and museums and so on. They may also be famous cultural figures and artists from countries, researchers of each culture, or researchers of their respective cultures. They can all participate in groups that promote bilateral culture exchange to strengthen international cooperation (Ali, et al., 2019). Both parties could establish connections in related fields and industries during such exchanges, and they could also look into ways to broaden such contacts. Increasing bilateral cultural exchanges at various levels between various social groups in this situation would be beneficial.

For instance, two nations could create a China-Pakistan Cultural and Art Corridor using the CPEC as a model, encouraging more frequent bilateral activities of cultural exchange like poetry, arts and crafts, song, folk, fine art, dance, painting, and acrobatics. By combining their respective high-quality artistic resources, two countries can establish some significant cultural industry projects and then collaborate to produce others, such as films and television shows that promote cultural exchange (Asif, et al., 2023). Then, they can produce some fresh cultural products that can be enjoyed by people from other nations as well as China and Pakistan. So, it will not fully utilize some present relevant institutions only, such as the Cultural Communication Center of the CPEC, but also refine the reciprocal exports of civilizing products and open up more chances for the other nations beside the "Road and Belt Initiative." The other efficient procedure is fostering communications and contacts between the nationals of both countries, particularly the new generations outside and inside.

Additionally, there should be increased efforts to help more Chinese learn Urdu and more Pakistanis learn Chinese, as well as to develop more student and scholar exchange programs and cultural exchange groups to help businesspeople better understand the differences between the two countries' business cultures. It is obvious that there will be a greater need for professional and technical labor as the CPEC is built out further and wider (Noor, 2022). As a result, it is crucial that both China and Pakistan's public and private sectors invest in building up their HR, making it remote future project that will fruitful to CPEC and mutual cooperation.

Additionally, it is critical to forge closer mutual ties in two nations in order to establish a network of cultural fabrication and assemble a shared ecosystem of culture. The scale and current levels of collaboration between Pakistan and China in culture industries are both far too small. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to do so because this area's prospects are promising. Regarding the background of this section, it should be noted that the cultural industry is most influential and potent sector in the twenty-first

century (Asif, et al., 2019). It has also emerged as a new industry in the global industrialization process, and more nations are executing it as a crucial component of their remunerative development (Khan, 2011).

Cultural Industry Cooperation between China and Pakistan

Television, arts and crafts, folk, museum systems, festival exhibition, radio, arts, cultural relic, advertising, publishing, sports, entertainment, cultural education, printing and packaging, healthcare, tourism, emerging and new cultural formats by usage of digital network and information technology, cultural paraphernalia manufacturing; it is encouraging that the two governments are installing fiber optic infrastructure as part of distant CPEC plan because it will improve digital connectivity between the two nations (Afzal, et al., 2022). In order to encourage cross-cultural interactions, they will also launch TV programs as segment of this plan. This is in row with one of the recommendations in this paper. Both nations have appointed diplomats to foster exchange of culture in the two nations due to the long-standing relationship between the two that dates back decades. It is important to invest more money in bolstering these cultural sections (Rajabov, 2021). It has a large network of academics who research salt. Joint projects between the two cities are possible; other typical research fields can benefit from using this model.

If the aforementioned theories come to pass, it is hoped that the activities and frequency of China-Pak cooperation in culture exchange will significantly increase, and that more cultural fields and areas of mutual cooperation and communication will be expanded (Zheng, 2010). It appears that combining society and culture in a variety of industries and fields is good to develop a variety of cultural industry foundations, especially in fields like film and TV culture, cultural art, tourism culture, cultural sports, cultural technology and science, cultural medicine, cultural education and culture-oriented agriculture. Additionally, it is feasible to establish institutions for cooperation and cultural exchange in the shapes of “China-Pak Film Center” and “China-Pak Art Culture and Folk Center” that can serve as excellent experience for the South Asian zone and few other nations along the “Road and Belt Initiative”.

2. CONCLUSION

The main focus and distinguishing feature of China-Pakistan bilateral relations should be seen as cultural cooperation and exchange. This will not only be in line with the global economic landscape and the new regional development trends, but also with the national interests of both China and Pakistan. Due to the distinctive role that culture plays in a nation and the fact that only cultural ties between nations can generate the kind of strong attraction that is unheard of in fields like the military and economy. Additionally, growth of the cultural industry aids in meeting people’s needs for a fulfilling spiritual and cultural life in the twenty-first century. Therefore, new approaches and techniques used in China and Pakistan’s cooperation and cultural exchange, particularly in the cultural sector, will significantly contribute to enormous economic growth in the two nations as well as the rest of Asia.

So we can say that, “China-Pakistan Shared Destiny” is a great example of how two civilizations can cooperate culturally. Cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan under the BRI have involved activities such as art exhibitions, music and dance performances, academic collaborations, and the promotion of language and education. Many Chinese and Pakistani cities have established sister city relationships to promote cultural and economic cooperation. For example, Karachi (Pakistan) and Xi’an (China) have a sister city agreement, which includes cultural exchanges. Chinese and Pakistani universities and educational institutions have partnered to facilitate student and faculty exchanges. These collaborations aim to promote cultural understanding and academic cooperation.

This initiative acknowledges the profound cultural heritage and diversity of both nations, recognizing the value of fostering deeper cultural connections as a means to bolster their long-standing political, economic, and strategic partnership. The cultural exchanges and cooperation encompass a wide array of activities, ranging from art exhibitions and music performances to educational collaborations and academic exchanges. These initiatives serve as bridges for cultural appreciation, knowledge sharing, and the celebration of shared traditions, all of which contribute to a more robust and enduring China-Pakistan relationship.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any competing interest.

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