



## CHINA-PAKISTAN CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: HOW CPEC PROMOTES THIS LINKAGE?

*Dr. JIANG Sheng*

*Lecturer*

*Xianda College of Economics and Humanities*

*Research Assistant of Center for Global Public Opinion of China*

*Shanghai International Studies University*

*Shanghai - China*

[shengjiang@shisu.edu.cn](mailto:shengjiang@shisu.edu.cn)

*Dr. Bilal Zubair*

*Assistant Professor*

*Department of Strategic Studies*

*National Defence University*

*Islamabad - Pakistan*

[bilal\\_zubair2001@hotmail.com](mailto:bilal_zubair2001@hotmail.com)

*Jahanzeb Khan*

*Assistant Professor*

*Area Study Center*

*University of Balochistan*

*Quetta - Pakistan*

[Jahanzeb.rind@gmail.com](mailto:Jahanzeb.rind@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*The Sino-Pakistan relationship is the epitome of enduring and time-tested friendships, despite the diverse culture and social system. Soon after the formation of the Peoples Republic of China, Pakistan recognized the PRC and established diplomatic relations with it in 1951. The Sino-Pakistan all-weather friendship is manifested in cultural exchange programs that have enhanced people-to-people contact between the two countries. With the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1951, cultural linkages started to grow. Pakistan and China enjoy a seven-decade-old friendship. The promotion of cultural communication between the peoples of the two countries has been one of the areas of focus. This research paper seeks to examine the cultural linkage between China and Pakistan. Religious coexistence, ceremonial, social stratification among genders, socialization, arts, graphics, and architecture characterizes the*

---



*cultures of the two countries. Over the past decade, the two countries have taken concrete measures to promote cultural linkages between them. Initiatives have been taken to promote cultural connections between the peoples of the two countries under the CPEC, which is a flagship project of BRI. The study focuses on both cultures, analyzing historical connections and the most recent trends in cultural ties between the PRC and Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** China, Pakistan, cultural Communication, CPEC. Urdu, Chinese.

### **Introduction**

Pakistan-China diplomatic relations were established in 1951. Pakistan was one of the first to recognize the People's Republic of China. Soon after the foundation of the PRC, Pakistan established diplomatic relations with it. Since then, the two countries have maintained cordial friendly ties. (Niazi, Shoaib, & Khalid, 2020) In March 1965, Beijing and Islamabad signed the cultural cooperation agreement, which was a significant step towards cultural cooperation and promotion. Since then, the two nations have been taking steps to promote their culture and enhance bilateral cultural communication.

In recent years, cultural communication between Pakistan and the PRC has been enhanced, promoting art, literature, education, and language. Moreover, both sides are taking initiatives to promote their language and educational exchanges. Beijing and Islamabad have signed agreements on cooperation in education, technology transfer, and the media. The cultural exchange programs and economic cooperation have led to further strengthening the bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan. Over the past decades, the two countries have been engaged in efforts to boost cultural communication. Numerous institutes have been established to enhance cultural communication. Furthermore, different programs of cultural communication have been initiated which aim to promote cultural linkages, including the teaching of the Chinese language and the promotion of Chinese heritage in Pakistan. Cultural communication between the two countries has been boosted with the start of Chinese language programs in Pakistan. Initiatives taken for enhancing cultural communication are taking the people of the two countries closer to each other and playing critical role in cementing the traditional Sino-Pakistan friendship (GUI & Arif, 2016). This research seeks to explore Sino-Pakistan cultural relations in historical context as well as discusses emerging trends in cultural communication between the two countries.

### **Research Methodology**



This research has been conducted through the qualitative methodology. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection have been used which includes research articles, books, online sources, newspapers, and official reports. The collected data is then analyzed through a qualitative method of discussion which enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the research.

### **Literature Review**

Literature Review is deemed an essential part of a research. The reviewed literature helps in providing background knowledge and other information about a specific study. Furthermore, it helps the researcher to suggest the dimension and methods of research. There are many studies relevant to this study.

Raja (2011) in his study “Prospects of Sino-Pakistan relationship” concludes that China has been cooperating with Pakistan since the formation of diplomatic ties. He is of the view that Pakistan also supported China in the diplomatic areas. He further discusses political linkage, economic cooperation, defense cooperation, nuclear cooperation, and energy cooperation between the two countries.

Rakisits (2012) highlights historical account of China-Pakistan relations. According to the author, China and Pakistan have differences in terms of their ideologies. China pursues communism, while Islam is pursued in Pakistan. However, despite these differences the two countries are cooperating and have established cordial friendly ties due to their national interest.

Kataria & Naveed (2014) have discussed China-Pakistan relations and highlighted social and economic cooperation between the two countries. The author conclude that Sino-Pakistan relationships are time-tested and reliable.

Small (2015) in his study “The China- Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics” focuses bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan. The is of the view that the two countries have sustained a real and time-tested cooperation since the establishment of PRC in 1951. He examines that China supported Pakistan during the Pakistan-India wars in 1965, 1971, and 1999. He is of the view that China relied on Pakistan to balance India in the region.

Ramay (2016) in his study “China Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Chinese dream being materialized through Pakistan” discusses that PRC is has made substantial progress particularly in the economic domain and become the world’s second-largest economy. The



author explains that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a flagship project of China's BRI project which will help Pakistan in overcoming its longstanding energy issue.

Ibrar & Rafiq (2016) have discussed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its role in cementing bilateral relationships between Beijing and Islamabad. The authors state that the mega project is one of the most important agreements signed between the two countries. Furthermore, he highlights the evaluation of the socio-cultural cooperation between the two countries and its positive impacts on Pakistan's economy.

Allaudin, Liu & Ahmed (2020) have discussed the evolution of China-Pakistan relations and evaluated the recent trends in relationships between the two countries in the wake of changing world scenario. The authors are of the view that relations between the two countries are deep-rooted in history and the ongoing collaboration between China and Pakistan in the area of defense and economy is the natural evolution of their mutual ties.

The above-mentioned studies cover different aspects of China-Pakistan relations. This research aims to explore cultural linkages between China and Pakistan and fill the void.

### **History of Cultural Exchange between China and Pakistan**

China and Pakistan enjoy good friendly relationships that are linked by common mountains and rivers. Sino-Pakistan friendship has a long history. About two thousand years ago, the renowned Silk Road of the world linked the two sides together. Despite their disparate social systems and cultural traditions, China and Pakistan have maintained a strong bilateral relationship. The two countries have continued their efforts to promote cultural communication. (Shanglin, 2001)

Though diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan were established seven decades ago, the two nations have intertwined roots of civilization that trace back to ancient civilization. There are many resemblances between Pakistani and Chinese civilizations, which remain a great source of stimulation and interaction. The integration of cross-cultures has never been an impediment to strengthening bilateral relationships and people-to-people contacts.

The Sino-Pakistan diplomatic relationships were established in year 1951. Since then, the two countries have accorded top priority to promoting economic and cultural ties as basic principle of their bilateral relations. In the year 1956, while highlighting the significance of civilizational exchange the two countries, Madam Soon Ching-Ling the than vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress stated that: "the

---



ancient civilization the in the lower valley of the River Indus and Chinese culture in the upper Yellow River basin thrived at about the same time. Our two countries share a long cultural heritage”. (Ishaque, 2020)

Since the establishment of their formal relations, Beijing and Islamabad have taken many steps to promote cultural communication. In March 1965, the Cultural Cooperation Agreement was signed between the two countries, a significant step was taken aimed at promoting two-way exchanges. Pakistan and China resumed the signing and implementation of the two-year executive Programme regularly which has resulted in cultural exchange and cooperation. (NUML, 2020)

Pakistan and China have conducted several “fruitful exchanges and cooperation in art, literature, education, information, sports, youth affairs, cultural relics, archives, publications, health and women affairs, etc.” Chinese arts groups visited various Pakistani cities. Besides, the two-way exchanges have also taken place in fields of painting, handicrafts, puppet shows etc. The two countries also taken initiatives to promote cooperation in field of TV and films and a special agreement was signed in this regard. In 1980s, many TV programs were jointly produced by TV channels of both countries to highlight the fondness of people of the two countries. (Jiqiong & Keyu , 2017)

China Radio International (CRI) that was established on December 3, 1941, is a state-run radio station broadcasting to a global audience, is aimed at promoting favorable relations between China and the world. The CRI-Urdu service is a significant cultural bridge between the people of China and Pakistan. The CRI-Urdu service aims to promote better cultural understanding between China and Pakistan. In addition, this service aims to facilitate the people to understand China and its dynamic cultural diversity. In 2015, Radio Pakistan and Chinese Radio International jointly initiated Dosti Channel (Friendship Channel) with aim to enhance friendly exchanges and cultural communication by means of radio broadcasting. The launch of this channel is indeed a new platform for cultural communication between the people of the two countries. (Gui & Arif, 2016)

### **Cultural Communication through Language Promotion**

Promotion of each other's language has been one of the main components of China-Pakistan cultural programs. The two countries have taken initiatives to promote the Chinese and Urdu languages. Both Chinese and Urdu are gaining popularity in their respective countries. During the 1950s, China established the Urdu department at Peking University, Beijing, which has been playing a crucial role in promoting the Urdu language, providing training to a substantial number of Chinese scholars. Also, the department has

---



translated Urdu books into Chinese and published the first-ever Urdu dictionary. In China, the Urdu language has become prominent, which is evident from the fact that about five universities in China offer Urdu language courses.

In the same way, the Chinese language has gained popularity in Pakistan, even more than this. In Pakistan, the government has introduced the Chinese language at a very basic level. Across the country, more schools have started teaching Chinese at the kindergarten level. The central and provisional governments are taking initiatives to make the Chinese language compulsory at public-sector institutes. In addition, China Study Centers have been established at different universities across the country. (Raza, 2020) In the year 1980, the teaching of Chinese in Pakistan commenced at the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad. Subsequently, sub-campuses of this institute were established in major cities of Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Hyderabad, Multan, and Faisalabad. NUML is deemed the pioneer institution of a cultural communication channel between the two friendly nations. The Chinese language department at NUML has helped in introducing China to the people of Pakistan as well as promoting people-to-people contacts between the two countries. (NUML, 2020)

In 1954, China's Peking University commenced Urdu language classes at the bachelor level. Since then, it has provided training to a huge number of diplomats, scholars, and teachers. Besides, the Communication University of China started Urdu language courses for bachelor students. An Urdu language programme was established at China's foreign studies university in 2007. Also, Luoyang PLA College of Foreign Languages and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies started teaching Urdu as a main subject. The Urdu programme at these institutes was intended not only to train diplomats, scholars, and teachers, but also to conduct comprehensive research on Pakistan's religion, society, and culture, which has played a significant role in the progress of bilateral relationships between China and Pakistan. (Wei, Huazhong, Mehmood, & Dekai, 2017)

The Pakistani culture and communication study center at Tsinghua University was founded in 2007 with the cooperation of the Pakistani government. It was China's first Pakistan Studies Center. This center focuses on Pakistani culture-related research and academic exchange, with the goal of strengthening bilateral cultural exchanges and cooperation, deepening mutual understanding of the two countries' histories and cultures, and promoting friendship and partnership between China and Pakistan. (Wei, Huazhong, Mehmood, & Dekai, 2017)

### **Recent trends in China-Pakistan Cultural Communication**

---



Several state institutes and private organizations have been created in Pakistan in recent years with the goal of improving cultural engagement with China. Pakistan and China have taken steps to further strengthen their relationships in the 21st century. Various programs of cultural communication have been initiated, which include teaching the Chinese language and introducing Chinese heritage to various cities in Pakistan. Learning the Chinese language has risen in popularity as a result of these activities, and it is now taught at public and private schools, colleges, and other institutions. Young people and professionals have been introduced to Chinese culture and civilization.

There are different institutes in Pakistan that seek to promote Chinese language programs in Pakistan. Chinese language centers have been established in all provinces of Pakistan aimed at promoting Chinese language programs in the country (Shanglin, 2001). Moreover, the China Study Centers have been established to serve as mini think tanks and promote academic and research linkages between Pakistani and Chinese universities. These centers mainly aim to enhance understanding of the Chinese system, culture, and economic system. (The News, 2021)

The initiation of Chinese language programs in Pakistan has improved cultural communication between the two countries. The cultural communication ventures are outstanding achievements that assist in bridging the gap between the peoples of the two countries and deepening the long-standing friendship.

In the year 2013, China initiated a mega project with the aim of connecting Pakistan's deep seaport Gwadar with China's Xinjiang region via a road and rail network called the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. CPEC is considered a flagship project of the BRI. The mega project comprises energy projects, infrastructure development projects, and industrial development. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has given new impetus to China-Pakistan relations, which were already strong. It is deemed the new frontier of Sino-Pakistan bilateral cooperation. Besides economic and trade initiatives, the two countries have also taken initiatives to increase people-to-people contacts. In 2008, Pakistan and China signed a youth exchange programme aimed at promoting educational activities between universities in the two countries. Additionally, the year 2012 was celebrated as the year of friendship to give impetus to people-to-people communication. During the past ten years, China and Pakistan have initiated many cultural exchange programs. (Jiqiong & Keyu, 2017)

### **Enhancement of Pakistan-China People-to-People after CPEC**





To enhance people-to-people contacts, China and Pakistan have taken initiatives during the past decade. Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, cultural activities have received considerable boost, with locals getting better opportunities to showcase their talents to an international audience. China and Pakistan have initiated measures that are aimed at closing the gap between their two diverse cultures. In addition to strengthening economic and trade ties, the promotion of cultural linkages between the two countries has also been an important part of the CPEC project. In May 2013, Chinese Premier LI, during his visit to Pakistan, signed several cooperation-related documents that were aimed at enhancing cultural linkages between Pakistan and China. The premier made a promise to send 1000 teachers to Pakistan to teach the Chinese language. In addition, China has extended scholarships to Pakistani students to receive higher education at Chinese universities. More youth delegations were also promised to exchange visits and invite Chinese cultural troupes to Pakistan. In December 2013, the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Sun Weidong, while sharing his views with journalists in Islamabad, said that China intends to keep a tradition of high-level exchanges between the two nations. (Spearhead Research, 2017).

The last decade has seen a growing number of cultural delegations from both countries. Cultural exchange is a key component of CPEC. In a speech to the Pakistani Senate in 2013, Chinese Premier Keqiang Li said, "It is necessary to engage citizens of both Pakistan and China in mutual interaction through cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts." With CPEC, cultural activities between the two countries have grown, with people from both sides getting more opportunities to explore each other's cultures. (Spearhead Research, 2017)

With the launch of CPEC, cultural exchange between China and Pakistan increased. The past decades have seen the extension of cooperation and understanding between governments and the acceptance of the people. Additionally, people-to-people relationships between the two nations strengthened. Students, artists, businessmen, professionals, and workers travelled and developed rapport with locals. They played a role in strengthening cross-cultural relations. (Niazi, Shoaib, & Khalid, 2020)

Over the past few years, the educational exchange and cooperation between the two countries have developed a lot. China has provided hundreds of scholarships to Pakistani students, not only for learning the Chinese language but also in other areas. In 2017, over 19,000 Pakistani students were studying in various fields in the PRC.

Several short- and long-term initiatives are being implemented to bring the two countries' peoples closer together. For example, "Pakistan Study Centers" in China and "China Study





Centers" in Pakistan are being established, as are frequent youth exchange programs and language understanding programs, as well as extensive scholarship programs. The two countries commemorated the "Pakistan-China Year of Friendly Exchanges" in 2015. A series of events were held by both sides to foster mutual understanding between the two countries, including the opening of a Chinese cultural center in Islamabad. Chengdu and Lahore, Karamay and Gwadar, and Zhuhai and Gwadar have been designated as sister cities by both states. Pakistan built the Pakistan-China Friendship Pavilion in the cultural capital of Lahore as part of friendly year interactions. Along with media collaboration, China has announced a training programme for 2000 Pakistani experts. Dr. Julan, a prominent Chinese expert on the Urdu language, is also working on a project to compile a Chinese-Urdu dictionary. ( Hameed, 2017)

### **Socio-cultural Cooperation under CPEC**

The role of socio-cultural cooperation is deemed crucial in promoting regional cooperation. The time-tested partnership between China and Pakistan is based on the mutual understanding of their cultures, traditions, and languages. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is considered a game-changer for the social and cultural development of Pakistan. In 2010, a Pakistan-China friendship center was established in Islamabad. In China, four Pakistan Study Centers have been established by the Chinese government and around 8,000 Pakistani students are enrolled in different disciplines in China. In 2011, the Sindh government announced that it would start teaching the Chinese language as a compulsory subject on September 6th, 2013. In addition, the Sindh government set aside Rs. 625 million in 2012 for Chinese language instruction. In August 2008, Beijing and Islamabad signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Pakistan-China University of Engineering, Science, and Technology to build a permanent campus. The National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad opened a Confucius Institute in 2005. The socio-cultural cooperation between Pakistan and China has been progressing in recent years. (Ibrar & Rafiq, 2016)

Pakistan and China are taking initiatives on multiple cultural and educational exchanges to strengthen relationships between the two countries. Mr. Zhang, the director of the China Cultural Center after the opening of the Wuhan Photography and Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition and Art Workshop at the Pakistan National Council of Arts stated that: "The aim of organizing such cultural events is to make Pakistani students and people understand the rich cultural heritage of China and promote people-to-people contact, which is one of the core objectives of CPEC's second phase, and to celebrate the mid-autumn festival,". (Dawn, 2019)



Under the 2019-2022 Cultural Exchange Programme, the two nations are working on six agreements aimed at firm ties in areas of culture, education, and tourism. Pakistan and China will sign more agreements in the future to promote tourism, higher education, youth exchange, exchange of films and television shows, and the protection of cultural products. China, Pakistan working on multiple cultural exchange programs. (Dawn, 2019)

### **Tourism and Cultural Communication**

The role of the tourism industry in the progress of any economy is vital. CPEC has created new opportunities for the people of China and Pakistan to cross their borders with more ease. The cultural norms of Pakistani society have the potential to attract Chinese tourists to visit the country's tourist spots. CPEC provides opportunities for Pakistani tourists to visit China and explore the historic sites of China as well as Chinese culture. In China and Pakistan, there is a diverse range of places known for tourism, which includes the Great Wall of China, the majestic beauty of Azad Kashmir, the Forbidden City, the Lahore Fort, etc., which are the places that have the potential to generate a great deal of tourism for both countries. (CPIC, 2018) Tourism is an important way to promote cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan. During the last two decades, Pakistan became a destination of tourism for Chinese tourists. In 2015, about 50,000 Chinese tourists visited Pakistan and their number increased to 80,000 in 2019. (News Wire International, 2020)

Pakistan and China are taking steps to improve bilateral cooperation in cultural fields. Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is the flagship project of BRI, Sino-Pakistan relations are witnessing new trends in the economic, trade, political, and strategic domains. Besides, the two countries are taking measures to develop cultural communication. The cultural exchange allows people on both sides to better understand each other's cultures and important aspects of society.

### **Conclusion**

This article discussed cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Pakistan. Sino-Pakistan bilateral relations are characterized by cultural exchange and cooperation. It has evolved into the primary focus of the two countries' relations. Sino-Pakistan cultural ties began to develop when the PRC was established in 1949. Pakistan and China have established cordial friendly ties where the promotion of culture is one of the areas of top priority. Besides diplomatic and economic ties, the PRC and Pakistan have also prioritized the area of cultural communication, which is evident from their initiatives in this respect. Furthermore, over the last decades or so, as economic and trade ties have grown, people-to-people contacts between the two countries have also developed. Both countries have



taken concrete measures to promote cultural linkages between the two countries. Under the CPEC, which is a flagship project of BRI, initiatives have been taken to promote people-to-people contacts. The study focused on both cultures, analyzing historical connections and the most recent trends in cultural ties between the PRC and Pakistan. Cultural exchange between the two friendly nations has been bolstered in the form of art, literature, education, language, etc. Agreements on cooperation in education, technology transfer, and the media have been signed. Besides, China has offered thousands of scholarships to Pakistani students, which are playing a significant role in promoting cultural exchange between the two countries. The China-Pakistan bilateral relationship has become closer, and communication between the two countries is increasing. Due to cultural differences, cross-cultural communication impediments are prominent between China and Pakistan. Despite these barriers, the two nations made efforts for better cross-cultural communication.



## References

- Hameed, R. (2017). Pakistan and China: Partnership, Prospects and the Course Ahead. *Pluto Journals*, 14(1).
- Allauddin, Liu, H., & Ahmed, R. Q. (2020). The Changing Dynamics and New Developments of China–Pakistan Relations. *Indian Quarterly*, 76(1). Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0974928419901195>
- CPIC. (2018, July 23). THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE OF CPEC. Retrieved from <https://www.cpicglobal.com/the-cultural-exchange-of-cpec/>
- Dawn. (2019, September). China, Pakistan working on multiple cultural exchange programmes'. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1505219>
- Gui, B., & Arif, M. (2016). Exploring Channels of Cultural Communication between Pakistan and China. *Media Watch*, 7(2), 185-199. doi:DOI: 10.15655/mw/2016/v7i2/98724
- GUI, B., & Arif, M. (2016). Exploring Channels of Cultural Communication between Pakistan and China. *Media Watch*, 7(2).
- Ibrar, M., & Rafiq, M. (2016). China Pakistan Economic Corridor: Socio-cultural Cooperation and its Impact on Pakistan. *2016 5th EEM International Conference on Education Science and Social Science*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320554555>
- Ishaque, W. (2020, November 4). Culture: Key player in Enhancing Sino-Pak Bilateral Ties. Center for Global & Strategic Studies. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/hp/Desktop/Papers/Culture-Key-Player-in-Enhancing-Sino-Pak-Bilateral-Ties.pdf>
- Jiqiong, W., & Keyu, Z. (2017, July). Thinking on the Ways of Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation. *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, 30(2).
- News Wire International. (2020, December 31). Tourism good medium to promote cultural exchange. Retrieved from <https://www.newswire.com.pk/2020/12/31/tourism/>



- Niazi, K., Shoaib, M., & Khalid, A. (2020, December 24). An Ethnographic Study of Cross-Cultural Relations between China and Pakistan under the Umbrella of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 48, 274-293.
- NUML. (2020). Culture: Key Player in Enhancing Sino-Pak bilateral ties. *Analysis Paper Group 3 Week 1*. Retrieved from <https://www.numl.edu.pk/newsletters/1630308924Sample%20Analysis%20Paper.pdf>
- Raza, K. (2020, July 20). Language policy for China-Pakistan cooperation. Retrieved from <https://www.languageonthemove.com/language-policy-for-china-pakistan-cooperation/>
- Shanglin, L. (2001, July). Pakistan-China Relations. *Pakistan Horizon*, 54(3). Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41393998>
- Spearhead Research. (2017, November). CPEC: Enhancing Pakistan-China Cultural Exchange. Retrieved from <https://spearheadresearch.org/>
- The News. (2021, July 29). HEC notifies establishment of six China Study Centres. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/866015-hec-notifies-establishment-of-six-china-study-centres#:~:text=The%20China%20Study%20Centres%20are,%2C%20culture%2C%20and%20economic%20miracle.%20Friday%20January%2028,%202022>
- Wei, Z., Huazhong, T., Mehmood, T., & Dekai, H. (2017). Pak-China Relations & Pakistan Studies in China: An Analysis from Chinese Perspective. *MUSLIM PERSPECTIVES*, II(1).

