



RESEARCH PAPER

Cultural Implications of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: July 18, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: October 03, 2021</p> <p>Online: October 06, 2021</p> <p>Keywords: China, CPEC Culture, Exhibitions</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: amirjahangir82@gmail.com</p>	<p>This study is an attempt to highlight the cultural implication of CPEC on Pak-China relations, how it will align two nations culturally, and what steps were taken by the governments of two states to bring the people closer. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, the cultural aspect of relations between the two states also moved forward. The flow of cultural delegations intensified after the 2010, because this year was celebrated as the 'Pak-China Friendship Year'. This dimension of relations further cemented between the two states with the signing of CPEC in April 2015. CPEC will not only bring economic prosperity in Pakistan but it will also bring two states culturally closer. The roads and other communication link under this project will become source of cultural flow between the two states.</p>

Introduction

Culture is a very wide term. It has many components or it consists of various elements e.g language, values, norms, eating habits, food, wearing style, interaction with others, greetings, tourism, art, music, and millions of other. The history of cultural relations between Pakistan and China goes back to the period when traders, tourists, intellectuals and government agents voyaged on camels through the silk route from one state to another). During the British Raj in subcontinent, contacts between China and present day Pakistan were controlled at both formal and informal levels (Chaudhri, 1986). The cultural relations between the two states were restarted in 1950's, when the Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra personally met with Premier Chou En-Lai at Bandung Conference (1955) and removed his apprehensions about the Pakistan's involvement in SEATO (Anwar, 1974). After that exchange of culture delegations, scholars, writers, intellectuals, artists etc. took place between the two states but the intensity in exchange of cultural delegations and cultural programmes was seen after the signing of CPEC. In April 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping came to Pakistan to sign the formal document of CPEC,

he laid emphasis on the exchange of cultural delegations. He said cultural relations between the two states should be promoted to transfer the excellent political relations between the two states to the hearts of the people of Pakistan and China (Address President Xi, April 20, 2015). Before this when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang came to Pakistan in April 2013, he also stressed upon the intensification of Pak-China cultural ties (Shirin, 2017). Prime Minister Nawaz Shrif also highlighted the significance to promote the cultural cooperation between the two states when he visited China in July 2013 to sign the MoU on CPEC (Joint Statement 2015). The year 2015 was designated as “China-Pakistan Year of Friendly Exchange” (Address of Chinese President, 2015). The governments of Pakistan and China have taken a number of measures to promote the cultural ties between the two states.

Measures to Over-come Language Barrier

The most significant component of culture is language. When two states wants to come culturally closer than they have to overcome language barrier. If mean of communication is a single language (without translator) then emotions and sentiments can better be conveyed. Chinese language is one of the basic languages of the World. It is widely spoken around the globe but this language is a bit difficult than other languages because to learn this language one has to learn almost 3,000 to 5,000 characters. After signing of CPEC between Pakistan and China a number of Chinese companies, workers, engineers and technicians come to Pakistan. So to interact with these Chinese, experts in Chinese language are required. Central along the provincial government in Pakistan has taken steps in this regard. Different government institutions have offered Chinese language courses of short and long span in Pakistan. Some institutions have even offered weekend classes so professionals can also get benefit. Some courses are offered free of cost and few have nominal charges.

In Pakistan the first Confucius Institute was established in Islamabad at National University of Modern Languages (NUML) with the collaboration of Beijing Language and Culture University in 2005. Pakistan was the first Muslim state to recognized People’s Republic of China in 1950’s and she retains the honour by establishing first Confucius Institute in Islamabad (numal.edu.pk). Now NUML has set up its campus in Gawardar on the directives of Mamnoon Hussain, the President of Pakistan. The purpose of this campus is primarily to teach Chinese language to the people of Gawardar and Balochi language to Chinese nationals working at Gawardar (Raza, 2016). The Multan campus of NUML also offered Chinese language course since 2007 (multan.numl.edu.pk). After that Confucius institutes has been established at ‘Agricultural University: Faisalabad’, ‘University of the Punjab: Lahore’, ‘University of Karachi: Karachi’, and one is under process of development in Gilgit (Shirin, 2017 & Rahim, et. al. 2018).

To promote Chinese culture, language and research on China, ‘Excellence of China Study Centre’ is established in ‘Government College University (GCU):

Lahore', 'COMSAT: Islamabad' and at 'University of Peshawar (UoP): Peshawar'. In 2016 while inaugurating the Chinese Study Centre at UoP, Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong said that the Centre will promote Pak-China friendship through educational means. UoP has academic collaboration and coordination with three universities of China (Nihao-Salam Magazine, 2017).

Chinese languages courses are now offered in almost all major cities of Pakistan. 'Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA)' has offered Chinese language course of three months at its technical colleges in five major cities of Punjab namely Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Gujranwala along three cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda (Zia, 2017). The main objective of TEVTA is to initially produce almost 15,000 skilled labour forces that has grip on Chinese language, so they can get jobs in Chinese companies working in Pakistan. KP-government has offered free of cost Chinese language course at 'Government Technical Teachers Training College Hayatabad, Peashawar' (cpecvela.com, 2017). 'Punjab Jianguo Cultural Centre', 'Punjab Institute of Language, Art & Culture', and 'Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) Language Institute' near Ghalib Market, are offering Chinese language courses at Lahore. PCI has offered Chinese language courses first in Islamabad and then in Lahore and now it is planning to expand its scope to Karachi and Gawardar (Ali & Zahid, 2017). 'Pakistan-China Culture Centre', 'Pakistan Institute of Management (PIM)', 'Institute of Career Development', 'DHA Central Library' has organized Chinese language classes in Karachi after sensing the significance of CPEC. A Chinese government institute 'China Dream Culture' is working in Pakistan to promote Chinese culture in Pakistan mainly Chinese language (chinadreamculture.com, 2017).

Both government and private sectors put effort to introduced Chinese language at school level. Roots School System in private sector took lead in this regard. Rootshave introduced a separate department called the 'Roots Chinese Languages Department (RCLD)' after the 'Pakistan-China Friendship Year 2011' to strengthen the youth cooperation between the two states. At Roots Chinese language is taught a full time course from level I to VII (Mushtaq, 2017). 'Metropolitan International University College (MIUC)' that lies under Roots offers Chinese Mandarin to the undergraduate students (tribune.com.pk, 2017). KP government also moved a proposal to the cabinet for the inclusion of Chinese language as an optional subject from grade VI to XII. The proposal is not approved yet. Chinese language was also introduced in schools of Sindh since 2013. An amount of Rs. 625 million was approved by Sindh Education Department for the Chinese language programme (Mushtaq, 2017).

Federal government along the provincial governments even offered fully funded foreign scholarships to learn Chinese language in China. The first step in this regard was taken by the Punjab government, in December 2015 Chief Minister

Shahbaz Sharif decided to send 500 talented students to China to learn Chinese language (ue.edu.pk, 2017). In 2017, Government of Balochistan has sent 50 brilliant students from the province to China to learn Chinese language on scholarship. In November 2017, on the behalf of government of Pakistan Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has granted one year language scholarship for the students of Gawardar to learn Chinese language in top Chinese institutions and universities (hec.gov.pk, 2017).

To promote the Chinese language in Pakistan the first ever newspaper in Chinese language, Huashang, has been launched in Pakistan. Before that Confucius Institute, Islamabad has launched two Chinese language radio stations for the promotion of Chinese language in 2010. One is broadcast from Lahore (FM 95) and other is from Islamabad (FM 104.6) (Shirin, 2017).

These are the steps taken to overcome the gap produced by the language barrier between the two states. Once the language barrier is overcomes then it will also become the source to promote Chinese tourism in Pakistan and create more jobs opportunity for local people.

Tourism in Pakistan due to CPEC

Topographically Pakistan is blessed with all type of landscapes ranging from highest mountain peaks of the world to sea, from lush green-valleys to scorching deserts. These landscapes are source of attraction for tourists from all over the world. The number of tourists will increase in Pakistan due to batter road facilities under CPEC in Pakistan and will become a cause to flourish tourism industry in remote areas. With the concentration of tourists in Pakistan the economic condition of local people will become sound. Other than economic factor the tourists will also enjoy the local culture and hospitality.

The northern road route under CPEC, starts from Burhan Interchange and ended at Khunjrab Pass. This route mainly covers the northern areas of Pakistan. Gilgit, Baltistan, Hunza, Mansara and Abbottabad are main tourist's destination in northern areas due to mighty glaciers, lush green valleys, scenic beauty and diverse cultural heritage. These areas include the second highest peak of the world K-2 besides five other peaks having elevation of more than 8,000m and fifty over 7,000m. These mountains attract mountaineers from all over the World. Gilgit has a special attraction for Chinese tourist due to the presence of graveyard of Chinese workers that laid their lives during the construction of Karakoram Highway in mid 1970s. Gilgit also attract adventaurists due to the presence of Asia's largest suspension bridge (Qayyum & Javed, 2015). Chinese tourists can access Gilgit easily because a bus services is operational between Gilgit and Kashgar (China) with nominal fare since 2006 (nacto.gov.pk, 2017). From Gilgit the tourist can access the other routes of CPEC with valid visa.

Eastern route of CPEC covers major historical and culturally rich areas of Punjab and Sindh. Taxila just an hour drive from Islamabad is once the heartland of Gandhara civilization and Buddhist establishment (Tarar, 2015). The city is included in the UNESCO'S world heritage in 2006. Taxila is a source to access ancient Buddhist art and architecture. The old Buddhist art and crafts were preserved in the Taxila Museum that attracts Buddhists not only from China but also from other states of Buddhist concentration (Javad, 2015). Moving straight from Islamabad to Lahore one has to pass from Khewra Salt Range. This salt mine has historical significance as it was discovered by Alexander in 326BC, while passing from Pakistan its forces stopped at this place and during stay they observed that their horses started licking the rocks. So, they got clue from horses one of the soldier of Alexander army also lick the rock and founded them salty. These salt mines are second largest in world. Now for Chinese attraction a miniature of Great Wall of China is built inside the mine (Javed, 2015) . Lahore is the cultural capital of Pakistan. Lahore offers a lot of attractions for tourists from Mughal heritage to Chinese, Tai and Continental cuisine (Tarar, 2015). In April 2015, Mayor, Tang Lianghzi, of Chengdu visited Lahore. During his visit an agreement was signed between the two provincial governments in which Lahore and Chengdu was declared as twin cities. The agreement also addressed to promote tourism and economic activities between the twin cities. A proposal was also made by the visiting Mayor for thr regulation of flight services between the two provinces (Express Tribune, 2015). After passing through the plains of Punjab the Easter Route reach the culturally rich and diverse province of Pakistan, Sindh. The first destination of CPEC in Sindh is Sukkur the third largest city of province. After that comes the city of Hyderabad. Hyderabad fascinates the visitors due to architectural sites like, Hyderabad Fort, Kachha Qilla and Rani Bagh. Rani Bagh was 200 year old and was named after the Queen Victoria of England. Another significance of Hyderabad is, it is located just 110kms away from pre-harappa archeological sites. Then the metropolitan city of Pakistan, Karachi comes that has historical as well as unforgettable recreational sites for tourists (Javed, 2015). Karachi the city of lights was declared the twin city of Shanghai in 1984 and since that both cities have frequent exchange of visits of officials from both cities (Foreign Affairs Office Shanghai, 2015). Karachi is connected with Gwardar via Makran coastal highway. Makran coastal highway mainly passes through Balochistan province is one of the most scenic coastal highways of the world. Other than scenic beauty of the coastal highway the area can grab the tourists due to the presence of 'Princess of Hope', 'Sphinx' and 'NaniMandar' and become a source to earn foreign exchange.

Western and Central Route of CPEC mainly pass through the culturally diverse regions of Pakistan (Balochistan and KPK). These areas did not attract many tourists from last one decade due to the wave of extremism and terrorism. Military security tightens in these areas after signing of CPEC, so there are batter chances and opportunities for tourists to explore these areas too.

Chinese Restaurants and Food

Couples of Chinese restaurants are working in Pakistan. These restaurants are offering Chinese cuisines and other food items. Top ten Chinese restaurant in Pakistan are 'Yum! Chinese and Tai Restaurant', 'Mei Kong', 'Taipei', 'China Town', 'Bon Vivant Palais', 'Dynasty', 'X2 Pan Asian', 'China Citi', 'Oriental', and 'Nihao Chinese & Continental restaurant' (tripadvisor, 2015). Other than these, many other Chinese restaurants are also working in Pakistan and many other continental restaurants are offering Chinese food. Chinese rice and soups are very popular among the Pakistani masses. These restaurants are mainly concentrated in major cities of Pakistan. The chain of these restaurants will be opened in other cities and towns around the project proposed under CPEC and will uplift the local economy.

Other than these restaurants individual cook jobs are offered in different areas of Pakistan for those who know how to cook Chinese foods. Beside handsome salary package, the cooks are also offered some lucrative incentives like free accommodation, food and medical facilities. So it's a good opportunity of local people to get benefit from their skills.

Pak-China Cultural Exhibitions and Events (2015-2017)

To promote Chinese culture in Pakistan, several Chinese cultural exhibitions are held in Pakistan. Inauguration of Sangam Club at Chinese Embassy is way forward in this regard. Sangam Club is launching such activities through which the members of club can learn more about Chinese culture (Sun Weidong, 2016). Within the years this club has arranged trip of China for more than 200 teachers, students, medical staff and journalists (Awan, 2017). While addressing the Sangam Club Gala in 2016 the Chinese ambassador Sun said we are friends from long time but now we have to take a new start by connecting people of two nations together (Sun Weidong, 2016). At the Annual Sangam Club Gala 2017, special children from Balochistan entertained the audience by their cultural performance beside the other performances (Awan 2017).

Film exhibitions are best way to express culture of a state. To promote Chinese culture in Pakistan a Chinese film week was celebrated in May 2016 before this a film week was celebrated in 2006. During a week-long film exhibition four renowned Chinese films, 'River', 'ATA', 'The Verse of Us', and 'Young Love Lost' were displayed in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2016). Despite language hurdle these films received very warm response in Pakistan before this in 1980 a Pakistani film *Mera Naam Hai Mohabbat* (My Name is Love) was showed in Chinese cinema and got positive response there (The Nation, 2004).

In May 2016, two days Chinese Mela was held in LokVirsa, Islamabad. Mala was consisted of photographic, and craftwork exhibitions of Pakistani and Chinese artisans. The mala also included Chinese cuisines. The mala was graced by

ambassador Sun and Senator Pervaiz Rashid besides other guest from China and Pakistan. The Chinese cultural mala ended on a musical ceremony in which Pakistani and Chinese artists gave their skillful performance (Shahid, 2016).

In December 2016 Chinese artists from Xinjiang province organized a cultural programme at Pakistan National Council of Art (PNCA), Islamabad. This cultural programme was named as 'Glamorous China, Colorful Xinjiang'. During this programme seventeen traditional cultural performances were presented. These performances included Tajik, Uygurs and Kazakh traditional dances and songs. One joint performance was presented by Pakistani and Chinese artists after a week-long practice. Mr. Sun commented that these cultural performances provide any opportunity to people of Pakistan to discovered culture of Xinjiang.

The year 2017 witness a number of Chinese cultural activities in Pakistan. In August (2017), an exhibition of Southern Chinese culture, 'Passion for Silk, Porcelain and Tea' was held at PNCA, where tea, Chinese silk and porcelain were exhibited. Tea is an important component of Chinese culture for almost thousand years. It is discovered in the dynasty of Emperor ShenNung. During the exhibition different types of tea was presented to audience and beside this the Chinese tea expert, Mr. Xiang Zongzhou told the audience about the etiquettes of tea drinking and teach them how to hold the cup of tea. The second item of exhibition was Chinese Silk. Chinese was famous for its silk product since 6,000 years ago. Two Chinese cities, Hangzhou and Zhenjiang, are best known for silk production in China. Ms. Yu Zhiyin a Chinese artisan had demonstrated how sophisticated Hangzhou embroidery is made. Third item of exhibition was porcelain. Two areas, Shangu and Zhejiang, in China are famous for porcelain. Porcelain is originated in these areas during 'Eastern Han Dynasty'. A specialist, Mr. Jin Xin, came from China to exhibit the art of decorating porcelain (Javed, 2017). This exhibition was very informative regarding Chinese culture because three important components were not only exhibited but people get information and knowledge about their usage and history of origin during different Chinese dynasty.

In November 2017, China Cultural Centre has launched two cultural programmes. A ten days long programme 'Tai Chi' was organized in courtyard of China Cultural Centre on November 20. 'Tai Chi' is Chinese martial art that is beneficial for health as well as for defence training. Tese classes were attended by people from different age group and different walks of life of Pakistan (China Culture Centre, 2017). Another week long Chinese cultural painting programme was held at PNCA. The programme was based on traditional Chinese cultural 'Ink-Wash Painting' for public and it was free of cost. The painting classes were commenced on November 22 (Associated Press Pakistan, 2017). 'Ink-Wash' painting is mandatory part of Chinese traditional culture that was originated in the period of Song Empire in China. This style of painting that emerged in 5th century was actually created by using black ink and water. During 8th century colours were

added in these painting by Chinese poet Wang Wei. The main themes of these paintings are creation of landscapes. The painting classes organized in Pakistan are attended by students from Pak-Turk School, Roots Millennium School and Islamabad Collage of Arts and Science (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2017). The purpose of this programme was to give information about Chinese traditional painting to Pakistani youth.

In November 2017, a CPEC Cultural Caravan toured along the road routs of CPEC. This cultural caravan was consists of talented film makers, writer, musicians and artists from Pakistan and China. This caravan was guided by an anthropologist having vast knowledge of culture and society of Pakistan. During the two week long travelling, the caravan enjoyed the local cultural, folk music, painting and landscapes of surrounding areas. The Chinese nationals that accompanied the caravan were highly impressed by the diverse culture and local hospitality in Pakistan. The musicians in the caravan had documented the local folk music and also performed at different places and enthralled the locals (pnca.org.com, 2017). This was a great opportunity for Chinese and local people to interact with each other.

A two days musical gala 'Rhythm of Liaohai' was organized in December 2017 in Islamabad. This gala was jointly organized by China Cultural Centre in Pakistan and the Liaoning Song and Dance Ensemble. Both Chinese and Pakistani artists participated in the gala. The musical gala was consisted of thirteen traditional Pakistani and Chinese cultural performances. Folk dance 'Yangge' and traditional dances 'Wondering in the Forest' and 'Drums Praise the Flourishing Age' from China enthralled the audience. Balti dance, Khattak martial dance and Punjabi Bhangra from Pakistani artists were highly appreciated by the audience. Other than audience the traditional performances were praised by Chinese ambassador Mr. Yao Jing and Miss Marryam Aurangzeb, the Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting (Islamabad scene.com, 2017).

Conclusion:

After the signing of CPEC by the government of Pakistan and China a number of measures are taken to culturally connect two nations. Language was once a big hurdle of communication between the people of two states but to overcome this gap government of Pakistan offered fully funded scholarship along the introduction of Chinese language course at different technical institution even free of cost. Initially Chinese experts have been hired to teach Chinese language. If Chinese language will be introduced as compulsory subject in early classes and optional subject in degree classes than the next generation will be Chinese literate and will be in better position to avail good jobs in Chinese companies working in Pakistan.

CPEC open new avenue of tourism in Pakistan. Many areas that were not in the access of tourist due to bad road conditions are now attracted towards these

areas due to better ways of communications like once Makran coastal highway was a muddy track but now it is one of the world most scenic drive way. In past one or two decade Pakistan tourism industry did not progress much due to terrorism and extremist but due to CPEC army step forward to provided security along the project of CPEC and control the extensive wave of terrorism. The better security conditions become a cause of tourists flow in Pakistan.

Chinese cultural flow is intensified after CPEC. The culturally exhibitions and shows were once held after many years but now these events are order of the day. Pakistani youth is interested in learning Chinese cultural and history. These exhibitions provide them an opportunity to learn about the Chinese culture. These cultural exhibitions further tightened the bond of Pak-China friendship.

Although few Chinese films were exhibited in Pakistan but that were very limited its intensity would be increase to enhance the media cooperation. Joint productions and ventures would be promoted to bring both states culturally closer. Motivational programmes and conference would be arranged to promote maximum youth to learn Chinese language and also tell them the economic significance to learn this language because few people have reservations to learn Chinese language. Maximum protection should be given to international tourists to promote the tourism industry in Pakistan that can generate handsome revenue and become a cause to uplift the economy of Pakistan.

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