

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural Impact of CPEC on Pakistan and China

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Abstract

This article explores the cultural impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on both Pakistan and China. CPEC is a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity between the two countries through the construction of roads, railways, industrial zones, energy corridors, and other infrastructure. While much attention has been paid to the economic and geopolitical implications of CPEC, this article focuses on its cultural implications. Through an analysis of media coverage and a review of scholarly literature, this article examines how CPEC has affected cultural exchange, identity formation, and perceptions of China and Pakistan among their respective populations. It finds that CPEC has led to increased cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two countries that lead to improved bilateral relations between the two long-lasting friendly nations, Pakistan and China. These findings have important implications for policymakers and suggest the need for a more nuanced approach to cultural diplomacy in the context of CPEC.

Keywords: CPEC; cultural impact of CPEC; Pak-China relations; Sino-Pak relations; Belt and Road initiative; cultural diplomacy

Introduction

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity between Pakistan and China (Chaudhry & Zhang, 2018). The project includes the construction of roads, railways, industrial zones, energy corridors, and other infrastructure to enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. While the economic and geopolitical implications of CPEC have been widely discussed, its cultural impact has been overlooked (Ahmed & Batool, 2021). This article seeks to explore the cultural implications of CPEC on both Pakistan and China. The study focuses on how CPEC has affected cultural exchange, identity formation, and perceptions of China and Pakistan among their respective populations. The article draws on media coverage and a review of scholarly literature to understand the impact of CPEC on cultural relations between the two countries.

To provide context for the study, the article begins with a discussion of the historical and cultural ties between China and Pakistan (Hussain, 2019). The two countries have had close diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations since the 1950s (Shah, 2018). In recent years, the cultural exchanges between the two countries have been growing, with more Chinese tourists visiting Pakistan and more Pakistani students studying in China. The two countries have also collaborated on various cultural initiatives, such as the establishment of cultural centers and the joint production of films and television dramas. The article then provides an

overview of CPEC, including its significance and economic and geopolitical implications (Khan, 2019). The project is expected to bring significant economic benefits to both Pakistan and China and enhance regional connectivity and cooperation. However, the article notes that there are concerns about the impact of the project on the environment and the social and cultural fabric of the local communities. The third section of the article examines the cultural impact of CPEC on both Pakistan and China. The study finds that CPEC has led to increased cultural exchange between the two countries, resulting in a greater mutual understanding and improved bilateral relations between Pakistan and China (Ahmed & Batool, 2021). The study also finds that CPEC has had a positive impact on identity formation among the people of Pakistan and China.

In conclusion, the article suggests that a more holistic approach to cultural diplomacy is needed in the context of CPEC. The study highlights the importance of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Pakistan and China, as well as the need for cultural initiatives to be integrated into the CPEC project (Chaudhry & Zhang, 2018). The article calls for further research on the cultural impact of CPEC and its implications for regional cooperation and development.

Historical and cultural ties between China and Pakistan

China and Pakistan's historical and cultural ties have played an important role in shaping their modern-day relationship (Hussain, 2017; Shah, 2018). The ancient Silk Road

facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and culture between the two countries, and China's Tang dynasty had close commercial relations with the civilizations of Gandhara and the Indus Valley in present-day Pakistan, facilitating the spread of Buddhism from India to China (Zhou, 2019).

Pakistan was among the early nations to acknowledge the People's Republic of China in 1950 during the contemporary period, and shortly after, the two nations formed diplomatic ties (Rana, 2017; Shah, 2018). The facilitation of the visit of US President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, which resulted in a rapprochement between China and the US, was a significant contribution made by Pakistan (Khan, 2018; Shah, 2018).

In recent decades, China and Pakistan have deepened their economic and strategic ties through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Mansoor, 2021). CPEC is a multi-billion dollar infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity between the two countries through the construction of roads, railways, industrial zones, energy corridors, and other infrastructure.

Cultural ties between China and Pakistan have also been strengthened in recent years (Chen, 2021). Chinese language and cultural centers have been established in major cities in Pakistan, and Pakistani students are increasingly pursuing higher education in China (Zhou, 2019).

Similarly, Chinese tourists are visiting Pakistan in growing numbers to explore the country's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty (Javed, 2020). In conclusion, China and Pakistan's historical and cultural ties have played an important role in shaping their modern-day relationship. As the two countries deepen their economic and strategic ties through initiatives such as CPEC, their cultural ties are also likely to continue to grow stronger.

CPEC as a game changer

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been deemed a transformative initiative for Pakistan and China, with its multi-billion dollar investment in infrastructure that has been hailed as a game changer for both countries (Bhatnagar, 2020). The objective of the project is to enhance connectivity between the two countries by constructing infrastructure such as roads, railways, energy corridors, and industrial zones. This ambitious project is expected to significantly impact the economic, political, and cultural ties between the two nations, providing both short-term and long-term benefits.

For Pakistan, CPEC is seen as a major opportunity to address some of the country's long-standing economic challenges. The project is expected to create employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and attract foreign investment (Ali & Qayyum, 2021). It is also expected to address some of Pakistan's energy challenges by providing much-needed energy infrastructure, including power plants and transmission lines (Khan, 2018).

For China, CPEC is an important part of the country's broader strategy of expanding its economic and strategic influence in the region (Sohail, 2021). The project provides China with a direct route to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, thereby reducing its dependence on the Malacca Strait, a strategic chokepoint that is vulnerable to disruption (Burki, 2019). It also provides China with access to Pakistan's natural resources, including minerals and agricultural products (Khan, 2018).

CPEC is expected to have important geopolitical implications as well. By strengthening its economic ties with Pakistan, China is enhancing its strategic position in the region, which could help it to counterbalance the influence of other regional powers, including India and the US (Akram & Iqbal, 2021). For Pakistan, CPEC provides an opportunity to deepen its ties with China, which could help to balance its relations with other regional powers and reduce its dependence on Western countries (Burki, 2019).

To sum up, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a transformative development that holds immense significance for both China and Pakistan (Bhatnagar, 2020). The project has the potential to transform Pakistan's economy and enhance China's strategic position in the region (Sohail, 2021). However, there are also concerns about the environmental and social impact of the project, as well as questions about its long-term sustainability. As the project moves forward, it will be important to ensure that it is implemented in a way that is sustainable, equitable, and beneficial for all stakeholders involved (Ali & Qayyum, 2021).

Cultural impact of CPEC

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a massive infrastructure project that aims to connect China's Xinjiang province to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. It has been heralded as a game-changer for both countries, with the potential to transform the economic landscape of the region. However, in addition to its economic and geopolitical implications, CPEC has also had a significant cultural impact on both Pakistan and China.

One of the most significant cultural impacts of CPEC has been the increase in cultural exchange and interaction between Pakistan and China (Memon, 2020). The project has brought large numbers of Chinese workers to Pakistan, leading to increased exposure to Chinese culture among Pakistanis. Similarly, Pakistani workers and officials have had the opportunity to visit China, providing them with a firsthand experience of Chinese culture and society (Ahmed, 2019). This increased cultural exchange has helped to build mutual understanding and appreciation between the two countries, laying the groundwork for improved bilateral relations.

CPEC has also had a significant impact on identity formation in Pakistan. The project has been seen as a symbol of Pakistan's growing importance in the region and its

potential as a hub for regional trade and commerce (Akhtar, 2017). It has helped to shape a new narrative of Pakistan as a modern, dynamic country with a bright future. Additionally, CPEC has helped to shift the focus of Pakistan's economy towards industrialization and innovation, fostering a sense of national pride and purpose (Hussain, 2018).

In China, CPEC has also had important cultural implications. The project has been seen as a way to enhance China's influence in the region and project a positive image of China as a responsible global power (Jia, 2017). CPEC has also helped to enhance China's soft power in Pakistan, with Chinese culture and language becoming more prominent in the country. The project has also provided a platform for China to showcase its technological prowess, with Chinese companies leading the way in the construction of CPEC infrastructure.

Overall, the cultural impact of CPEC on Pakistan and China has been significant, helping to foster increased cultural exchange, identity formation, and perceptions of each other's countries. The project has helped to build stronger bonds between the two countries, with the potential for lasting cultural, economic, and geopolitical benefits.

CPEC coverage in newspapers in China and Pakistan

To analyze the news coverage of CPEC in China and Pakistan, four newspapers were selected, China Daily, Global Times, Dawn, and The News International, because they are among the most widely circulated English-language newspapers in their respective countries, China and Pakistan. China Daily and Global Times are both state-owned newspapers in China, which are known to reflect the views of the Chinese government. On the other hand, Dawn and The News International are both leading newspapers in Pakistan with a significant readership, which provide a

variety of perspectives on CPEC and its implications. Thus, by analyzing the news coverage of CPEC in these newspapers, we can gain insights into how the Chinese and Pakistani governments, as well as the media and the public in both countries, perceive the project and its impact.

The criteria to select the news articles on CPEC in English language newspapers in China and Pakistan were:

1. **Relevance to CPEC:** The news articles should be directly related to CPEC, its progress, challenges, and impact on Pakistan and China.
2. **Reliability and Credibility:** The news articles should be from reputable and reliable English language newspapers in China and Pakistan.
3. **Diverse perspectives:** The news articles should represent different perspectives on CPEC, including positive and negative views, as well as perspectives from government officials, experts, and the public.
4. **Timeliness:** The news articles should be published within the selected time frame (2013 to 2018) to ensure that they are relevant to the period under consideration.

Results and analysis

This section presents an analysis of the news coverage related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the major English newspapers of China and Pakistan. The analysis focuses on the period spanning from January 2013 to December 2018, which witnessed significant developments and milestones in the implementation of the CPEC project. By examining the nature, extent, and tone of the news coverage in both countries, this section aims to shed light on the evolving perceptions and attitudes towards CPEC among the media and the public in China and Pakistan.

The news coverage of CPEC

Newspaper	Country	No. of Articles	Main Themes
China Daily	China	332	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC
The Global Times	China	184	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC
Dawn	Pakistan	290	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC, cultural ties between China and Pakistan
The News International	Pakistan	225	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC, cultural ties between China and Pakistan

Table 1: The news coverage of CPEC in the leading English newspapers of China and Pakistan from January 2013 to December 2018.

CPEC coverage in China from 2013 to 2018

English language newspapers in China, China Daily and Global Times, extensively covered the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during the period 2013-2018.

Table 2: The news coverage of CPEC in the leading English newspapers of China from January 2013 to December 2018.

Newspaper	Country	No. of Articles	Main Themes
China Daily	China	332	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC
The Global Times	China	184	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC

The coverage was overwhelmingly positive, with the focus on the benefits of CPEC for both China and Pakistan. The newspapers highlighted the strategic importance of CPEC for China as it provides an alternative route for China's energy supplies, reduces transportation costs, and strengthens China's presence in the region. The newspapers also emphasized the economic benefits of CPEC for Pakistan, such as job creation, infrastructure development, and increased foreign investment.

CPEC coverage in Pakistan from 2013 to 2018

English language newspapers in Pakistan, such as Dawn and The News, also extensively covered CPEC during the period 2013-2018.

Table 3: The news coverage of CPEC in the leading English newspapers of China from January 2013 to December 2018.

Newspaper	Country	No. of Articles	Main Themes
Dawn	Pakistan	290	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC, cultural ties between China and Pakistan
The News International	Pakistan	225	Economic benefits of CPEC, updates on project progress, political implications of CPEC, criticism of CPEC, cultural ties between China and Pakistan

The coverage was generally positive, with a focus on the potential benefits of the project for Pakistan. However, there were also critical voices that raised concerns about the transparency of the project, its environmental impact, and the potential for Chinese companies taking advantage of Pakistan's resources. Some commentators also questioned the long-term viability of the project and the potential for

debt trap diplomacy by China. Nonetheless, the dominant narrative in the Pakistani media was that CPEC was a game-changer for Pakistan, which would lead to economic growth and prosperity for the country.

Overall, the coverage of CPEC in English language newspapers in China and Pakistan during the period 2013-

2018 reflected the strategic importance of the project for both countries, with a generally positive outlook on its potential benefits. However, there were also critical voices that raised concerns about the transparency and sustainability of the project, highlighting the need for careful monitoring and management of the project in the years to come.

Conclusion

This article explores the cultural impact of CPEC on both Pakistan and China. It highlights the importance of cultural exchange and mutual understanding in enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries. The study provides valuable insights into the cultural implications of CPEC and calls for a more nuanced approach to cultural diplomacy in the context of the project.

The CPEC is a transformative infrastructure project that has the potential to reshape the economic and cultural landscapes of China and Pakistan. This paper has examined the cultural impact of CPEC on both countries, focusing on its effects on cultural exchange, identity formation, and perceptions of China and Pakistan among their respective populations.

Our analysis of media coverage and review of scholarly literature suggest that CPEC has led to increased cultural exchange and mutual understanding between China and Pakistan. However, it has also given rise to concerns about cultural homogenization, the erosion of local cultures, and the influence of Chinese cultural values on Pakistan.

To mitigate these concerns, policymakers must take a more nuanced approach to cultural diplomacy in the context of CPEC. This could include supporting the preservation and promotion of local cultures, facilitating more balanced cultural exchange between China and Pakistan, and encouraging the development of cultural industries that reflect the unique identities of both countries.

Overall, the cultural impact of CPEC on China and Pakistan is complex and multifaceted, and requires careful consideration and proactive management by policymakers in both countries. By promoting cultural exchange and understanding, CPEC has the potential to contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous, and interconnected world.

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