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Institute for a Community  
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## China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):

### Exploring China's Public Diplomacy



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The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), not only aims to revolutionize Pakistan's economy but also serves as a vehicle for deepening bilateral ties and fostering mutual understanding and trust through its significant aspect of public diplomacy.



Public diplomacy, or interacting and communicating with the foreign public directly is one of the five primary goals of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), positively influencing China's soft power and favorable image across the globe. Through a wide range of initiatives such as cultural activities, education, exchange, media cooperation, language, and tourism, china exercises its public diplomacy enhancing its reputation and good image in Pakistan. Through a network of organizations and cultural exchange programs, Beijing is exporting its rich cultural history, enriching Chinese diplomacy. Both Beijing and Islamabad have remained committed to promoting cultural interactions through cross-cultural exchanges by signing different MOUs and Cultural Cooperation Agreements, resulting in developing cultural centers, where different cultural exhibitions and heritage ceremonies are frequently taken place. The great celebration of the "2024 Happy Chinese New Year - Year of the Dragon" in Pakistan, by the collaboration of the China Cultural Center in Pakistan and the Cultural Office of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan depicts their coordination on strengthening cultural ties.



Promoting one another's languages has been a key element of cultural activities between China and Pakistan. The government of Pakistan promotes Chinese language and literature at the public and private sector level to further enhance people-to-people ties between the two nations. Chinese is becoming more and more popular in Pakistan.

Beijing also used soft power through programs like the Confucius Institutes, which offer Chinese language and cultural instruction, financing for think tanks, and scholarships to attract Pakistanis. Five major Confucius schools in Pakistan operating include the ones in National University of Modern Languages (NUML), University of Sargodha, , University of Agriculture, University of Punjab and University of Karachi. In South Asia, Pakistan has become the country that receives the most Chinese scholarships. China has turned into the main educational destination for Pakistani students. The recent data given by the Ministry of Education of China showed that approximately 21,000 Pakistani students are enrolled in Chinese universities. In addition, "Pakistan Study Centers" in China and "China Study Centers" in Pakistan have been formed with the aim of frequent youth exchange programs, scholarship programs and language understanding programs. Media contribution to enhancing people-to-people bonds cannot be ignored. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of broadcasting was signed by China Central Television (CCTV) and Pakistan Television Corporation Ltd, which would allow CCTV News and the documentary channel CCTV 9 to gain access to Pakistan, shaping public opinion, counter misinformation, and mobilising support for CPEC initiatives.

Moreover, Tourism is promoted as a means to enhance diplomatic outreach by bringing people from both countries together, fostering cultural exchange, and building mutual understanding. In 2023, The Embassy arranged for approximately fifteen Chinese tour operators to come to Pakistan to investigate possible travel packages that would appeal to Chinese travellers' interests, such as adventure,



culture, and heritage sites. Similarly, twelve tour operators from Pakistan went to China, encouraging cooperation for coordinated travel planning. Events and exhibitions such as the Gandhara exhibition 2023 at the Palace Museum, in Beijing, engage audiences in cross-cultural dialogue emphasizing the Buddhist ties and historical relationship between China and Pakistan.

Pakistanis have consistently valued China's support during difficult times. China's dedication to the people of Pakistan is remarkable. In addition to disaster relief Coordination, China is a major investor in Pakistani business and development projects, focusing on renewable energy, infrastructure like dams, the Karakorum Highway, and the Gwadar deep-sea port, offering the general public substantial benefits in the form of jobs, technical know-how, and quicker transit. Furthermore, Chinese corporations and companies have worked very hard to help Pakistani society's marginalized and



disadvantaged segments rise. More than 20,000 Chinese businesses are working with the Pakistani government to raise living standards throughout Pakistani society.

The positive perception of China in Pakistan, bolstered by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its public diplomacy efforts, demonstrates the alignment of Chinese interests with the needs and aspirations of the Pakistani people. Through CPEC, the integration of public diplomacy with economic efforts improves not only China's favourable reputation in Pakistan and the long-lasting mutual relationship but also contributes to long-term economic growth and stability in the region.