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ESSAYS AND PERSPECTIVES ON
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Sino-Pakistan Cultural Relations: Challenges and Policy Directions

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Introduction

As business relationships and people-to-people contacts between China and Pakistan steadily increased with the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, one arena that has not been given substantial attention in the academic discourse is cross-cultural issues between the two disparate cultures. Examining them is plausible and timely both from a theoretical and empirical standpoint. This paper thus aims at dwelling on drawing a comparison between the two cultures highlighting their differences and similarities; and argues that the success and smooth functioning of the relationships between the two nations depend not only on the political clichés and bilateral cooperation in economic, industrial, and diplomatic spheres but also on understanding the cultural differences and similarities. The effort will help the players and partners reduce the tangible and intangible barriers that may hinder cross-cultural communication between the two nations and foster similarities to craft mutual understanding. From the vantage point of cross-cultural communication, the current exploratory study is the first to investigate the Pak-China cordial ties for ages. Specifically, it attempts to gauge the cultural differences between the two nations on the one hand, that could pose challenges in their understanding of each other and similarities on the other hand, that could forge and foster better understanding. It is argued that recognizing cultural differences is the first step in reducing the difficulties of dealing with these two disparate cultures. The study further contends that despite some noticeable differences and unique aspects in the cultures of China and Pakistan, there are also commonalities that can well be utilized to cultivate mutual acceptance and bring the two nations closer to each other. The study also suggests some policy directions and proposals to reduce the barriers and enhance the prospects of mutual understanding between the two nations considering their growing engagement in various human spheres.

The relations between China and Pakistan have remained constantly the defining features of their foreign policies since their very outset in 1951. Over the years, despite many changes and upheavals in the chaotic global political order and adherence to their unique cultural, political, and economic systems, the ties between these two countries have remained durable and kept growing steadily with every passing day, particularly with the launch and promulgation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (R. Hameed, 2017). Until the turn of the century, this

relationship was limited in most cases to government to government, defenses, diplomatic and military cooperation. However, since the start of the current century, the ties between the two countries have expanded drastically in economic and socio-cultural spheres. Moreover, with the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is a flagship of China's Belt and Road Initiative (Z. S. Ahmed, 2019; M. Hameed, 2018) and the changing geo-political situation in the region, the bilateral relations between China and Pakistan have further garnered attention and significance in meeting the national interest of both countries, a plethora of academic scholarship on Sino-Pakistan relations in the geopolitical, economic, and military realms (Azeemi, 2007; Javaid & Jahangir, 2015; Small, 2015), intriguingly hitherto, no academic and strategic heed has ever been given to examining the ties between the two nations from a geo-cultural perspective. This is a critical oversight in the extant literature, and examining it is both timely and theoretically and empirically sound. Moreover, within the ambit of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the bilateral relationship has further added impetus to state-to-state level relations and equality at the people-to-people and cultural levels. Yet these growing engagements between both nations are not without challenges from a cross-cultural communication perspective. Exploring these engagements seems timely, which could add valuably and substantially to the existing discourses on ties between China and Pakistan.

In the prior literature on China and Pakistan, no considerable academic attention has been paid to examining the relations from a cross-cultural perspective, particularly the cross-cultural differences that could hinder the meaningful communication process between the two countries. Few prior studies have attempted to examine the impacts of the cultural differences between China and Pakistan on the success of the company projects (Naeem, Butt, & Khanzada, 2018), the need to promote the cultural exchanges between the two countries (Jiqiong & Keyu, 2017), some common notions embed in Confucianism and Islamic mysticism on filial piety and development (Cetinkaya, 2011; Tanggok, 2017), humanism in Islamic and Confucian education (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017) and the cultural adaptation of Pakistani students in China (Su, 2017), these studies, however, have not discussed what the cultural differences are in the first hand and how to overcome them.

As has been argued that understanding cultural differences between people of disparate cultures and managing them is of pivotal significance not only for the success of business ventures but equally for fostering better understanding between peoples of different cultures and that paying no attention to cultural differences could jeopardize mutually beneficial enterprises between people (Brunner, Koh, & Lou, 1993). Thus, the success of relations between nations depends on the extent to which the people deeply connect; for that, understating the differences is the first step toward more congenial relations (Slate, 1993). Finally, the notion of culture itself is very complex and nuanced, which could be conceptualized as "the manifold ways of perceiving and organizing the world that is held in common

by a group of people and passed on interpersonally and interchangeably” (Yuan, 2010). Thus, culture is a complex whole that is constituent and constitutive of almost every aspect of human lives. It is, as a matter of fact, the part of the behavior that is once learned collectively; it is therefore taught and not instinctive or innate. Culture influences how people within a particular context communicate and how they perceive each other.

This study thus departs from the traditional studies of economic, political, and military relations between the two countries. It provides unique yet unexamined aspects of these relations from the vantage point of cross-cultural communication, which we have conceptualized here as the way people from different cultures communicate when they deal with each other either from a distance or face to face (Hurn, Tomalin, Hurn, & Tomalin, 2013). Specifically, the study delves into the challenges of cultural differences and prospects of cultural similarities between the two countries. It proceeds as follows: In the first part of the study, we will briefly discuss the cultural differences and challenges between the two cultures, namely China and Pakistan. We will then attempt to elaborate on the cultural similarities and prospects that could forge mutual understanding between the two countries. Finally, some suggestions and policy guidelines will be given to overcome the existing cross-cultural issues between the two cultures and civilizations.

Cultural Variations Between China and Pakistan

The significant cultural differences between China and Pakistan include language, different worldviews, religion, gender roles, political and economic systems, and the broader notions associated with life. A list encompassing all the possible visible and invisible differences both at the physical and cognitive levels is beyond the scope of the current study; nevertheless, the aforementioned factors are significant differences that lead to cultural differences and hinder the cross-cultural communication between the two cultures. Cultural differences could be a sign of diversity and pluralism. Still, when it comes to cross-cultural communication, they could act as hindering devices rather than fostering dialogues and mutual understandings. These differences can be further pronounced as impediments in business dealings. They even could create stereotypical generalizations about different cultures resulting in misunderstandings between people of disparate cultures. From a cross-cultural communications perspective, cultural differences must be recognized before they can be understood. Only we begin to understand the differences can we change our ways and adjust our attitudes and behaviors toward the other cultural group to accommodate the differences and can finally communicate to our counterparts of other groups in a mutually understandable way. This is equally true in the case of China and Pakistan vis-à-vis their cultural differences/ similarities. Below will briefly elaborate on the significant differences, which are purely based on our own understanding as scholars of cultural communication, and our immersion with both cultures for quite a few years and thus must be considered more as heuristic rather than empirical (Alam et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, one can hardly deny these obvious differences prevalent in both the cultures of China and Pakistan.

Language

Language is the basic medium of communication between human beings but can also be a hindering medium if misunderstood or not understood by people of different languages speakers. Language is an essential part of any cultural community that fosters communication and shapes our mental perceptions and meanings of the world. Language is the most apparent barrier between China and Pakistan. Due to their different language systems, the two communities cannot communicate and thus cannot understand each other fully. While there is a growing realization in Pakistan to learn the Chinese language, most of the people at the grass root level cannot understand the Chinese language. Further, learning the national language of Pakistan (*Urdu*) be not a preferable acquisition for Chinese who instead prefer to learn English or Japanese, or other major global languages, due to the global significance of those languages. Given the significance of language in bringing different cultures closer to each other, even learning to say basic greetings of 'please' and 'thank you' is considered to create goodwill among people of different cultures (Slate, 1993), yet given the difficulty of both languages and their relative importance, it seems that language barrier will remain a significant obstacle between China and Pakistan in the foreseeable future despite efforts to overcome it.

Religion

Religion is yet another challenging barrier when it comes to cross-cultural communication between China and Pakistan, wherein the latter is a predominantly religious society. Still, the former is less religion-centric in the sense that there is no official religion in Chinese society. Many of the misunderstandings prevalent between the two societies could be accounted due to the high religiosity prevalent among Pakistanis. Religion is such a powerful force in Pakistani society that it shapes the entire social and political structure of Pakistan. At the same time, it equally shapes the mental models of many of the people in Pakistan, which in turn forms the opinions about the people of other cultures. In the case of China, religion is not an essential factor in building world views and their relationships with people from other cultures and their everyday lives. In contrast, religion is part and parcel of almost every sphere of life in Pakistani society. In Chinese society, Confucianism pervades the entire society. Although Confucianism is not a religion in the strict sense, but arguably plays a pivotal role in Chinese society, life, everyday dealings, and cultural and value systems of China (Tang, 1995).

Furthermore, in post-9/11, when Islam and its followers came under attack in the global media and cultural discourses, the views and attitudes toward Muslims and Islam have been seemingly unfriendly, ambivalent, and even negative in most societies around the globe. These global representations of Islam and Muslims

have further widened the void between Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Moreover, given the general tendency of interest lacking towards religion in Chinese society and the lack of understanding of diversity and pluralism within Islam and Muslim community, the gap between the two societies seemingly will remain there unless and until serious efforts are made to remove the misperceptions about religion. Compared to other religions, arguably Islam as a religion has fewer attraction, and charm for the Chinese community, which could further hinder the cross-cultural communication between the two societies. For most Pakistanis, religion is arguably the single most important entity of their lives, which exerts significant influence on all aspects of their lives. This might result in rigidity and lack of accommodating other cultures and their norms and practices. Even though the Chinese do not adhere to any religion in the wider sense, the Chinese mind is highly influenced by Confucianism to a great extent. Confucianism does not belong to any religion, neither it is considered a 'religion' in Chinese society (Tang, 1995), yet as an appealing thought, it has highly shaped the Chinese mind both consciously and unconsciously. Confucianism can better be understood as a moral philosophy than as a religion that centers on humanism and the transformation of individual and collective life. It does not put emphasis on the worship of a God, or the lord instead emphasizes the individual piety that would lead to collective well-being. In this sense Islamic mysticism and Confucianism seem to share more common moral virtues, which will be further discussed in the forthcoming part of the study.

It is plausible to think that if we want to transform the closed societies in Muslim countries, including Pakistan, into open and pluralistic ones, it is imperative to define the religion of Islam philosophically instead of, dogmatically. For dialogues and constructive counters with other faiths and cultures, the religion of Islam needs to be liberated from the chains of unreason to explore and understand it philosophically. The unreasoned Muslim mind has stifled the expansion of religious discourse to explore new horizons. Thus, it is the need of the hour to explore and approach the religion of Islam from a philosophical and civilizational point of view instead of looking at it as dogmatism. Understanding Islam from a civilizational and philosophical approach has become more imperative in contemporary times than ever as the global discourse on Islam is becoming increasingly reductive, narrowed, and even distorted.

Different Worldviews

Besides religion, at the larger societal level, two contrasting views are embedded in the Chinese and Pakistani minds. The two contrasting conceptions are about this world and the hereafter. The predominant belief in Islam, and equally in the Muslims of Pakistan, is the temporal status of the world which is not immortal but rather a temporary place for the preparation of the next world. Accordingly, for many Pakistanis, this material world and life are not necessary as compared to the permanent life hereafter or after the death of an individual. In this view, according to the creeds and injunctions of the Quran- the Holy book of Islam, everything in

life is predestined and arranged by God what is generally known as fatalism. According to fatalism, everything good or evil which happens to someone is considered an ‘act’ of God over which an individual and even a society has no control. In contrast, Chinese society can be argued to believe more in cause and effect, introspection, and self-criticism, and necessary after a failure, and the person who is supposed to be in the dispensation of responsibilities is made responsible and investigated accordingly for any failure or calamity in the society (Zhu, 2017). Seeking material wealth and happiness seems to be a dominant norm of Chinese society though it equally believes in good and bad deeds and their rewards.

Most Muslim community members, including the Pakistanis, have a deep sense of cultural and religious superiority. This sense of religious and cultural superiority over others tends to create a sense of intolerance and religious bigotry toward the members of other religious and cultural groups. This sense of ‘superiority’ tends to hinder the adaptation and tolerance toward other cultures, values, norms, and worldviews, thus creating challenges for communication and understanding of other cultures and societies. Admittedly, this is a distorted view of the followers, which has nothing to do with the true spirit of Islam, which instructs its followers to exercise tolerance, forbearance, peaceful coexistence, and acceptance of human pluralism. Further, given the lack of dialogues and interactions between Chinese and Muslim communities, the distorted views about each other could be manifold. Contrary to the West, wherein the best and most refined scholarship on Islam is produced and where Islam in its various dimensions, from history to spirituality, is taught in the top Western universities with almost every Western university with a Chair of Islam, unfortunately to the best of our knowledge there is not a single university in China that might hold an Islamic Chair and wherein Islam is being introduced to the academic circles.

Gender Roles

Beyond the religious and language barriers, there are also significant differences in the roles of gender- the socially defined positions and roles of men and women in Chinese and Pakistani societies that can impede working relationships between the two cultures. From the cultural perspective, the roles socially assigned to males and females are also dimensions of the cultural differences. In the contemporary society of China, gender equality is much more prevalent compared than in Pakistan. Chinese men and women share the same public spaces without being discriminated against based on gender, thus contributing to China’s national development. In contrast, in Pakistan, gender discrimination in the name of religion, culture, and many other excuses prevents Pakistan women from sharing the public spaces as do their male counterparts. Male dominance and patriarchal practices are not just norms but well-structured in Pakistan’s overall social and political fabric. In most of cases, woman is culturally considered ‘inferior’ to men and are expected to be obedient to their husbands and other members of the family. Furthermore, the presence of females in public spaces is generally discouraged if not fully avoided. Mixing of the opposite sex in most cases is equally discour-

aged in most parts of Pakistani society. Although this primordial notion about women is more cultural and contextual rather than religious, one is changing with the modernization of society yet, they still pose as cultural differences and hinder communication with people from other cultures. Contrarily, in China, especially with the reforms and opening policies, discrimination based on gender is almost nonexistent paving the way for a Chinese woman to play an important role in all walks of life and receive equal treatment. This culturally driven discrimination of women in Muslim societies like Pakistan prevents people from other cultures from interacting with Pakistani women resulting in the further strengthening of the negative images of Pakistani women and the society at large. With the opening and reforms policies, Chinese society is much more open and accommodating to other cultures, customs, norms, and values. Further, the process of globalization, which has brought Chinese people closer to other cultures, and the internationalization of the Chinese culture have made it possible for Chinese people to get exposed to other cultures and people, something which is still either missing or not encouraged in the Pakistani cultural milieu.

Political and Economic Systems

The political and economic systems practiced in both countries are yet another visible difference that impedes cross-cultural communication between the two countries and their people. Political and economic systems are not just political and economic practices but also important constructs that shape the mental models, social cognition, and world views of individuals and societies. Chinese political and economic systems are more centralized and with controlled economic liberty, which is often dubbed as 'socialism' with Chinese characteristics. China's political system is also more centralized, with a rigorous hierarchy at various levels. In contrast, the Pakistani economic and political system is a mix of both Islamic and Western ideals. It is neither completely westernized nor Islamic but rather a hodgepodge of both (Baig et al., 2020). The political system of Pakistan is more decentralized with powers devolved to the grass root levels. Economically, it follows the Western models of economic practices often, yet the Islamic notions of economics influence economic practices. Often, these striking contrasts in the economic and political systems of both countries create unnecessary misunderstandings and ambivalence toward each other among the two people. These systems arguably also shape each society's mental views, behavior, and attitude patterns, causing more hindrance to be understanding each other. Often, these differences in the political and economic systems in the two countries create misperceptions, misunderstandings, and even miscommunications between the people of the two cultures. Both countries have unique political and economic systems, which is an outcome of the needs of contexts and thus cannot be judged as good or bad or democratic or not. Each system has its limitations and advantages.

Miscellaneous

In addition, the two cultures have other obvious cultural differences. For instance, food, an essential part of any culture, varies strikingly between the two cultures. For most Pakistanis, Chinese cuisine is not liked either out of their unfamiliarity with Chinese food or because of religious concerns that they avoid eating Chinese cuisine. Pork and alcohol, essential Chinese food culture ingredients, are unacceptable for most Muslims and Pakistani people. Observance of *Halal* food culture is an essential part of Pakistani culture. In addition to food, punctuality of time and promises and commitments may not be as strictly followed in Pakistani culture as one might expect in Chinese culture. Marriage ceremonies, traditions, music, festivals, etc., are yet other visible differences between the two countries (Ghanem et al., 2021).

Cultural Similarities Between China and Pakistan

Despite the disparities in the cultures of China and Pakistan, fortunately, there are also shared values, morals, and virtues between the two cultures and civilizations that could be the impetus to bring the two cultures closer to each other and to forge mutual understanding between these cultures. In this part of the paper, we will briefly illustrate the moral virtues and philosophies common to both cultures and exploring them could be vital for cross-cultural communication between the two countries. Admittedly, a more detailed analysis of the common cultural values and philosophies is beyond the scope of the study (Baig & Zehra, 2020). Suffice it to say that despite the seemingly widespread differences, there are some critical, deeply held commonalities between the two cultures, namely the values and virtues of Confucianism and Islamic mysticism, collectivism over individualism, kinship, and familial system and filial piety in Islam and Confucianism which are being briefly elucidated below.

Confucianism, Islamic Mysticism, and Spiritualism

One of the tenets common to Confucian and Muslim mysticism – the latter is also known in the Western discourse as Islamic esotericism or Islamic Sufism (Sorgenfrei, 2018) is the concept of spirituality which remains a less understood and unexplored phenomenon between Islam and Chinese Confucianism. Spirituality has been a subject of interest and concern for human beings for most regions and ages. Islamic mysticism and Confucianism are among some of recorded human history's great moral and spiritual traditions. It is the affinity of the human soul with nature, morals, and fellow human beings. Muslim mysticism has been playing a pivotal role in promoting Islam's spiritual dimensions, namely establishing a vibrant, productive, and peaceful human society based on human dignity, diversity, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and fraternity. Similarly, Confucianism has remained influential and plays the same role in Chinese society. However, it does not claim to be a religious system or spirituality. Yet, the outcomes of the Confucian practices and philosophical approaches ultimately lead to spiritual

satisfaction, peace of mind, and peaceful coexistence. Social harmony, peace, love, peaceful coexistence, and human dignity are shared values that spiritual traditions aim to inculcate among their followers. For instance, one of the major emphases in the teachings of Muslim mysticism is the purity of the human soul of prejudice, hatred, and narrow-mindedness and to enlighten it with the light of knowledge. For most Muslims, respecting human dignity irrespective of origin, ethnicity, color, and religion is part and parcel of their faith. The great Muslim mystics and sages have always taught spirituality and the ‘oneness of all human beings from one soul. *Sulhe Kul* (peace with all human beings) is one of the basic teachings and tenants of Muslim mysticism and spiritual dimensions of Islam. Most Muslims believe and follow this tenet as fundamental to their belief system. However, the few extremist actions of some Muslims often cloud this spiritual dimension of the religion of Islam.

Likewise, within Confucianism, the presumption is that human beings are fundamentally sound and will internalize the acceptable norms and only take proper actions, which will result in the creation of a harmonious society and improve an individual’s inner character and the overall quality of society. Confucianism’s abstract notion of Tian (heaven) represents the universe or all natural things. Though Confucian never claimed that God had sent him or that he had obtained enlightenment from God, the emphasis on the relationship among people for a harmonious life and peaceful coexistence resembles Islamic teachings, particularly those embedded in Islamic mysticism. Furthermore, Confucianism, like Muslim mysticism, places great emphasis on personal virtues that should guide all individual actions, namely- benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity, wherein benevolence conveys the concept that everyone should try to help others and embody compassion in the inner world as well as avoid ill feelings toward others. It states, ‘You should not impose on others what you would not desire’ (Q. Zhao, 2018). Likewise, righteousness emphasizes self-control and integrity. Propriety focuses on the social hierarchy and respect one must give to others, including the elders and rulers. The virtue of wisdom is inevitable for proper and moral actions, while fidelity deals with honesty and integrity to maintain a clear relationship between one’s words, thoughts, and deeds (Zhao, 2018). Elaborating further on the notion of Tianxia, (Q. Zhao, 2018) explains that tianxia has three levels of meanings: the earth- the whole world under the heaven; the hearts of all peoples- the general will of the people, and world institution- a utopia of the world as one family. All these notions convey one meaning: a vision of the world characterized by harmony and cooperation without coercion. This very notion resembles to the mystic traditions of Islam that emphasize on the ‘oneness’ of human beings and that all human beings embody a single divinely inculcated soul. In this sense, Confucianism echoes Islam’s teaching that the perfection of human beings can only be achieved through their integration with society (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017).

Like many other dimensions, there are several similarities between Islamic edu-

cation and Confucian education, according to which the sole mission of human beings is to perform their duty on earth as God's stewards (in Islam) or Way-propagators in Confucianism. Both the traditions emphasize human perfectibility through education and spiritual discernment for Islam and realizing and broadening the Way for Confucianism. That both civilizations go beyond mere cognitive development through education and instead emphasize moral education and spiritual enlightenment through the ethical and practical rules of conduct of Islam and the moral self-cultivation of Confucianism; additionally, Confucian's point about heaven being the source of his virtue parallels Islam's belief in an objective morality given by God to human beings, which makes it possible for its adherents to achieve self-actualization- the ultimate purpose of human life (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017). These ordinary virtues prevalent in these two significant civilizations have remarkable power over the external virtues, which can lead the believers toward being harmonious members of society and be instrumental in building dialogue between the two civilizations of Confucianism and Islam.

Furthermore, both the traditions of Confucianism and Islam emphasize that human beings to be in harmony with nature and not exploit its resources out of greed. Confucianism always regards human beings as part of nature. It has been made obligatory upon human beings to respect and protect nature. The Confucian idea of ecology and sustainable life is epitomized in the notion of 'harmony between Heaven and human being'. In other words, humans need to live in harmony with nature as both are interdependent. Similar views and notions are there in the teachings of Islam to be in harmony with nature and not to conquer or disturb its order.

Filial Piety in Islam and Confucianism

An important concept common to both Islam and Confucianism is filial piety. Filial piety means respecting one's parents. Respecting one's parents is explained in not only the Quran- the Holy book of Muslims but also in the *Hadith*- the sayings of Prophet Mohammed. Likewise, in the Confucian teachings honoring and respecting one's parents is also important. In both traditions, filial piety is not only limited to the worldly life but hereafter. The Quran is very emphatic on respecting parents on many occasions. Its injunctions upon the believers:

And the Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age [while] thy life, say not to them [so much as], "uff," But address them in terms of honour. [Al-Isra: 23] (as cited in Tanggok, 2017).

In *Analects*, a book that records the collections of Confucius and his disciples, there is an abundance of human-heartedness, love, respect, and avoidance of wars with fellow human beings. Confucianism demands loyalty, sincerity, filial on the children's part, obedience, and faithfulness. The concept of *Li*, prevalent in the *Analects*, is interpreted as a ritual to honor parents. This teaching of respecting

parents has remained part of the Chinese culture till today, much like the same in the culture of Muslim societies.

Collectivism, Kinship, and Familial System

Chinese and Pakistani cultures practice and believe in collectivism over individualism, as both are part of the larger Eastern culture. Further, the Chinese and Pakistanis are group-centered, living and working together in the same place and group. They depend on each other in their lives and their work. Working for the reward and honoring the group and family is a common norm and practice in both cultures. Likewise, kinship and family systems are both powerful in the two cultures. Chinese are widely known for their help and support, both material and non-material, to other Chinese people, particularly in the rural settings of China.

This strong kinship is a significant source of social support for the less privileged segments of society in China. Similarly, the strong familial system in the Chinese culture makes China unique in contrast to many Western cultures. Despite globalization and individualistic tendency globally, the Chinese people seem to believe strongly in the family system, which is also considered a sign of collective development. In the context of Pakistan, this is equally true that most Pakistanis still have a strong familial system, and the religion of Islam itself puts more emphasis on the familial system and collective and inclusive development. Further, a familial system in the context of Pakistan is also a vital sign of an individual's identity.

Despite the seemingly two different worldviews, it is mainly in the ethical and spiritual characteristics of these religions and civilizations that we can find noteworthy similarities, which could be the impetus for forging dialogue and understanding between the two traditions of China and Pakistan.

Conclusion and Policy Directions

Recognizing the cultural differences is the first step in reducing the difficulties of dealing with disparate cultures, accommodating the differences, and forging a dialogue between the two cultures of China and Pakistan. For both nations to strengthen bilateral relations further, people-to-people contact and cultural understanding between China and Pakistan are pivotal. The cultural components and issues surrounding it remain unexplored, yet the key area in the bilateral relations between China and Pakistan. With the steady increase in the flow of people and interactions between the two peoples in the emergence of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, it is of potent significance to understand the cultural differences and similarities between the two nations. Such considerations are not only according to the increasing phenomenon of globalization, which will bring distant cultures and societies closer to each other but could also conform to the national interests and changing needs of China and Pakistan.

It is also argued that despite the deeply held political relations, the cultural component is more important to bring the two nations closer to each other to over-

come the stereotypical representations and sweeping generalizations of each other. Until the relations are understood at more cultural and people levels, the ties between China and Pakistan will remain incomplete. Moreover, the development of cultural corridors- by building and establishing more cultural ties between the two countries, would be helpful to identify the more commonalities embedded in the two cultures. Thus, new methods and measures used in the cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Pakistan, especially in the cultural industry, will significantly bring enormous economic growth and mutually beneficial ventures. It is believed that constructing the 'China-Pakistan Cultural Corridor' (CPCC) could offer an excellent model of cultural cooperation between the two nations and their ancient civilizations. With the growing ties between the two nations, both countries must openly accept the diversity of the cultures, learn from and respect each other. It is only through understanding the cultural differences and promoting the cultural similarities that the relationships between the two nations can be promoted at the cultural and people-to-people level, which is miserably missing in the existing relations between China and Pakistan.

The current study is a step toward addressing cultural differences by recognizing and accepting the differences between the two cultures. It has made a modest attempt to highlight the differences and similarities between the two cultures that could forge mutual understanding between China and Pakistan by recognizing and accepting the differences and promoting and enhancing their similarities. Finally, this study is by no means an encompassing one on an essential dimension of the cultural aspects of the Sino-Pakistan relations. Yet, it is a critical step along the road that still has much distance to be covered. Nevertheless, it is a step toward filling the lingering gap in the cultural issues between the two countries. With the steady increase of people to people to people ties, it is the need of the hour that future studies must build on to it for a deeper and more nuanced understating of the cultural challenges between China and Pakistan as the ties between the two countries keep on increasing in various spheres of mutual interests. Such studies could contribute to the theoretical knowledge and address the empirical challenges in cultural understandings and misunderstandings between the two nations.

It is concluded by arguing that to implement the CPEC, deepen the all-weather bilateral strategic cooperative partnership, and further boost a comprehensive and healthy development of the bilateral relationship, China and Pakistan should significantly improve their cultural understating and cultural exchanges. Therefore, a more efficient mechanism must be established, and appropriate and practical measures must be implemented to increase bilateral cultural exchanges and cultural understandings at different levels. This will enable the people of both countries to understand each other's cultures, worldviews, cultural similarities, sensitivities, and other essential aspects of their societies. Thus, the following policy guidelines are furnished to strengthen the ties between the two countries based on the current study.

First, it is time to strengthen the Sino-Pakistan ties beyond the political rhetoric; a more effective mechanism of cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact is established to forge more cultural understanding between the two people. To that end, besides the officials, people from different segments of society, like celebrities, artists, students, etc., must also be part of the cultural exchanges. Moreover, this mechanism should be given powers and resources to plan cultural exchanges and cooperative projects.

Second, more tertiary and academic exchanges and research need to be done regarding cross-cultural issues between China and Pakistan. Such interactions and academic explorations are of pivotal significance in underrating the cultural differences between the two countries and providing appropriate solutions to the factors hindering mutual understanding and building healthy and fruitful bilateral relations. Furthermore, within the framework of the CPEC, a China-Pakistan Cultural Corridor is a plausible initiative to understand and promote the cultural relations between the two countries that will lead to overcoming the existing cross-cultural issues. A community of cultural industries and building up a cultural corridor could be the catalyst in the emergence of a 'shared cultural cooperation model' between the two civilizations. Recently, efforts have been made to produce films and documentaries jointly. That seems a good step. Joint media productions can promote cultural understanding and remove misunderstandings and stereotypes about each other. More media interactions between the two countries can be fruitful for positive image building of both countries.

Third, along with the teachings of Chinese culture and the Chinese language in Pakistan, it seems imperative that a joint curriculum that combines the teachings and moral virtues of Confucianism and Islamic mysticism be taught as the two philosophies share much in common, centering on humanism and spirituality as their core values. Such an initiative will inculcate more tolerance and acceptance of the two disparate cultures.

Finally, although Islam has long remained part of the Chinese culture, the existing knowledge and understanding of Islam and Muslim civilization in Chinese society seem limited and narrow in scope. It is imperative that introducing Chairs on Islam in Chinese universities and academia on similar patterns as has been in practice in major Western universities could be a milestone in promoting the understating of Islam and bringing closer the two major civilizations.

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The China Study Centre (CSC) at Karakoram International University (KIU) is funded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Government of Pakistan, which frames the core objectives to value the foreseeable consequences of the establishment of this Center with special reference to the benefits that will achieve from creating a social space, which facilitates to study and research on diverse arts, culture, history and polity of China, GB-Pakistan and surrounding mountainous region. Hence, there is a deep understanding that the study or promotion of culture, history, society and polity is a shared objective of proposed China Study Centre at KIU and other partner institutions.

The establishment of centre aims to provide a base to learn not only Chinese society, but a window of opportunity to take advantage of this platform via developing research collaborations in Xinjiang and mainland China. These collaborations are key to conduct research with high relevance to GB. As referred above that, historically the GB (Pakistan) and Xinjiang (China) offer much in common to share, which includes languages, heritage sites, oral and documented traditions, religious traditions, socio-political and economic pacts, ethnography mapping of mountain communities, cultural diplomacy, etc. The commonalities of these wide range areas are significantly important to consider as an opportunity for collaboration between KIU, Chinese Universities and beyond.

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