

**RESEARCH PAPER****China Contest for Cultural and Multi-Lingual Centres and its Attraction in South Asia****Munazzah Bukhari**

Lecturer, Department of Politics & International Relations, GC Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

munaza.bukhari@gcwus.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The study explores China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a 21st-century soft power and its approach for cultural diplomacy. This article examines how China influences through media, education, infrastructural development, and cultural interchange program to enhance its power in Asia. The study analyzes China's employment of cultural diplomacy within the framework of the BRI using a qualitative methodology and secondary sources, such as academic publications, governmental papers, and reports. According to the study, China successfully use cultural diplomacy to foster regional cooperation and steer clear of political disputes. China promotes cultural awareness and understanding among Asian countries through programs like international arts festivals, educational initiatives, and Confucius Institutes. Large-scale infrastructure initiatives under the BRI also increase China's cultural influence while fostering economic connection. China's soft power approach is further enhanced by its involvement with regional institutes such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and ASEAN. According to the findings, the BRI strengthens China's position as the region's leader by acting as a potent cultural diplomacy instrument in addition to being an economic project. Long-term diplomatic and commercial ties are eventually fostered by the growth of cultural exchange programs and the propagation of Confucian ideals, which enhance China's favorable international reputation.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, China, Belt and Road Initiative, Confucious Institute, Regional Connectivity, Asian Development

Introduction

In the 21st century, the Chinese recovery of the old Silk Road of the Silk Economy Belt and the general Maritime Silk Road recovery awarded the Belt and Road Initiative in the latest era of cultural diplomacy. Basically, China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in this time capable to convert and express the vivacious involvement and collision of this strategy through the social, political, and economic spheres of multiculturalism and ethnicity. (Yaseen, et. al., 2023). China became improved at cultural diplomacy through performing arts, media, education, and tourism. According to Confucian philosophy, soft power and tactical force are both based on improving the capacity to cultivate culture. China soft power put into practice for instance culture, intentionally encourage an way to sustain gracious associations among other nations in the Asian area to keep away from dogmatic and regional arguments that endorse widespread affluence of cultural exchanges and generates intermediate for harmony and regional connectivity. Consequently, China elevates its illustration in Asia through the BRI, to make sure accurate assimilation of cultural diplomacy with utilization of soft power policy and stimulating communication, creating link for official declaration entrenched agreement among the diverse cultures in Asia effectively make certain initiative that extend and accomplished successful results helpful for the countries in Asian region (Cartier, 2011).

In the implementation of China reflection in Asia through the BRI and to use a soft power approach, China undertakes numerous distinguished question and economic competitor mounting the utilization of soft power in separate foreign policy strategy. In 2008, for instance China certified its icon showcased cultural phase in world throughout the Beijing Olympics evenly in 2010 from side of Shanghai Expo, etc. In order to maintain cultural communication around the Belt and Road Initiative, this continued cultural diplomacy used soft power tools throughout the series of cultural events, such as the "Silk Road International Arts Festival," the Marine Silk Road International Arts Festival, and the Silk Road International Cultural Expo in various sovereign states. This created the opportunity for other people to become more culturally aware of Chinese customs and cultural heritage. Conversely the budding growth of China infrastructural expenditure actions in Asia from first to last the BRI has observe enlargement through tactics and erection of the building's railways in Southeast Asia, that involve constructing passageway during the mountains of Laos spreading out the railways in Central Asia, that are predictable and it will be facilitate countries by means of their economic improvement. Generally China influence has been clarify from side to side the sum and substance of China cultural values in the Asian region and incorporation of allocating substantial teacher training for Asian language, transfer in more Chinese resident speakers work in Asian schools, the formation of China media for example radio and television. At the present time BRI permitted for new consolidation of the internalization of China culture merely not in perspective of enhancing economic amalgamation however as well as escalating connectivity with people to people and exchange plans with the implement of cultural diplomacy same soft power approach basically essential in the improvement of cultural attentiveness and its concern in Asia. As a result, China increased its presence in Asia by advancing cultural awareness and actively participating in a number of regional organizations and partnerships, such as ASEAN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the East Asian Summit, the Asian Development Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Thus, China soft power boosted in Asian region with BRI and similarly amplifies culture consciousness in China and traditional standards and promotes increasing common accepting of its developmental plan consequential for that reason in helping a tuneful society in Asia. In 2020 china anticipated more than 1000 Confucius Institutes in Asia as well as added countries approximately in world. The expansion of cultural alertness in consequence of the BRI in Asia with the exercise of Cultural diplomacy as a soft power is essential to engage the communication responsiveness and cultural values, beliefs insight. In Asian regions the communication of China offers to exchange culture as well as education programs which absolutely augmentation the image of China influences security and affluence (Ain, et. al., 2024; Battle, 2012).

Literature Review

In Obaidullah's work (2024) shows that in this multipolar world, China has become a competitor of USA because of its soft power diplomatic tactics in South Asia. As this region is equally important for both these countries from strategic point of view.

Sun, (2023) analyzed that China is enhancing its soft power through Confucius institutes and transmitting its cultural elements abroad. But China is facing hurdles in promoting its soft power from US and European Union.

Weissman, (2020) explains the importance of promotion that has been observed in Chinese foreign policy through the previous one and semi decades, with Xi Jinping's extra energetic foreign policy but the preceding example. It is unclear if China under Xi Jinping would maintain its status quo influence and accept the world as it is, nor should we anticipate that it would transform into a revisionist force with the aim of modernizing the world order. The Chinese foreign policies towards striving for achievement have made great progress in many areas under Xi leadership.

Nye, (2017) reflects on soft power and in 1980s author initiates the concept of soft power. Approximately around the world it is used often imperfectly by political leader's editorial writers and academics. So, what is soft power? Soft power has capability to magnetize and persuade. Soft power comes from the appealing aspects of a nation's culture, political beliefs, and tactics, whereas hard power is the ability to compel an expansion of a nation's military or economic might. World states demanding soft power strategies and to enforce in their policies also demand to protection their self-determination and non-state groups enthusiastic to turn into aggression (Muzaffar& Khan, 2021).

Hayden (2012) asserts a comparative evaluation of public diplomacy and strategic communication creativity to illustrate how Joseph Nye's notion of "soft power" has evolved into context-specific global power tactics. Four manifestations—Japan, Venezuela, China, and the United States—are examined in order to clarify the unique impact that culture, international audiences, and communication technology have on each nation's foreign policy goals. Examining the ideas of soft power in the context of a hypothetical power struggle and as a sign of how nation-states determine what is an excessively necessary intrusion on international relations in a time when inclusive communication is widely available and non-state actors are encroaching on networks (Yaseen, et. al., 2017).

Gallarotti, (2011) Struggle to address the systematic deficiencies in the process of soft power and give an explanation about world politics that changes the assessment of soft power comparative to hard power and intend several prescriptions that encourage decisions makers to use soft power strategies effectively in their foreign policies. Analyze the progression of soft power in perspective of systematically. Present situation emphasis on soft power strategies that develop the condition of strong and attractive political and economic system.

Zhang, (2010) focused on the inside rational relations amongst Chinese cultural soft power and the comprehension of the China dream although similarly present comprehensive clarifications of the opportunity and crucial questions regarding Chinese cultural soft power. Author further argued about the alienation of China into six portions which engaged together curtly so far systematically observe the theoretical start of China soft power and the current position as exemplified in tangible cases. Afterward the author allures a vigilant general conclusion on the progress of China soft power.

Kurlantzick, (2008) explained the historical background of the foreign policy of China in twentieth century. The initial part of this creative book to examine the importance of china current focus on soft power that is diplomacy trade and encouragement of education cultural exchanges and proficiency of project to achieve social and economic benefits also expand stronger international associations. The study of China strategies with a charm offensive in South Asia (Nawab, et. al., 2021; Yaseen, et. al., 2023).

Material and Methods

The methodology used in this study is qualitative to explore China's strategic expansion of cultural and multilingual centers and its growing influence in South Asian region. The research is based on descriptive design involved secondary data sources like past articles, journals, textbooks, research papers, policy papers and credible online sources. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to understand how China utilizes cultural and linguistic institutions, such as Confucius Institutes and other language centers, to enhance its soft power in South Asia.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study highlight that China has greatly increased its soft power in South Asia especially through the establishment of Confucius institutions and by cultural

and multilingual centers. The study also shows that although China's cultural diplomacy is embraced in certain countries as a way to cooperate academically and economically, it encounters opposition in others because of geopolitical tensions and worries about cultural domination. Furthermore, the study shows that China's deliberate use of language and cultural institutions is essential to influencing perceptions, extending its power, and establishing itself as a major player in the sociocultural landscape of South Asia.

China Cultural Centers in Pakistan

Studying Chinese languages has become more popular in Pakistan after the CPEC project was created because China is showcasing its might and potential in the global economic conflict. With the success of CPEC, global economic turmoil is anticipated. Currently, compared to other students, the majority of Pakistani students are receiving scholarships in Chinese (Rahim, et. al., 2018). Many people in Pakistan are learning Chinese both domestically and abroad because they believe that speaking Chinese will open up a wide range of innovative career opportunities in the near future. An organization that promotes cultural exchange between Pakistan and China exists. This makes it possible to create an anticipated approach. Accordingly, the People's Republic of China delegation in Islamabad and the cultural exchange organizations that link the two nations' citizens go back to the prehistoric era. The two nations have taken part in a number of initiatives to promote exchanges since the PRC's 1949 venture. On March 25, 1965, the Cultural Cooperation Agreement of two-way exchanges was endorsed, marking the beginning of several important stages. Beijing and Islamabad have conducted innumerable abundant trades and assistance in art, literature, education, information, sports, youth affairs, cultural relics, archives, publications, health and women affairs, etc. Another city in Pakistan hosts Chinese art groups, where they perform folk dances, play traditional instruments, and perform acrobatics. China is meticulous and has a long history of supporting Urdu. China acknowledged the Urdu department at Beijing's Peking University for the whole 1950s. Because of this, the department has taught a large number of Chinese scholars who are fluent in Urdu. These departments' graduates work in various government agencies and suggest their support to odd business partners (Asif, Zhiyong, Ullah, Kalsoom, 2019).

In Pakistan, the Chinese language enjoys much better standing. Pakistan launched China at a very important point. Numerous China Study Centers can be found in Pakistan's several colleges. Confucius Institutes acknowledged the Chinese government's assistance, which played a significant role in this. The China-Pakistan Cultural Communication Center One of the most potent and significant sectors of the twenty-first century is the cultural industry, which has also emerged as a nascent sector of global industrial development and is being adopted by more nations as a crucial component of their economic expansion. There are certain areas in the cultural industries where a two-way partnership between China and Pakistan may focus on different points of view (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018). Production for radio and television, folk arts and crafts industry participating in the arts industry festival demonstration, cultural relic and museum arrangements circulating industry, advertising industry, entertainment industry, sports industry, printing and packaging industry, cultural education and healthcare, cultural agricultural tourism, emerging cultural industry and innovative cultural formats using digital technology and a network of information technology, industry producing cultural equipment, cooperative training of creative talents in the cultural industry, and several other interconnected grounds. It projects that the two governments will develop fiber optic as part of the long-term agreement for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which will increase digital connection between the two nations. Additionally, as part of this preparation, TV shows will be launched to promote language and cultural exchanges between the two parties. Research on how to promote more cooperative cultural exchanges between the two nations can be conducted by these departments. In actuality, there are enormous amounts of similarity between the two nations. For example, salt mines have been found in Zigong, a small city in

Sichuan province. On the other hand, the next largest mine in the world is Khewra's Salt Mine in Jhelum District, Pakistan. Zigong is skilled and has done a lot of research on salt. It has a broad network of researchers' innovative investigations on salt. Together, the two cities can grow their schemes. Other common fields of study can benefit from this replica. Furthermore, the growth of the cultural sector satisfies people's needs for spiritual and cultural life in the twenty-first century. The China-Pakistan Shared Destiny is said to have been built before the world and to have a remarkable ability to reproduce cultural assistance between two civilizations (Yaseen, et. al., 2020; Sterling, 2018).

China Cultural Centers in India

It is commonly known that the ancient cultures of China and India tolerate the distinction between the two countries. The esteemed Nalanda University was home to hundreds of Chinese intellectuals. The Chinese academics were among the first to participate in Buddhist parishioners. Chinese intellectuals Fa-hein, Sung-yun, and Hieuen Tsang also traveled to India during the primordial era, as did Indian scholars such as Dharmaratha, Kumarajiva, Buddhajiva, Dharmakshema, and Sangabhati. The intimate historical and religious ties of Buddhism, which were introduced to China by Indian monks before the customary period of their respective histories, further promote the cooperative relationship between the two countries (Imtiaz, et. al., 2023; Chauhan, 2015).

When Indian Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee visited China in 2003, both nations set up cultural centers in their capital cities and will facilitate their establishment. The University of Taxila and Nalanda, two of India's most prestigious educational institutions, were founded by Chinese monks. Wen-Jiabo in India was overtaken by the most recent cultural exchange program in December 2010 to help in the cultural field through visits from artists, officials, writers, archivists, and archaeologists, as well as the planning of cultural festivals.

Under the Cultural Exchange Program, 25 scholarships are granted each year to Chinese students who wish to continue their education in India. Mandarin was made available as a foreign language in India starting in April 2011 by the Central Board of Secondary Education (Kattumuri, 2012).

China cultural centers induced in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka and China connected intimately together with the characteristic of education. In recent times, figures of foreign students escalate in China, various researchers illustrate concentration on the troubles of become accustomed Chinese. Chongqing Normal University and its network of linkages were promoted as a Sri Lankan research center in 2003 as part of the precondition and extension of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative, which aimed to provide access to global education. Chongqing Normal University is home to about 80 Sri Lankan students. In addition, there aren't many studies looking at how Sri Lankan students are changing culturally in Chongqing. Chinese charity initiatives in Sri Lanka stand out for fostering soft power by fortifying cultural institutions that support interconnected tactics with a clear goal of maintaining Chinese representation and clashes. In Sri Lanka the Confucius institutes at the University of Kelaniya organizing the essentially, development of the Chinese mandarin, existence used tool for edifying cooperation. The China radio in Sri Lanka infatuated a foreign country enthusiast is motivating on-air Confucius Institute. The social mandatory movements accomplished in the course of the Chinese educational scholarship. Beijing has been keeping forward that grants Sri Lankans for focusing on Chinese language moreover glancing for subsequent to altered study and inspect it in China. The China Scholarship Council (CSC) has brought up to date of understanding (MOU) with the Higher Education Ministry of Sri Lanka, at the same time as China compensates more or less 23 allowances to Sri Lanka each year. All the way these

movements in China boost the capability to advanced knowledge in elucidation, science and Technology (Yao, Pan, 2018).

China Cultural Centers in Bhutan

Bhutan is a surrounded land nation encircled by China to the north and Indian states to the west. Bhutan's proximity to China has not official ambassadorial relations. The Bhutanese Home Secretary presided over China's first expert group convention in June 2002. Technical deliberations have been followed. Authorized associates among the two countries have been increasing from side to side for direct and multilateral channels. Chinese establishment on a regular basis explained the essential principles of Bhutan, articulating China's devotion for traditional companionship among the people and put together magnitude for gracious relationships among these two countries, greetings Bhutan's self-government and sovereignty, attach the principle of non intervention in Bhutan domestic dealings. In 2000, the substances of Assamese press recommended weapons disbursed insurgents in Southern Bhutan, in the way of Burma and using Chittagong port in Bangladesh. Thus, accusations are not acknowledged. In June 2000, Bhutanese Ambassador tripped in China. The visitations released an innovative channel of associations in border meetings. Other circumstances used for intensify communal understanding of religious, cultural, political and technical matters. Although governments moved to the Macao Special Administration Region in 2000 to safeguard the Bhutanese honorary consulate, there are still very little exchanges. Significant wealth has been established in Central Tibet by China and Bhutan. Kaewkhunok (2018). One more facet to be contemplated in China and Bhutan policy pertain to the recommencement of religious associations among Bhutanese and Tibetan monasteries. Nevertheless, different interactions had subsisted from beginning to end times, by means of pilgrimages (Kaewkhunok, 2018).

China Cultural Centers in Maldives

Maldives is an island state. The Center of Global Development regards Maldives in one of the eight countries very susceptible to financial obligation controlled by China Belt Road Initiative. Maldives indebted to China the sums of financial records is \$240 and only 8.6% of the entire country debt \$2.775 billion. Preeminent Chinese projects in Maldives stay behind attractive, particularly those that move ahead the tourism industry, specified the country's reliance on tourism to fuel the economy. Up to now Maldives' military ties with China restricted specially contrasted bottomless security links flanked by Maldives and India. Maldives' relations with China concentrated on a few types of economic projects including the Xi Jinping's visit in 2014 a first Chinese USIP. In 2007 President Yameen visited in China. Infrastructure projects paying attention essentially in road connectivity from corner to corner islands, tourism, housing, and improvement in worldwide airport runway. China and Maldives has persistent history with delineated to the 1970s. According to interviewees, President Gayoom "opened up the country by necessity" because he needed associates to help rebuild the struggling economy after the 2004 disaster created a window of opportunity for Beijing (Kumar, 2012).

During 2000 and 2017 Maldivian civil servants take part in opposed to corruption working out in China, also to in conferences on Belt Road Initiative, climate modify, and erection. Chinese publicize is insignificant in the Maldives, although Beijing has required to promote associations with domestic media, for instance hosting once a year interchange trips and a ten-month journalism instruction plan in China for Maldivian journalists. The Chinese legation as well-organized events on themes for example BRI, and encouraged local media. In order to refute claims of debt-trap negotiations through the MDP, the Chinese envoy was undoubtedly active on social media and in posting op-eds on Maldivian news networks. By stating that the Chinese envoy had contracted with the China-Maldives Cultural Association, a local civil society organization, to handle their cultural diplomacy activities, Beijing was merely affianced with the standard Maldivian.

Due to cultural and religious sensitivity, Chinese superintendents have had to overcome the barrier that prevents the establishment of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in the Maldives. As an alternative, Beijing established a Mandarin Language Learning Center in Male, placed volunteer Chinese instructors at Maldives National University, and provided lodging for the embassy's events, including a Chinese cultural festival (Kumar in 2012).

Conclusion

The cultural centers in China such as Confucius institutes program have the prospective to furnish states with both domestic and international advantages. Further in other countries cultural revelation and new prospects for language erudition can show the way to a consequent amplify in tourism and business right of circumstances given that states with domestic economic assistances. In 2020, it is anticipated that China will serve as a conduit for the unfastening of over 1000 Confucius Institutes, not just in Asia but also in other nations. Raising awareness of culture as a BRI component in Asia throughout the implementation of Cultural mediation is an essential soft power that links the assertion of openness to cultural values and perspectives. In South Asian region China presents the Chinese cultural exchange programs as well as communication and education plans which enormously intensification the reflection of china and also persuade security and prosperity. Pakistan and china are functioning to remain CPEC project. So for this purpose it is necessary to considerate the local culture and norms. The governments of China and Pakistan have started numerous imperative actions to enhance consciousness in their relevant populations concerning the differentiation in cultures, social lives and business surroundings transversely China and Pakistan. Governments of both countries try to gratifying the official visits spending in the tourism manufacturing or challenging to terminate the space by concentrate on the language barrier, and invested in making cultural collaboration an essential part of the project. Cultural connectivity between Pakistan and China will also certainly augment under the CPEC as the project itself intends to manufacture a rail and road network associations between the two countries.

In 2010 China and India develop cultural exchanges, and improve the India-China Strategic and reciprocated corporation for peaceful and privileged circumstances. Cultural Exchange Programme supporting to which 25 scholarships are permitted once a year to Chinese students inadequate to pursue highly developed studies in India. Same as concerning to 8,000 Indian students enlisted in different Chinese Universities, for the most part in Chinese medical universities where they are experienced MBBS studies.

The Confucius institute in Sri Lanka confers importance to instantly positive system of the China diversity manufacture interest for the nation. Nevertheless, the Confucius institute undertaking in Sri Lanka indicates an existing manifestation of a cultural soft power in China international position. China determined that it affirmed one million US dollars to send out the completion and restoration procedure in war exaggerated regions in Sri Lanka.

Bhutan and China have a widespread conference of cultural and religious crossing point with Tibet and deal out extensive boundary with China. Exchanges besides expanded at the expert level. Although China offered Bhutan large government scholarships in 2001, Chinese instruction is still required for Bhutanese students. Through several enscribing Chinese commissions, Beijing essentially engaged the average Maldivian, outsourcing their cultural diplomacy efforts to the China-Maldives Cultural Association. Due to cultural and religious credulity, Chinese administrations have had to address the obstacle that Confucius institutions are not feasible in the Maldives. In Malé, Beijing also established a Mandarin Language Learning Center, placed volunteer Chinese instructors at Maldives National University, provided lodging for a Chinese Cultural Festival, and promoted initiatives within the embassy.

Recommendations

- A feasibility analysis should be conducted to minimize risks of failure and ensure long-term sustainability for every cultural and linguistic project.
- China can modernize its cultural diplomacy by incorporating digital platforms, AI-driven language learning, and virtual exchanges to make its influence more dynamic and engaging.
- China must adopt an inclusive and adaptive approach, ensuring that its cultural and linguistic initiatives respect South Asian nations' diverse traditions, political ideologies, and societal values.
- Further studies should analyse the long-term effectiveness of China's cultural and language-based soft power strategies in South Asia, measuring their role in shaping regional perceptions and alliances.

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