



Upgrading China Pakistan Bilateral Relations through Everyday Life Communications: Cases from North Minzu University

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Abstract: What we know about the very good relations between China and Pakistan and the concrete implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative is only reported by the media of the two countries, rather than the personal experience of the people from both China and Pakistan. From the perspective of anthropology, in this article, authors suggested that the exchanges and interactions between two countries should be reflected in the concrete cultural exchanges. In recent years, we have invited scholars from Pakistan to China and carried out a variety of activities such as forums, lectures, seminars and conferences, in order to reinforce the mutual understandings between two countries. Afterwards, the evaluations and reflections from participants proved that these academic activities are meaningful to the concrete practice of the friendship between China and Pakistan.

Keywords: China Pakistan Bilateral Relations, The Belt and Road Initiative, Anthropology

Introduction

When we talked about the relationship between China and Pakistan, we are habitually speaking on behalf of political leaders that we two countries are very friendly with brotherhoods, and our friendship is higher, deeper and sweeter, and we, as usual, have been saying in this way without thinking who are we, and whom we are speaking for and who give our power to say in this way unconsciously, are we really responsible for this? After shaking hands, and mentioning what we colloquially used slogans, we felt lost in having nothing more to communicate, we were not hindered by languages, not estranged by identities, and not limited by diplomatic requests either. Why? From media reports, we know Belt and Road Initiatives have been concretely implemented in Pakistan through CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) and Gwadar Port project, both two countries have jointly invested fund, human resources and man power for mutual benefits and sustainable development. China continues to broaden and deepen its cooperative ties with countries along the silk roads, aiming to build a community of interests with economic^[1], under the background of initiatives of a community with a shared future for mankind. Projects and formal official activities are normally carried out, while folk communications, people to people activities are not largely implemented. China and Pakistan good relations integration and reinforcement should be involved and connected with people, by people and for people from both countries. Currently, it seems that communications, ideal future bilateral relations are frequently orally mentioned, concrete practices should be immediately put forward.

People from Pakistan and China should be involved with Concrete Practice

People from both countries, similar to grassroots dwellers on this world in other countries, are easily “trained” by the information from one aspect, the manipulated aspect, and we naturally trust it and we believe it is true, even as the truth. As we all know, media is biased with intention, and being manipulated. The information we received had been processed, reproduced and reedited by the one for the benefit of oneself. For the short run, we were brainwashed without the capability to differ from, for the long run, we were shaped by one tunnel of voice, and we cannot escape from the iron cage of knowledge we were irrigated. Frankly speaking, we didn’t escape the traps in the hands of manipulators. Media revealed the corner of ice burger, we accepted them as the whole picture. TV is the idiot box which we all know, but the current short clips shipping all kinds of information, from the perspective of “entertainment”, while enjoying the laughter as the laugh stock, we accept stories without hesitations with happiness and satisfaction that we have known more with good emotion, nice air and relax circumstance. The fact what we have seen is also made latterly by directors. Like that think tanks and media are assisting their governments to create negativity about China-Pakistan relationship.^[2] Other examples are a lot, needless to pick a few to reinterpret and reinforce the simplicity of perspectives, because when we observe, there are multiple perspectives, multiple layers and uncountable spheres.

The security situation and tourism environment in Pakistan are gradually improving, foreign tourists travel to Pakistan began to increase.^[3] I have this progressive conclusion is from common sense, from China side, visitors of various motivations came back from Pakistan, would share what they have experienced, what they encountered and what they contributed, some are positively acceptable, no doubt others are hypothesis, narrow minded compiled stories from their own one-side and subjective perspectives. The most frequently mentioned content is the

exaggeration of poverty, the instability, the turbulence, the terrorism, the flood etc., and not just these. From Pakistan side as well, novelty hunted approaches as well. Those who went back from China in Pakistan, were used to ways of thinking and mentioned theirs under the “theories” of they trusted should be correct, the hidden hands were there as usual, some were from earlier knowledge they were ascribed in Pakistan social, political and cultural concepts, and some were from global concepts, normally being taken for granted as the fashionable, popular, advanced and correct visions. We believe the east, the west or south and north were made up by we human beings, yet western and western ideological background were considered as what being mentioned in the above lines, we have kind of peripheral trustworthy habitus^[4] of them without doubt. All in all, based on the above, my writing here is to say, the communication, the interaction and even dialogues of civilizations were not purely, simply and naturally represented, there were always some powers^[5] behind the curtains of our thinking and ways of thinking.

China and Pakistan communications should come down to the ground with concrete activities naturally without interference. Pakistan-China relationship has a glorious past, [and a] bright future.^[3] What I have shared here is to advice that cultural and people to people ties and interactions should be the first and foremost priority for the betterment of mutual understanding and total acceptance by people from both countries.

Communications are possible approaches to improve better understandings

The following mentioned is based on my personal experiences. Several years ago, when I was in Hong Kong taking my PhD study, the other day I met two people with thick beards and moustache, and also Sikh stylish caps, but I had no idea of Sikhism, historical experience and cultural identity encouraged me to walk up to them and say salam to build up brotherhood for more knowing to each other. Both of them accepted my salam greetings and corrected me that they were not Muslims but Sikhs. I didn't have any idea of Sikh, thought it was Sufism, which was quite common in my hometown. Later on, I went to Sikh temples in Hong Kong as well and ate their vegetarian foods. The misunderstanding and misconceptions ended with more interests to know how were lives of Pakistanis in Hong Kong, finding similarities and differences of them became sort of mission for me, although I had not been to Pakistan.

A few years after my graduation, I had the opportunity to become the dean of Pakistan culture studies, and the window and the door for me to understand more about Pakistan and Pakistanis of their cultures and societies were gradually opened. Going inside for a long term living together with whom we were studying and knowing from oneself personal experiences, anthropologically, the fieldwork, observation and participate observation, were helpful for the full picture of those whom we studied.^[6] But it was difficult to have opportunities to go to Pakistan because of the ubiquitous covid-19. Before 2019, we did some concrete work to put forward the communications from scholars from both countries. One year after the centre established, we invited students studying in China from Pakistan and came to North Minzu University for a forum, and two scholars from Pakistan, both of them were anthropologists retired from Universities of Pakistan, we also invited one scholar from Europe and four from China, we had 2 days of talks, the main topics were concerned with everyday lives of people in both China and Pakistan. One main topic was food and foodways, students and scholars presented their topics, which were very effective, because we understood each other through food cultures, was a possible approach to closely see the universality of we human beings^[7], although we were shaped by societies, cultures and local geographies, ecology and whatever possible. Besides, through these talks, we knew the abundant foodways. Scholars also shared their professional studies in different areas, such as what is mankind for the shared future, advantages and hinders on CPEC projects, ethnicity and ethnic identities, which helped us broaden our visions of better mutual understandings, covering various aspects for all walks of lives.

After the talk, we invited more students from Pakistan in China to join the wechat group with a name of “Pakistan Students in China”. Students from Pakistan, when they studied in China, they also underwent various communications, interactions and talks with Chinese in their everyday life, they encountered cultural shocks as well. After discussion with them, we reached a consensus that their experiences should be written down and be shared with other students as reference in the future. It is a possible approach to avoid same troubles and difficulties being encountered. We invited each of them to contribute one chapter with same theme and topic, and wrote their experiences in China. This is very meaningful. People started their new lives in different environments, they inevitably underwent cultural shocks and processes of adaptations. After a few months of preparation and writing, we collected their chapters and reimbursed them with some payment. Their contributions were carefully written with details of what they have experiences. Aside from the good references for the future students, it is also useful for other Pakistanis to know more about China and Chinese people. We have finished the editorial work, and have contacted press to publish this collection in Pakistan. As things are changed everyday, we plan to have a continuation of this work, we will look for more students graduated from China in Pakistan to contribute their experiences.

Learning from this, we also had a new idea that why not invite some more people graduated from Pakistan to contribute chapters of their lives in Pakistan, also a good reference for Chinese to understand more about Pakistan and Pakistanis. We are doing this work now, and we have found 10 scholars in China, before long, I believe this Chinese version collection will come out as well.

Aside from this work, based on the China-Arab Expo, once two years held in Yinchuan city, Ningxia, we also invited scholars from Pakistan in 2018. during the Expo forum, we extended our studies on Science and Technology communications between two countries, such as agricultural equipment, irrigation system to defend the drought and floods. Also some points on trades, the possible collaborations. This work was reported by local TV station and left positive impacts on people who were willing to carry out business between two countries.

Some more suggestions after the concrete implementation

A good beginning is half down. After activities mentioned above, we started to develop more activities and projects. Influenced by the Covid-19, quite a few students graduated from China, it was very difficult for them to find positions in Pakistan. They had pressure of a good living with their family, no income was very embarrassed, I had some fund for doing research on people in Pakistan, then I invited PhD graduates in Pakistan to collect some ebooks, draft some articles and teaching our undergraduates through online meetings. It is a good way for them to make some money and support their families. Also it is an achievements for them to use their knowledge to prove educations could be changed as wealth. For undergraduates, they also learned new things about Pakistan, a possible approach to reduce misunderstandings and increase more understandings. We had very good relations through these activities. I believe it is a good way to for the betterment of bilateral relations from non-governmental and so-called informal approaches. Through our frequent interactions, we developed more possibilities to ways of thinking, concepts of time, current situations etc. Education has always been an important part of China-Pakistan exchanges and cooperation, and with the promotion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the exchange and cooperation between the two countries in higher education will certainly reach a new level. ^[9]As we both have quite a lot centers and research institutes, it is a decent way to know more of each other, although it is only through wechats, webinars and talks. In the near future, we have opportunity to put these activities into face to face work.

Conclusion

To make a summary, people from China to Pakistan, as we all know, there are quite a lot of projects supported by China, are carrying out, Chinese labors and technicians should know everyday life of local people, customs and folk cultures, as well as taboos, if we are active enough to do some training works, it should be very helpful for them to get a quicker adaptation in Pakistan and reduce some clashes, conflicts and misunderstandings, surely it is helpful for both countries' good. This folk diplomatic activities should be a good support for governments to borrow and learn to deal with unexpected issues. We are to learn more approaches to do contributions for China and Pakistan, and put our friendship into effect and be away from colloquial expressions.

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