

Pak China Relations: Academic & Socio-Cultural Perspective



Round Table Discussion

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Organised By
MUSLIM Institute

MUSLIM Institute in collaboration with China Pakistan Educational and Cultural Institute organized a Round Table Discussion titled “Pak China Relations: Academic & Socio-Cultural Perspective” on December 8, 2017 at Islamabad. Air Vice Marshal (R) Faaiz Amir (Vice Chancellor, Air University, Islamabad) chaired the session. Mr. Tahir Mehmood (Public Relations Coordinator, MUSLIM Institute) delivered the opening remarks and moderated the proceedings. Other speakers include Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari (Former President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry), Prof. Le Wei (Dean, School of International Education, Yunnan University, China), Dr. Zhang Daojian (Director, Confucius Institute, NUML Islamabad), Mr. Tanvir Jafri (Incharge, China Study Centre, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad) and Mr. Me Heju (CEO, China Pakistan Educational & Cultural Institute). Mr. Asif Tanveer Awan Advocate (Research Associate MUSLIM Institute) presented the vote of thanks.

Brief Summary of the remarks shared by the speakers is as follows:



Row 01 (From Left): Air Vice Marshal (R) Faaiz Amir, Prof. Le Wei, Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari
Row 02 (From Left): Dr. Zhang Daojian, Mr. Tanvir Jafri, Mr. Me Heju

Pak-China diplomatic relations were established in 1951. Pakistan is among those countries which recognized People's Republic of China soon after its revolution. Islamic republic of Pakistan is also the first Muslim state to establish relations with China. An unshakeable mutual trust between both the states was seeded soon after the Bandung Conference in 1955 under the efforts of the Premier Zhou Enlai. Pak-China friendship, described by the political leadership of both the states is as higher as mountains, as deeper as oceans and as sweeter as honey is a unique and exceptional case in the international system.

Pakistan is home to the vital link between China and the Muslim World. Both states have been rendering remarkable services for the sake of their mutual development in their transitional period of almost seven decades. For example, more than twenty-two major projects have been initiated by China in Pakistan which include heavy mechanical complex, heavy electrical complex, tank rebuilding factory, aircraft rebuilding factory, Gwadar port, Karakoram Highway, Nuclear power plants etc.



Hall view of round table discussion.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is going to be a reality and both countries have decided to establish an international economic hub. CPEC is a game changer because the fate of Pakistan as well as the region of South Asia and even the world at large is going to be changed. Current Chinese president, Mr Xi Jinping wants to make China an economic super power and in the pursuance of these initiatives, One Belt One Road (OBOR) project is in the process of completion. This initiative will connect 65 countries of the whole world. An interesting fact regarding this initiative is that out of a total 65 countries, 55 are Muslim countries. It looks that the world order is going to be reconstructed. The center of power is likely to be shifted from the West to the East. Pakistan is on the front line with China and CPEC will benefit both Pakistan and China economically. The One Belt One Road initiative would bring competition as well as stability between both the nations. It will not only improve infrastructure but also total export at large. The major task is based on five points. 1st is the policy communication, 2nd is the facility of connectivity, 3rd is regarding unlimited trade, 4th deals with mutual financing and the 5th considers strong people to people contact. If the two countries are devoid of indigenous connectivity, we will not be benefitting ourselves with the maximum potential enshrined in CPEC. They need to understand each other. They need to know their similarities as well as the differences so that they form the habit of respecting each other. In this respect, they will be able to explore their challenges mutually while influencing factors regarding their relationship in a positive manner. Most of the issues can be solved easily through academic, social and cultural exchanges and with also people to people contact between the two countries not only at state level but also at individual. The world is changing its dynamics and the China and Pakistan have specific and unique role in the world generally and in the region at large. Both the countries enjoy the peculiarity of their own cultural values and abilities to face the change, in this regard, a famous Chinese scholar says "Everyone respect one's own culture and values. If we respect others' culture and values, the world will be full of hope".

However, there are cultural differences between the two nations and an acute sense of understanding regarding those cultural differences is very important. Pakistan is home to 200 million people contrary to 1.35 billion that of China. For cultural interaction and

cultural affinity, the civilization of China has to be more sensitive towards the cultural adequacies of Islamic civilization. Significance of the promotion of China-Pakistan socio-cultural exchanges and people to people contact has increased.



Hall view of round table discussion.

It will be better to enhance educational exchanges first which is the basic level. This level will disseminate a greater sense of opportunities regarding mutual understanding. Propagation of cultural affinity at student level deserves pivotal importance. In this respect, a high level of mutual confidence is required. It is really a good omen that Chinese students used to study in various universities of Pakistan. Both the governments are advised to invest heavily in the field of education while establishing world class educational institutions under mutual operational capacity. It will help a great deal in achieving mutual recognition regarding educational qualification between both the nations. Moreover, collaboration in significant areas like that of language and culture are of pivotal importance. Another significant area is the establishment of vocational education institutes across Pakistan in the wake of world's largest credible project CPEC. Because a large number of skilled workers will be needed soon to drive the project up to its maximum potential.

Academic contribution is considered as an ignored area with respect to other developmental areas. Humans are more important than projects. Up to May, 2017, Chinese institutions which officially set up Pakistan Research Centre include only seven special research institutions: Tsinghua University Pakistan Cultural Transmission Research Centre, Peking University Pakistan Research Centre, Sichuan University Pakistan Research Centre, Fudan University Pakistan Research Centre, Jiangsu Normal University Pakistan Research Centre, China West Normal University Pakistan Research Centre, Yunnan Nationalities University Pakistan Research Centre. In addition to above seven special research institutions, comparatively minimal number of scholars in other universities and scientific research institutions pay attention to jointly composed China's Pakistan research team. Similarly, in Pakistan, a recent increase in academic and cultural studies was witnessed but still it needs to be strengthened. Therefore, there is a dire need to establish and improve existing volume of Pakistan-China academic cooperation. It will help a great deal in further strengthening the already an unshakable relationship. In Pakistan, China Study Centre aims to promote cooperation in the field of science and technology. Various projects have been visualized by joint coordination with Chinese universities. A team of seven artists was warmly welcomed in Chinese universities. Another effort by the center is the introduction of Chinese way of flying a kite which is less dangerous as compared to the Pakistani way. Hundreds of kites were imported from China in order to celebrate Pak-China kite festival at China Study Centre. In addition, mass singing of Chinese anthem at China Study Centre is another feather in the center's cap. This singing has the privilege of first such kind in the history of Pakistan.



Hall view of round table discussion.

A large number of Buddhist antiquities and sculptures are present in different museums of Pakistan including Taxila Museum, Lahore Museum, Peshawar Museum, Dir Museum and Karachi Museum which is a treasure encompassing wonders not only for the Chinese tourists but for the researchers belonging to the field of archaeology. These assets are not only promoting tourism in Pakistan but also providing a chance of interaction between the two peoples.

Being the forth pillar, Media paly a very significant role in the development and prosperity of a nation. Chinese are advised to develop their own news agencies along with independent TV networks operating multilingual news along with encompassing a global reach. It will help a great deal in dealing with prevailing propogandas geo-politically against this historic friendship.

Although there exists healthy exchange of academicians, scholars, analysts as well as researchers yet the up gradation of future prospects of socio-cultural and academic cooperation is the need of the hour in concordance with the changing geo-political scenario.

Interactive Session:



Participants asking questions in interactive session

A fruitful discussion took place in interactive session it is summarized as follows:

People of China consider the folks of Pakistan their best friends. CPEC is a game changer which will benefit both countries of China and Pakistan. Pakistani students are under education in various departments of Chinese universities and their numbers have increased substantially after CPEC. They are being provided full time scholarships and other educational facilities. Although different academic scholars, analysts and students visit both sides thus enhancing future prospects of socio-cultural and academic relationship, but considering the capacity on both sides, a lot of work need to be done.