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New Trends in China's Educational Diplomacy under the "Belt and Road" Initiative ----- Case Study of China's Higher Education Policy in Pakistan

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Abstract: With the promotion of the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative and the increasingly frequent exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world, emerging factors such as education, culture and economy have gradually become the central topics of diplomatic dialogue. In the context of the "Belt and Road" and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, this paper reviews the development history of China-Pakistan education cooperation from 1955 to 2023, and identifies the obstacles to China's educational diplomacy in Pakistan. This paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of educational cooperation between the two countries, and puts forward a new approach suitable for China's educational diplomacy according to the national conditions of the two countries.

Keywords: Education Diplomacy ; Belt and Road ; Pakistan

I. Introduction:

With the promotion of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and the increasingly frequent exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world, education, culture, economy, and other emerging elements are gradually taking center stage in diplomatic talks. China and Pakistan's educational cooperation is based on the fact that the two countries are friendly neighbors with a long tradition of friendship. It has been 70 years since educational cooperation between China and Pakistan began in 1955 and reached new heights. In the context of the "One Belt, One Road" and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects, China's education diplomacy has progressed in a solid and orderly manner, and the two countries have made significant achievements in international student education activities, building educational cooperation business cards and academic research platforms. There are still many differences between the two countries in terms of higher education philosophy and cooperation management planning, and there is still great potential for improving the education cooperation between China and Pakistan. This paper discusses the new path and significance of China's educational diplomacy in Pakistan, analyses the advantages and disadvantages of educational cooperation between the two countries, and proposes a new approach suitable for China's educational diplomacy according to the situation of both countries.

1. The Concept and Historical Development of Chinese Educational Diplomacy

"Educational diplomacy" promotes international understanding and cooperation through

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educational exchange programs and is a powerful tool for advancing peace and mutual understanding between nations. It was first coined in the 1960s by the American scholar Stephen Barron.^[1] Garyfallia Ramtsiou is an EU scholar who has studied educational diplomacy as a subject. He sees educational diplomacy as the use of educational projects, exchanges, and partnerships to promote international cooperation and foster positive relations between nations. Educational diplomacy can also advance foreign policy objectives and enhance a country's soft power.^[2] Zachary Abuza, a professor at the National War College in Washington DC, and John Allison explore how educational diplomacy builds relationships between nations and promotes global cooperation. They examine the role of education in promoting cross-cultural understanding and how educational exchanges and partnerships can help promote foreign policy objectives. Their research also explores the challenges and limitations of educational diplomacy.^[3]

The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) began developing the concept of educational diplomacy in 2009, based on its history of educational progress worldwide and inspired by the transformative potential of education to ensure a bright future for every child in every country. The concept can be understood as a diplomatic technique and approach that bridges understanding, addresses educational challenges and promotes a transformative agenda to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education. In summary, the subject of educational diplomacy, the object of which is the government of a country and the foreign recipient of education, respectively, is a variety of humanistic exchange activities aimed at cultivating and training human resources, primarily to safeguard national interests and harmonize international interests, and promoting people-to-people contact.

The essence of educational diplomacy is diplomacy, and education is its expression. Educational diplomacy combines the characteristics of education and diplomacy. The subject of educational diplomacy is a particular country, and the object is the educated people of other countries. Educational diplomacy promotes people-to-people contacts, talent training and training, and humanities exchanges. Guided by Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy insists on developing friendly cooperation with other countries based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.^[4]

As exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world become more frequent, new elements such as education, culture, economy, and so on are gradually taking center stage in diplomatic talks. The number of educational exchange and cooperation projects between China and other countries worldwide has also increased with China's rapid economic development. With the promotion of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the opening up of China's education to the outside world has ushered in a historic opportunity. Along with it, the role of "education diplomacy" in the country's overall diplomatic landscape is moving from ambiguity to clarity, its positioning is moving from the periphery to the center, and its use is moving from spontaneous to spontaneous. It is becoming a relatively independent and increasingly important form of diplomacy, forming an important part of the diplomacy of a great power with Chinese characteristics.

Although the concept of educational diplomacy was introduced late in China, it has a long history as a fact of existence. For example, the Silk Road was a network of trade routes linking China to the Mediterranean world, and from the 2nd century BC to the 18th century AD, Chinese scholars and educators introduced the Chinese language, philosophy, literature and other forms of culture to people in Central Asia, West Asia and Europe. The Four Books and Five Classics, ancient Chinese texts, were considered key to the spread of education and culture. These ancient texts were also used for diplomatic exchanges with neighboring countries. The historical journey of exploring the establishment of a socialist education system from the founding of New China in 1949 to the reform and opening up of China in 1978 saw the beginning and advancement of international

exchange and cooperation in education. Through nearly 30 years of exploration and practice, China's educational diplomacy has expanded globally, the scale of Chinese language international education and opportunities for international student exchanges have gradually expanded, educational cooperation and training bases have gradually been established, China's educational diplomacy has increasingly developed in the direction of institutionalization, and the influence of China's educational diplomacy has grown with each passing day. Overall, education has been an important tool for diplomacy throughout Chinese history and has played a key role in connecting China with the world.

2. Current situation of education cooperation between China and Pakistan under the "Belt and Road" initiative

Cooperation in education between China and Pakistan is based on the long-standing traditional friendship between the two countries, which are friendly neighbors, and on 21 May 1951, when diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan were formally established. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have developed good unneighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Under the attention and promotion of the two governments, projects such as the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor", industrial parks, and cultural and educational exchanges between China and Pakistan have been gradually launched along with the "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

2.1 The initial start and slow development of Sino-Pakistani cooperation in education (1955-2003)

During the Bandung Conference in 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai held two friendly talks with Prime Minister Muhammad Ali. Both sides agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in various fields. After the Bandung Conference, high-level exchanges between the two countries gradually increased, and in October 1956, Pakistani Prime Minister Sulawady was invited to China for an official visit. In December of the same year, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Pakistan. 1957-1969 was a very important period in the history of Sino-Pakistani relations, during which a historic transformation took place and a new chapter in Sino-Pakistani relations was opened. 1963 saw the signing of the Sino-Pakistani Educational and Cultural Agreement between the Chinese Ministry of Education and the Pakistani government. In 1965, the first batch of 33 Pakistani students from Peking University and Tsinghua University arrived in Beijing to study engineering, agriculture, medicine and the Chinese language in China.^[5] Since 1965, China and Pakistan have signed several education agreements, reflecting the growing educational cooperation and exchange between the two countries.

In 1976, China and Pakistan signed the Protocol on Educational Exchanges, which established a framework for educational exchanges between China and Pakistan, covering exchanges of teachers and students in various fields, joint research projects, and cooperation in teaching materials and technology.

In 1979, China decided to carry out comprehensive reform and opening up. China's education sector also entered a new period of socialist education modernization with internal reform and opening up to the outside world. The reform and opening up of the education sector started a new journey in China's education development. They became an important driving force for China to strengthen the globalization of education diplomacy. The reform and opening up of China's education sector have promoted domestic education reform and development, driving China's active participation in international education exchanges, cooperation, and global education affairs. Since the 1980s, China's reform and opening up of the education sector have shown a positive and positive interaction with its participation in global education governance. Educational exchanges

have been relatively rare, with the establishment of the Chinese Department of the National Institute of Modern Languages (now the National University of Modern Languages) in the early 1980s being the main educational achievement of China and Pakistan. The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) was the first of all schools in Pakistan to open a Chinese language department and teach Chinese as a foreign language in the country. This marked the official start of Chinese language teaching in Pakistan.

In general, it was only after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan in the 1950s that the two countries began to engage in political, diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchanges. However, until 1979 the theme of Sino-Pakistani engagement remained largely centered on the political level. After 1980, as China continued to make new achievements on the international stage with more confidence, China began to focus on cultural diplomacy, and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan began to increase. Until the 2000s, educational exchanges between China and Pakistan, in the true sense of the word, suffered from less cooperation and a more homogeneous approach to cooperation.

3.2 Quality Development of China-Pakistan Cooperation in Education since the New Century (2003-2023)

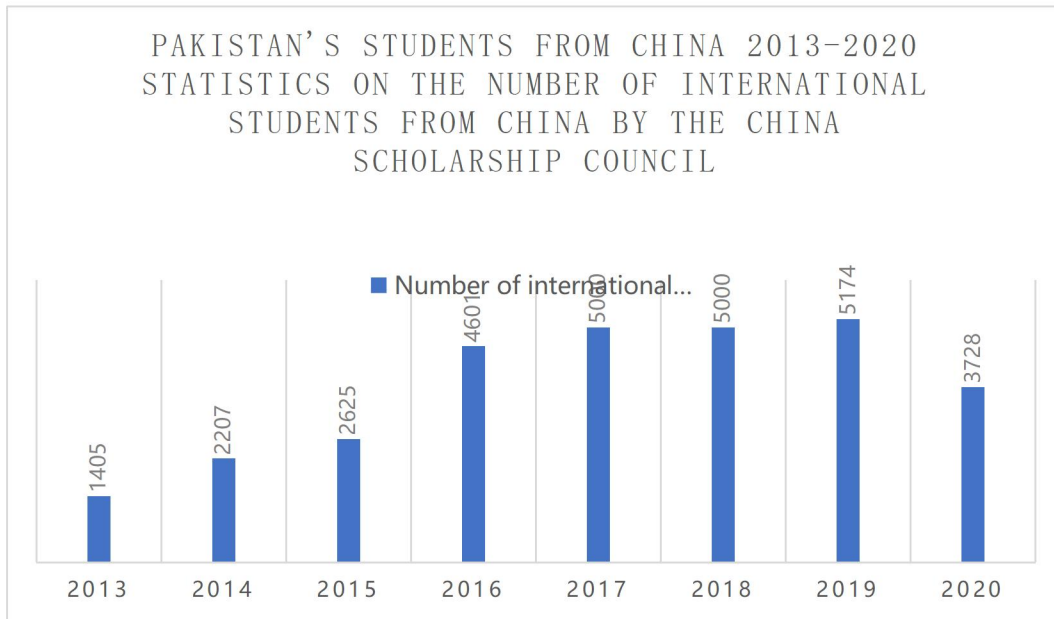
From 2003 to the present, the relationship between China and Pakistan has grown and deepened, with more and more educational exchanges between the two countries. The first is the strong diplomatic ties between the two countries. China and Pakistan have a long-standing diplomatic relationship, strengthened by frequent high-level visits and a series of economic and strategic partnerships. These strong diplomatic relations have provided a favorable educational exchange and cooperation environment. From 2003 to date, China and Pakistan have met 23 times, including as many as 14 meetings between heads of state.^[6] The second is economic cooperation. China and Pakistan have sought to strengthen economic cooperation, and China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects in Pakistan under the Belt and Road Initiative. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has provided scholarships and other forms of support to Pakistani students to study in China to strengthen educational exchanges between the two countries further.

Thirdly due to the shared cultural and historical ties between China and Pakistan, including the influence of Buddhism and the Silk Road trade routes. These common cultural ties provide the basis for educational exchanges and cooperation in language, history and culture. For example, the area of Taxila, some 50 kilometers northwest of the Pakistani capital Islamabad, is the site of a sermon by Tang Xuanzang on his journey westward to obtain scriptures. Fourthly, there is a growing demand for quality education in China and Pakistan, and educational exchange programs provide opportunities for students and scholars to learn about each other's education systems, research methods and academic disciplines. For example, since 2003, the Pakistan Council of Higher Education has sent senior advanced students to China for doctoral studies each year, with 72 students sent so far.^[7] The Pakistan Higher Education Commission selects and funds no less than 50 Pakistani university teachers to come to China each year for five years from 2003 to 2007 to pursue doctoral studies in Chinese universities that match their professional backgrounds. The China Scholarship Council arranged for the admission of applicants to suitable Chinese higher education institutions. In addition, approximately 500 self-funded students come to China each year to study medicine, electronics, engineering, and technology, with the number tending to increase yearly.^[8]

According to the statistics of the number of Pakistani students who have been awarded the China Scholarship Council to study in China from 2013 to 2020, the number of Pakistani students who have been awarded the China Scholarship Council scholarship to study in China has been increasing every year since 2013, and the number of Pakistani students to study in China will be

relatively reduced in 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Chart 1: Statistical table of the number of Pakistani students awarded the China Scholarship Council to study in China from 2013 to 2020.



In 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road quickly. Pakistan was one of the first countries to support and participate in the Belt and Road Initiative, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was formally proposed in 2013 as a landmark project under the Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past decade, the 3,000km-long China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has not only become a link between the North and South Silk Roads but has also built a bridge between China and Pakistan. With the gradual implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative in Pakistan in 2013, cooperation between China and Pakistan in various fields such as trade and economy, education, culture and military has continued to advance, and a "study in China fever" has arisen in Pakistan, with more and more Pakistani students choosing to study in China. More and more Pakistani students are choosing to study in China for further education. Studying in China is becoming a priority for many young Pakistanis, and Chinese higher education is gaining popularity among Pakistani students and parents. According to data released by the Pakistani Embassy in China, the number of new Pakistani students in China in 2017 was about 2,500. The total number of students in China is now about 22,000. According to Chinese statistics, more than 5,000 Pakistani students in China are benefiting from various scholarships.

With the increasing exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan in the field of humanities, the number of Pakistani students going to China has also continued to grow rapidly in recent years. In 2017, Pakistan became the third largest source country for international students after South Korea and Thailand, up six places from 2012. The workshop will train much technical and skilled personnel in electromechanics and electrical automation for Pakistan. The Luban Workshop is an internationally renowned brand in vocational education promoted by Tianjin Municipality. Based on the image of Lu Ban as a "great craftsman", "Lu Ban Workshops" have been set up in Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia.^[9] The "Luban Workshop" adopts three modes of construction: inter-school cooperation, school-enterprise cooperation and government-based cooperation focusing on technical skills training for local employees and integrating

humanistic exchanges, effectively promoting the sharing of Chinese vocational education concepts and experiences, education and teaching models, teaching technology and equipment, international professional teaching standards and high-level teacher training with related countries. The program has effectively promoted the sharing of Chinese vocational education concepts and experiences, education and teaching models, teaching technology and equipment, international professional teaching standards and high-level teacher training with related countries. After years of practical exploration, the program has enriched the paths and methods for vocational education to "go global" and gradually built a good image of Chinese vocational education, becoming an international brand of Chinese education.

Confucius Institutes are like another bright card of Chinese education, playing a vital role in promoting people-to-people contact and strengthening humanistic exchanges. According to the Ministry of Education, as of December 2019, China has established 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools in 162 countries (regions). China has opened five Confucius Institutes and two Confucius Classrooms in Pakistan.^[10] In May 2020, President Xi Jinping wrote back to all Pakistani students at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, encouraging foreign students in China to learn more about China, to tell the world more about the China they see, to interact more with Chinese youth, and to contribute to the promotion of people-to-people contact and the building of a community of human destiny.^[11]

Overall, the increasing educational exchanges between China and Pakistan from 2003 to 2023 reflect the growing recognition of the importance of education and human resource development in the long-term development plans of both countries and the desire to strengthen their relationship through people-to-people contact and educational exchanges.

3. China's diplomatic measures towards Pakistan under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative

Educational diplomacy has a long history in China and plays a pivotal role in developing relations between China and Pakistan. The "One Belt, One Road" initiative is now progressing in an orderly manner, and this new policy environment provides opportunities for the development of educational diplomacy in many ways.

3.1 Increased educational activities for international students between China and Pakistan

In 2005, China and Pakistan signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the China Scholarship Council and the Pakistan Higher Education Commission on the Pakistani Government Scholarship Programme for Postgraduate Students in China, officially launching the China-Pakistan Higher Education Student Exchange Programme. Before the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, the number and scale of staff exchanges in higher education between China and Pakistan were relatively limited. After the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, there have been significant changes in the exchange of personnel and talent training between the two sides. Firstly, China has increased the number of scholarships offered to Pakistan. As of 2018, about 2,700 Pakistani students are studying for master's or doctoral degrees with the Chinese government's and universities' financial support. In the 2018-2019 academic year alone, more than 1,000 Pakistani students will receive scholarships from China.^[12] As of 2019, with the support of the Belt and Road Scholarship, Pakistan has seen a massive increase in students coming to China, moving from tenth to third place in the country rankings, behind South Korea (50,600) and Thailand (28,608).^[13] During their studies, Pakistani students in China learn the Chinese language, cultural traditions, and professional knowledge, reserving many talents to construct the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Secondly, China has expanded the channels for providing scholarship programs. China's

scholarships are mainly offered through the central government scholarship program, local government scholarship program, university scholarship program and social institution scholarship program, effectively leveraging talent cultivation. For example, in 2017, China launched a scholarship program specifically for Pakistani students, making China the first choice for Pakistani students to study abroad. In February 2019, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing said that China would further increase its efforts to attract talent and provide 20,000 scholarships for Pakistani students in the next two years.^[14] In March 2022, China and Pakistan jointly signed the Agreement between the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Commission for Higher Education of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education. The "One Belt, One Road" and the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor have promoted the in-depth development of higher education exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor University Alliance has enriched the mechanism of higher education exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. Academic exchanges, talent training, and joint research between countries frequently promote common academic progress. The China-Pakistan University Consortium cooperation and the exchange of international students will further promote academic exchanges between the two countries, enhance cooperation between the two countries in the fields of culture, education, and science, promote people-to-people contact, and promote the building of closer China-Pakistan community of destiny in the new era.^[15]

3.2 China and Pakistan join hands to build a business card for education cooperation

"In 2020, the Pakistan Higher Education Commission and Huawei Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly promote the development of Huawei ICT Academy in Pakistan and increase the number of training places there from 800 to over 3,000 per year. The two parties decided to jointly promote the development of Huawei ICT Academy in Pakistan and to increase the number of training places there from 800 to over 3,000 per year. Under the terms of the MoU, Huawei will build eight more ICT academies in Pakistan. Together with the 15 previously completed academies, Huawei will have built a total of 23 ICT academies in Pakistan by the end of 2020, and will increase the number of training places from 800 to over 3,000. In addition, Huawei will upgrade five of the ICT academies that have already been built.

As an important promoter of the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Chinese enterprises are also actively involved in training talents on the Pakistani side. For example, the Three Gorges Group Scholarship Programme, which was launched at the end of 2017, is the first full scholarship program in Pakistan funded by Chinese enterprises and jointly trained by Chinese and foreign universities, with a long-term plan. The most important aspect of the scholarship program is the implementation of teaching. With the support of China Three Gorges Corporation, Punjabi University and Jiangxi University of Technology are working together to^[16]

To further serve the people of China and Pakistan, education cooperation between the two countries is changing from strategic to service-oriented education cooperation, with more emphasis on solving practical problems. The government, schools, and the community are all important players in this service-oriented model of education cooperation. Before the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, the Confucius Institute was an important channel for strengthening educational and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan. To build a sustainable partnership, China and Pakistan took active steps to break the language barrier by introducing Chinese language classes in primary schools in Sindh and establishing language centers in Chinese and Urdu in 2012. The Confucius Institute Islamabad and the Confucius Classroom of Muzaffargarh Shortwave Listening Club are the only places where Chinese is taught on a larger scale. With the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, the University

of Karachi, the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, the University of Punjab, and the University of Sargodha have established four new Confucius Institutes in collaboration with Beijing Language and Culture University, Sichuan Normal University, Xinjiang Agricultural University and Jiangxi University of Technology. At the same time, Sichuan Normal University has also set up a Confucius Classroom at Cadet College Petaro in Pakistan. These Confucius Institutes not only play an important role in the teaching and promoting the Chinese language, but also serve as an important platform for the Pakistani public to learn about Chinese education and culture.

With Chinese investment and infrastructure projects in Pakistan, there is a growing demand for translators, lawyers, and management personnel who know Chinese. Chinese is becoming a language that helps Pakistanis lead a better life. It can be said that the Confucius Institutes (classes) in Pakistan have played an active role in helping Pakistani students to learn Chinese and understand Chinese culture by increasing their efforts in teaching Chinese and actively organizing cultural activities. Mohammad Hashmi, a lecturer in the Chinese Department at the National University of Modern Languages, said that more and more people in Pakistan are learning Chinese "because the cooperation between Pakistan and China in various fields, including the economy, continues to deepen, and Pakistani people want to learn Chinese to better grasp the opportunities brought by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor".^[17] Cooperation between China and Pakistan has yielded many positive results, including improved language education. The establishment of the Confucius Institute and other language education programs have helped to improve the teaching of the Chinese language and culture in other institutions in Pakistan, promote cross-cultural dialogue, and improve human resource development. Overall, the cooperation between China and Pakistan reflects the growing recognition of the importance of educational exchange and cooperation between the two countries in strengthening ties between nations and promoting human development.

3.3 Building academic and research platforms in China and Pakistan

Think tanks are important for serving relevant policies and decisions in developing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Pakistani universities are actively building research centers focusing on China or the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to keep abreast of developments in the construction of the CPEC and the South Asian region and to promote policy research and initiatives on the CPEC. Universities such as the National University of Modern languages and the University of Peshawar have established 'China Studies Centres' or 'China-Pakistan Studies Center'. The main purpose of these centers is to create and maintain a database of China-related research, mainly on Chinese culture, Sino-Pakistani relations, and educational facilities. The Centre for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Studies at Karakoram International University and the University of Sindh has been established to assess the current status of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its future development. The main objective of the research is to assess the current situation and future development trends of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and to provide recommendations to policy makers.

In addition, some Chinese universities have established comprehensive or regional research centers, either alone or in collaboration with the Pakistani side. For example, the Centre for Pakistani Science, Technology and Economics at Beijing University of Technology and Business, the Centre for Pakistani Studies at Peking University, and the Centre for Pakistani Studies at Fudan University in cooperation with the Pakistani government. The Pakistan Research Centre of Fudan University is a joint venture between Fudan University and the Pakistani Government. These research centres aim to create a platform for scientific cooperation and to fill the gap in policy research between China and Pakistan, while playing an important role in the study of cultural connectivity, internal and external social dynamics in the Asian region, economic development integration and the

development of China-Pakistan relations. For the further development of academic research cooperation between China and Pakistan, the Pakistan Higher Education Commission has established the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Centre at its headquarters, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor University Consortium, comprising more than 50 universities, has been set up^[18]

Overall, strengthening academic research between China and Pakistan will enhance the academic capacity of faculty members in Pakistani higher education institutions, provide opportunities for a wide range of students in Pakistani universities, promote the rapid growth of contemporary Pakistani youth power, and can contribute to the recovery and rapid growth of the Pakistani national economy.

4. Obstacles to China's educational diplomacy in Pakistan under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative

While the Belt and Road Initiative offers many opportunities for China's educational diplomacy and has a number of favorable links to promote educational diplomacy between China and Pakistan, there are also many obstacles to China's educational diplomacy in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

4.1 Differences in Higher Education between China and Pakistan

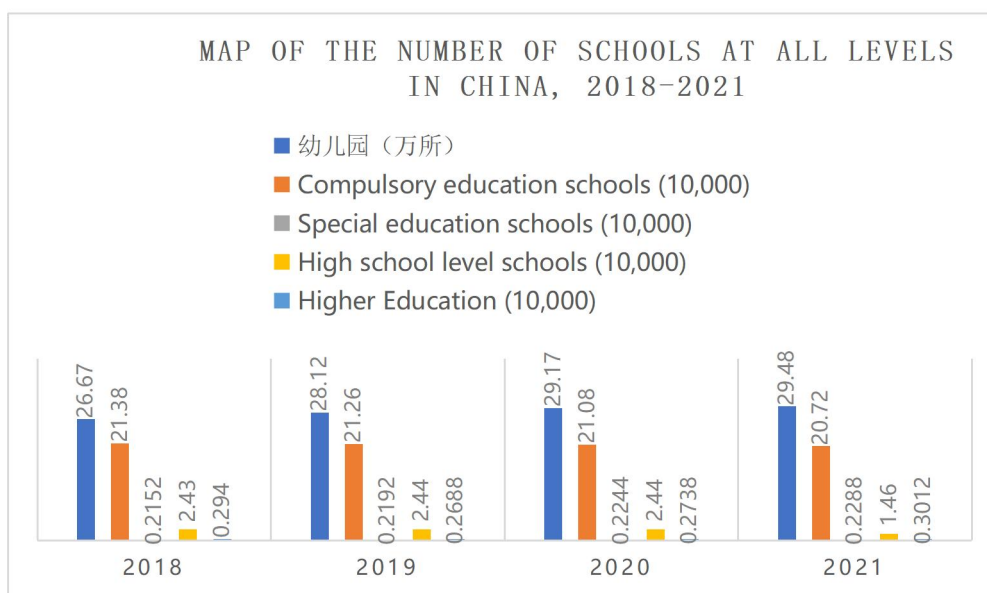
The first is the difference in the higher education system between the two countries, as Chinese education is managed at four levels: central, provincial, municipal, and county. Vocational education has gradually established a management system under the leadership of the Chinese State Council, with hierarchical management, local focus, government coordination, and social participation; higher education is managed at both the central and provincial levels of government, with the provincial government being the primary management system. From direct administrative management of schools, the Chinese government emphasizes macro management using legislation, funding, planning, information services, policy guidance, and necessary administrative means. A system of presidential responsibility under the leadership of the Party Committee is in place in higher education institutions. Pakistan is a federal state with four provinces, one union territory, and two autonomous regions. The Ministry of Education is the central government authority for education, while the provinces are relatively autonomous and have jurisdiction over their own affairs. Each province has a Ministry of Education, with subordinate regional and district education offices. Education is essentially the responsibility of the provincial governments, with the central government responsible only for national planning and coordination, policy formulation, and advisory work. The federal government generally sets education policy, programs, curricula, and standards, while the provincial government administers schools at all levels in each province. The education system of Pakistan was reformed in 1958, 1964, and 1969, but the political turmoil prevented the implementation of these reforms. 1978 saw the formulation of a new education policy, which proposed that education should conform to the ideology of Islam and the nation's cultural traditions and be adapted to the requirements of socio-economic development. Formal education in Pakistan follows the British structure and is divided into six levels: five years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, two years of senior secondary education, two years of general or technical education, and higher education, with students graduating from intermediate colleges with two years of study leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree; four years of study leading to a Bachelor of Engineering or Veterinary Science degree, and six years of study leading to a Bachelor of Medicine degree. For master's and doctoral education, a bachelor's degree is followed by two years of study leading to a master's degree and a further two to three years of study leading to a doctorate. There is also a post-doctoral system in

place as well. Side by side with the general school system is the mosque school system.

The second is the issue of mutual recognition of academic qualifications, credits and degrees. To date, China has signed different types of Education Exchange and Cooperation Agreements with Pakistan, reflecting the supportive attitude of both countries toward deepening education cooperation. However, due to the differences in the two countries education systems, the process of mutual recognition of academic qualifications, credits, and degrees has been slow. For example, mutual recognition of vocational qualifications with Pakistan has not yet been achieved in vocational education. This not only fails to meet the expectations of educational cooperation between Pakistan and China, but also poses many difficulties for the mobility of talents and employment of international students from the unilateral side, and increases their concerns about choosing to study in China, which is not conducive to the balanced, stable and sustainable development of China's educational diplomacy. The third is the limited recognition of Chinese schools by the Pakistani public. Currently, the US, Europe and the US are at the forefront regarding education brands and programs. Pakistan's high-level talent or elites in government control have mainly graduated from prestigious schools in Europe and the US. According to data published in the World Higher Education Policy Study in September 2017, the top five countries in the world in terms of degrees earned by world leaders are the UK, the US, France, Russia and Australia, with one in seven graduating from the UK.^[19] However, Chinese education is not yet well recognized among the Pakistani elite, and there is still a gap between it and the developed countries of Europe and America. Many talented people and elites in Pakistan do not know enough about Chinese schools, and most have only heard of Tsinghua University and Peking University.

4.2 Inadequate planning and management of Sino-Pakistani educational cooperation

There is a lack of systematic and complete planning for Sino-Pakistani education cooperation. It is not difficult for China to set up compliant educational institutions in Pakistan, but the question of how to run educational institutions that are both distinctive and reputable is an important issue that needs to be addressed in China's foreign education policy. China wants to expand its extraterritorial influence, especially its cultural influence, of which education is a major aspect. It remains to be seen whether the model of relying on large or purpose-built scholarships is sustainable. In addition, while education diplomacy is progressing rapidly at the higher education level, there are still shortcomings in preschool, basic and vocational education.

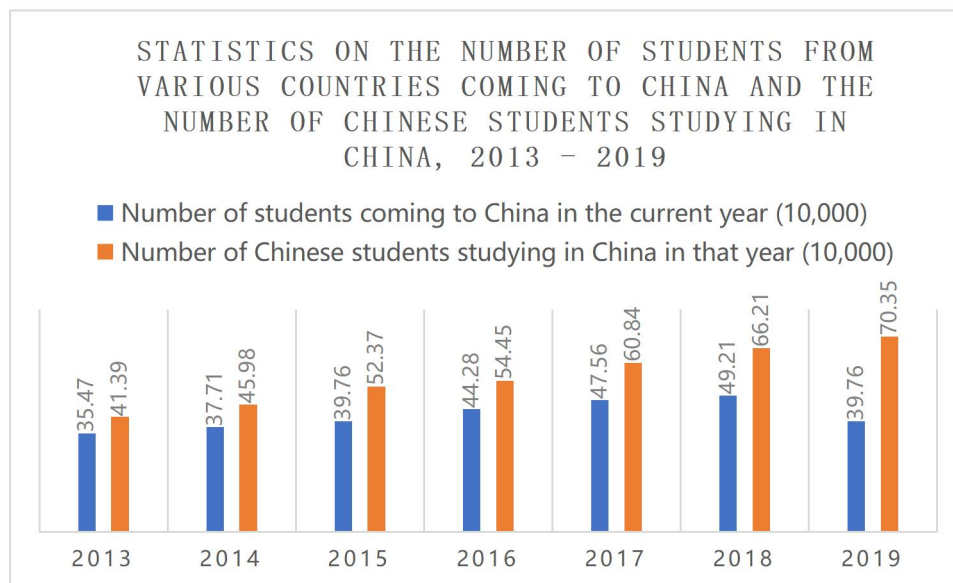


According to the statistics on the number of schools at all levels in China from 2018 to 2021, it

can be observed that from 2018 to 2021, China has made steady progress in the development of preschool and higher education, with the number of schools increasing year by year, while the number of schools at the compulsory education level has decreased year by year and the number of special education schools has remained largely unchanged.^[20] This shows a growing trend in the development of pre-primary and higher education in China and provides more opportunities for exchange and cooperation between China and Pakistan in pre-primary and higher education.

However, the document "Vision and Action for Promoting the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" focuses mainly on the development of higher education, with less content related to pre-primary education, basic education and vocational education services. The focus of educational cooperation and exchange between China and Pakistan is biased towards higher education, and in the actual situation of Pakistan pre-primary education, basic education and vocational education are regarded as important components of the country's educational development. Compared to the stronger higher education institutions, the overall strength of the two countries is weak in the education of international students in vocational institutions, joint education abroad, and the establishment of overseas branches. As preschool education, cooperation in basic education is still in the early exploration period. There is a relative lack of overall planning, services and guidance on overseas schooling in China. At the same time, there is a gap between costs and benefits. Recently, the number of Chinese students going abroad has increased rapidly.

The total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2018 was 662,100, according to data from the 2018 Annual Statistics on Students Studying Abroad released by the Ministry of Education.^[21] From 1978 to 2019, the total number of students studying abroad was 6,560,600.^[22] 492,185 people from 196 countries and regions were enrolled in China in 2018. International students of all categories studied in 1,004 higher education institutions in 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) across China, an increase of 3,013 students or 0.62% over 2017.^[23] The chart below shows the statistics of the number of students studying abroad and the number of students returning to China from 2013-2019.



According to the chart above, it is indisputable that the number of students exported from China in terms of educational diplomacy is much higher than the number of international students absorbed. For example, in 2018, the number of students studying abroad in China was 662,100 and the number of students coming to China was 492,185.^[24] These show that our educational diplomacy is still lacking in charm, value and attractiveness.

5. New Paths and Significance of China's Educational Diplomacy Development in Pakistan

Based on the various dilemmas and problems faced by China in promoting education diplomacy to countries along the Belt and Road, to promote the effectiveness of education diplomacy and serve the overall diplomatic strategy, China should make full use of this important "business card" of education diplomacy and take corresponding targeted measures in terms of top-level design, institutional construction, model innovation and deepening cooperation, to effectively promote the development of education diplomacy.

In the context of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, to achieve the orderly promotion of educational diplomacy, it is necessary to strengthen the top-level design to coordinate the interests of different departments and regions. Firstly, the establishment of an education diplomacy office under the Ministry of Education could be considered. On the one hand, it will coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Chinese and Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Centre and other units involved in education; on the other hand, it will do a good job of docking with the friendship cities of the two countries and implementing the memorandum of understanding on education cooperation signed with them previously. Through the coordination and intervention of the Foreign Affairs Office of the universities in China, different universities in each region will develop their contacts and cooperation with Pakistani universities in a targeted manner, so as to truly play the role of an important carrier of educational diplomacy on the "Belt and Road".

Secondly, due consideration can be given to obtaining more financial support from the two governments to help the construction of Pakistani study bases, the absorption of study abroad students and other educational opening platforms in the process of "One Belt, One Road", and tilting scholarships to Pakistani students to enhance the attractiveness and international competitiveness of education diplomacy in the context of "One Belt, One Road". The Government will also provide scholarships to Pakistani students to enhance the attractiveness and international competitiveness of education diplomacy in "One Belt, One Road". Third, promote the balanced development of various forms of education diplomacy, including preschool education, basic education, vocational education and higher education. Strengthen the exchanges between China and Pakistan in preschool education, basic education, and help the two sides to connect with each other in the field of education, making it a basic guarantee for educational diplomacy. At the same time, we will build "Chinese + Vocational" training institutions in Pakistan, relying on the professional and vocational advantages of vocational education, to provide technical and application-oriented personnel to support the development of Pakistani enterprises and help improve their vocational education or training capacity.

Fourthly, based on the importance of English and Urdu in educational diplomacy, the country needs to make full use of and leverage the advantages of foreign language institutions in training human resources, build and implement a coordination mechanism for language interoperability, and promote the shaping of more Pakistani specialists in China. At the same time, education branding should be incorporated into the overall design blueprint of the Belt and Road. Educational cooperation is closely linked to factors such as population mobility and economic interaction. For example, the US, Europe and Japan have promoted educational mobility, scholarly communication and cultural interaction with the international community precisely through successful educational cooperation in attracting quality students from abroad. China can accelerate the construction of specialised educational disciplines and establish more iconic educational brands, contributing to the sustainability of educational diplomacy under the "Belt and Road" construction. Constructive China-Pakistan education cooperation pacts can be proposed to encourage the establishment of new

academic exchange platforms and student exchange mechanisms to achieve the sharing of education resources between China and Pakistan, ultimately leading to the formation of an education community. These institutional approaches and measures provide safeguards and institutional support for China's educational diplomacy in the "Belt and Road" construction context.

The world today is evolving at an accelerated pace amid a major change unprecedented in a century, with a profound adjustment in the international power balance and new strategic opportunities for China's development. Promoting educational exchanges between China and Pakistan is strategically important in this new era. Promoting the development of education in China and Pakistan is a guarantee for the successful implementation of the "Belt and Road" construction and the maintenance of regional stability and peace. Pakistan is at the pivotal point of the link between the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road, and is vital to the development of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Improving educational cooperation between China and Pakistan can connect the entire Islamic world and break through Western suppression and containment. Pakistan is a window to the Islamic world and, as the first Islamic country to establish diplomatic relations with China, it has also facilitated the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and other Islamic countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. At the same time, with Pakistan's influence among Islamic countries, China has also been able to carry out smooth diplomatic activities with countries in the Middle East.

Pakistan is, therefore the medium through which China connects with the Islamic world. Strengthening educational exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan can help China better understand the cultural traditions of Islamic peoples, close China's ties with Central Asia, West Asia and the Middle East, balance China's power in these regions, improve the overall layout of China's diplomacy and promote coordinated regional development, thus contributing to the building of a new type of international relations and promoting peaceful and stable development in the world as a whole.

6. Conclusion

With the promotion of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the opening up of Chinese education to the outside world has ushered in a historic opportunity. Along with it, the role of "education diplomacy" in the overall diplomatic landscape of the country is moving from ambiguity to clarity, its positioning from the periphery to the center. It is becoming a relatively independent and increasingly important form of diplomacy, forming an important part of great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. As China moves closer to the center of the world stage and continues to make greater contributions to humanity, it is urgent to put educational diplomacy on the agenda.

China's educational diplomacy needs to enhance academic excellence. Academic excellence is a key objective of educational diplomacy, which contributes to the development of human resources and promotes academic exchange and cooperation. High-quality education programmers can meet the needs of students and professionals in both China and Pakistan while also providing a better platform for exchanging cutting-edge technologies and resources, indirectly promoting the commercialization of the results. Education cooperation between China and Pakistan can be not only a model for inter-country cooperation but also a model for regional cooperation. To promote education diplomacy in the Belt and Road Initiative, we must adhere to precise policies, educate people and build brands, and maintain a moderate degree of "neutrality" and strategic determination.

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