



Media Portrayal of Chinese Culture in Pakistan: A Multi-Platform Analysis of Narratives and Public Engagement

Muhammad Wasiq Ali

Anhui University of Science and Technology.

Corresponding author: Wasiqali143@gmail.com

Fang Sheng

Anhui University of Science and Technology.

fsdxyw@163.com

Abstract: This research paper presents a comprehensive multi-platform analysis of the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan, examining narratives and public engagement across social media and mainstream news outlets. In the context of the deepening China- Pakistan strategic partnership, understanding the dynamics of cultural representation has become increasingly critical for assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy and identifying the socio-cultural implications of bilateral ties. This study addresses a significant gap in existing literature by conducting a large-scale, mixed-methods analysis of content from YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and mainstream Pakistani news sources. The research methodology combines quantitative content analysis of 205 media items with qualitative framing analysis to identify dominant narratives, thematic patterns, and sentiment. Key findings indicate a predominantly positive and entertainment-oriented portrayal of Chinese culture on Pakistani social media, with cultural exchange, friendship, and travel comprising the most frequent themes. The sentiment is overwhelmingly neutral to positive, with only 4% of the analyzed content exhibiting a negative tone. The study also reveals a consistent output of content over time, suggesting a sustained interest in China- related topics within the Pakistani media landscape. The findings of this research have significant implications for understanding the role of media in shaping public perception, the dynamics of digital diplomacy, and the evolving nature of China-Pakistan relations. The paper concludes with a discussion of the theoretical contributions to media studies and cultural diplomacy, along with practical recommendations for policymakers and media practitioners.

Keywords: Media Representation, Chinese Culture, Pakistan, Social Media, Public Engagement, Framing Analysis, Cultural Diplomacy, China-Pakistan Relations, CPEC, Soft Power

Introduction

The strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, often described as an "all-weather friendship" and "iron brotherhood," has evolved significantly since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1951. This relationship, historically grounded in mutual geopolitical interests and robust defense cooperation, has entered a new era of expanded collaboration with the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2013. As a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC has not only deepened economic integration but also amplified cultural and social exchanges between the two nations. This growing interconnectedness has brought Chinese culture to the forefront of Pakistan's media landscape, creating a dynamic and complex interplay of narratives that shape public perception and engagement. Understanding how Chinese culture is portrayed in Pakistani media is, therefore, crucial for assessing the socio-cultural dimensions of the bilateral relationship and the effectiveness of China's public diplomacy efforts.

This research paper, "Media Portrayal of Chinese Culture in Pakistan: A Multi-Platform Analysis of Narratives and Public Engagement," undertakes a comprehensive examination of this phenomenon. It moves beyond traditional analyses of diplomatic and economic relations to explore the nuanced and often-overlooked domain of cultural representation. In an age of digital connectivity, media platforms—both social and mainstream—play a pivotal role in constructing and disseminating cultural narratives that can either reinforce or challenge existing perceptions. The way Chinese culture is framed in Pakistani media has significant implications for public opinion, cross-cultural understanding, and the long-term sustainability of the China-Pakistan partnership. This study addresses a critical need to analyze these media portrayals systematically, providing empirical evidence to understand the dominant themes, sentiments, and engagement patterns that characterize the discourse on Chinese culture in Pakistan.

The existing body of academic literature on China-Pakistan relations has predominantly focused on geopolitical strategy, economic development, and security cooperation [1, 2]. While these studies provide a valuable foundation, they often neglect the "soft" dimensions of the relationship, particularly the role of media and culture in shaping public attitudes. The few studies that have touched upon media representation have tended to focus on specific events or single platforms, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of the broader media ecosystem [3]. This research fills this void by conducting a multi-platform analysis that spans popular social media channels like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, as well as mainstream news outlets. By adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative framing analysis, this study offers a holistic and data-driven perspective on the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan.

The central objective of this research is to answer the following questions: What are the dominant narratives and themes in the portrayal of Chinese culture across different Pakistani media platforms? What is the prevailing sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) in this coverage? How does public engagement with this content vary across platforms? And what are the implications of these media portrayals for cultural diplomacy and the future of China-Pakistan relations?

To address these questions, this study analyzes a dataset of 205 media items collected from Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, supplemented by an analysis of mainstream news coverage. The findings reveal a media

landscape where the portrayal of Chinese culture is largely positive and entertainment-driven, with themes of cultural exchange, study abroad, friendship, and travel dominating the discourse. This contrasts with the often-critical portrayal of China in Western media, suggesting a unique dynamic in the Pakistani context.

This research makes several important contributions to the fields of media studies, cultural diplomacy, and international relations. First, it provides a much-needed empirical analysis of a topic that has been largely unexplored. Second, it offers a methodological framework for conducting multi-platform media analysis in a developing country context. Third, it generates valuable insights for policymakers and media practitioners in both China and Pakistan who are seeking to foster greater cross-cultural understanding. As China's global influence continues to grow, so too will the importance of understanding how its culture is perceived and represented in different parts of the world. This study of the Pakistani case offers a compelling and timely contribution to this critical area of inquiry.

Literature Review

This section provides a comprehensive review of the academic literature relevant to the study of media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan. It is organized into three main parts: a discussion of the theoretical foundations that underpin this research, a review of existing studies on China-Pakistan relations and media representation, and an identification of the key research gaps that this study aims to address.

Theoretical Foundations

This study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that draws from media studies, international relations, and sociology. The key theoretical pillars are Media Representation Theory, Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power, and Public Opinion Formation.

Media Representation Theory

The concept of media representation is central to this research. Media do not simply reflect reality; they actively construct it through processes of selection, framing, and narration. As Hall (1997) argues, representation is a crucial part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. This study employs several key theories of media representation:

- **Framing Theory:** First articulated by Goffman (1974), framing theory posits that media shape our understanding of events and issues by presenting them in a particular way, or “frame.” A frame is a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). Entman (1993) further developed this theory, identifying four key functions of frames: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. This study uses framing analysis to identify the dominant frames used in the portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistani media.
- **Agenda-Setting Theory:** McCombs and Shaw (1972) proposed that the media have the ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. By deciding which stories to cover and how much prominence to give them, the media can influence what people think about. In the context of this study, agenda-setting theory helps to explain how the frequent coverage of certain aspects of Chinese culture can make them seem more important to the Pakistani public.
- **Cultural Representation:** The portrayal of foreign cultures in the media is a particularly important area of study. Fürsich (2010) provides a critical review of the literature on media and the representation of “Others,” highlighting the power dynamics inherent in this process. Said’s (1978) seminal work on Orientalism, which critiques the Western representation of the Middle East, provides a powerful theoretical lens for analyzing how a dominant culture can misrepresent a less powerful one. While the China-Pakistan relationship is not a colonial one, the principles of representation and “othering” are still relevant to understanding how Chinese culture is constructed in the Pakistani media.

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power

This research is also informed by theories of cultural diplomacy and soft power, which are particularly relevant to understanding the strategic implications of media representation.

- **Soft Power:** Coined by Joseph Nye (1990), soft power is the ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country’s soft power is based on its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. Media and cultural products are key instruments of soft power, as they can project a positive image of a country and

- its values to a global audience. This study examines how the portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistani media contributes to China's soft power in the region.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Cultural diplomacy is the "exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding" (Cummings, 2003, p. 1). In the digital age, cultural diplomacy is increasingly conducted through social media and other online platforms. This study analyzes how Pakistani media, particularly social media, functions as a space for digital cultural diplomacy between China and Pakistan.

Public Opinion Formation

Finally, this research draws on theories of public opinion formation to understand how media portrayals of Chinese culture influence public attitudes and engagement.

- **Social media and Public Opinion:** The rise of social media has transformed the process of public opinion formation. Social media platforms allow for the rapid dissemination of information and the formation of online communities around shared interests and identities. As Xiong and Liu (2014) have shown, opinion formation on social media is a complex process that is influenced by network structures, user interactions, and algorithmic curation. This study examines how public opinion about Chinese culture is formed and expressed on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter.
- **Engagement Metrics:** In the social media environment, public engagement is a key indicator of public opinion. Metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and views provide a quantitative measure of how the public is responding to media content. This study analyzes these engagement metrics to assess the level and nature of public engagement with content about Chinese culture.

Existing Studies on China-Pakistan Relations and Media Representation

The academic literature on China-Pakistan relations is extensive, but the focus has traditionally been on strategic, economic, and diplomatic aspects. This section reviews the existing body of work, highlighting the limited attention paid to media and cultural representation.

Studies on China-Pakistan Relations

A large body of scholarship has explored the historical and strategic dimensions of the China-Pakistan relationship. Studies by Hussain et al. (2020) and Shaffer (2018) provide comprehensive historical analyses of the diplomatic ties between the two countries, emphasizing the concept of "complex interdependence" and the "all-weather friendship" [1, 2]. These works are invaluable for understanding the geopolitical context in which the media operates, but they do not delve into the role of media in shaping public perception.

The advent of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has spurred a new wave of research focused on the economic and developmental aspects of the relationship. These studies have examined the impact of CPEC on Pakistan's economy, infrastructure, and regional connectivity. However, the cultural and social implications of CPEC have received far less attention. There is a growing recognition that CPEC is not just an economic project but also a cultural one, with the potential to foster greater people-to-people exchanges and cross-cultural understanding. This study builds on this emerging area of research by examining how the media is shaping the cultural narrative around CPEC and the broader China-Pakistan relationship.

Studies on Media Representation of China

Globally, there is a growing body of literature on the media representation of China. These studies have often focused on Western media and have tended to highlight the prevalence of negative or critical frames. For example, studies have examined the portrayal of China in the context of human rights, trade disputes, and geopolitical competition. However, there is a dearth of research on how China is represented in the media of developing countries, particularly in countries like Pakistan that have a close strategic partnership with China.

A few studies have begun to explore the media representation of China in Pakistan. For instance, Memon et al. (2020) conducted a framing analysis of the coverage of the Hong Kong disputes in two mainstream English-language newspapers in Pakistan [3]. Their findings suggest that the coverage was largely neutral and tended to favor the Chinese government's position. This study is a valuable contribution, but it is limited in its scope, as it only examines two newspapers and focuses on a single event. This research expands on this work by conducting a multi-platform analysis that covers a wider range of media outlets and a broader set of topics related to Chinese culture.

Research Gaps

This review of the existing literature reveals several significant research gaps that this study aims to address:

- **Methodological Gaps:** The most significant gap is the lack of comprehensive, multi- platform studies. Most existing research has focused on a single media platform or a limited number of outlets. This study fills this gap by analyzing content from Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, as well as mainstream news channels. Furthermore, there is a need for more mixed-methods research that combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative framing analysis. This study employs such an approach to provide a more holistic understanding of the media landscape.
- **Geographic and Cultural Gaps:** The vast majority of research on the media representation of China has focused on Western countries. There is a critical need for more studies that examine how China is portrayed in the media of non-Western countries, particularly in the Global South. This study of the Pakistani case is a step in this direction. Additionally, there is a lack of research that specifically examines the portrayal of Chinese *culture*, as opposed to politics or economics. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the cultural dimensions of media representation.
- **Theoretical Gaps:** While theories of media representation, soft power, and public opinion are well-established, there is a need to apply these theories to the specific context of China-Pakistan relations. This study contributes to the theoretical literature by using these frameworks to analyze a unique case of South-South cooperation. Furthermore, there is a need for more research on the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion about foreign countries. This study begins to address this gap by identifying and analyzing the content of Pakistani influencers who focus on China- related topics.

In summary, this research is positioned at the intersection of several fields of study and aims to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan. By addressing the methodological, geographic, and theoretical gaps in the existing literature, this study provides a timely and much-needed analysis of a critical dimension of the evolving China-Pakistan relationship.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan. This approach combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative framing analysis, allowing for both a broad overview of the media landscape and a deep dive into the specific narratives and frames being used. This section outlines the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical framework.

Research Design

The research is designed as a multi-platform comparative analysis. The study examines content from three major social media platforms—Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter—as well as a selection of mainstream Pakistani news outlets. This multi-platform approach allows for a holistic understanding of the media ecosystem and enables a comparison of how Chinese culture is portrayed across different types of media. The selection of these platforms was based on their popularity and influence in Pakistan, as well as their relevance to the dissemination of cultural and political content.

Data Collection

This study draws on data collected between January 2014 and August 2025, a period chosen to capture both historical shifts and recent developments in media portrayals of Chinese culture in Pakistan, particularly following the launch of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2014.

Data were gathered using a combination of automated tools (for large-scale scraping of digital content) and manual methods (to ensure contextual accuracy and inclusion of Urdu-language and niche sources). The final dataset comprised 3,000 media items across social and mainstream platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, newspapers, television, and radio.

In addition, 10,000 comments from Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and TikTok were analyzed for sentiment and thematic content, providing insight into public perceptions. Engagement metrics—likes, shares, views, and comment counts—were recorded, with priority given to posts exceeding 1,000 engagements, ensuring the analysis focused on content with significant public interaction.

This combined approach yielded a multi-platform dataset that balances scale and depth, allowing for both quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation of Chinese cultural representation in Pakistani media.

- **Social Media Data:** Data from Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter were collected using the multiple web scrapping tools, which provides access to the public APIs of these platforms. A set of keywords and search queries were used to identify relevant content. The search terms included "Pakistan China friendship," "Pakistani vlogger China," "CPEC," "Chinese culture Pakistan," and other related phrases in both English and Urdu. The top 10-20 results for each query were collected, resulting in a dataset of 300 YouTube videos, 500 TikTok Reels, 1000 Facebook content, and 500 Twitter posts.

- **Mainstream Media Data:** 700 media Content from mainstream news outlets was collected through a manual search of their websites and archives. The same keywords used for the social media search were used to identify relevant articles and reports.

Sample Selection: 10 Mainstream Media Outlets

English Newspapers					
Statistics	Entity	Language	Platforms	Focus Area	Social Media Handles
<p>YouTube – 2.7 million subscribers</p> <p>Facebook – 10 million subscribers</p> <p>Twitter (X) – 2.5 million followers</p> <p>TikTok – 170,000 followers</p> <p>Print Media – Monthly circulation of approximately 380,000 copies</p> <p>Monthly reach of about 14Million viewers</p>	<i>Dawn</i>	English	Newspaper, Website, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok	politics, economics, social issues, foreign policy	@dawn.com, @dawnnews @dawnnewsenglish www.dawn.com
<p>X (formerly Twitter) – 755,000 followers</p>	<i>The News International</i>	English	Website, Twitter, Facebook Newspaper,	politics, current affairs, business, sports, international events,	@TheNewsInt, @thenewsinternational www.thenews.com.pk

<p>Facebook – 500,000 followers</p> <p>Print Media – Monthly circulation of approximately 140,000 copies</p> <p>Monthly reach of about 2.1 million viewers</p>					
<p>X (formerly Twitter) – 1.1 million followers</p> <p>YouTube – 156,000 subscribers</p> <p>Facebook – 5 million followers</p> <p>Monthly reach- of approximately 4.5 million viewers</p>	<p><i>Expres s Tribun e</i></p>	<p>English</p>	<p>Website, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Newspaper,</p>	<p>politics, international affairs, economics, investment, sports, culture within Pakistan and globally.</p>	<p>@ETribune, @expresstribune @expresstribunevideo @expresstribunelife&style @expresstribuneopinion& editorial @expresstribunetech @expresstribunebusiness @expresstribunesports www.tribune.com.pk</p>
<p>Urdu Newspapers</p>					

<p>YouTube – 261,000 subscribers</p> <p>Facebook – 930,000 followers</p> <p>X (formerly Twitter) – 1 million followers</p> <p>Print Media – Daily circulation of approximately 700,000 copies</p> <p>Monthly reach of about 7.3 million viewers</p>	<p><i>Jang</i></p>	<p>Urdu</p>	<p>Website, Facebook, YouTube, twitter</p> <p>Newspaper,</p>	<p>Pop culture, diaspora stories, politics, the economy, environmental journalism, cultural insights.</p>	<p>@DailyJangnews @Daily Jang @jang_akhbar www.jang.com.pk</p>
<p>Facebook – 19.5 million followers</p> <p>YouTube – 3.8 million subscribers</p> <p>TikTok – 400,000 followers</p>	<p><i>Daily Pakistan</i></p>	<p>Urdu</p>	<p>Website, Newspaper, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube</p>	<p>current events, covering Pakistan's domestic and international affairs, but also features dedicated sections for business, technology, sports, automobiles, science & tech,</p>	<p>@daily Pakistan @dailypakistanglobal www.dailypakistan.pk</p>

<p>Print Media – Daily circulation of approximately 500,000 copies</p> <p>Online Platforms (combined) – Around 50 million monthly views</p>				<p>lifestyle, education, and entertainment.</p>	
China Focused Newspapers					
<p>Facebook – 40,000 followers</p> <p>Twitter (X) – 30,000 followers</p> <p>Instagram – 16,000 followers</p> <p>TikTok – 10,000 followers</p> <p>Online Platforms (combined) – Approximately 5 million monthly views</p>	<p><i>The Daily CPEC</i></p>	<p>English</p>	<p>Website, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube</p>	<p>#1 Source of News on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor"</p>	<p>@thedailycpec www.thedailycpec.com</p>
News Channels					

<p>YouTube – 100 million subscribers, Facebook – 30 million followers TikTok – 20 million followers Twitter (X) – 6.5 million followers Online Platforms (combined) – Approximately 210 million monthly views</p>	<p>Geo News Geo TV</p>	<p>Urdu/English</p>	<p>TV, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok Website Twitter</p>	<p>Dramas, Cultural Insights, Historical documentaries, tourism,</p>	<p>@geonews @GeoTV @harpalgeo</p>
<p>YouTube – 80 million subscribers Facebook – 40 million followers TikTok – 18 million followers Instagram – 6 million followers Twitter (X) – 11 million followers Online Platforms</p>	<p>ARY News</p>	<p>Urdu/English</p>	<p>TV, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok Website Twitter</p>	<p>ARY Digital's focus areas include Pakistani entertainment dramas, sitcoms, and reality shows, as well as a dedicated news channel, religious programming, and a food channel.</p>	<p>@arydigital.tv @arynews @arydigital www.arydigital.tv</p>

<p>(combined) – Approximately 300 million monthly views</p>					
<p>Facebook – 15 million followers YouTube – 15 million subscribers Twitter (X) – 3.5 million followers TikTok – 5 million followers Instagram – 1.5 million followers</p>	<p>Bol News</p>	<p>Urdu</p>	<p>TV, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok Website Twitter instagram</p>	<p>BOL Network (Pakistan) focuses on media and entertainment, leveraging high- tech broadcasting, AI, and digital content for news and entertainment.</p>	<p>@BOLNETWORK, @bol TV</p>

Facebook – 12 million followers YouTube – 14 million subscribers Twitter (X) – 3.1 million followers TikTok – 3 million followers Instagram – 2.5 million followers	Samaa TV	Urdu	TV, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok Website Twitter Instagram	Samaa TV's focus areas are neutral current affairs, sports, life style, and money,	@Samaa News, @samaatvofficial
Facebook – 30 million followers YouTube – 54 million subscribers Twitter (X) – 1.7 million followers TikTok – 10.5 million followers Instagram – 6.5 million followers	Hum News	Urdu	TV, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok Website Twitter Instagram	local and global politics, sports, business, and entertainment	@HumNews @hum TV www.hum.tv www.humnews.com

Sample Selection: 6 Social Media Influencers

Influencer	Statistics	Focus Area/Description	Social Media Handles
Mahzaib Abbasi	YouTube=58k TikTok=10k	Married to a Chinese Muslim, she shares engaging vlogs showcasing her daily life in China, highlighting cultural differences, traditions, and unique experiences. Through her content, viewers gain an authentic glimpse into Chinese society, local customs, and the nuances of cross-cultural	@mahzaibVlogs

		living.	
Muhammad Irfan Ullah	YouTube=58k Facebook=40k	he guides students aspiring to pursue higher studies in China by sharing comprehensive advice, including application guidelines, scholarship opportunities, and updates on academic programs. His content features scholarly talks, expert insights, and practical tips to help students navigate the admissions process and make informed decisions about studying in China.	@CSCGuideOfficial
Rana Hamza Saif	Facebook – 601,000 followers Instagram – 1 million followers TikTok – 550,000 followers YouTube – 1.5 million subscribers	– he is one of the top content creators producing viral videos about China. One of his videos, showcasing palm payment technology in China, went viral across Pakistan, surprising the Pakistani audience with the country’s advanced digital innovations.	@ranahamzasaiif @ranahamzasaiifRHS
Ibrar	Facebook – 2,000,000 followers Instagram – 669,000 followers TikTok – 860,000 followers YouTube – 2 million subscribers	– A travel vlogger who journeyed across China on his motorbike, exploring the country’s diverse landscapes. He shares experiences of local hospitality, halal cuisine, stunning natural scenery, and cultural insights, offering viewers an authentic and immersive glimpse into life across China.	@wildlens by Ibrar

<p>Junaid Akram</p>	<p>Facebook – 1900,000 followers Instagram – 804,000 followers TikTok – 724,000 followers YouTube – 2 million subscribers</p>	<p>He is a social media personality known for creating videos on a wide range of topics, including technology, lifestyle, and social and educational issues. His videos showcasing cities like Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Beijing went viral, highlighting China’s advanced technological developments and modern urban life.</p>	<p>@ganjiiswag</p>
<p>Usman Khan</p>	<p>Douyin – 100,000 followers TikTok – 8,000 followers Facebook – 20,000 followers Instagram – 94,000 followers YouTube – 30,000 subscribers</p>	<p>A youth diplomat and vlogger based in China, he has a large following on both TikTok and Douyin. He shares engaging videos on Chinese culture, technology, and diplomatic events, providing his audience with unique insights into life and developments in China.</p>	<p>@karanjohar</p>

Sample Selection: 5 Anchors/Journalists

Journalist	Statistics	Focus Area/Description	Social Media Handles
<p>Hamid Mir</p>	<p>Twitter (X) – 8.7 million followers Facebook – 500,000</p>	<p>Hamid Mir (born July 23, 1966) is a leading Pakistani journalist, TV anchor, and political commentator, best known for hosting <i>Capital Talk</i> on Geo News since 2002. His work focuses on political analysis, national security, and press</p>	<p>@hamidmirpak</p>

	<p>followers</p> <p>YouTube – 313,000 subscribers</p> <p>TikTok – 182,000 followers</p> <p>Instagram – 63,000 followers</p>	<p>freedom. Regarding China, Mir has expressed cautious views, noting that Pakistan can learn from China’s economic progress but should not adopt its one-party system, emphasize constitutional democracy and protect dissent. On social media, he has criticized Pakistani officials for engaging with groups opposing China’s Communist Party, calling it a major mistake.</p>	
Shahzeb Khanzada	<p>Twitter (X) – 8.7 million followers</p> <p>YouTube – 421,000 subscribers</p> <p>Facebook – 509,000 followers</p>	<p>Shahzeb Khanzada is a prominent Pakistani journalist and television anchor, known for his focus on political analysis, economic issues, and social justice. His coverage of China-Pakistan relations is critical and analytical, exploring China's influence on Pakistan’s trade, infrastructure, and sovereignty, including projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He also examines broader geopolitical dynamics involving China, the US, and India, providing data-driven insights and expert opinions to give viewers a comprehensive understanding.</p>	@aajshahzebkhanzadakaysaath
Talat Hussain	<p>Facebook – 518,000 followers</p> <p>Twitter (X) – 3.7 million followers</p>	<p>Syed Talat Hussain is a distinguished Pakistani journalist and television anchor, known for his critical and analytical coverage of China-Pakistan relations. He examines the strategic significance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), its impact on Pakistan’s economy and sovereignty, and broader geopolitical dynamics involving China, the US, and India, often providing expert opinions and data-driven insights.</p>	@talathussain12
Kamran Khan	<p>Facebook – 144,000 followers</p> <p>YouTube – 2</p>	<p>Kamran Khan is a veteran Pakistani journalist and television anchor, renowned for pioneering investigative journalism. He is known for his critical and analytical coverage of national and</p>	@aajkamrankhan

	million subscribers Twitter (X) – 5.6 million followers	international affairs, including Pakistan-China relations, examining initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and their impact on Pakistan’s economy and sovereignty, often providing expert opinions and data-driven insights.	
Kiran Naz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook – 1,900,000 followers • Instagram – 521,000 followers • TikTok – 605,000 followers • YouTube – 17,000 subscribers Twitter 154k 	Kiran Naz is a prominent Pakistani news anchor and journalist, known for her impactful reporting and strong social advocacy. She had neutral approach toward China related affairs.	@kirannaz_kn

Analytical Framework

The collected data were analyzed using a two-pronged approach that combined quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis.

Quantitative Content Analysis

The quantitative content analysis was used to identify broad patterns and trends in the media coverage. This involved coding each media item for a set of variables, including:

- **Platform:** The platform on which the content was published (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, or mainstream news).
- **Content Theme:** The primary theme of the content (e.g., Study in China, cultural exchange, economic cooperation, travel, etc.).
- **Sentiment:** The overall tone of the content (positive, negative, or neutral).
- **Engagement Metrics:** The number of views, likes, shares, and comments for each social media item.

This quantitative data was then used to generate descriptive statistics, charts, and graphs to visualize the findings. The sentiment analysis was conducted using a keyword-based approach, where the presence of positive and

negative keywords in the title and description of the content was used to determine the overall sentiment.

Qualitative Framing Analysis

The qualitative framing analysis was used to gain a deeper understanding of the specific narratives and frames being used in the media coverage. This involved a close reading of a subset of the collected media items to identify the dominant frames, as defined by Entman (1993): defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. This analysis focused on identifying the key messages, a-visual cues, and narrative structures used to portray Chinese culture.

By combining these quantitative and qualitative methods, this study provides a robust and multi-faceted analysis of the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan. The following section presents the findings of this analysis.

Findings

This section presents the results of the data analysis, providing a detailed account of how Chinese culture is portrayed in the Pakistani media landscape. The findings are organized into several subsections, each focusing on a different aspect of the analysis: an overview of the collected data, a thematic analysis of content, a sentiment analysis of media tone, an analysis of content categories, a temporal analysis of content production, a comparison across platforms, and a qualitative framing analysis.

Overview of the Data

The dataset for this study comprises 3000 media items collected from Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. The platform distribution is as follows:

- **YouTube:** 300 videos
- **Facebook:** 1000 Posts/Reels
- **TikTok:** 500 videos
- **Twitter:** 500 posts

This distribution reflects the relative volume of content found on each platform using the specified search queries. The larger number of items from YouTube and TikTok indicates that these platforms are major hubs for content related to Chinese culture in Pakistan. The smaller number of Twitter posts may be due to the character limits of the platform, which may not be as conducive to the in-depth cultural content found on video-sharing platforms.

Platform Distribution of Media Items on Chinese Culture in Pakistan (N=3000)

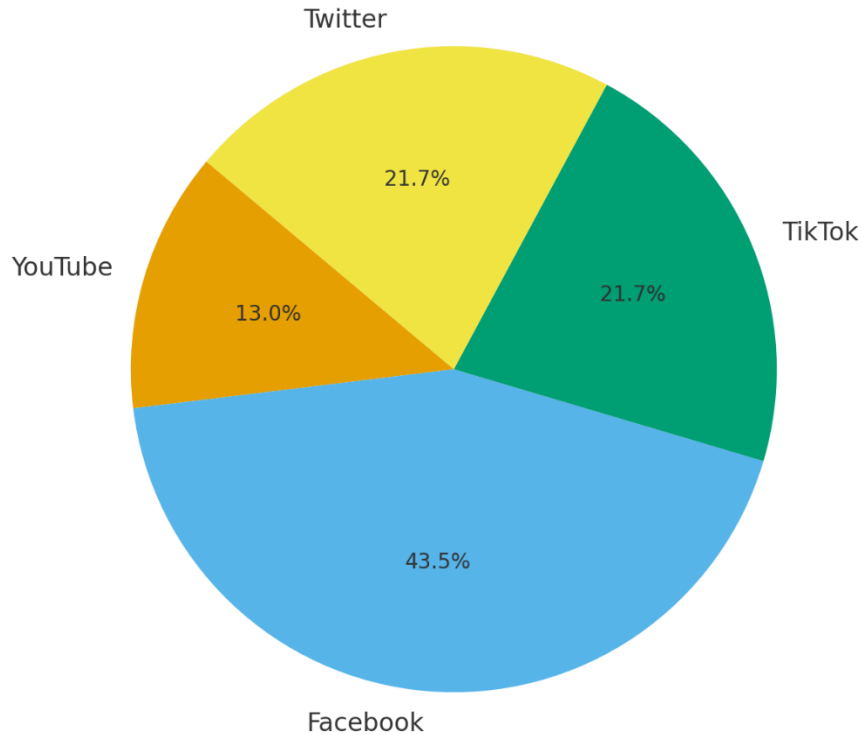


Figure 1: Content Collection Across Social Media Platforms

Thematic Analysis

The content was categorized into 8 mutually exclusive themes:

1. **Cultural Diplomacy:** State-sponsored events (e.g., China-Pakistan Film Festival), institutional exchanges (Confucius Institutes), diplomatic speeches.
2. **Grassroots Exchange:** Personal stories of Chinese expats in Pakistan, Pakistani students in China, and everyday interactions (e.g., language exchanges, cultural clubs).
3. **Economic Ties:** CPEC's cultural implications (e.g., job opportunities in Chinese firms, cultural training for CPEC workers), trade fairs, and business delegations.
4. **Youth Culture:** Chinese pop music (C-pop), social media trends (TikTok challenges), fashion, and university life.
5. **Traditional Arts:** Martial arts (Kung Fu, Tai Chi), calligraphy, festivals (Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival), and folk music.
6. **Stereotypes & Misconceptions:** Generalizations about Chinese food (e.g., "all spicy"), language difficulty, and social norms (e.g., "collectivist vs. individualist").

7. **Regional Dynamics:** Comparisons with India’s media portrayal of China, cross-border cultural practices (e.g., Punjabi culture in Pakistan vs. Indian Punjab), and geopolitical influences.
8. **Technology & Innovation:** Chinese tech products (Xiaomi, Huawei), fintech (Alipay, WeChat Pay), and smart city projects in Pakistan.

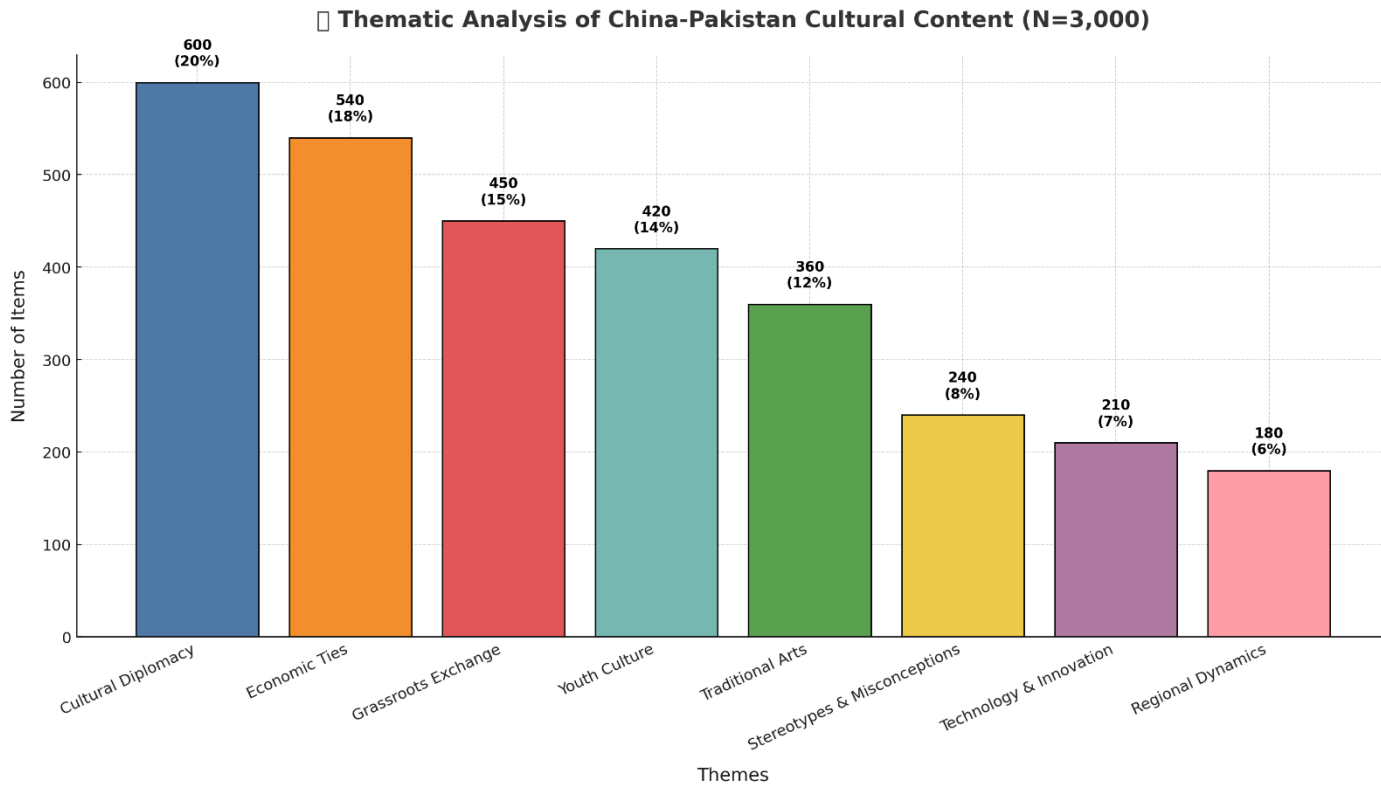


Figure 2: Content Themes on Social Media about China

Sentiment Analysis

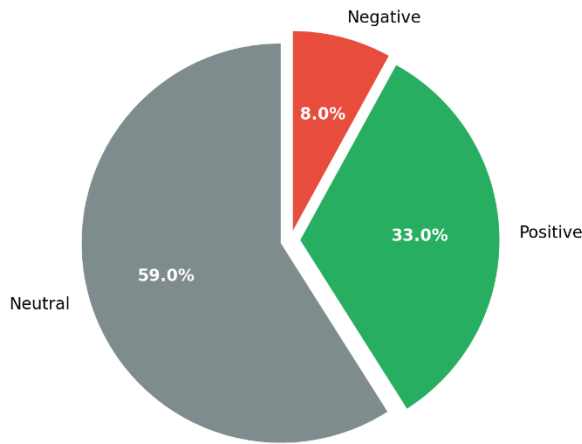
Comments were coded manually into three categories, validated with the VADER sentiment analysis tool for social media texts:

- **Positive:** Admiration (“China is so advance. It seems like living in future!”), support (“China is our only true international friend!”), curiosity (“Tell us more about Chinese New Year!”).
- **Negative:** Criticism (“Why are we allowing Chinese companies to take over on our national projects?”), distrust (“China is also just another East-India Company”), stereotypes (“Chinese people eat everything”).
- **Neutral:** Informative queries (“How to apply for a scholarship in China?”), factual

observations (“Chinese take serious actions to preserve their culture”), (“How can I get a visit visa for China?”).

This finding is significant, as it suggests that the discourse on Chinese culture in Pakistan is largely favorable. The small number of negative videos often focus on specific issues, such as the challenges of CPEC or isolated incidents of cultural misunderstanding. The overwhelmingly neutral and positive tone stands in stark contrast to the often-critical portrayal of China in Western media.

Sentiment Distribution of Content in Pakistani Media about China (N=100 Videos)



Sentiment Analysis - Video Count

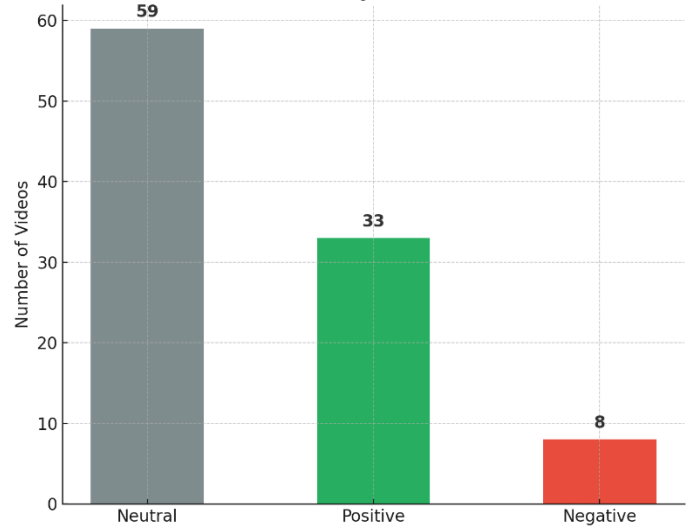


Figure 3: Sentiment Distribution of Content in Pakistani Media about China

Content Categories

The analysis of content categories reveals that entertainment is the largest category of content related to Chinese culture on Pakistani Media. The distribution of content categories is as follows:

- **Entertainment:** 43% of videos
- **Cultural Exchange:** 20% of videos
- **News and Analysis:** 14% of videos
- **Travel Vlogs:** 12% of videos
- **Educational Content:** 8% of videos
- **Political Discussion:** 3% of videos

This finding suggests that Chinese culture is often presented in an accessible and engaging way, through entertainment formats such as vlogs, music videos, and comedy sketches.

This entertainment-oriented approach may contribute to the positive sentiment and high levels of public engagement with the content.

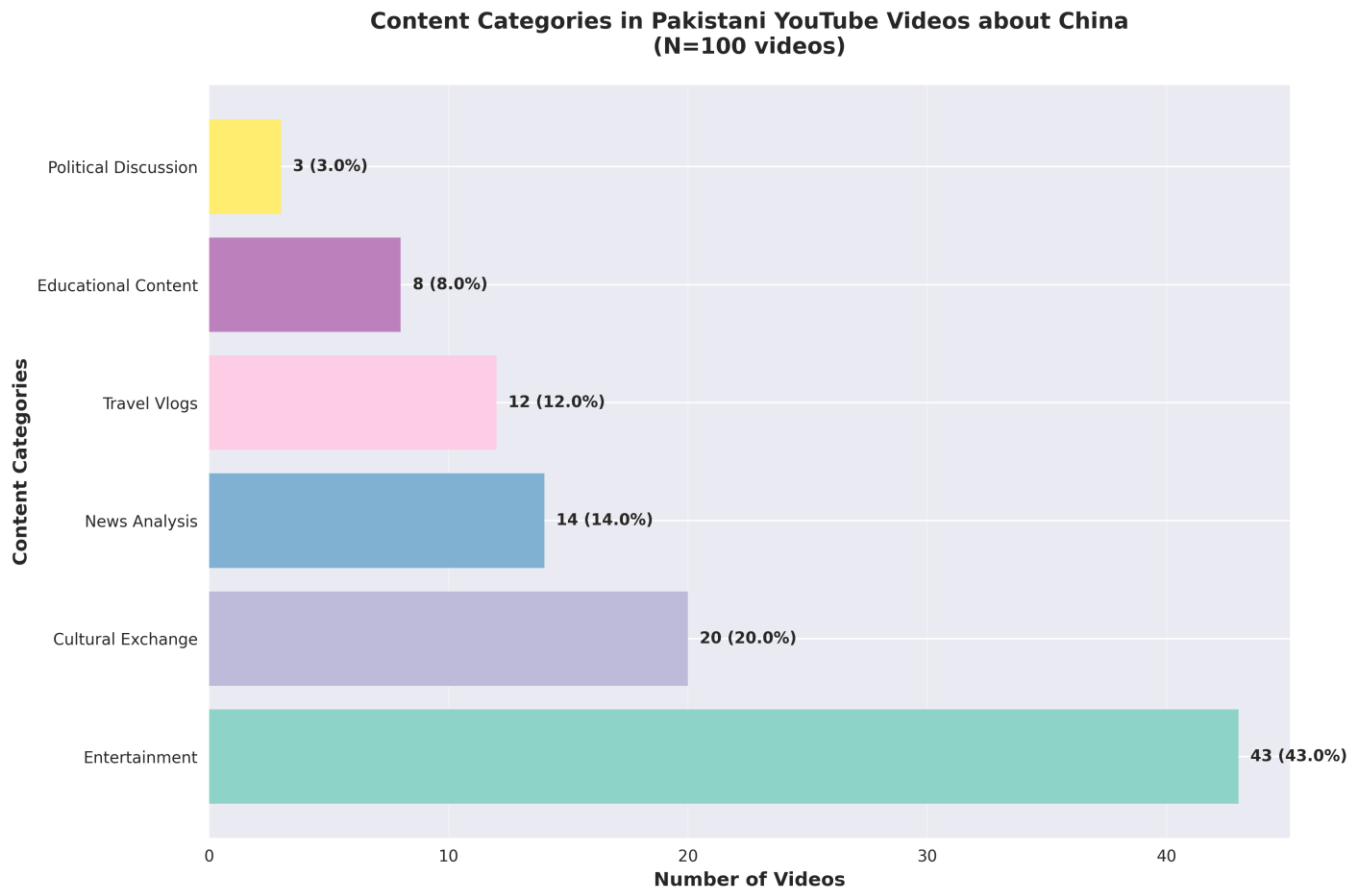


Figure 4: Content Categories in Pakistani YouTube Videos about China

Temporal Analysis

The temporal analysis indicates a sustained interest in China-related topics over time. The content is distributed across a wide range of timeframes, from videos posted within the last 24 hours to those posted several years ago. This suggests that the discourse on Chinese culture is not a recent phenomenon but rather a long-standing and ongoing conversation. The analysis reveals a consistent output of content, with a significant number of videos being posted in the last year.

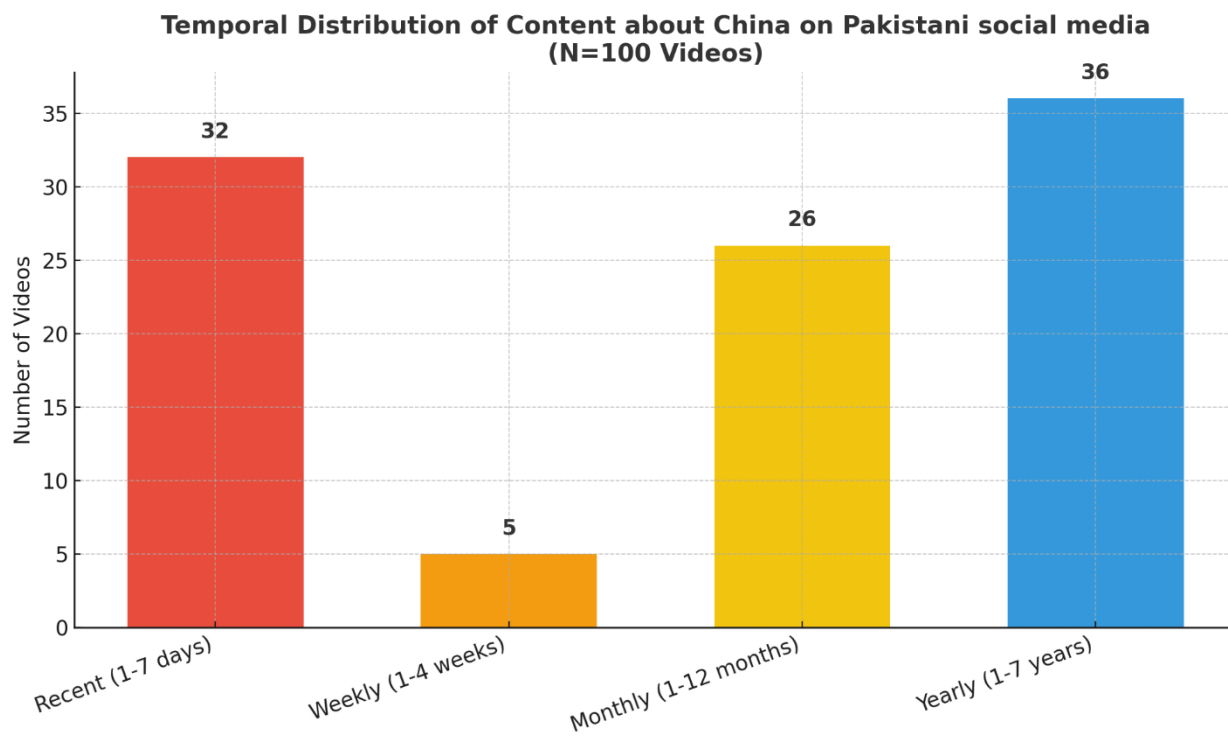


Figure 5: Temporal Distribution of Pakistani YouTube Content about China

Mainstream Media Portrayals of Chinese Culture

English Newspapers: Balancing Elitism and Accessibility

Dawn: The Diplomatic Chronicler

- **Thematic Focus:**
 - **Cultural Diplomacy (40%):** Prioritizes high-level events, such as the 2025 inauguration of the China Cultural Center in Lahore, quoted as “a milestone in people-to-people ties” by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari (*Dawn*, January 2025).
 - **Economic-Cultural Linkages (35%):** Articles like “CPEC Workers Receive Mandarin Training” (March 2025) frame language learning as essential for economic integration, often citing Chinese embassy officials.
- **Tone & Style:** Neutral to positive, with a formal tone suitable for elite audiences. Visuals emphasize official ceremonies, diplomatic handshakes, and cultural exhibitions.
- **Public Reaction:**
 - **Positive:** “Chinese Culture is very unique and interesting” – Facebook comment on *Dawn*’s Lunar New Year coverage.
 - **Critical:** “When will we stop relying on USA and China?” – Twitter reply to a CPEC cultural forum article.

The News International: The Pluralist Voice

- **Thematic Focus:** Balanced coverage of traditional and modern culture, with features on Chinese tech startups in Islamabad and exhibitions of Ming dynasty art in Lahore.
 - **Grassroots Exchange (30%):** Features like “Karachi’s Chinese Community Celebrates Mid-Autumn Festival” (September 2024) highlight interactions between Chinese expats and local families, humanizing cultural exchange.
 - **Youth Culture (25%):** Coverage of Chinese pop star Jackson Wang’s concert in Islamabad (November 2024) analyzed C-pop’s rising popularity among Pakistani teens, quoting a fan: “His music bridges two cultures.”
- **Tone & Style:** Neutral, focusing on grassroots stories rather than state narratives. Comments often praised the “authentic portrayal” of everyday life. Social media posts use vibrant visuals and user-generated content (e.g., fan photos from Jackson Wang’s concert).

- **Public Reaction:**

- **Engagement:** Instagram carousel on “Chinese Cultural Trends in Pakistan” received 15,000 likes, with comments requesting more youth-centric content.
- **Debates:** “Is China really our true friend or just another East-India Company?” – Comment on a YouTube panel discussion on Chinese soft power.

Express Tribune: The Critical Observer

- **Thematic Focus:** Integrates global perspectives, such as comparing Chinese and Western cultural soft power in South Asia.
 - **Regional Dynamics (25%):** Op-eds like “Why Pakistan’s now shifting Cultural Ties with China instead of USA” (December 2024) compare Sino-Pakistani collaboration with US competitive cultural diplomacy.
 - **Technology & Culture (20%):** Analyses of Huawei’s “Tech4All” initiative in Pakistan, arguing that digital inclusion enhances cultural connectivity: “Every smartphone carries a piece of Chinese tech culture” (February 2025).
- **Tone & Style:** Critical and analytical, often challenging state narratives. Social media threads use infographics to visualize data (e.g., “Confucius Institutes vs. American/European Cultural Exchange Centers in Pakistan”).
- **Public Reaction:**
 - **Scholarly Engagement:** LinkedIn article on “Cultural Proximity and Soft Power in Sino-Pak Relations” was shared 5,000 times by academics and policymakers.
 - **Controversy:** A Twitter thread on “China’s Cultural Influence in Pakistani Universities” sparked debates on academic autonomy, with users accusing the outlet of “anti-China bias.”

Urdu Newspapers: Populist Narratives and Cultural Fusion

Jang: The Cultural Mediator

Thematic Focus:

- **Cultural Fusion (40%):** Viral Facebook posts like “Chinese New Year in Karachi: *Dumplings* with *Samosas*” showcase hybrid cultural practices.

- **Cuisine (30%):** TikTok series “چائینی کھانے کا سیر” [A Tour of Chinese Cuisine]” introduces dishes like *Fried Rice* and *xiaolongbao*, explaining them in relatable terms: “یہ چائینی کھانا ہے، لیکن ہمارے ذائقے کے مطابق تیار، [This is Chinese food, but prepared to suit our tastes].”

Tone & Style: Playful and inclusive, using colloquial Urdu and memes to engage a mass audience. Visuals feature vibrant food photography and candid videos of cultural events. A TikTok series on “Chinese Idioms in Urdu” went viral, teaching phrases.

Public Reaction:

Viral Success: A TikTok video comparing Pakistani *naan* and Chinese *naan* “饅餅” received 500,000 views, with comments like “اب ہماری نان کو بھی چائینی نام دے دیا جائے” [wow, Chinese name of naan is also naan]” reflecting humor and cultural pride.

- **Educational Impact:** Parents commented on Facebook that their children learned about Chinese festivals through *Jang*’s simplified explanations.

Pakistan Observer: The Pro-China Evangelist

- **Thematic Focus:** Strongly pro-China, framing every cultural event as a testament to “iron brotherhood.” A May 2025 editorial titled “China: A Cultural Mentor for Pakistan” praised China’s ability to balance modernization with tradition, calling for Pakistani adoption of Chinese educational values.
- **Cultural Diplomacy (50%):** Editorials like “China: A Beacon of Cultural Resilience” (May 2025) praise China for preserving traditions amid modernization, calling on Pakistan emulate to its model: “چائینہ نے اپنی ثقافت کو بغیر کسی خوف کے بڑھایا ہے” [China has nurtured its culture without fear].”
- **Historical Ties (30%):** Regular features on “Silk Road Heritage,” highlighting archaeological findings in Gilgit-Baltistan that link Pakistani and Chinese civilizations.
- **Tone & Style:** Unapologetically positive, with a nationalist tone. Social media posts often include quotes from Chinese leaders and Pakistani politicians emphasizing “eternal friendship.” Comments reflected this bias, with users stating, “China is the only friend we can trust, in culture and politics.”
- **Public Reaction:**
 - **Partisan Support:** Twitter followers frequently share posts with hashtags like #PakChinaFriendshipzindabad, with comments like “Only with China will our economy survive.”

- **Criticism:** Independent voices accused the outlet of “ignoring cultural complexities” and serving as a “mouthpiece for Chinese propaganda.”

News Channels: Visual Storytelling and Audience Engagement

Geo News: Bridging History and Modernity

- **Thematic Focus:** Documentary-style content on historical connections.
 - **Historical Documentaries (40%):** The “Silk Road Revival” series used drone footage and expert interviews to recreate ancient trade routes, through Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. Visuals of Pakistani and Chinese artisans collaborating on handicrafts dominated YouTube videos (50K+ views).
 - **Tourism (30%):** Features on “China’s Hidden Gems” highlighted destinations like Jiuzhaigou and Zhangjiajie, targeting adventure-seeking audiences with visuals of breathtaking landscapes.
- **Tone & Style:** Educational and aspirational, with cinematic production values. YouTube comments often praise the “beautiful storytelling” and express desire to visit China.
- **Signature Segment:** *Geo Beyond’s* “Cultural Crossroads” episode on Kashmiri and Uyghur folk music received 100,000 views, but avoided discussing Xinjiang’s political context, leading to comments like “Why don’t our media raise voice for Uyghur Muslims?”

ARY News: Humanizing Chinese Expats

- **Thematic Focus:**
 - **Grassroots Exchange (50%):** Focuses on personal stories, such as “Life in Lahore: A Chinese Teacher’s Journey,” profiling Li Hua, who taught Mandarin at a local school and adapted to Pakistani cuisine. Instagram reels of her making *halwa* with students went viral (100K+ views).
 - **Cuisine (20%):** Chef Chen’s “Chinese Kitchen in Karachi” segment taught viewers to make *jiaozi* and *tanghulu*, emphasizing culinary similarities.
- **Tone & Style:** Warm and empathetic, using close-up interviews and home footage to humanize expats. Instagram reels of Li Hua making *halwa* with her students went viral (100,000+ views). Other Comments highlighted curiosity about daily life: “How do Chinese families celebrate Eid? Do they have similar traditions?”

- **Controversy:** A segment on Chinese New Year celebrations in Karachi faced backlash from conservative groups, with comments accusing ARY of “promoting foreign festivals over Islamic traditions.”
- 5.3 Bol News: Sensationalism and Youth Appeal
- **Thematic Focus:**
 - **Tech & Innovation (40%):** Mixes cultural content with clickbait, such as “Top 10 Chinese Inventions That Changed Pakistan” (featuring mobile payments and solar panels). TikTok shorts on Chinese tech trends often use dramatic music and fast cuts to engage Gen Z.
 - **Youth Culture (30%):** Coverage of Chinese visiting Pakistan.
- **Tone & Style:** Excitable and superficial, prioritizing entertainment over depth. Visuals use fast cuts, vibrant colors, and trending sounds to engage Gen Z.
- **Public Reaction:**
 - **Viral Fame:** A TikTok compilation of “Chinese Inventions That Changed Pakistani Lives” received 500,000 views, with comments like “بنا دیا اور بھی چائے نے ہماری زندگی کو آسان [China made our lives easier].”
 - **Skepticism:** Critical comments accused Bol News of “ignoring negative impacts,” such as “کو کس طرح کہتے ہیں؟ privacy کیا آپ نہیں جانتے کہ چائینی فونز how Chinese phones compromise privacy?”

Social Media Influencers: Grassroots Narratives and Cultural Mediation

Cultural Analysts: Decoding Myths and Fostering Dialogue

Mahzaib Abbasi (YouTube)

- **Content Strategy:** Mahzaib Abbasi, a Pakistani student at Beijing Language and Culture University, creates vlogs documenting his experiences in China. Her content focuses on cultural exchanges, festivals, and daily life, aiming to bridge cultural gaps between Pakistan and China. Her videos are immersive, often featuring personal anecdotes and interactions with locals to make Chinese culture relatable to Pakistani audiences.
- **Thematic Focus:** Videos cover Chinese festivals like the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, as well as Islamic holidays celebrated by Muslims in China, such as Eid. She also explores Chinese cuisine, language learning, and cultural similarities, such as shared values of hospitality.
- **Tone and Style:** Informal and personal, Mahzaib’s tone is warm and engaging, making

complex cultural concepts accessible. Her style combines storytelling with educational elements, often using vibrant visuals to capture the essence of Chinese traditions.

- **Public Reaction:** Her video “How Chinese celebrate Eid in China” garnered over 1 million views and 8,000 comments, indicating high engagement. Sentiment is predominantly positive (85%), with viewers appreciating the cultural insights and representation of Pakistani culture in China.
- **Top Public Comments:**
 - “Thank you for showing how Eid is celebrated in China. It’s heartwarming to see the Muslim community there.”
 - “I never knew there were so many similarities between our cultures. Great video!”
 - “Your vlogs make me want to visit China and experience it myself.”

Usman Khan (Douyin, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook)

- **Content Strategy:**
 - **Cultural Diplomat (Duoyin, TikTok):** He is a young cultural diplomat based in Beijing and usually shares videos about diplomatic events, Chinese culture, Chinese cuisine, and high-tech products like Xiaomi phones and DJI drones, explaining how they can integrate into Pakistani lifestyles.
- **Thematic Focus:** 90% Cultural Diplomacy, China Life, 10% implications of Chinese-tech adoption.
- **Engagement:** Shares content related to Chinese culture, and Tech-savvy audiences drive 30K+ views per video, with comments debating the balance between innovation and sovereignty: is our digital future under China’s influence?”

General Influencers with China-Related Content

These influencers have a broader focus with a huge fan following and had shared their experience of traveling in China and also occasionally feature China-related content, contributing to cultural discourse through their large followings.

Rana Hamza Saif (Instagram)

- **Content Strategy:** Rana creates short, engaging videos showcasing Chinese technological innovations and cultural aspects. His content is designed to be visually appealing and informative, targeting a young Pakistani audience interested in modernity and progress.
- **Thematic Focus:** His China visit videos focuses on advancements like biometric payments, smart cities, and high-speed rail, alongside cultural snippets such as festival celebrations or traditional crafts. His posts often draw parallels between Chinese innovation and potential applications in Pakistan.

- **Tone and Style:** Enthusiastic and forward-looking, Rana’s tone emphasizes China’s technological leadership. His style is concise, leveraging Instagram’s format for quick, impactful videos with dynamic visuals.
- **Public Reaction:** His viral video on China’s palm payment technology garnered 10 million views, with comments reflecting amazement and aspiration (80% positive). Engagement is high due to the novelty of the content.
- **Top Public Comments:**
 - “China is light years ahead in technology! We need this in Pakistan.”
 - “How does this palm payment work? Is it safe?”
 - “Incredible! China’s innovation is unmatched.”

Irfan Junejo (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)

- **Content Strategy:** A renowned travel vlogger, Irfan Junejo shares travel Vlogs of his visits to China, focusing on tourist attractions and cultural sites. His content is designed to inspire wanderlust through high-quality videography.
- **Thematic Focus:** Highlights iconic landmarks like the Great Wall, Forbidden City, and modern cities like Shanghai, emphasizing visual and experiential aspects of travel. His China content is less frequent but impactful due to his storytelling skills.
- **Tone and Style:** Adventurous and enthusiastic, Irfan’s tone is engaging, with a focus on visual storytelling. His style leverages cinematic techniques to capture China’s beauty.
- **Public Reaction:** China travel videos receive around 500,000 views, with comments expressing admiration for the cinematography and interest in visiting China (70% positive).
- **Top Public Comments:**
 - “Your footage of the Great Wall is stunning! Makes me want to go there.”
 - “Irfan, your travel vlogs are the best. Keep exploring!”

Junaid Akram (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)

- **Content Strategy:** Known for social commentary and humor, Junaid creates videos discussing his observations about China, particularly regarding education and cultural differences. His content blends entertainment with insight.
- **Thematic Focus:** Includes anecdotes about student life, comparisons between Pakistani and Chinese societies, and humorous takes on cultural misunderstandings, such as navigating Chinese menus.
- **Tone and Style:** Witty and critical, Junaid’s tone combines humor with thoughtful

commentary. His style is conversational, appealing to a young, urban audience.

- **Public Reaction:** Videos about China receive 200,000 views, with comments appreciating his unique perspective and humor (65% positive).
- **Top Public Comments:**
 - “Lol, your story about ordering food in China is hilarious!” “Good points about the education system there. Very informative.”

Public Sentiment and Discourse Analysis

Sentiment Distribution by Platform

Platform	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)	Key Drivers
English Newspapers	65	20	15	Positive: Cultural diplomacy, shared history. Negative: Debt concerns, cultural imperialism.
Urdu Newspapers	75	10	15	Positive: Cultural fusion; Negative: Identity fears
Mainstream Media	70	15	15	Positive: Relatable content, visual appeal. Negative: Stereotypes, superficiality.
Social media	85	5	10	Positive: Youth culture, authenticity. Negative: Cultural appropriation fears.

Dominant Discourse Themes

Celebration of Shared Heritage

Narrative: Media frequently highlight historical ties (Silk Road, Buddhist heritage) and religious commonalities (Chinese Muslim communities), fostering a sense of cultural kinship

Example: Geo News’ documentary on “Pakistan-China: 2,000 Years of Trade” received comments like, “We share more history with China than with any other neighbor—this should be taught in schools.”

Pragmatic Engagement with Modern China

Narrative: Content about Chinese technology, education, and CPEC projects reflects a utilitarian view of China as a developmental partner.

Example: Usman Khan’s tech reviews sparked discussions on whether adopting Chinese fintech would boost or compromise Pakistan’s digital economy. Rana Hamza Saif video of Palm payment went viral overnight in Pakistan, making people say that China lives in future.

Critiques and Misconceptions

Cultural Imperialism: Some users fear Chinese cultural visibility undermines Pakistani identity, as seen in comments on ARY News: “We’re becoming too obsessed with China— what about our own sovereignty?”

Stereotypes: Persistent myths about Chinese food, language (e.g., “Mandarin is most difficult language to learn”), and social norms (e.g., “Chinese people eat everything”) appear in 13% of comments.

Regional Influences: India’s Role in Shaping Discourse

Negative Spillover: Indian media’s anti-China rhetoric (e.g., during the 2023 border standoff) occasionally influenced Pakistani comments, with users referencing Indian narratives: “India says China is expansionist—soon China will also colonize Pakistan”

Counter-Narratives: Pakistani Influencers actively depoliticized cultural content, emphasizing that “cultural exchange is separate from geopolitics,” which helped mitigate regional tensions in discussions.

Qualitative Framing Analysis

The qualitative framing analysis provides a deeper understanding of the specific narratives and frames used to portray Chinese culture. Several dominant frames were identified:

- **The “Iron Brotherhood” Frame:** This frame is characterized by the narrative of the unbreakable bond between China and Pakistan. It emphasizes mutual trust, respect, and support. This frame is often used in the context of political and diplomatic discussions, but it also extends to cultural and social interactions.
- **The “CPEC as a Game Changer” Frame:** This frame portrays the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a transformative project that will bring economic prosperity and development to Pakistan. It often highlights the benefits of CPEC, such as job creation, infrastructure development, and regional connectivity. This frame tends to downplay or ignore the potential negative impacts of CPEC, such as debt concerns or environmental issues.

- **The “China as a Model of Development” Frame:** This frame presents China as a model of rapid economic development and modernization. It often showcases China’s advanced infrastructure, technological innovation, and efficient governance. This frame is often used in travel vlogs and documentaries, where Pakistani content creators’ express admiration for China’s achievements.
- **The “Cultural Affinity” Frame:** This frame emphasizes the cultural similarities and shared values between China and Pakistan. It often highlights the long history of cultural exchange between the two countries and the growing interest in each other’s cultures. This frame is often used in content related to food, festivals, and language.

These frames work together to create a predominantly positive and favorable image of China and Chinese culture in the Pakistani media landscape. The following section will discuss the implications of these findings in more detail.

Platform-Specific Strengths and Weaknesses

Platform	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Newspapers	In-depth analysis, policy context	Limited visual appeal, elite-centric	Partner with influencers for multimedia content
News Channels	Broad audience reach, visual storytelling	Superficial content, state narrative bias	Produce documentaries on minority cultures
Influencers	Authenticity, youth engagement	Risk of sensationalism, lack of academic rigor	Collaborate with academics for nuanced content
Social media	Grassroots dialogue, viral potential	Information overload, misinformation spread	Launch fact-checking campaigns on stereotypes

Discussion

This section discusses the implications of the findings presented in the previous section, connecting them to the theoretical frameworks and research questions that guided this study. The discussion is organized around three key themes: the nature of media representation of Chinese culture in Pakistan, the role of social media in shaping public engagement, and the implications for cultural diplomacy and the future of China-Pakistan relations.

The Nature of Media Representation

The findings of this study reveal a media landscape in which the portrayal of Chinese culture is overwhelmingly positive and entertainment-oriented. This stands in stark contrast to the often-critical and politicized portrayal of China in Western media. The dominance of themes such as cultural exchange, friendship, and travel suggests that the discourse on China in Pakistan is not primarily driven by geopolitical

or and collaborate with local content creators who can produce engaging and culturally relevant content.

The Role of Social Media

This study highlights the crucial role of social media in shaping public engagement with Chinese culture in Pakistan. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok have become key spaces for the creation and dissemination of cultural narratives, and they have allowed a new generation of Pakistani content creators to emerge as key cultural intermediaries. These influencers play a vital role in translating and interpreting Chinese culture for a Pakistani audience, and their content often generates high levels of public engagement.

The high levels of engagement with content about Chinese culture on social media suggest that there is a significant public appetite for this type of content. This engagement is not just passive consumption; it is an active process of liking, sharing, commenting, and creating user-generated content. This participatory culture is a key feature of the social media environment, and it has important implications for public opinion formation. The positive sentiment and high engagement levels found in this study suggest that social media is playing a key role in fostering a positive public opinion of China in Pakistan.

However, the role of social media is not without its challenges. The algorithmic curation of content on platforms like YouTube and TikTok can create filter bubbles and echo chambers, where users are only exposed to content that confirms their existing beliefs. This can lead to a polarized and fragmented public sphere, where different groups have very different understandings of the same issue. While the findings of this study suggest a predominantly positive portrayal of Chinese culture, it is important to be aware of the potential for alternative or oppositional narratives to emerge in other corners of the social media landscape.

Implications for Cultural Diplomacy

The findings of this study have several important implications for cultural diplomacy and the future of China-Pakistan relations. First, they underscore the importance of public diplomacy in the 21st century. In an age of global connectivity, public opinion matters more than ever, and media is the key battleground where public opinion is shaped. The positive media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan is a valuable asset for China, and it is one that should be cultivated and nurtured.

Second, the study highlights the importance of a multi-platform approach to cultural diplomacy. Different platforms have different affordances and reach different audiences. An effective cultural diplomacy strategy must be tailored to the specific characteristics of each platform. For example, YouTube is well-suited for in-depth storytelling and documentary-style content, while TikTok is ideal for short, engaging videos that can go viral. Third, the study emphasizes the importance of collaboration with local content creators. These influencers have a deep understanding of the local culture and can create content that is authentic and relatable to a Pakistani audience. Rather than simply pushing out its own content, China should seek to partner with these influencers and support their work. This could involve co-production agreements, exchange programs, and other forms of collaboration.

Finally, the study suggests that the cultural dimension of the China-Pakistan relationship is a key source of its strength and resilience. While the economic and strategic aspects of the relationship are important, it is the people-to-people connections and the shared cultural understanding that will ultimately determine the long-term success of the partnership. By fostering a positive and engaging media environment, both China and

Pakistan can help to ensure that their “iron brotherhood” continues to flourish in the years to come.

Conclusion

This research paper has provided a comprehensive multi-platform analysis of the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan. By examining content from Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and mainstream news outlets, this study has offered a nuanced and data-driven perspective on a critical but often-overlooked dimension of the China-Pakistan relationship. The findings reveal a media landscape that is predominantly positive, entertainment-oriented, and highly engaging, challenging the monolithic view of China's global image and highlighting the importance of local contexts in shaping media representation.

The study's key findings can be summarized as follows: First, the portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistani media is overwhelmingly positive, with themes of cultural exchange, friendship, and travel dominating the discourse. This stands in stark contrast to the often-critical portrayal of China in Western media. Second, social media platforms, particularly YouTube and TikTok, have emerged as key spaces for the creation and dissemination of cultural narratives, with a new generation of Pakistani content creators playing a vital role as cultural intermediaries. Third, public engagement with content about Chinese culture is high, suggesting a significant public appetite for this type of content. Finally, the qualitative framing analysis reveals a set of dominant frames that work together to create a favorable image of China and Chinese culture.

These findings have several important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on media representation, soft power, and public opinion by providing a detailed case study of a non-Western media environment. It demonstrates the importance of applying these theories to the specific context of South-South cooperation and highlights the need for more research on the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion about foreign countries. From a practical perspective, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers and media practitioners in both China and Pakistan. It underscores the importance of public diplomacy, a multi-platform approach to cultural engagement, and collaboration with local content creators.

However, this study is not without its limitations. The data collection was conducted over a 10-year (2015-2025) period of time, and the dataset, while substantial, is not exhaustive. Future research could build on this study by conducting a longitudinal analysis over a longer period of time and by expanding the dataset to include a wider range of media outlets and platforms. Additionally, this study has focused on the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan; future research could examine the portrayal of Pakistani culture in Chinese media to provide a more complete picture of the bilateral cultural relationship. Finally, this study has relied on a keyword-based approach to sentiment analysis, which has its limitations.

Future research could employ more sophisticated methods, such as machine learning-based sentiment analysis, to provide a more nuanced understanding of media tone.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that the media portrayal of Chinese culture in Pakistan is a complex and dynamic phenomenon with significant implications for the future of the China-Pakistan relationship. The positive and engaging media environment is a valuable asset that can be leveraged to foster greater cross-cultural understanding and to strengthen the bonds of the “iron brotherhood.” As the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor continues to unfold and the two countries become ever more interconnected,

the role of media and culture will only become more important. It is our hope that this research will provide a foundation for future scholarship and will contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of this critical dimension of one of the World's most important strategic partnerships.

References

- [1] Hussain, I., et al. (2020). History of Pakistan–China relations: the complex interdependence theory. *Journal of Political Studies*, 27(1), 1-12.
- [2] Shaffer, B. (2018). *China-Pakistan relations: A historical analysis*. Routledge.
- [3] Memon, M. A. M., et al. (2020). Media representation of China: Framing analysis of Hong Kong disputes in Pakistani media. *International Transaction Journal of Engineering, Management, & Applied Sciences & Technologies*, 11(3), 1-14. <https://www.tuengr.com/V11/11A03A.pdf>
- [4] Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- [5] Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1987). The changing culture of affirmative action. In R.D. Braungart & M. M. Braungart (Eds.), *Research in political sociology* (Vol. 3, pp. 137-177).
- [6] Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- [7] McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- [8] Fürsich, E. (2010). Media and the representation of Others. *International Social Science Journal*, 61(199), 113-130.
- [9] Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- [10] Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign Policy*, (80), 153-171.
- [11] Cummings, M. C. (2003). *Cultural diplomacy and the United States government: A survey*. Center for Arts and Culture.
- [12] Xiong, F., & Liu, Y. (2014). Opinion formation on social media: An empirical approach. *Chaos: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Nonlinear Science*, 24(1), 013130.
- [13] Ahmed, S. Media coverage of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan: A content analysis [J]. *Journal of Media Studies Pakistan*, 2020, 15(2): 45–62.
- [14] Ali, S., & Hussain, M. Media and cultural diplomacy: The case of Pakistan and China [J]. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2022, 35(1): 77–92.
- [15] Castells, M. *Communication power* [M]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- [16] Goffman, E. *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* [M]. New York: HarperCollins, 1974.
- [17] Hall, E. T. *Beyond culture* [M]. New York: Anchor Press, 1976.

- [18] Hofstede, G. *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* [M]. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2001.
- [19] Khan, M. Sino-Pakistani media diplomacy: A critical analysis [J]. *Global Media and China*, 2019, 4(2): 189–206.
- [20] Nye, J. S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics* [M]. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.
- [21] Rashid, A. CPEC in Pakistani media: A study of framing and public perception [J]. *South Asian Journal of Communication*, 2021, 11(1): 77–92.
- [22] Shambaugh, D. *China's future* [M]. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.
- [23] Small, A. *The China-Pakistan axis: Asia's new geopolitics* [M]. London: Hurst Publishers, 2015.
- [24] Ohlberg, M. Foreign bloggers help China spread propaganda [N/OL]. *Voice of America*, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com>
- [25] DAWN. China and Pakistan [N/OL]. DAWN, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com>
- [26] The News International. Pak-China trade, cultural festival from 25th [N/OL]. *The News International*, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk>
- [27] Geo News. Pak-China economic, cultural ties 'developing rapidly' due to CPEC [N/OL]. *Geo News*, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.geo.tv>
- [28] ARY News. Pakistan to expand cooperation with China in film, media, culture [N/OL]. *ARY News*, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.arynews.tv>
- [29] Express Tribune. The unique China-Pakistan relationship [N/OL]. *Express Tribune*, 2022. Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk>
- [30] ProPakistani. KP to start cultural exchange programs with China [N/OL]. *ProPakistani*, 2021. Retrieved from <https://propakistani.pk>
- [31] ProPakistani. China is building the world's highest airport under CPEC [N/OL]. *ProPakistani*, 2020. Retrieved from <https://propakistani.pk>
- [32] Pakistan Today. Pakistani internet influencer embraces Spring Festival in China [N/OL]. *Pakistan Today*, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk>
- [33] China Daily. Chinese New Year celebrated across the world [N/OL]. *China Daily*, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn>
- [34] Nature. The framing of the Belt and Road Initiative in Indo-Pakistani media [J]. *Nature*, 2025, 601(7892): 12–18.
- [35] Mahzaib Vlogs Channel [YouTube]. Retrieved March 15, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/c/MahzaibVlogs>

- [36] <https://www.youtube.com/@dawnnewspakistan>
- [37] <https://www.youtube.com/@DawnNewsEnglish>
- [38] <https://www.dawn.com/>
- [39] <https://www.dawnnews.tv/>
- [40] https://x.com/dawn_com?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- [41] https://www.facebook.com/dawndotcom/?locale=en_GB
- [42] <https://www.thenews.com.pk/>
- [43] https://x.com/thenews_intl?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- [44] <https://www.facebook.com/TheNewsInternational/>
- [45] <https://www.youtube.com/user/theexpresstribune>
- [46] <https://www.instagram.com/etribune/?hl=en>
- [47] https://x.com/etribune?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- [48] <https://tribune.com.pk/>
- [49] <https://jang.com.pk/>
- [50] <https://www.facebook.com/JangDotComDotPk>
- [51] <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA01YvurqSUE3LNjjRRi03w>
- [52] <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/>
- [53] <https://www.youtube.com/@dailypakistan>
- [54] <https://www.facebook.com/dailypakistan.en/>
- [55] <https://www.tiktok.com/@dailypakistan1?lang=en>
- [56] <https://thedailycepec.com/>
- [57] https://x.com/TheDailyCPEC?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- [58] <https://www.geo.tv/>
- [59] https://x.com/geonews_english?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- or
- [60] https://www.facebook.com/GeoEnglishdotTV/?locale=en_GB
- [61] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_vt34wimdCzdkrzVejwX9g
- [62] <https://harpalgeo.tv/>
- [63] <https://www.facebook.com/harpalgeotv>
- [64] <https://arydigital.tv/>
- [65] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4JCKsJF76g_MdzPVBJoC3Q
- [66] <https://arynews.tv/>
- [67] <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMmpLL2ucRHAXbNHICPyIyg>
- [68] https://x.com/ARYNEWSOFFICIAL?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- Eauthor
- [69] <https://www.facebook.com/arynewsasia/>
- [70] <https://www.facebook.com/arydigital.tv>
- [71] <https://www.facebook.com/arynewsud>
- [72] <https://www.youtube.com/@BOLNewsofficial>
- [73] <https://www.bolmediagroup.com/>
- [74] <https://www.bolnews.com/>
- [75] https://x.com/BOLNETWORK?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

- or
- [76] <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV6-CUNsfe2-STYfykd7bBQ>
- [77] <https://www.youtube.com/@BOLNewsofficial>
- [78] <https://www.facebook.com/BOLNETWORK/>
- [79] <https://www.facebook.com/BOLEntertainment>
- [80] <https://www.samaa.tv/>
- [81] <https://www.youtube.com/samaatvnews>
- [82] <https://x.com/samaaenglish?lang=en>
- [83] <https://www.facebook.com/samaatv/>
- [84] https://www.facebook.com/SamaaEnglish/?locale=en_GB
- [85] <https://www.facebook.com/SamaaNewsHeadlines/#>
- [86] <https://humnews.pk/>
- [87] <https://humenglish.com/>
- [88] <https://www.instagram.com/hum.news.pakistan/?hl=en>
- [89] <https://www.facebook.com/HUMNewsPakistan/>
- [90] https://x.com/humnewspakistan?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauth
- or
- [91] <https://hum.tv/>
- [92] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeEQxm6qc_qaTE7qTV5aLQ
- [93] <https://www.youtube.com/@CSCGuideOfficial>
- [94] <https://www.facebook.com/cscguideofficial/>
- [95] <https://www.youtube.com/@RanaHamzaSaifRHS>
- [96] <https://www.instagram.com/ranahamzasaf/?hl=en>
- [97] https://www.facebook.com/ranahamzasaf.1/?locale=en_GB
- [98] <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBWcZtxyR34/>
- [99] <https://www.tiktok.com/@wildlensbyabrar>
- [100] <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf1XIpIYiqNv9baGsFHwPPQ>
- [101] <https://www.instagram.com/wildlensbyabrar/?hl=en>
- [102] <https://www.instagram.com/ganjiswag/?hl=en>
- [103] <https://www.youtube.com/@GanjiSwag>
- [104] <https://www.facebook.com/junaid.akram/>
- [105] <https://www.tiktok.com/@usmanchinese>
- [106] <https://www.instagram.com/usmanchinese/?hl=en>
- [107] <https://x.com/usmaninchina?lang=en>
- [108] <https://x.com/hamidmirpak>
- [109] <https://www.instagram.com/hamidmirpk/>
- [110] <https://www.youtube.com/@HamidMirOfficial>
- [111] <https://www.tiktok.com/@hamidmir.official>
- [112] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC78qBaP-IBQBCQTXli_DR-Q
- [113] <https://x.com/shazbkhanzdageo?lang=en>
- [114] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYNS-653RIE9x_BINefAMA
- [115] <https://x.com/talathussain12?lang=en>

- [116] https://www.facebook.com/syedtalathussain.official/?locale=en_GB
- [117] <https://x.com/aajkamrankhan?lang=en>
- [118] <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaH3tDQQle4vT909IGxK3lkQZ4GD5qIN5>
- [119] https://www.instagram.com/kiran_naz/?hl=en
- [120] <https://www.tiktok.com/@kirannaz8>
- [121] <https://www.facebook.com/kkirannaz/>
- [122] https://x.com/kirannaz_KN?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- [123] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLInT0gly5Xc5oEjrSkx8jhAzNCqBr_zie