**China-Pakistan sociocultural influences**

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CPEC and China-Pakistan relationships perfectly represent the idea of “unity in diversity and diversity in unity”. China is a multiethnic society representing “unity in diversity”, taking into account the social structures, the interaction between ethnicities, unifying the diverse cultural and communal networks, inculcating the unity across the country would not have been an easy task. China is well-versed in accommodating and negotiating to develop harmony and consensus on different issues including economic and development projects.
Pakistan is also a nation of diverse ethnicities although living together happily but still have some serious strategic conflicting priorities. It is the religion and patriotism which binds them together bringing “unity in the diversity”. But this unity falls apart when people’s political affiliations come to the fore. Sometimes they put everything at stake for a fear of losing their political space, therefore, exploit their popular support to secure instant partisan gains. The same happened to CPEC, relatively slow progress during last ten years, since inception, is probably due to the inability to inculcate consensus among all stakeholders on the project.
There are extensive sociocultural similarities between two nations with the history of cooperation and confidence at governmental level. But still, we observe clear hiccups in the implementation of CPEC. If we look at the progress of CPEC disinterestedly, we can’t excuse any of the sides. However, much of the onus lies on Pakistani counterparts; because they exposed CPEC to their internal differences and political rivalries.
China and Pakistan can create an exceptional synergy to make CPEC a historic success by utilising the Chinese pattern of “Ge” and “Ju” proposed by Fei Hsiao-tung. “Ge” helps to understand the unity in diversity and “Ju” helps to understand the dimensions of diversity. With so much in common in sociocultural aspects both nations can capitalise on the understanding of “Ge” and “Ju”.
The case of diversity in China with 56 ethnicities is much challenging than that of Pakistan. We can broadly divide ethnic diversity in Pakistan into two distinct groups of conservatives and relatively less conservatives; rest of the customs and traditions are more or less same across the country. It is probably lack of understanding of the dimensions of diversity i.e., “Ju” which needs attention to inculcate unity in the diversity.
Numerous commonalities between Pakistan and China represent “unity in diversity”; approaches towards benevolence, righteousness, modesty, loyalty and harmony truly manifest this concept. Religion constitutes beliefs, ideas, preferences and considerations about what is holy, sacred, absolute and worthy of special reverence in human lives. Social and ethical considerations are usually at the heart of any religion which determine the way of life of adherents of any religious belief. Islam is an established religion; however, Confucianism has been characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophies. In terms of social cohesion, moral values, spiritual evolution, and respect for humanity there are stark similarities between the two e.g., the concept of ‘filialpiety’ can be considered corresponding to the familyism in Pakistan. Filialpiety is the core concept in Confucianism that requires one to give parents and elders utmost respect and devotion. Filialpiety is akin to the reverence of one’s ancestors and may entail unconditional obedience of seniors. Surprisingly, roles defined in filialpiety are similar to those determined in the notion of familyism in Pakistan. Husband or father being head of the family unit is responsible for all provisions while wide or mother is accountable for daily routine in the households.
I feel excited putting forward the concept of “Easternism” as a foundation to determine the sociocultural impact of CPEC. The concepts of Eastern connectedness and solidarity developed considerable popularity in some of the Asian nations in the period between the two World Wars primarily focusing on Arab or Muslim cooperation and unity. However, that squeezed to an almost paralysed body of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Intense illiteracy, intentional distance from modern and evolving sciences and latest technologies coupled with lack of visionary leadership throughout Islamic world for the last few centuries, Muslim world failed to capitalise on the concept.
I am intentionally distancing from terms such as “orientalism” and “Easternisation”. Because, Easternisation is generally considered as an influence with ideas or customs characteristic of eastern Asia. It is also used to explain the influence, ideas, customs, and characteristics of the eastern U.S. Whereas, orientalism probably carries somewhat negative implications these days as a label for literary analyses deprived of social or historical context.
However, emergence of CPEC as an epitome of OBOR (One Belt One Road) initiative carries different circumstances. Eastern nations have started making their mark on global front with their economic, scientific and technological excellence. Therefore, it is probably the right time to promote Easternism to inculcate unity and foster swift development of Asian nations. Recent developments in Asia, settlement of decades old frictions between Saudi Arabia and Iran suggests that nothing is impossible in bringing Asian nations closer for the benefit of entire planet.
It is just a natural phenomenon that nations when dominating other societies remain subject to several internal depletions which occupy prominence once there is decline to the civilisation. Those who were struggling keep eye on leading cultures to adopt their strengths and by the time of decline they emerge as strong contenders to fill the gap. There is no surprise that the trend will continue and people from era of deprivation may emerge as leaders for tomorrow. During this course there remain a discussion on several fronts including scientific development, societal values, and socio-cultural preferences. Western developments are awe-inspiring, extending comfort and ease to the daily lives of people, explored all new dimensions of human life, extending human approach beyond this planet. But still there are certain fronts where West has remarkably failed in promoting transcending empathy and benevolence which is indeed a strength of Easternism.
Theoretically Sino-Pakistan sociocultural similarities suggest a strong bond between two neighbors, practically there is proven depth in the relationships of both countries but perceptually there seems a gap between two societies which needs attention. There is a need to educate civil societies on both sides that philosophically we are akin to each other, therefore, we need to work hand in hand to transform the fate of this region, to uplift the quality of life of relevant communities, and to expand Sino-Pakistan economies.