**Pakistan-China: The real lessons to learn**

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While some of us are envious of the smaller countries with smaller populations, in many ways, Pakistan is quite blessed to have a large percentage of young population, which if put to productive use can be a game changer for the fortunes of this nation. Smaller populations often get rattled when head winds come their way, whereas bigger countries have much more resilience and room to manoeuvre due to the shared collective numbers to face difficult challenges.

For example, Chile is comparatively a more-developed developing country, but in a major earthquake in 2010, GDP fell by a large chunk, and the entire economy could not function for almost two years. In contrast, Pakistan got back to normal activity fairly soon after the major earthquakes of 2005 and 2013.

So, what really ails us? Thomas Friedman, the famous writer, wrote an article titled, “The Seven years of China and the United States”, where he shocked his own government by stating: “When I sat in the seat of a Chinese stadium and enjoyed the magical performances of thousands of Chinese dancers, drummers, singers, and acrobats on stilts, I could not but recall the past seven years. Different years in the United States where the focus instead was on geo-politics rather than national development.”

[Global debt hit record high in 2020 of $226tr: IMF](https://nation.com.pk/16-Dec-2021/global-debt-hit-record-high-in-2020-of-dollar-226tr-imf)

When we look at South Asia in the context of Pakistan, the observations tend to be no different. Pakistan was ahead of the game in the region right till the early 90s’ when suddenly our focus shifted, in-turn giving rise to religious right-wing extremism, intolerance, the Taliban, and Al-Qaeda; on and on in this direction, while on the other hand during the same period our regional competitors were busy in building industry, corporates, exports, software houses, strengthening internal law and order and security, taming extremism and entering into lucrative global economic linkages. No surprises then that today Bangladesh and India have economically moved far ahead of us!

No one has been better at this game than China. China, since its entry into WTO, has been busy with mega infrastructure projects in the race to have the world’s best stadiums, subways, airports, roads and parks. Today in 2021, a traveller arriving in New York from Shanghai would in comparison suddenly get the feeling of arriving in a third-world country, just because the difference in the sheer quality, magnitude and the modernity of the infrastructure of the two cities is so stark.

[Pakistan doesn't want to be part of any camp's politics: FM Qureshi](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2021/pakistan-doesn-t-want-to-be-part-of-any-camp-s-politics-fm-qureshi)

And this is where we need to learn from the Chinese. As per Confucius’s teaching, if we take China as our true friend, we should actually be asking them to teach us how to fish; meaning how to develop and progress by keeping everything else secondary. That is, to teach us modern-day value systems that allow people to advance while not compromising on their roots and core beliefs. For anyone closely studying China, it is quite apparent that as a modern country, China has accepted the main concepts of modern national sovereignty and human rights.

However, the various qualities of ancient Chinese civilisation make this even more unique. One of the characteristics of China’s development model is that the scale effect of learning plus innovation plus a huge population affects China and the world very strongly. Many foreign companies investing in China have a slogan: Become number one in China and you automatically become number one in the world.

Now with the rise of China, going forward, the very perception of Chinese entrepreneurs is beginning to expand into more and more softer areas of business, such as in tourism, aviation, film and television, sports, education, new energy, modernisation models, and high-speed rail and transport. More importantly, in this quest for excellence, despite a very active international interaction over the last thirty years, such exposure has not caused a majority of the Chinese people to lose their cultural confidence in any way. Even today, they proudly embrace Confucius’s heat, Lao Tzu’s heat, reciting hot, calligraphy and painting fever, tea company heat, old house heat, cultural relics, Chinese medicine fever, and the heat of health—all reflecting a unshaking belief of the Chinese people in maintaining their own traditional culture and values.

[Dr Fauzia refuses to receive PHD degree from Shahbaz Gill at LCWU](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2021/dr-fauzia-refuses-to-receive-phd-degree-from-shahbaz-gill-at-lcwu)

On a more current note, one feels that the Pakistani government did well by excusing itself from the recent democratic summit organised by the US. An exercise perhaps more to embarrass China and Russia than taking any objective cognisance of the real issues facing the world today, so why get involved unnecessarily. In fact, the term ‘democracy’ itself these days is quite frequently exploited by global powers to impose their hegemony or enforce their own agendas (FATF being one example in such pre-empted huddles).

On the other hand, China’s traditional economy may not be a ‘market economy’ in the stricter sense, but taking into account the miracle of poverty-eradication by China (the largest scale ever witnessed in the history of the world), it certainly is a ‘humanistic economy’. Many political analysts who argue in simply linking legitimacy of a regime to a multi-party system, may just be victims of a very narrow and shallow vision.

[History-making NASA spacecraft touches sun for 1st time](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2021/history-making-nasa-spacecraft-touches-sun-for-1st-time)

In the long history of China since ancient times, a government that fails to improve its people’s livelihoods, loses its ‘destiny’ and ultimately its rule. This is why the most important feature of China’s historical legitimacy is the “political tradition of selecting the most able and capable people and primarily governing the country with the support of the people.” In the political culture of China, the concepts of: “one game at a time”, “hardships on one side, support from all sides”, and “culture cannot be produced”, tend to be the main pillars.

Dr Deming from Yale, who put Japan on the course of quality and leadership, often talked about how he envied the Chinese underlying governance structure. According to him, on the face of it China is centralised, but every reform in China actually has strong local characteristics. They compete and complement each other making the system very dynamic. To get results in the stipulated time, he argued, the world has to learn from the Chinese who have their own unique political and cultural combination that makes it easier for them to overcome populism, short-sightedness, and legalism that has plagued Western democracies, often leaving them ineffective in many development initiatives, since they fail to take-off on time.

[Barcelona forward Aguero ends his career due to heart problem](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2021/barcelona-forward-aguero-ends-his-career-due-to-heart-problem)

Frankly, if China indeed values its friendship with Pakistan as the cliched, ‘higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans’, then it needs to come forward and work with our leadership to instil the values and the management framework that has today made it the leading economy of the world.