

## PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

### THE POTENTIAL OF CPEC IN PROMOTING CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

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**Seema Gul, Imran Ur Rahman, Aisha Iftikhar, Dr. Noor Mohammad, Misbah Haque, Muhammad Fahim Khan. The Potential Of Cpec In Promoting Cultural Heritage And Tourism Development In Pakistan -- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20(2), 449-457. ISSN 1567-214x**

**Keywords: Cpec, Cultural Heritage, Tourism Development, Infrastructure Development.**

#### ABSTRACT

This review paper examines the potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in promoting tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan. It highlights the diverse tourism opportunities in Pakistan and the challenges that need to be addressed. The paper also proposes three approaches for promoting tourism in Pakistan: digital technologies for tourism promotion, public-private partnerships for infrastructure development, and sustainable tourism development. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a concerted effort from the government, private sector, and civil society to fully realize the potential of CPEC in promoting tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan.

#### INTRODUCTION

The CPEC is a project that aims to improve economic connection between China and Pakistan by building a network of motorways, trains, and energy

pipelines. CPEC is a massive project that has garnered a lot of attention since its inception in 2013. The success of the project is dependent on a number of things, the most important of which are tourism development and cultural assets (M Ibrar, Mi, & Rafiq, 2016). The purpose of this review article is to investigate the role of CPEC in encouraging tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan. The paper will discuss Pakistan's diverse tourism opportunities, the importance of preserving and promoting cultural heritage, the challenges that must be addressed, and recommendations for fully realizing CPEC's potential in promoting tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan.

CPEC is a massive infrastructure development project that aims to connect the Gwadar Port in southern Pakistan with China's northwestern region of Xinjiang via a network of highways, railways, and pipelines (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, Rafiq, & Buriro, 2018; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019). The CPEC is a component of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and it is anticipated to revolutionize the region's economic landscape by enhancing trade, commerce, and energy cooperation. Aside from economic benefits, the CPEC has the potential to encourage tourism growth and cultural heritage development in Pakistan. Pakistan has a number of world-famous tourist attractions, including historical landmarks, natural wonders, and strong cultural traditions. The country's rich cultural legacy, including arts, crafts, music, and food, has immense tourism potential, but it is mostly underutilized due to insufficient infrastructure, security concerns, and a lack of investment in tourism promotion. (Saad, Ijaz, Asghar, & Yamin, 2020). The creation of cultural heritage sites can also improve the tourism experience while also helping to preserve Pakistan's unique cultural legacy. However, realizing the promise of the CPEC in encouraging tourism growth and cultural heritage in Pakistan confronts a number of hurdles. These problems include assuring tourist safety and security, conserving cultural heritage sites from damage or destruction, creating sustainable tourism practices, and addressing tourism's socioeconomic impact on local populations.

To address these issues, the study suggests that the Pakistani government and its CPEC partners prioritize the development of sustainable tourism practices that conserve cultural heritage sites while also benefiting local populations. Promotion of Pakistan's tourism potential should also be prioritized.

### ***Theoretical Viewpoint***

The CPEC is a project that will build a network of roads, railroads, and energy pipelines in order to improve economic connection between China and Pakistan. The potential of CPEC to support Pakistan's tourism industry and cultural heritage is examined in this review article. In addition to highlighting Pakistan's many tourism prospects, the paper discusses how CPEC can help with problems including political unpredictability, security concerns, and a lack of infrastructure to support tourism. The study also highlights the significance of safeguarding and promoting Pakistan's extensive cultural legacy and how CPEC can offer a chance to do so. The article also identifies

problems that need to be solved, such as the lack of collaboration between the federal and provincial governments, the shortage of qualified workers in the tourism sector, and security issues. In order to overcome these obstacles and fully achieve the potential of CPEC in supporting Pakistan's tourism growth and cultural legacy, the report emphasizes the necessity for a concerted effort from the government, corporate sector, and civil society.

The theoretical foundation of this review paper is based on a number of fundamental ideas about the growth of tourism and cultural heritage. (Khan et al., 2020). By developing new tourism destinations, improving current ones, and safeguarding cultural heritage sites, CPEC offers Pakistan the chance to grow sustainable tourism. Second, the development of tourism in Pakistan must take cultural heritage into account. (Masoud, Mortazavi, Farsani, & Society, 2019). CPEC offers a chance to protect and promote Pakistan's rich cultural history, which has the potential to draw tourists from all over the world. The construction of infrastructure along the CPEC route may result in the discovery of fresh historical sites, while the preservation of older ones may encourage the growth of cultural tourism. (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018). By creating infrastructure along the route, CPEC offers the chance to facilitate tourist access to various regions of the nation. Additionally, the establishment of Special (Shaikh, Ji, Fan, & Reviews, 2016). Stakeholder involvement is the term for the involvement of various actors, such as the government, business sector, civil society, and local communities, in the growth of the tourism industry. Addressing the lack of cooperation between the federal and provincial governments, the shortage of skilled experts in the tourist industry, and security concerns would require a joint effort from all parties. To ensure the long-term growth of tourism in Pakistan, local people must be actively engaged in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

This review paper's theoretical foundation is built on a number of fundamental ideas about the development of sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, infrastructure development, and stakeholder involvement. These ideas offer a framework for comprehending both the difficulties that must be overcome in order to fully realize the promise of CPEC in fostering Pakistani tourism growth and cultural heritage.

### ***Existing Information***

Policymakers, scholars, and business professionals have all turned their attention to the CPEC, which is a huge initiative. The project, which intends to improve economic connectivity between China and Pakistan by building a network of motorways, railways, and energy pipelines, has been hailed as a possible game-changer for the area. As a result, CPEC has come to be recognized as a crucial element of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to encourage connectivity and economic cooperation among participating nations. In academic and business circles, there has been much discussion about the possibility of CPEC to support Pakistan's development of its tourism industry and cultural assets. (Gondhalekar & Drewes, 2021). CPEC offers a chance to deal with these problems and advance the nation's tourism industry. Additionally, the project's preservation and promotion of Pakistan's

cultural legacy are crucial elements. In order to draw tourists from all over the world, scholars have emphasized the importance of preserving Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, particularly its historical landmarks. They contend that the construction of infrastructure along the CPEC route may result in the identification of fresh historical sites and the preservation of older ones.

Even with the potential advantages of CPEC, academics and industry professionals have also identified a number of issues that need to be resolved. There is a lack of coordination between the federal and provincial governments, a shortage of qualified workers in the tourism sector, worries about security, and environmental issues, among others. In order to fully achieve the potential of CPEC in fostering tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan, it will be necessary for the government, corporate sector, and civil society to work together in concert to address these difficulties.

### *Development of tourism*

Pakistan is endowed with a variety of tourist attractions, including historical sites, stunning scenery, and cultural diversity. However, a number of factors, including political unpredictability, security worries, and a lack of infrastructure, have prevented the country's tourism industry from reaching its full potential. By developing new tourist attractions and improving current ones, CPEC offers a chance to address these problems. The construction of infrastructure, such as roads, trains, and airports, will make it simpler for visitors to travel to various regions of the nation. Investors have the chance to engage in the tourism sector because to CPEC's emphasis on the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the CPEC route. The (Pinyochatchinda, Walsh, & Review, 2015) Eco-tourism development in Pakistan has the potential to advance responsible tourist methods, protect natural resources, and bring in money for nearby people. Along with the advantages offered by SEZs, the CPEC can aid in the growth of new tourist destinations in Pakistan. For instance, the growth of the Gwadar Port may open up chances for yachting and cruise ship travel. New places can be developed for tourism as a result of the building of new roads and trains, including Pakistan's northern regions, which are renowned for their scenic beauty and adventure tourist potential (S. A. Ali, Haider, Ali, Ali, & Ming, 2017).

The development and preservation of Pakistan's cultural heritage can benefit from the CPEC. History-rich sites like the Mohenjo-Daro archaeological site and the Lahore Fort are part of Pakistan's rich cultural legacy. The creation of cultural heritage sites can improve the tourism industry while also preserving Pakistan's distinctive cultural identity. The growth of local communities' socioeconomic conditions and revenue opportunities can both be facilitated by the promotion of cultural tourism. To prevent detrimental effects on the environment and local communities, Pakistani tourist development must be done responsibly and sustainably. By promoting responsible tourist methods that protect natural resources and assist local people, eco-tourism promotion can aid in the achievement of this objective. The growth of programs for community-based tourism can also give local communities options for income

and support their empowerment (S. Ali, Daud, & Ibrar, 2021; M. Ibrar, Kakepoto, H., Manzoor, B., & Khan, M. A. , 2022).

A great potential to advance Pakistan's tourism industry and cultural legacy is provided by the CPEC. Unlocking Pakistan's tourist potential and promoting sustainable tourism practices can help the country prosper economically. Infrastructure development, SEZ establishment, and promotion of sustainable tourism practices can all help. To fully reap these advantages, Pakistan will need to address infrastructure, sustainability, and security issues, as well as put in place policies that place an emphasis on cultural heritage preservation and community empowerment.

### *Cultural Heritage*

Pakistan has a 5,000-year-old cultural legacy that includes the Indus Valley Civilization, the Mughal Empire, and the Gandhara Civilization. However, many of these historical landmarks are in disrepair due to neglect and a lack of funding. The CPEC project provides an opportunity to protect and promote Pakistan's cultural heritage. The construction of infrastructure along the CPEC route may result in the discovery of new historical landmarks, as well as the restoration of existing ones, attracting tourists from all over the world.

Cultural heritage promotion can also lead to job opportunities in local communities. Local communities can be trained in cultural preservation and promotion, giving them the opportunity to earn a living while preserving their cultural legacy. Cultural heritage promotion can also lead to the development of new products and services, such as handicrafts, that can be marketed to tourists. Furthermore, promoting cultural heritage can help Pakistan's overall economic development. The tourist industry contributes significantly to the country's economy, and cultural tourism can play an important role in boosting tourism. Pakistan may attract tourists interested in history, architecture, and cultural experiences through promoting cultural heritage sites. This can result in greater tourism revenue, employment creation, and the growth of adjacent industries like hospitality and transportation. Moreover, through promoting events and festivals that celebrate Pakistan's cultural richness, CPEC can help to increase cultural tourism. These events can highlight Pakistan's traditional music, dance, and cuisine, allowing travelers to experience the country's distinct cultural character (Asif et al., 2019). Cultural event and festival promotion can also provide opportunities for local artists and performers to demonstrate their talents, so helping to their socioeconomic growth. However, cultural heritage must be preserved and promoted in a responsible and sustainable manner. Tourism infrastructure and activities must not jeopardize cultural sites or the environment. Local community participation in cultural preservation and promotion must be prioritized, and their rights and interests must be protected.

CPEC offers Pakistan a huge chance to conserve and promote its rich cultural legacy. Infrastructure development, cultural tourist marketing, and community involvement can all contribute to the country's overall economic development. However, in order to fully achieve these benefits, Pakistan must enact policies

that prioritize cultural heritage preservation, sustainability, and community empowerment.

### ***Future Obstacles***

Despite the potential benefits of CPEC in terms of tourism growth and cultural heritage in Pakistan, a number of obstacles must be addressed.

First, the federal and provincial governments are not working together to create tourism infrastructure. Coordination failure has resulted in duplication of activities, poor resource use, and project execution delays. Second, there is a scarcity of educated tourist workers, such as tour guides, hotel employees, and transportation suppliers. A dearth of skilled personnel has resulted in a mediocre visitor experience, resulting in an unfavorable image of Pakistan's tourism industry. Third, security concerns remain a major concern, and the government must protect tourist safety. Pakistan's security situation has dramatically improved in recent years. However, there are still sections of the country where tourists are not safe. The government must take steps to safeguard tourist safety, such as providing appropriate security staff and increasing security in key areas. Fourth, another issue that must be addressed is the lack of effective waste management and environmental protection measures. The growth of tourism infrastructure may result in an increase in trash output, which may impact the environment and the sustainability of the tourism business. The government must create and enforce rules and regulations that support sustainable waste management methods while also protecting the environment. Fifth, tourism must be promoted in an inclusive and equitable manner that benefits all regions and groups in Pakistan. Most tourism operations are currently concentrated in a few localities, ignoring the potential of other regions. Tourism infrastructure development should be inclusive, benefiting all regions and allowing local populations to participate in tourism-related activities (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karan, 2016; M. Ibrar, Saleem, N., Ali, S., Merri, S. A., & Jamil, I. , 2023).

To solve these issues, the government must emphasize the creation of a coordinated and sustainable tourism strategy involving all stakeholders, including the federal and provincial governments, the commercial sector, and local communities. The government should also invest in tourism professional training and development, as well as establish proper security measures and promote sustainable tourist practices. CPEC is a tremendous opportunity for Pakistan to promote tourism growth and cultural heritage; nevertheless, some problems must be solved. To fully achieve the potential benefits of CPEC in the tourism industry, the government must adopt a coordinated and sustainable tourism plan that addresses these difficulties, prioritizes the inclusion of local people, and encourages sustainable tourism practices. To address these issues, the government can create a coordinated tourism infrastructure plan, prioritize tourism professional training and development, improve security in sensitive areas, promote sustainable tourism practices, and create inclusive tourism activities that benefit all regions and communities in Pakistan. By applying these ideas, Pakistan would be able to fully achieve the potential benefits of CPEC in terms of encouraging tourism development and cultural heritage, as

well as creating job opportunities for local populations and safeguarding its rich cultural history.

### ***Tourism Development Approaches***

CPEC has been planned to promote tourism development and cultural heritage in Pakistan:

#### ***Tourism Promotion Using Digital Technologies***

One strategy may be to promote Pakistan tourism through CPEC by exploiting digital technologies. This might entail developing a digital platform that allows travelers to research various places and attractions in Pakistan, book tours, and communicate with local guides. The platform might also include virtual reality tours of historical landmarks and cultural locations, allowing travelers to immerse themselves in the country's rich cultural legacy even before they arrive. Social media and influencer marketing could also be used to reach a larger audience and highlight Pakistan's tourism potential (Timothy, 2011). This strategy has the potential to greatly improve the tourism experience and attract a new generation of tech-savvy travelers.

#### ***Infrastructure Development Partnerships between the Public and Private Sectors***

Another option is to encourage Infrastructure Development Partnerships between the Public and Private Sectors along the CPEC route. Tax breaks, subsidies, and other financial incentives could be offered by the government to encourage private investors to invest in the tourism industry (Kwak, Chih, & Ibbs, 2009). The government might then focus on creating transportation and communication infrastructure, while private investors may develop and maintain tourism infrastructure such as hotels, resorts, and theme parks. Infrastructure Development Partnerships between the Public and Private Sectors could help overcome the public sector's lack of resources and competence, hence accelerating the development of tourism infrastructure along the CPEC route.

#### ***Development of Sustainable Tourism***

A third way could be to encourage long-term tourism development along the CPEC corridor. Adopting environmentally responsible techniques and limiting the harmful impact of tourism on the environment and local populations could be part of this. Promoting eco-tourism, decreasing waste and carbon footprint, and preserving natural and cultural resources are all examples of sustainable tourism practices (Ullah, Khan, & Haq, 2018). Furthermore, community-based tourism projects might be developed to ensure that the advantages of tourism are distributed to local populations. This method has the potential to not only stimulate tourism development but also ensure that it is socially and environmentally responsible.

## CONCLUSION

The CPEC has the potential to significantly boost Pakistan's tourism development and cultural heritage. Digital technology can be used to effectively promote tourism, while public-private partnerships can help with infrastructure development. Long-term success requires sustainable tourism growth. However, difficulties such as a lack of coordination and security concerns must be addressed collaboratively by the government, corporate sector, and civil society. CPEC can be a driver for economic progress and cultural preservation in Pakistan if these techniques are taken.

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