

Reviving Gandhara Civilization under CPEC

Dost Barrech

Lecturer in the International Relations (IR) Department, University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta

Dr. Samra Naz

Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad

Dr. Barkat Shah Kakar

Assistant Professor Department of Pashto, University of Balochistan, Quetta

Tahira Naudhani

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Balochistan, Quetta

Ayesha Alam

Head of Department of Pakistan Studies Hazara University, Mansehra

Abstract: *The Gandhara Civilization, ostensibly, holds immense significance for Pakistan, representing a great dimension of rich cultural heritage. The Gandhara civilization thrived around 1000 BC lasted for over 1000 years, currently, is located in northwestern Pakistan. It remained the centre of learning and attracted intellectual discourse. Its cosmopolitan nature and cultural fusion promoted an environment of tolerance and harmony. By showcasing archaeological sites associated with Buddhism, and highlighting the rich cultural heritage under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC, Pakistan is extremely likely to attract thousands of tourists annually. More than 535 million people practice Buddhism across the globe and the majority of them inhabit in Asia. An estimated 245 million people are practising Buddhism in China. The world's largest numbers of Buddhist adherents are in China. The former used Buddhism as a soft power with the Southeast Asian countries reinforced its soft image in the aforementioned countries. Buddhism cemented China's soft image. The country remains the largest Buddhist state in the world, obtaining an overwhelming soft power attractiveness among the Southeast Asian Buddhist states like Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Pakistan has huge potential and resources under CPEC it can replicate the Chinese model by promoting Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist diplomacy resulting in promoting religious tourism, and soft power. This paper, thus, will focus on the revival of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC. How can it pave the way for religious tourism, promoting soft power, tolerance and harmony? In this paper, mixed-method would be applied by using both primary and secondary data.*

Keywords: *Civilization, Soft Power, Buddhist Diplomacy, Religious Tourism, CPEC, Stupas*

Introduction

Gandhara Civilization includes the areas of the Indus River in the West and Kabul River in the North encompassing the valleys of Swat, Dir, Bajaur and Peshawar extended to eastwards to the Taxila valley

in Punjab including Jhelum, Sialkot in Punjab. In the westwards, it extended to Hadda and Bamiyan in Afghanistan including Kashmir on the part of greater Gandhara. (Muhammad Bin Naveed, 2015) Gandhara Civilization was a stable empire of Pakosati at the beginning of 600 BEC. The Pakosati Empire was captured by the Persian Empire followed by Achaemenids which lasted till Alexander invaded the Gandhara. However, Alexander the Great left his influence on the part of Hellenic Civilization. Meanwhile, Mauryan Empire built an empire in the region described as a Mauryan Empire (Chiragh, 2011).

There are different interpretations as far as the meaning of Gandhara is concerned. The Sanskrit origin of the term Gandhara believes that Gand means 'fragrance' and the 'Har' is attributed to land which is termed as the "land of fragrance". (Naveed, 2015) In the geographical context, Gandhara is regarded as Qand or Gand made of 'Kun' the 'well' which means 'pool of water'. On the other hand, others view Gandhara as the old name of Peshawar Valley (Khan, 2014). Fortunately, Pakistan remains the junction of two ancient civilizations of the world such as the Gandhara Civilization, and the Indus Valley Civilization.

Gandhara Civilization is well-known as a Centre of Buddhist learning nearly 3000 years ago. Peshawar, Swat and Taxila were renowned centres of learning philosophy, art and trade. Travellers and pilgrims were thrilled to visit Gandhara from Greece and China. Julian University in Gandhara Civilization is reckoned to be the oldest university in the world. (Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Embassy Beijing, 2019) Dr Ashraf Khan who remained Director of the Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations stated that Julian University played a significant role in learning during the Kingdom of Gandhara. History illustrates that Julian attracted scholars from China, India Persia, Greece and Afghanistan. (Ajmal Iqbal, 2019)

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan is home to two ancient civilizations with the Gandhara Civilization being one of them. A query arises here: Why has Pakistan being an epicenter of civilizations not materialized its civilizational potential? Pakistan has a great opportunity to capitalize on the potential of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative BRI led by China. In future, Pakistan under CPEC is extremely likely to become a hub of civilizations connecting different civilizations of the world. (Bashir, S., Arshad, M., & Barech, S., 2019). Diversity management makes difference in performance and opinions (Khan & Javaid, 2023). China's obsession with the Gandhara Civilization is growing. There are a large number of Buddhists in China including Southeast Asian states, Thailand Myanmar, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Reviving Gandhara Civilization has paramount importance for Islamabad in the projection of religious tourism, soft power and consolidation of the economy. Persuasion through leaders affects economy and political stability (Ramzan et al., 2023). Unfortunately, political instability, bad governance, terrorism and extremism have tarnished the soft image of the country which could be improved by promoting Gandhara Civilization and religious tourism under

CPEC.

Research Methodology

In this research paper mixed research method has been applied by using both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from renowned archaeologists, historians and Ph.D. scholars who gave their valuable and instructive insights about the importance of the Gandhara Civilization and its revival under CPEC. The secondary data has been collected from books, research papers and articles from different sources.

Capitalizing Gandhara Civilization under CPEC

CPEC is termed as a game changer. The year 2023 has been marked a successful decade of CPEC. Over a decade, China's investment in Pakistan restored the confidence of foreign investors. Pakistan obtained maximum dividends in terms of economic development, modernization in infrastructure and job opportunities (Dost Barrech, 2023). Stress faced by employees change experience of employability (Javaid et al., 2023). Arguably, keeping all eggs in the energy sector and infrastructure under CPEC would prove counterproductive. Both China and Pakistan are civilizational states. CPEC provides monolithic opportunities to Beijing and Islamabad to tap the untapped potential of their civilizations. (Sadiq, W., B., D. S., Zafar, H., Zarar, R., Naudani, T., & Ali, T., 2022). Civilizations, no doubt are the historical legacy of nations, paving the way for promoting cultural dialogue, fostering people-to-people contacts and peace via exchange of norms and values. Social media motivated in learning and collaborative strategies makes interaction better (Ramzan et al., 2023). China and Pakistan have interlinked roots of civilization when traced back to ancient civilizations. The Gandhara, Taxila, Indus Valley Civilization which flourished five thousand years ago existed on the lower basin of the Indus River. (Dr Ahmad Rashid Malik, 2020).

The flow of Indus River water originates from the Tibetan mountains of China. Chinese Civilization also depended on the Yellow River its water flow also originated from the Tibetan mountains. Thus, both civilizations have had a long-term influence on modern headways such as architecture and scientific discoveries. (Rabeea Khalid and Young, 2014) Buddhism was introduced in China in the 2nd century in the Ghandhari language and literature. (Yao Jing, 2018). The Chinese well-known scholars like Fa Xian, and Xuan Zang in the 4th and 7th visited Buddhist sites in Peshawar and Taxila University along with the ancient Silk Route. (PRC Consulate Karachi, 2020)

History manifests there had been overlapping similarities between Pakistani and Chinese civilizations. There had been no competition and contention between Indus Valley Civilization and the Yellow River. They instead had great communication and mutual understanding nor had there been barriers in cross-cultural integration and people-to-people contacts. The Silk Route has 2500 years old history and ushered a path to barter trade and exchange of culture. Buddhism which had roots in ancient India was embraced by the Chinese (Dr Waseem Ishaque, 2019)

Both parties have a massive opportunity to promote Gandhara Civilization and Buddhism under CPEC. China has the world's largest Buddhist population having 245 million Buddhists. (Yang Siqi, 2016) Beijing has been using Buddhism as a soft power in Southeast Asian states resulting in the consolidation of its soft image across the region. China via media promotes Buddhism intending to foster religious harmony that by and large is serving Beijing's interest politically and diplomatically. P. Stobdan argues that: "Becoming a guardian of Buddhism is helping Xi successfully promote China as an acceptable world power with a soft image. Buddhist globalization helps Beijing push its economic projects – religious diplomacy makes it easier for China to win economic and infrastructural projects in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal and elsewhere" (P. Stobdan, 2017)

Though China does not have Gandhara Civilization, it leaves no stone unturned to promote Buddhism as a soft power by enhancing religious harmony resulting in enhancing its economic and political dividends. Buddhists conceptualizes mindfulness which is a key to improve interpersonal relations (Javaid et al., 2023). Pakistan is lucky enough to have the ancient Gandhara Civilization that can be promoted by espousing the Chinese footsteps aimed at protecting its ancient civilization, religious harmony and soft power under CPEC. More than 245 million Chinese Buddhists under CPEC could be cajoled to visit Gandhara Civilization. (Amna Ejaz Rafi, 2022) China is the world's largest outbound tourism industry in the world. Beijing's outbound tourism in 2019 reached approximately 155 million almost three times as many as 2010. Pakistan is viewed as an Iron Brother in Chinese political discourse but the former remained utterly failed to capitalize on China's outbound tourism. Pakistan should not miss the bus and ought to exploit Chinese outbound tourism and should encourage them to visit Gandhara Civilization under CPEC. (Agne Blazyte, 2023)

Arguably, the Chinese are getting richer year by year. To draw a comparison between China and Pakistan in per capita income one would be taken aback to see China's exponential rise in per capita income. China and Pakistan in 1970 had USD150 and USD250 per capita income respectively. Currently, China's per capita income is USD12,732, while Pakistan has merely USD1600. Affluent Chinese under CPEC could be encouraged to visit the historic sites of Pakistan (Dost Barrech, 2023). Against this backdrop, the government of Pakistan took a great step by organizing the "Gandhara Symposium 2023: Cultural Diplomacy: Reviving Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan," Islamabad. Pakistan's president Arif Alvi accentuated in Symposium that today's world was engulfed by the growing hatred and unstoppable polarization that could be eroded by fostering cultural diplomacy and dialogue among civilizations and reviving Gandhara Civilization was a prerequisite. President further added, "Gandhara was a great centre of learning that attracted intellectual discourse, and its cosmopolitan nature and cultural fusion fostered an environment of tolerance and harmony". (ISSI, 2023)

In the event monks from China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam were invited to share their valuable insights regarding Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist legacy in Pakistan.

The event was attributed to exploring Pakistan's rich Buddhist legacy and to creating an enabling environment for Gandhara tourism. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani Minister of State, and Chairman of the PM Task Force in the event stated that "The Gandhara civilization continues to mesmerize from all over the world and emphasized the need to preserve and revive the historic Buddhist relics" Pakistan needs to make a conducive environment under CPEC for the Buddhists of China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam to visit Gandhara Civilization that will certainly embark a path to revival of Gandhara Civilization, promoting religious harmony, encouraging tourism, diminishing extremism and cementing the economy of the country (The President of Pakistan, 2023). CPEC affects language use across culture. Language attitudes are fostered in good environment (Ramzan et al., 2023). People may experience bitterness as result of bad interaction but expressive writing marks significant difference (Javaid & Mahmood, 2023 a, b). Social adjustment helps improve social skills (Maqbool et al., 2021). Psychological factors also impact the language and cultural representations across nations (Ikramullah et al., 2023). Emotions alter language skills and makes experience enjoyable (Javaid et al., 2023).

Following are interviews of the experts who gave their valuable insights about the revival of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC

I. What importance does Gandhara Civilization have for Pakistan?

Respondent I

Every state feels proud of its history. Similarly, Pakistan should feel proud of its history. Pakistan has two great ancient civilizations of the world Gandhara Civilization and Indus Civilization. There are very few countries in the world that possess two great civilizations. We need to be proud of these two ancient civilizations. The world ought to be made aware of these civilizations. In this regard, Mortimer Wheeler has written a classical book entitled "Five Thousand Years of Pakistan" in which he argues that the Gandhara Civilization and Indus Civilization are the genuine pride of Pakistan.

2. How can Pakistan capitalize on Gandhara Civilization, soft power and religious tourism under CPEC?

Respondent I

Pakistan under CPEC can promote Gandhara Civilization and religious tourism by inviting the Buddhists and monks of China, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The above-mentioned countries have a great deal of affection for the Gandhara Civilization. Religious tourism from the mentioned countries be exploited under CPEC. Geographically, Pakistan is a well-placed country having a -30 centigrade temperature in winter. In summer there are areas where the temperature remains 50 centigrade. Unfortunately, Pakistan has many tourism opportunities but over the last 45 years due to terrorism and extremism, the country's image

tarnished badly. Currently, Gandhara Civilization and religious tourism under CPEC can prove effective in improving the soft image and economy of Pakistan.

3. Why has Pakistan so far remained failed in the projection of the Gandhara Civilization?

Respondent I

Unfortunately, the history of Pakistan has been distorted. The ruling class of the country that migrated from North India desired to accentuate the Ganga-Jamuna Civilization and intentionally overlooked the Gandhara Civilization and Indus Valley Civilization. When we observe Pakistan Studies books where the history of Pakistan starts with 712 AD and a great deal of concentration is given to the 1857 war, the formation of the Pakistan Muslim League and Allahabad Address. The ruling class of current Pakistan as mentioned earlier migrated from Northern India and inculcated the history of North India. They deliberately ignored Gandhara Civilization and indigenous history and were unwilling to revive the Gandhara Civilization. When there was darkness in North India there was a great Gandhara Civilization in current Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Even before Gandhara Civilization there existed Zoroastrianism religion. Pakistan does not go for innovation and repeats the distorted history that devalues Gandhara Civilization.

4. What challenges do you predict in the promotion of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC?

Respondent I

The 18th Amendment is the biggest challenge as far as the revival of the Gandhara Civilization is concerned. The Federal Government has recently passed the Gandhara Act which has empowered the Federal Government at the expense of the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK. The Awami National Party in KPK rejected the Gandhara Act and accused the Federal Government of plundering the ancient civilization from the provincial government. The Buddha statue which is the biggest Buddha statue was found in Takht-i-Bhai KPK but it is being shifted to Lahore. ANP says it is yet another assault on the rights of the KPK government. Now religious tourists instead of visiting Takht-i-Bhai and Peshawar KPK which are the indigenous places of Gandhara Civilization will visit Lahore which is unfair to the KPK government.

I. What importance does Gandhara Civilization have for Pakistan?

Respondent 2

Gandhara Civilization is a treasure trove of soft power for Pakistan. Within culture, there would be both tangible heritage and intangible heritage. In the tangible heritage, Pakistan has Buddhist ruins and archaeological sites. Its symbolic significance which is also part of the heritage. Most considerably, Gandhara Civilization represents the living religion. More than in 29 countries Buddhism religion is practiced. Gandhara Civilization is a great source to connect with 29 countries of the world where Buddhism exists. Buddhism is a local religion in China and it

promotes Buddhism. The rest of the Buddhist countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka have a Buddhist identity. Pakistan has a golden means to promote religious harmony and religious tourism with the above-mentioned countries. Pakistan has an Islamic identity, similarly, the Buddhist states have a Buddhist identity which exists in Pakistan that ought to be capitalized accordingly. Pakistan promotes better ties with Muslim countries. Islamabad can also promote good ties with the Buddhist states by using Gandhara Civilization under CPEC.

2. How can Pakistan capitalize on Gandhara Civilization, soft power and religious tourism under CPEC?

Respondent 2

Pakistan is never short of resources, it has a problem of capitalization. The country witnesses governance issues. There are many authorities for tourism like the provincial authority, PTDC. There has been a multiplication of institutions where we get trapped. Multiplication of institutions ought to be discouraged. There has to be one institution which needs to work by maintaining good coordination with the provincial government. Governance issues prevail in the whole country, tourism sector thus does not remain immune to governance problems. There has to be continuity in the program under CPEC.

3. Why has Pakistan so far remained failed in the projection of the Gandhara Civilization?

Respondent 2

Pakistan has failed because it remained a prisoner of its history. In history, Pakistan becomes a US ally against USSR in the Cold War. The country promotes an Indian-centric foreign policy. Since its independence, India projected Buddhism and linked Buddhism with Indian secular identity. Pakistan was supposed to portray itself differently from India and disowned Gandhara Civilization. During the Cold War, Pakistan did not seek foreign investment, because Islamabad obtained the economic dividends and arms from the US resulting in the non-capitalization of the Gandhara Civilization. There has been no continuity in the projection of Gandhara Civilization as far as the prisoner of history is concerned. After 9/11 Pakistan became an ally of the US in the War on Terror that tarnished the soft image of the country. To be fair, the tourism sector is not run by professionals which is also damaging the sector badly.

4. What challenges do you predict in the promotion of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC?

Respondent 2

Tourism is highly sensitive to terrorism. Due to terrorist attacks, the tourism sector's future will remain in jeopardy. The most affected sector due to the law & order situation is the tourism sector. Because it is multi-sectoral, many sectors are involved in the tourist sector like hoteling, transportation, and retail sector. Law & order situation must be improved. Radicalization and extremism are yet another big challenge to religious tourism. On one hand, it is portrayed by the

state that it will promote religious tourism. On the other, radicalization and extremism are increasing by leaps and bounds. Radicalization, extremism and terrorism are the grave threats to the projection of Gandhara Civilization. Tourism no doubt is a billion dollars industry. But the sector cannot be improved unless radicalization, extremism and terrorism and governance issues are addressed.

It requires missionary zeal and missionary zeal can be implemented with policymakers who are professionals who could monitor the tourism sector vigilantly. In order to promote tourism, Pakistan needs professionals. Government should support professionals to go with vision. Coordination with all other departments is very essential. Most of the time political parties get economic and political mileage while other institutions are not in the loop. They view issues from their perspective. For instance, Interior Ministry will see issues through a security lens. The security lens will be a huge lens that would overshadow and erode the whole initiative. We need to do away with the thinking of securitization and should see through economic activity. There have to be pragmatic measures of accountability, and checks and balances but not at the cost of killing the initiative which is essential for the progress and prosperity of the country.

5. What suggestions do you suggest to the government of Pakistan to foster Gandhara civilization, its soft power and religious tolerance under CPEC?

Respondent 2

I would suggest to the government of Pakistan, that the tourism sector under CPEC must be dealt with by professionals. There needs to be a religious tourism vision. People must be made cognizant of the vision and religious tourism. Vision must be documented concerning Buddhist tourism. Pakistan needs to focus on international collaboration with those institutions which are working on religious tourism. Law & order and negative trends in society must be improved. Infrastructure ought to be improved. Pakistan by hook or by crook will have to eliminate racist thinking within the society. Islamabad launched its National Security Policy in 2022. In the same way, Vision 2050 religious tourism must be launched by sharing the vision of the entire institutions of the country. India and China have been working on Buddhist diplomacy. Pakistan must learn instructive lessons from them.

I. What importance does Gandhara Civilization have for Pakistan?

Respondent 3

Gandhara Civilization is being called the "land of fragrance". Invaders came to Gandhara Civilization through Silk Route and conquered Gandhara Civilization. In the era of Ashoka from 268 B.C.E to 232 B.C.E the region, Buddhist religion and Gandhara Civilization reached its zenith. Ashoka initiated Buddhist councils in which he promoted Buddhist scriptures. Missionaries were sent to different countries like China, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Europe. The

missionaries were sponsored by the government. More than 80 thousand Buddhist stupas were built by Ashoka. When Chinese pilgrims visited the Gandhara Civilization, they saw the Buddhist stupas and understood that the birthplace of the Buddhist Civilization was in Gandhara Civilization. Buddhist civilization matured in the Gandhara Civilization. The world's largest collection of Buddhist statues is in the Peshawar Museum. There are many stupas in Swat and Taxila. The second civilization took place in current Pakistan and got old here. Its decline also took place in current Pakistan. The invaders also amalgamated their culture with the local culture. Many cities were built by the invaders in this part of the world. The Mahayana Buddhism birth took place here, it got old here. Mahayana Buddhism promoted statues and stupas. The Gandhara Civilization's importance for Pakistan thus cannot be ignored.

2. How can Pakistan capitalize on Gandhara Civilization, soft power and religious tourism under CPEC?

Respondent 3

At the current juncture, religious tourism is a very important sector in the tourism sector. Pakistan can generate healthy income because the country has enough resources. Pakistan has many sites of the Gandhara Civilization like the Taxila world heritage site, the Buddhist ruins of Takht-i-Bahi KPK, and Dharmarajika Stupa. The above-mentioned sites are on the world's heritage list. In Swat Valley, more than 6 thousand monasteries were built. If policymakers of the country preserve and manage stupas, monasteries and historical sites can contribute to generating whopping revenue and projecting the soft image of Pakistan. For Buddhist pilgrims, Takht-i-Bahi, Mardan is a huge complex and the monastery ought to be capitalized under CPEC. Political instability, and non-preservation of the sites, would damage the promotion of religious tourism. Under CPEC government should start publicity of Gandhara Civilization and start work on its infrastructure. If roads, and railways infrastructures under CPEC are built in adjacent areas of the Gandhara Civilization including stupas, monasteries and historical sites. Pakistan would benefit massively in terms of economy, religious tourism and soft power projection. As I mentioned earlier, we have resources but we do not have the infrastructure, and preservation of the sites which could be made possible through CPEC. Monks and religious tourism should be encouraged under CPEC.

There has to be one specific day of the Gandhara Civilization celebration. Different Buddhist countries could be involved in the celebration day of the Gandhara Civilization. In order to pay a visit to the Buddhist sites along with monks, Buddhist pilgrims under CPEC will prove effective in the projection of Gandhara Civilization. Organizing seminars and involving scholars, journalists and followers of the Buddhist countries will give a positive image to the world. Under CPEC, art pieces of the Gandhara Civilization which are in Peshawar and Swat museums could be displayed

in the Buddhist countries which will pave the way for the awareness of the Gandhara Civilization and importance of Pakistan. Resultantly, Buddhist pilgrims will frequently visit Pakistan.

3. Why has Pakistan so far remained failed in the projection of the Gandhara Civilization?

Respondent 3

Pakistan is an Islamic state. After the 9/11 incident, wrong perceptions of Islam prevailed across the globe. It had a great impact on Pakistan. It is unfortunate to say that the state disowns Gandhara Civilization. Whenever any mishap occurs with Muslims, particularly in Sri Lanka and Myanmar the incidents will have an impact on Buddhist sites in Pakistan. Pakistan does not have skilled and professional people to look after the Buddhist sites. Management of historical sites remains exceedingly poor. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Pakistan are vanishing due to poor management. Under urbanization, the propagation and preservation of the Gandhara Civilization remains to be an uphill task for the state. Plundering and looting of the stupas and historical equipment is very unfortunate in the land of pure. There is open trade in the black market selling treasure and Gandhara arts.

Meanwhile, political instability in the country is causing a great deal of impediment in the projection of Gandhara Civilization nor does the country have ample funds to promote Gandhara Civilization. When Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan TTP emerged in Swat, they damaged the Buddhist sites. There has been a lack of interest from the government side. Gandhara Civilization is the least funded department in the country. Teachers, students, and celebrities could play a crucial role in projection of the civilization. But we have not utilized them in the promotion of the Gandhara Civilization. Political instability, plundering of stupas, urbanization, mismanagement, war and conflict, I reckon are the genuine reasons creating obstacles in fostering of Gandhara Civilization.

4. What challenges do you predict in the promotion of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC?

Respondent 3

Before going to initiate any project survey need to be conducted to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the project. Without proper planning, we might damage the Gandhara heritage. Before the initiation of the CPEC project preservation of Gandhara heritage must be under consideration. During the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, more than 25 thousand Buddhist carvings were lost. Similarly, Lahore Orange Line caused irreparable damage to the Mughal Garden and Lahore Port. CPEC will also disturb the environment which will have an impact on the Gandhara heritage. Rapid urbanization and industrial zones near historical sites must be avoided under CPEC which by and large will pose a grave challenge to the preservation of Gandhara heritages.

1. What importance does Gandhara Civilization have for Pakistan?

Respondent 4

Gandhara civilization is important for Pakistan because it can attract Buddhist religious tourists and create a soft image of Pakistan internationally.

2. How can Pakistan capitalize on Gandhara Civilization, soft power and religious tourism under CPEC?

Respondent 3.

The Buddhist sites of Gandhara may be popularized through media promotion and major facilities at sites, security and diplomatic ties.

3. Why has Pakistan so far remained failed in the projection of the Gandhara Civilization?

Respondent 3

Pakistan has not worked properly for the Buddhist Art of Gandhara due to poor infrastructure and a lack of national-level cultural policy.

4. What challenges do you predict in the promotion of the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC?

Respondent 3

May be illegal trade of Gandhara artefacts increased with the development of CPEC.

5. What suggestions do you suggest to the government of Pakistan to foster Gandhara civilization, its soft power and religious tolerance under CPEC?

Respondent 3

The government of Pakistan can develop and promote Gandhara Buddhist Art by providing better infrastructure and foreign investment and investment in academia.

Recommendations for the Promotion of Gandhara Civilization and Religious Tourism under CPEC

- A union or an institution should be established to manage funding facilities for Gandharan Studies. These funding organizations could also build learning institution which focuses on Gandharan Studies vis-a-vis Gandharan Tourism.
- Gandhara tourism must be made an essential part of national diplomacy to involve nations housing Gandharan heritage such as Japan, China, Thailand, India, and South Korea. This step is necessary

to enhance sponsorship and to promote this legacy via borrowing cultural materials such as sculptures, reliefs, and gold and bronze fragments from museums located in Pakistan and displayed in other countries under CPEC.

- National and international conferences should be organized by the Pakistan embassy under CPEC where scholars, professors and Buddhist monks are invited to discuss the possible prospects of the Gandharan tradition in Pakistan.
- To boost local and international tourism, careful attention must be given to Buddhist sites' Infrastructure so that they are easily accessible. Such measures will improve the tourism industry of the country and will become a source of revenue generation.
- Gandhara Civilization day may be organized under CPEC to increase awareness about its tradition and to encourage tourism.
- Reconstruction of the past and especially the dynamic historical events based on the archaeological records increases tourists' interest. Thus, virtual learning facilities should be available at each site to increase tourism attractions.
- Tourist love to buy local products when it comes to artworks and handicrafts. Hence, small shops can be set up at cultural sites so that people enjoy shopping for artefacts without stealing anything.
- Once Gandharan heritage sites are appropriately publicized and equipped for local and international visitors, they will be kept in good condition and high respect by adopting slight necessary conservation and protection.
- To promote archaeological tourism especially Gandhara tourism in Pakistan, local communities and organizations must be acquainted with the significance of heritage sites. For this purpose, festivals, art shows and amusement parks may be launched under CPEC to develop tourist attractions and knowledge among locals.
- Gandhara tourism will facilitate connecting the ancient cultural features with those of the future through the reduction of poverty. Also, it will ultimately maintain the living condition of the local population by providing more socioeconomic opportunities.
- Government should allocate separate funds for the advancement of scientific and experimental archaeology so that the cultural heritage of the country is protected from further decline and provide itself as a source of income for the country's dwindling economy.
- Political polarization is a major challenge for a stable development of a country. Therefore, unanimous steps should be taken under CPEC to promote unity among all factions of society. That is a way forward to promote Gandhara Civilization to the world.
- Cultural tourism presents the cultural and historical backgrounds of a region and develops the national identity of a country. Government must take positive and workable actions to represent Pakistan on the world's stage as an heir to rich and diverse cultures.

- To engage diverse groups and individuals, such as travel agencies, celebrities, media, Buddhist organizations, important figures and major world museums that collect artefacts from Gandhara should also be involved under CPEC to promote Gandhara Tourism.
- It should be a mandate of Pakistan's government to make Gandhara tourism an essential part of Pakistan's long-term national development plan under CPEC.
- Listing and cataloguing of Gandhara sites is very important. Hence efforts should be done to properly manage those sites in records.
- To incorporate the tourists' facilities in Northern Pakistan for instance hotels, restaurants, museums, public transport and Natural scenery must be improved.
- Gandhara Civilization must be comprehensively available in multiple languages to bring mass awareness about the subject.
- A corridor for Buddhist sacred sites under CPEC can be created through partnerships with countries in South Asia and East Asia.
- Academics, researchers, artists, institutions, foundations, and museums must be involved to get opinion leaders' confirmation and support.
- International Gandhara festivals should be organized to enhance the significance of the region of Gandhara and Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan is the only state in the world simultaneously boasts two great civilizations like Gandhara Civilization and Indus Valley Civilization. Gandhara Civilization is the birthplace of the Buddhist religion. Due to excessive concentration on traditional security and Islamization, Pakistan remained unsuccessful in tapping the potential of its civilizations. Pakistan became the victim of its history by joining the US during the Cold War and War and Terror. Islamabad's enduring hostility with New Delhi also accelerated its preoccupation with the arms race to thwart the Indian hegemony resulting in overshadowing the two great civilizations of the world. It is a fait accompli, the foreign policy of the country cannot remain static. It changes due to the evolving regional and international politics. Pakistan is blessed with huge potential and resources in the promotion of its ancient civilizations and soft power. Ostensibly, at the current juncture in international politics countries do not keep all eggs in the basket of hard power and give an equal importance to soft power. The canon of soft power is based on attraction rather than coercion to pull not push. Unlike, hard power, soft power can be utilized anytime. Both Beijing and Islamabad have an enormous opportunity to foster the Gandhara Civilization under CPEC. The flow of Indus River water originates from the Tibetan mountains of China. The Chinese Civilization depended on the Yellow River its water flow also originated from the Tibetan mountains. Thus, both civilizations had a long-term influence on modern headways such as architecture and scientific discoveries. History manifests that there had been overlapping similarities between Pakistani

and Chinese civilizations. There had been no competition and contention between Indus Valley Civilization and the Yellow River. China has the world's largest Buddhist population having 245 million Buddhists. Beijing's outbound tourism in 2019 reached approximately 155 million almost three times as many as 2010. Pakistan is viewed as an iron brother in Chinese political discourse. Chinese outbound tourism's capitalization requires special attention under CPEC.

Bear in mind, in more than 29 countries Buddhism religion is practiced. Gandhara Civilization is a great source to connect Pakistan with 29 countries of the world where Buddhism exists. Buddhism is a local religion in China and it promotes Buddhism. The rest of the Buddhist countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka have a Buddhist identity. Pakistan has a golden means to promote religious harmony and religious tourism with the above-mentioned countries. Pakistan has an Islamic identity, similarly, the Buddhist states have a Buddhist identity which exists in Pakistan that ought to be capitalized accordingly. Pakistan promotes better ties with Muslim countries. Islamabad can also promote good ties with the Buddhist states by using Gandhara Civilization under CPEC. In short, Pakistan under CPEC needs to promote Gandhara Civilization by improving the following shortcomings, political instability, strained relations with the neighbouring countries, growing radicalization within the country, excessive use of hard power and islamization, plundering of stupas, mismanagement of the tourism sector and poor governance.

Annexure I: Introduction of Respondents

Dr. Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah (2023, July 26) Personal communication [Personal interview]

Dr Idress Janjua (2023, August 01) Personal communication [Personal interview]

Zakir Khan (2023, August 05) Personal communication [Personal interview]

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