



ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF
PAKISTAN'S CULTURAL
&
HISTORIC TIES WITH ITS
NEIGHBOURS

IMTIAZ RASTGAR

Economic Potential of Pakistan's Cultural & Historic Ties With Its Neighbours

**Imtiaz Rastgar
(2023)**

Pakistan's historic and cultural ties with the neighbouring countries hold substantial economic potential. By leveraging these connections, Pakistan can enhance trade, attract tourism, promote cultural exchanges, foster educational collaborations, and contribute to infrastructure development. The economic benefits of these ties extend beyond bilateral relations, creating opportunities for regional integration and cooperation. By tapping into this potential, Pakistan can strengthen its economy and forge deeper partnerships with its neighbouring nations.

Pakistan, a country itself rich in cultural diversity and historical heritage, shares deep-rooted ties with its neighbouring nations. These connections have flourished over centuries and continue to shape the region's vibrant tapestry of traditions, customs, and shared values. While geopolitical factors often dominate discussions about the region, it is crucial to acknowledge the people-oriented aspects of Pakistan's cultural and historic relationships with its neighbours.

India, Pakistan's largest neighbour, shares an intricate and intertwined history that predates the modern borders. Both countries have a shared heritage, with historical connections dating back thousands of years. People on both sides of the border have similar languages, cuisines, and cultural practices that have evolved over centuries. The influence of Mughal architecture, classical music, and traditional attire is evident in both nations, showcasing the common cultural heritage that unites the people.

The people of Pakistan and Afghanistan have strong bonds rooted in historical, ethnic, and linguistic affinities.

Pashto, a widely spoken language in Pakistan, further strengthens this connection. Pashtun culture, renowned for its hospitality, honour code, and vibrant arts, has transcended borders and found expression in various forms on both sides. The rich tapestry of Pashtun music, dance, and traditional clothing serves as a testament to the deep cultural ties between the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistan also shares a significant cultural connection with Iran. The historical and geographical proximity has fostered a strong bond between the two nations. Persian influence can be seen in various aspects of Pakistani culture, including poetry, music, and cuisine. The centuries-old tradition of Sufism has further deepened the spiritual and cultural ties between Pakistan and Iran, with shared reverence for revered Sufi saints and their teachings.

China, Pakistan's neighbour to the north, has become a close ally in recent times. The cultural and historic connections between the two countries date back to the ancient Silk Road. Today, these connections are evident through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has not only strengthened economic ties but also fostered cultural exchanges. The rich traditions of Chinese art, calligraphy, and cuisine have found a place in Pakistan, contributing to the cultural diversity and mutual understanding between the peoples of the two nations.

In conclusion, Pakistan's cultural and historic ties with its neighbours are deeply rooted in centuries-old connections. The people of Pakistan share a common cultural heritage with their neighbouring nations, characterised by shared languages, arts, and traditions. These ties transcend political boundaries and play a significant role in fostering understanding, respect, and

harmony among the diverse communities of the region. By appreciating and nurturing these people-oriented connections, Pakistan and its neighbours can continue to celebrate their shared cultural legacy and build a more harmonious and interconnected future.

Pakistan's cultural, historic, and economic ties extend beyond its immediate neighbours to countries in the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. These connections have flourished over centuries and have left a lasting impact on the cultural landscape and economic cooperation between Pakistan and these regions.

Yemen, situated at the crossroads of Asia and Africa, shares a rich historical connection with Pakistan. The ancient port of Mocha served as a significant trade hub, facilitating cultural and economic exchanges between the two regions. The ties between Pakistan and Yemen have been further strengthened by the presence of a sizeable Yemeni diaspora in Pakistan, contributing to cultural diversity and fostering people-to-people connections. The influence of Yemeni culture can be seen in various aspects, such as music, cuisine, and clothing, in different parts of Pakistan.

Oman, a neighbouring country of Pakistan, has a long history of cultural and economic interactions. The historical trade routes, such as the Makran Coastal Highway, have facilitated commerce and cultural exchanges between the two regions. Omani influence is evident in the coastal areas of Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh, where traditions, architecture, and maritime practices bear the mark of this enduring connection. The people of Pakistan and Oman also share common values and customs, such as a strong emphasis on hospitality and respect for traditions.

Djibouti, located on the Horn of Africa, has historical ties with Pakistan dating back to ancient times. The coastal

city of Gwadar in Pakistan and Djibouti serve as strategic maritime gateways, contributing to trade and economic cooperation. The historic maritime links have facilitated cultural exchanges, with influences from both regions shaping the arts, music, and cuisine of the respective countries. Today, Pakistan and Djibouti continue to enhance their economic ties through collaborations in various sectors, including shipping, logistics, and infrastructure development.

Pakistan's ties with East Africa, particularly countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, have a significant cultural and historic dimension. The Swahili language, spoken in these countries, has absorbed various linguistic elements from Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, showcasing the historical connections between the regions. Pakistani communities in East Africa have contributed to the local economies and cultural fabric, while also preserving their own traditions. Moreover, Pakistani businesses have played an active role in trade and investment, fostering economic cooperation and strengthening the ties between Pakistan and East African nations.

In terms of economic ties, Pakistan engages in trade and investment activities with Yemen, Oman, Djibouti, and countries in East Africa. These partnerships encompass sectors such as agriculture, textiles, construction, and energy. Economic collaborations not only facilitate bilateral trade but also contribute to knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and capacity building, benefiting both Pakistan and its partner nations.

cultural, historic, and economic ties with Yemen, Oman, Djibouti, and East Africa are significant and have shaped the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the regions. These relationships are characterised by shared historical experiences, cultural exchanges, and mutual economic interests. By nurturing and strengthening these

ties, Pakistan and its counterparts can further enhance people-to-people connections, promote cultural understanding, and foster sustainable economic growth in the region.

The Makran region has a long history of maritime trade and cultural exchanges with the Arabian Peninsula. The Makrani community traces its roots back to the African coast, particularly the regions of Somalia and Sudan. Over the centuries, due to trade routes and migrations, the Makrani people settled in the coastal areas of Pakistan, bringing with them their unique cultural heritage.

The Makrani community has preserved its African roots through various cultural practices, including language, music, dance, and cuisine. They have their distinct dialect, known as Makrani or Hinglaj language, which bears linguistic influences from Swahili, Arabic, Persian, and local languages. This linguistic blend reflects the historical connections with East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

The Makrani music and dance forms, such as the Dhamal, showcase the vibrant cultural expressions of the community. These art forms, characterised by rhythmic beats, energetic movements, and colourful attire, reflect the cultural fusion and influences from both Africa and the Middle East.

Moreover, the Makrani community has established strong ties with the Middle East through their maritime traditions. Many Makranis have been involved in seafaring activities, such as fishing and maritime trade, which have facilitated cultural interactions and connections with the Arab nations across the Arabian Sea.

In recent times, with the development of the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, the significance of the Makrani community's connection to the Middle East has further grown. Gwadar Port has become an essential component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), enhancing regional connectivity and trade. This development has attracted investment and trade opportunities, thereby increasing interactions between the Makrani community and Arab countries.

The Makrani community's connection to the Middle East serves as a bridge between Pakistan and the Arab nations, fostering cultural understanding and economic cooperation. The shared cultural heritage, linguistic influences, and maritime traditions create a bond that promotes people-to-people exchanges and strengthens the overall relationship between Pakistan and the Middle East.

The Makrani community in Pakistan plays a vital role in connecting the country with the Middle East, both culturally and historically. Their African roots, blended with Arabian and local influences, contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of Pakistan. Through their maritime traditions, language, music, and dance, the Makrani community reinforces the deep cultural ties between Pakistan and the Middle East, fostering mutual understanding and facilitating cross-cultural interactions. The historic and cultural ties that Pakistan shares with the countries discussed above have significant economic potential. These connections can pave the way for enhanced trade, investment, tourism, and cultural exchanges, benefiting all the involved nations. Let's explore the economic potential in more detail:

1. Trade and Investment: The cultural and historic ties provide a foundation for increased bilateral trade between Pakistan and these countries. Common

cultural elements and historical links create an environment of familiarity and trust, which can facilitate trade collaborations. Pakistan can leverage these connections to expand its export markets, promoting the exchange of goods, services, and investments. For example, Pakistan's expertise in textiles, agriculture, and construction can find a market in these regions, while imports of products specific to these countries can fulfill local demand.

2. Tourism: The cultural and historical ties can boost tourism flows between Pakistan and the discussed countries. People often feel drawn to explore places that share a common heritage or historical connections. Tourists from Yemen, Oman, Djibouti, and East Africa may be intrigued by the opportunity to witness firsthand the cultural influences that have shaped their own traditions. Similarly, Pakistani tourists can be attracted to explore the cultural and historical landmarks of these countries. This influx of tourists can contribute to the local economies through increased spending on accommodations, transportation, dining, and shopping.
3. Cultural Exchanges: Strengthening cultural exchanges between Pakistan and these nations can open up avenues for creative collaborations, artistic performances, and exhibitions. This can lead to cultural festivals, joint cultural events, and artistic showcases, attracting audiences and participants from all sides. Such cultural exchanges have the potential to boost the creative industries, stimulate tourism, and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's traditions.
4. Education and Research: The cultural and historic ties can also encourage academic collaborations, research partnerships, and knowledge sharing

between educational institutions in Pakistan and the discussed countries. This can lead to student exchanges, joint research projects, and the sharing of expertise in various fields. Such collaborations can contribute to the development of human capital, exchange of knowledge and ideas, and foster innovation and technological advancements.

5. Infrastructure and Connectivity: The economic potential extends to infrastructure development and connectivity projects. Pakistan's strategic location makes it an important link in various regional connectivity initiatives. With its historic ties, Pakistan can play a pivotal role in promoting trade routes, transportation networks, and infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity between these countries. This can facilitate smoother trade flows, boost economic integration, and foster regional cooperation.

In conclusion, Pakistan's historic and cultural ties with the discussed countries hold substantial economic potential. By leveraging these connections, Pakistan can enhance trade, attract tourism, promote cultural exchanges, foster educational collaborations, and contribute to infrastructure development. The economic benefits of these ties extend beyond bilateral relations, creating opportunities for regional integration and cooperation. By tapping into this potential, Pakistan can strengthen its economy and forge deeper partnerships with its neighbouring nations.

By creating more peaceful and easy to cross borders, governments can foster SMEs in all countries to contribute to cross border trade. Export/import of machinery, ethnic food products, local fashion garments, local crockery, cutlery and a host of other products, have

a vast market in this region but may be of little interest in other parts of the world.

Business houses and entrepreneurs from Western countries would do well to establish their presence in Pakistan. The rapidly changing regional scenario presents an opportunity as well as threat for European and American businesses. They can be a part of the action or they can be left out!

