

# CRSS Research 2022

**Perceptions on China**

**Tardy Public Procurement**

**Pakistan Bangladesh Relations**



**Center for  
Research &  
Security  
Studies**

*Rule of Law - Security - Governance*



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# CRSS Research 2022

## Executive Summary

As a long-trusted and tested political friend, China wields significant influence in, and a central position in Pakistan's foreign relations. However, due to certain cultural barriers and fewer people-to-people interactions, people on both sides know relatively little about one another. In an attempt to evaluate this information deficit, CRSS conducted research on common Pakistanis' perceptions and understanding of China's culture and history. These findings are part of the first report. Based on a survey of 300+ individuals, it was found that most of young and older people have a positive view of China and are keen on learning more about the neighboring country. However, many young individuals lack awareness of some of the key facts about China; for instance, about 26 % did not know that China has achieved major watersheds in its economic development in the past two decades. Some of the recommendations of the report are:

- A special curriculum on China should be included for higher secondary and lower academic levels, as most of the individuals with these backgrounds either have a neutral or ill-informed perception of China;
- There should be independent cultural exchange programs between youth which can be beneficial in learning about Chinese culture, and vice versa;
- Collaboration among organizations especially think tanks and NGOs of both countries can be very advantageous. Collective research projects will help in knowledge exchange as well as capacity building of both sides while bringing academics and researchers together;
- Besides track 1, multi-level diplomatic efforts must be started such as track 2 and track 1.5, an area that CRSS has considerable expertise and experience in.

The second report focuses on Pakistan's dated, expensive, and time-consuming Public Procurement Regime. A sound public procurement regime ensures transparency, cost-effectiveness, and swiftness and can help public sector institutions make better financial decisions. This report specifically addresses the flaws in the country's Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) and argues that the system needs an overhaul to bring it in sync with the universal procurement systems, in conformity with the best practices regime. This will likely save substantial public spending, the report concludes.

The third report contains an account of a series of six Policy Dialogues - a series of 6 webinars to be precise - on the Pakistan-Bangladesh relationship. An array of political experts and scholars from both countries participated in these panel discussions to convey their respective views from their country's perspectives. These webinars gave a glimpse of existing impediments to the improvement in bilateral ties, issues of common interest, and prospects of improvement between the two countries.

A stylized graphic of the Chinese flag, featuring a red field with five golden-yellow stars in the canton. The stars are arranged with one large star on the left and four smaller stars in an arc to its right. The graphic has a textured, brush-stroke appearance.

# CHINA

# PERCEPTION

# STUDY

KEY FINDINGS

by Amna Khan



## Background:

Pakistan and China share a long and storied history, dating back over seven decades. Pakistan was the first non-communist country to recognize China in 1951, and the first country to help China build a bridge to the US through Henry Kissinger's visit in 1971. So deep is the friendship between the two, that the legendary Chinese leader Chairman Mao, invited his counterpart Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as his last formal diplomatic guest, before succumbing to old age.

The two countries have consistently supported one another on international forums, multi-laterals, and presented a united front to detractors, particularly in the recent decades, as geopolitical great games metamorphose, and geo-economics rise in the global east. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is spearheaded by the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and as the name suggests, China selected Pakistan to be its economic partner for the pilot phase of the most significant global undertaking of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

China trusted Pakistan when no one else did.

There is a particular term used in China to denote Pakistan, *bā-tiě*, which means "Iron Brother". The implication is that friendship is an unbreakable bond of mutual interests, objectives, and shared destiny. Famously, it is said that the China-Pakistan friendship is higher than the highest mountains and deeper than the deepest oceans. But as one Chinese scholar once said: "Can we shake hands on land?"

The implication here is that while there is immense love and appreciation for one another, there is little people-to-people contact (especially given the population sizes of the two countries), and few opportunities to interact and understand one another.

Keeping all of this in mind, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) conducted a small survey to determine what Pakistanis know about China, its art, culture, history, and cuisine. The hope is to leverage the findings into bringing the peoples of the two nations closer together. This report covers some of the said findings.

## About China:

### Population:

The People's Republic of China (Chinese name 中国; means middle/central kingdom) is the world's most populous country, with a population of more than 1.4 billion. It is the largest country in Asia and covers almost a quarter of Asia's surface area. China is overtaken in the area only by Russia and Canada among the major countries of the world and is nearly as large as all of Europe.

### Borders:

It shares a border with 14 countries. Incidentally, the only countries it does not have border treaties with are India and Tibet.

China is about 3,250 miles (5,250 km) long from east to west and 3,400 miles (5,500 km) long from north to south. Its land border is approximately 12,400 miles (20,000 km) long, while its coastline is around 8,700 miles (14,000 km) long. The country is bounded to the north by Mongolia; to the

northeast by Russia and North Korea; to the east by the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea; to the southeast by the South China Sea; to the south by Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, India, Bhutan, and Nepal; to the southwest by Pakistan; and the west by Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

### Administration:

China is divided into 33 administrative units directly under the control of the central government; these units consist of 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Ningxia), 4 municipalities (Chongqing, Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin), and 2 special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau). Beijing (Peking), the capital, is also the cultural, economic, and communications center of the country. Shanghai is the main industrial city, while Hong Kong is the leading commercial center and port.

### Survey Methodology:

The research was qualitative/analytical and used primary data that has been collected via a digital survey form. The survey was conducted among Pakistani nationals. In total 300+ participants belonging to all walks of life responded.

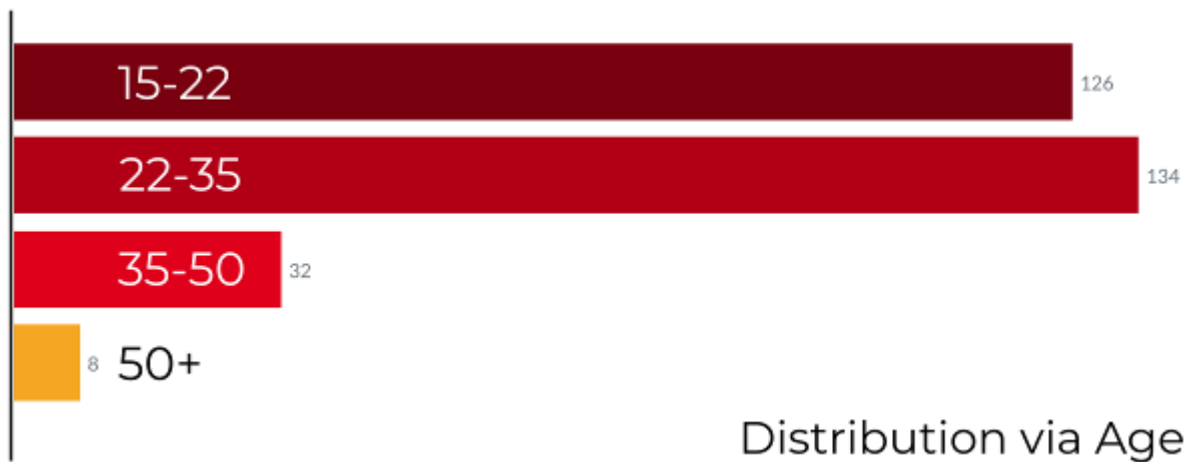
Desk research on the subject of China’s existing system, laws, culture, and society was made for a better understanding of the data and its contextualization.

### Key Findings:

#### Participant Data:

##### Age:

Of the total, 126 respondents were between 15 to 22 years of age, 134 were between 22 to 35 years of age, 32 were between 35 to 50 years of age, and 8 were above 50 years old.



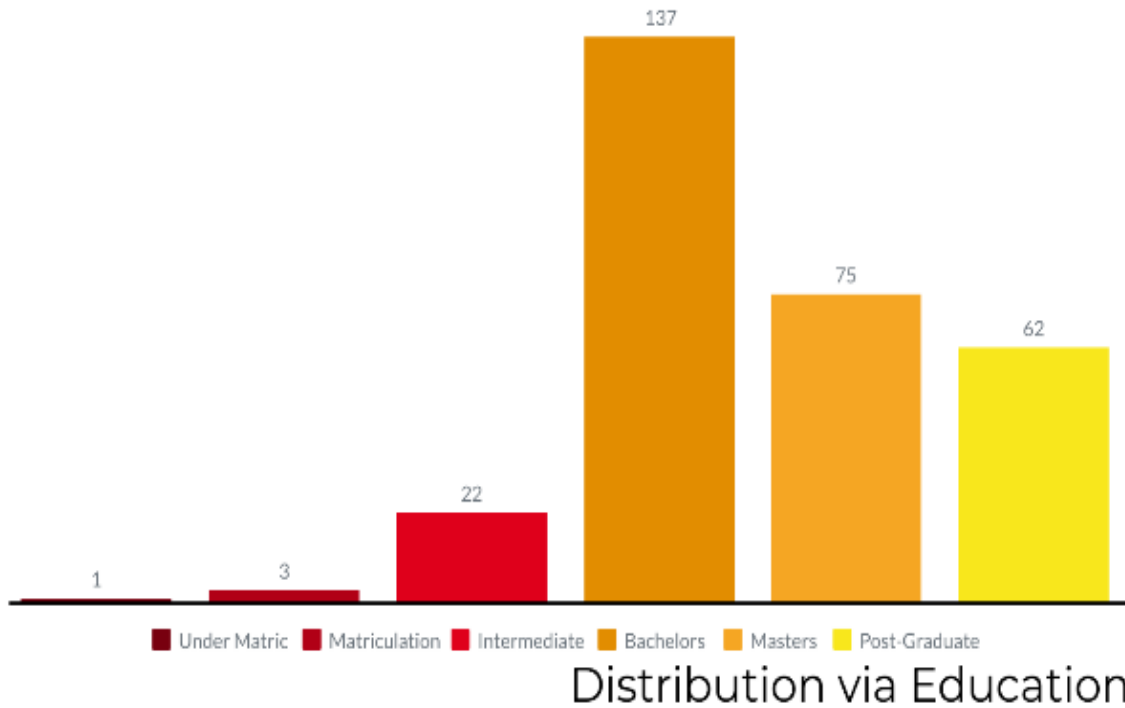
##### Gender:

A total of 151 were female and 149 were male, a fairly even gender parity.

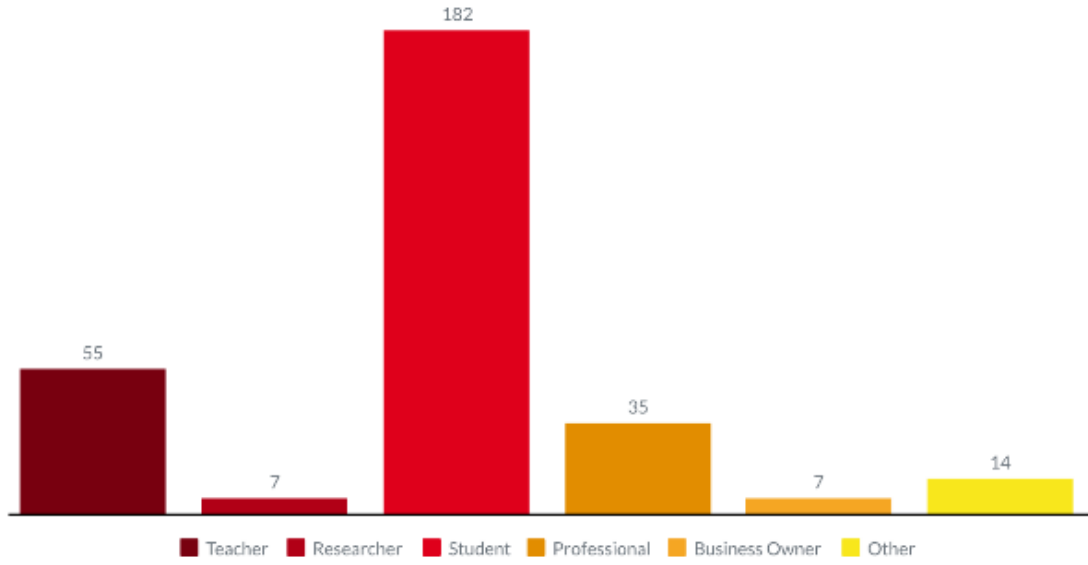


### Education

Of the respondents, four were at or under matriculation, 22 had done intermediate, 137 had at least a bachelor's degree, 75 had a master's degree, and 62 were post-graduates.



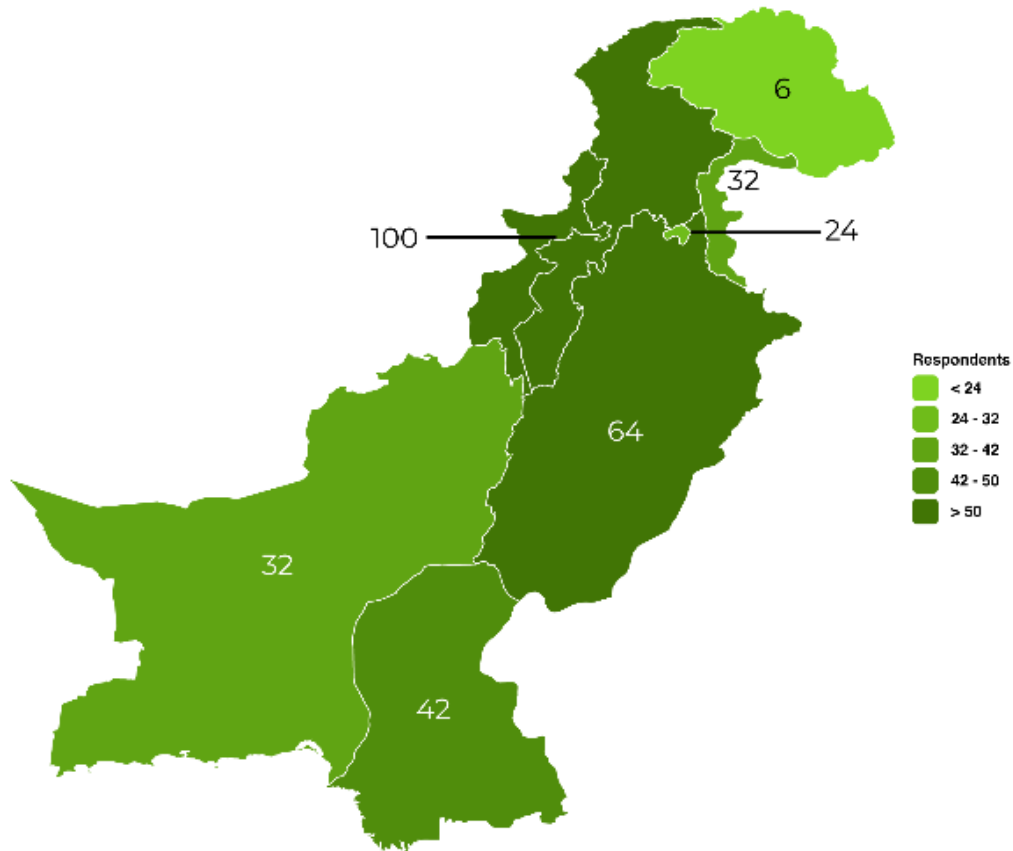
Additionally, we found that a sizable portion of respondents were either students, teachers, or researchers, as depicted in the infographic below.



Distribution via Education

Ethnicity/Geography:

The participants were from all across Pakistan including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK), and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). The majority (one-third) of the respondents were from KP, 64 were from Punjab, 42 were from Sindh, 32 each from both Baluchistan and AJK, 24 from ICT, and 6 were from GB.



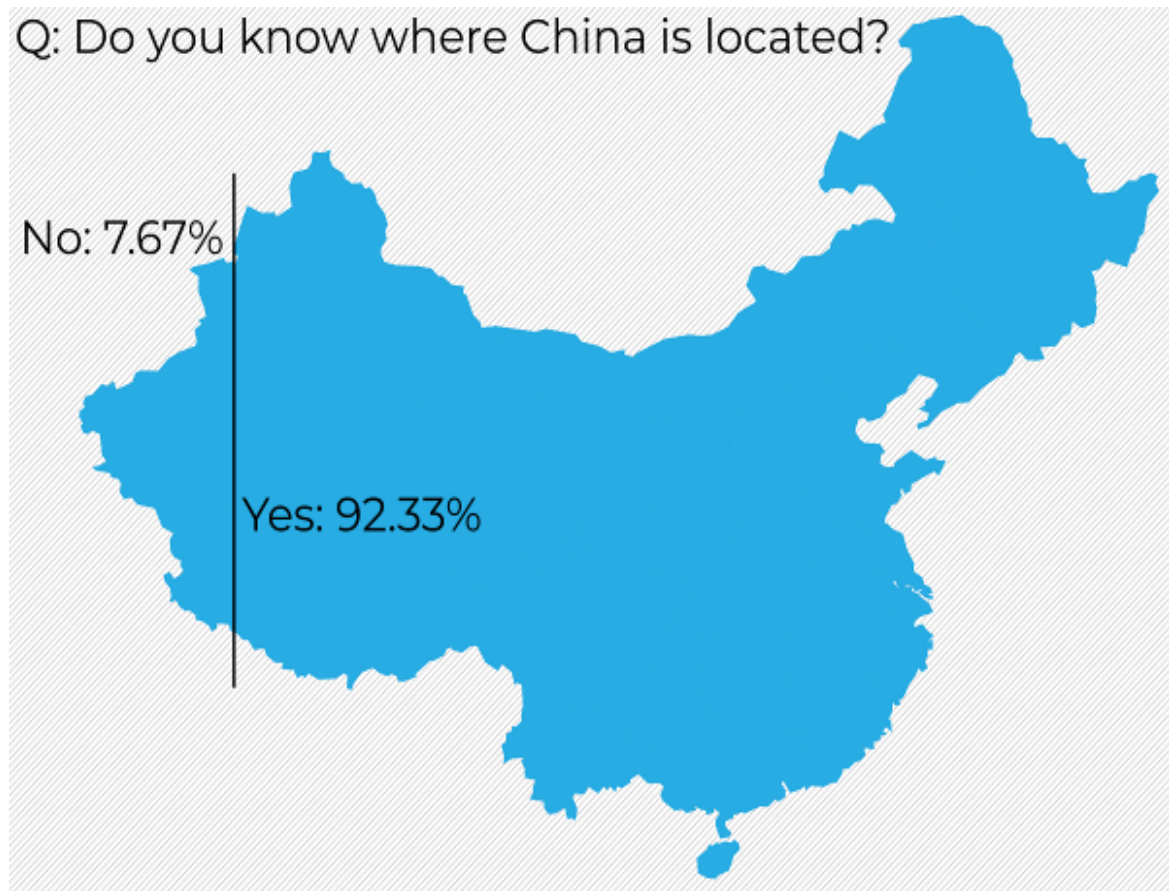
Distribution via Geography

## Perception Data:

For the critical examination of the statistics obtained from survey participants, we split them into several themes to obtain a more holistic picture. We discovered significant findings by rigorously evaluating the data, which are written below in relation to the desk research. In addition to critical analysis, recommendations have been included in the respective themes, where clear and applicable.

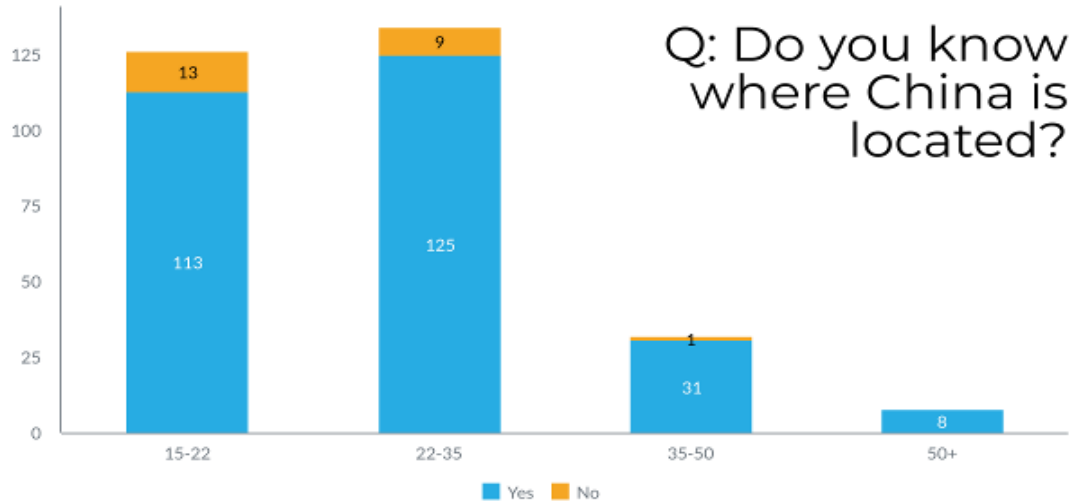
### Location of China:

Young people (below 35) despite having access to the internet and social media, had the largest percentage of individuals unaware of China's location.



Interestingly, people over 35 years of age seemed more knowledgeable about China's location and its governance system than younger people.

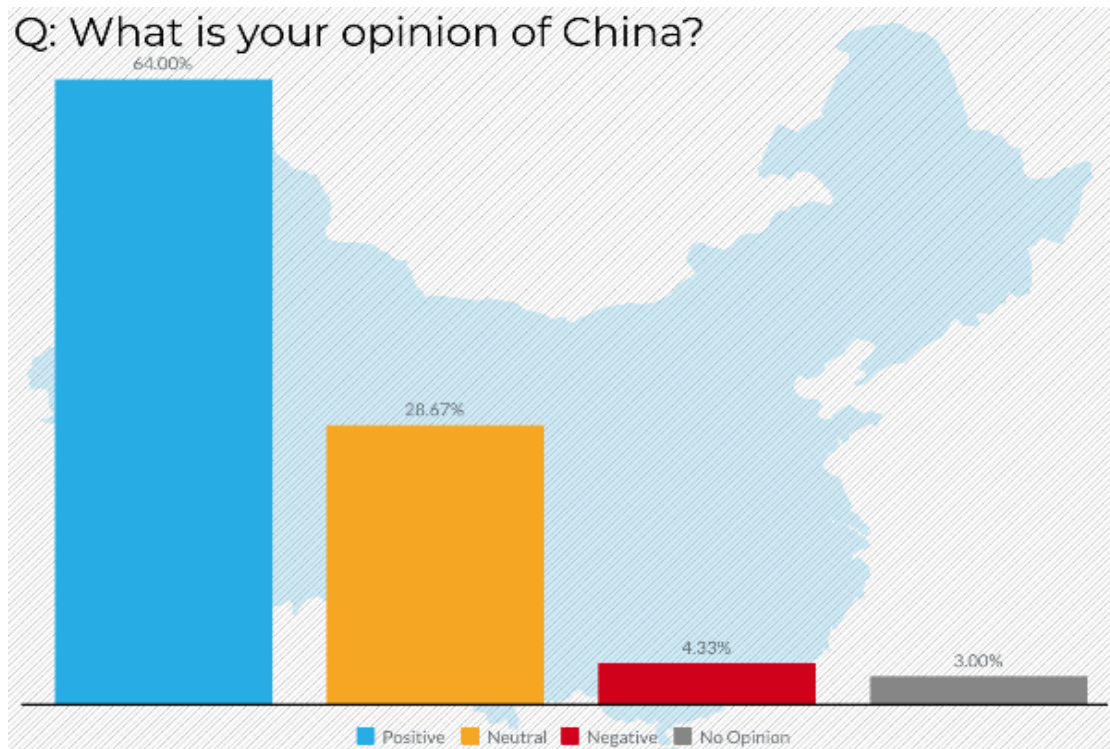




Generally speaking, Pakistani youngsters have a working understanding of political systems and international relations worldwide. Hence, given that China is both our closest ally and a neighbor, the vast majority of respondents knowing China’s location is unsurprising.

General Opinion on China and its People:

Overall, 192 people had a positive image of China, 86 were neutral, and 13 were negative. The rest did not opine on this issue. If we break down this data by level of education, some interesting dynamics emerge.

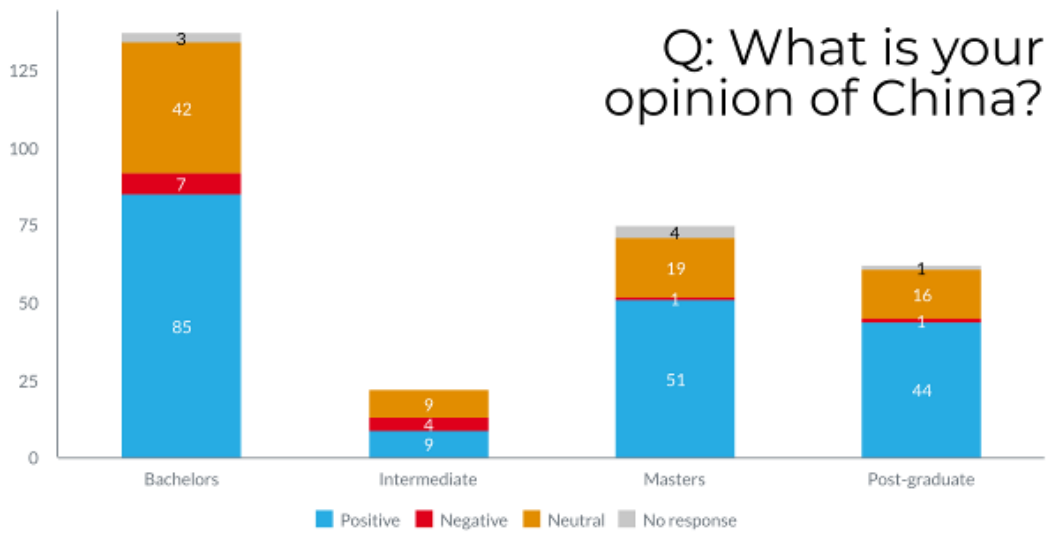


Individuals with the education level of matric or below gave a neutral response when asked for their opinion about China as a country. Roughly 36% of individuals with the educational qualification of intermediate gave a neutral response while 54% considered China a positive country and 9% showed that China is a negative country.

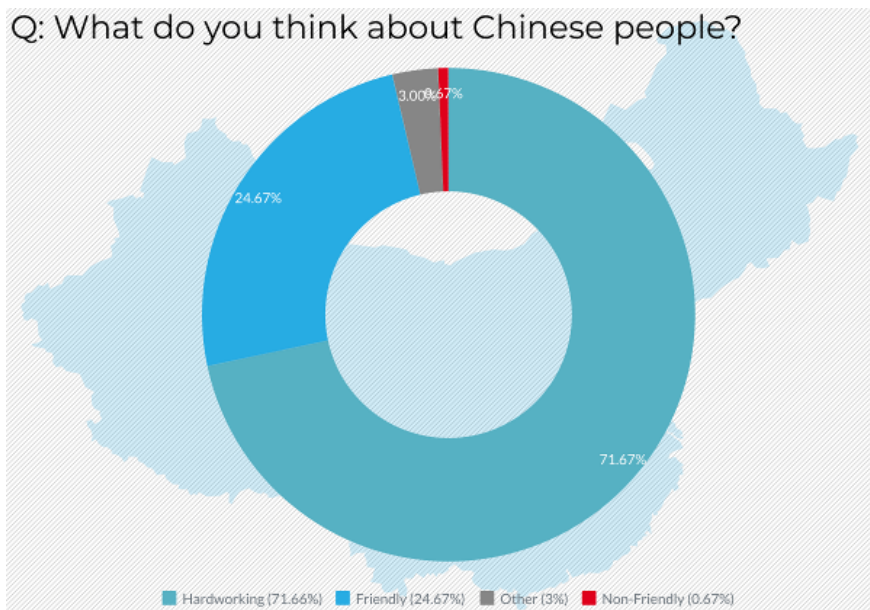
Roughly 84.6% of individuals with a bachelor’s qualification had a positive opinion of China, and only 0.1% of individuals from the group had a negative perception, while 14.4% had a neutral perspective of China. Similarly, 91% of individuals with a masters’ qualification had a positive opinion about China as a country, while 9% had a neutral image of China in mind. 0% of individuals from this group held a negative image of China in mind.

Finally, 58% of individuals from the post-graduate level considered China a positive country, and 33% held a neutral perspective of China, while 8% of individuals considered China a negative country.

This is summarized in the infographic below for better visual understanding. It appears that with **increasing levels of education**, the perception of China also **improves**.

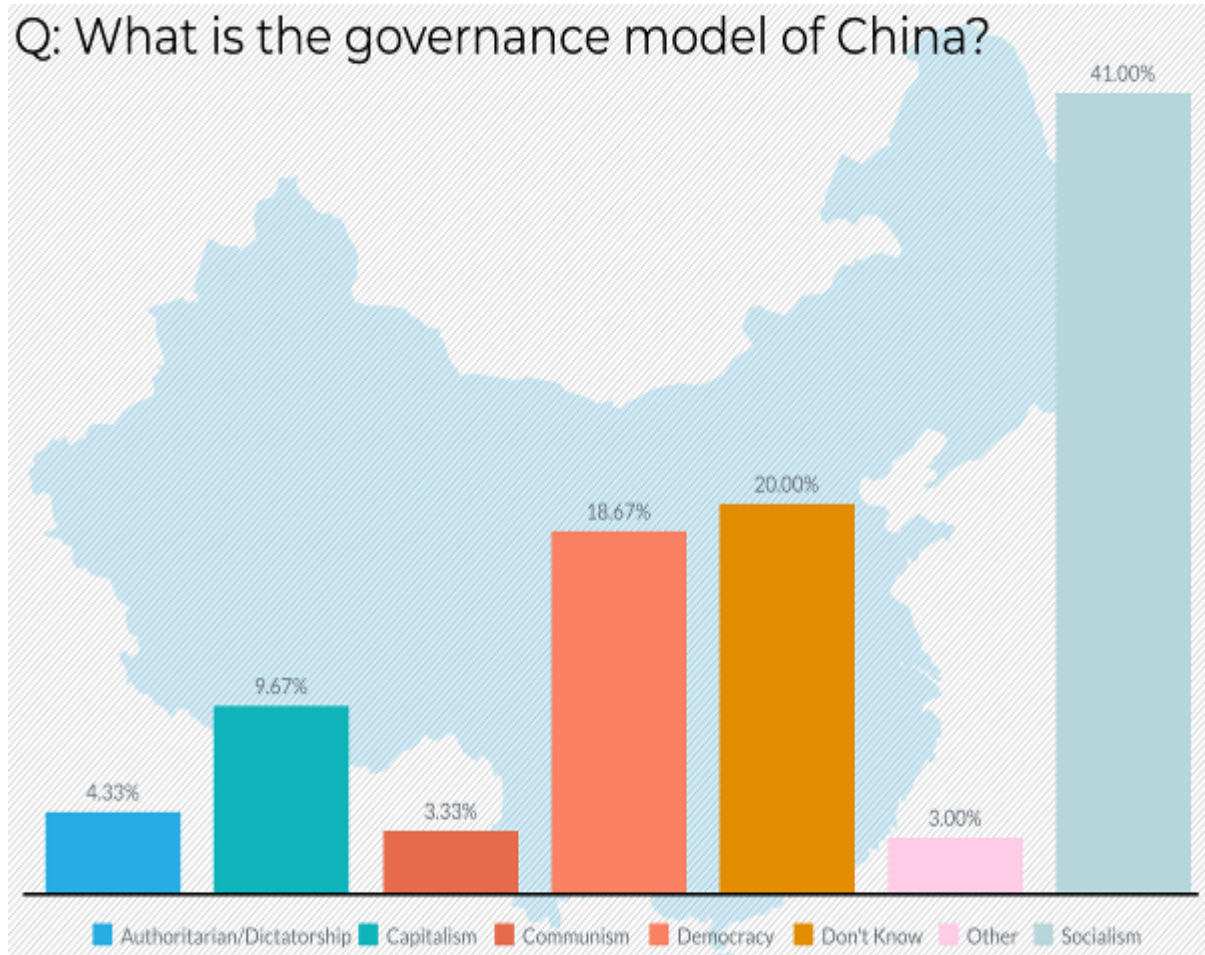


Survey takers were also asked how they felt about Chinese people. Nearly three-quarters (71.7%) thought they were hardworking, and another 24.7% found them friendly. Only two (0.65%) said they were non-friendly. With such an overwhelmingly positive perception, there is little point to analyze this response deeper in the data chain.

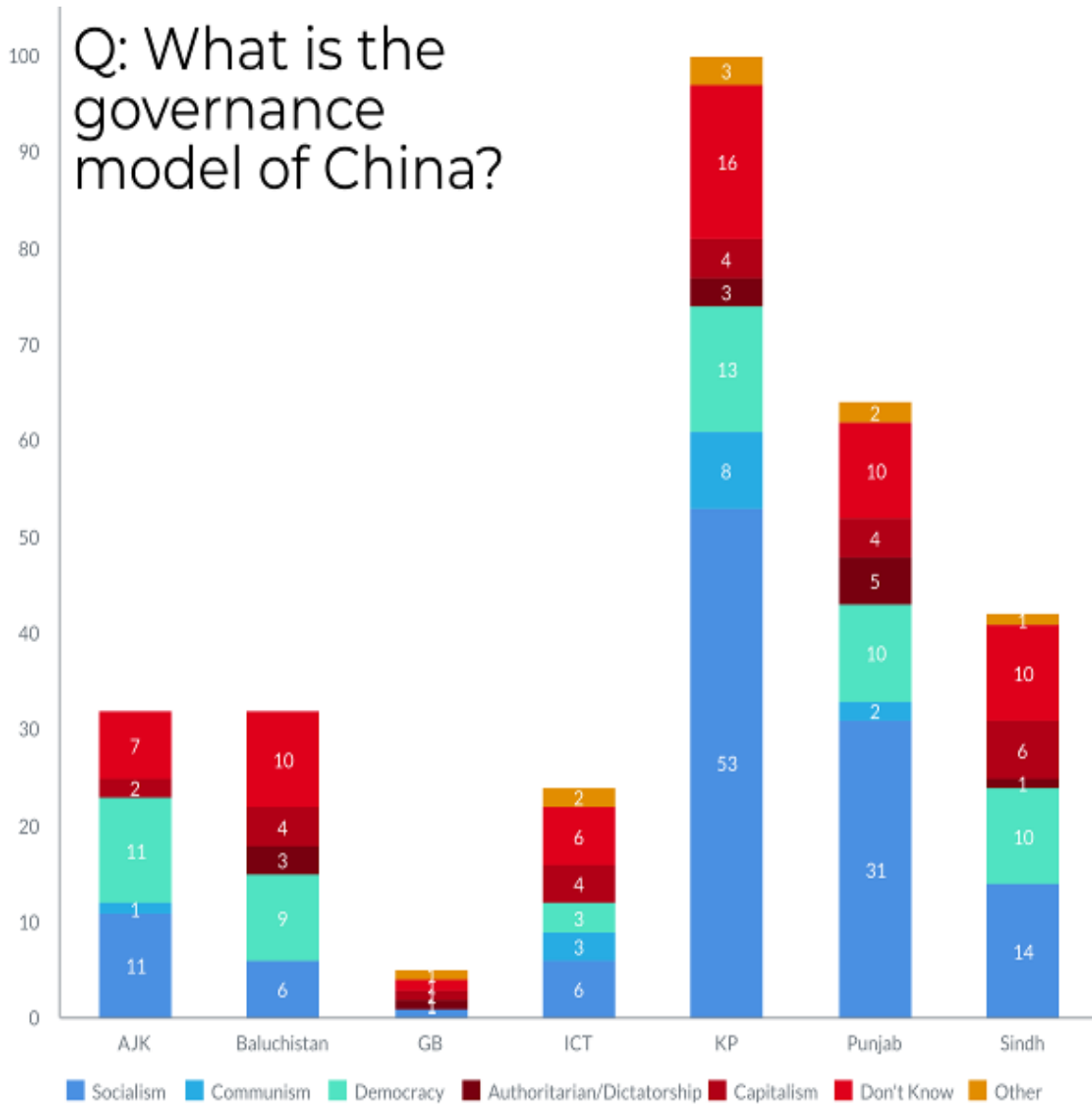


Governance Model of China:

China is a one-party democracy with socialism at its core, informed by nearly a century of communist ideology. When asked about respondents' perception of the form of governance in China, 44.3% correctly identified it as socialism or communism, and 18.7% identified it as a democracy. Roughly 4.3% thought it was authoritarian, 3% thought it was something other than the aforementioned options, and 20% did not know. This shows that a large volume of the Pakistani population does not adequately understand the governance structure in China.



Another way to look at this data is through distribution across geographic boundaries. The infographic clarifies that the populations in KP, Punjab, and Sindh are better able to identify the system of governance in China.



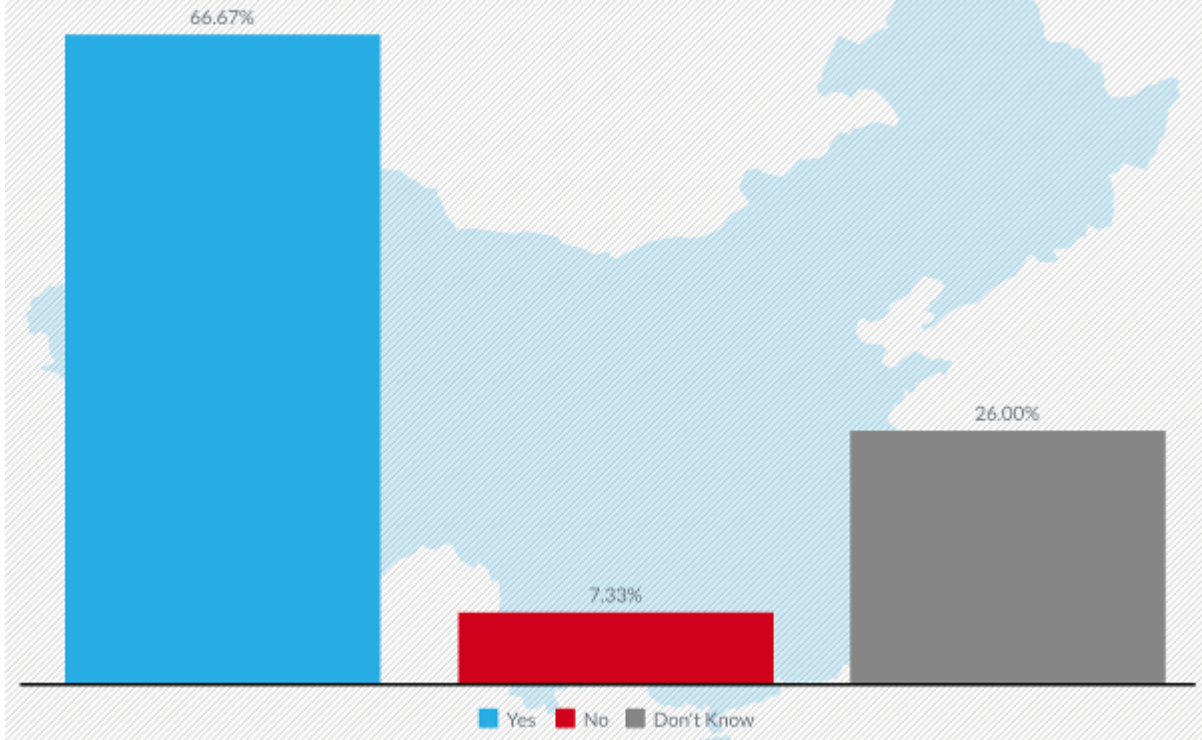
Citizen-Focused and Progressing:

Questions 4 and 6 in the survey inquired about whether respondents felt that China was citizen-focused and if it had made positive progress in the recent past.

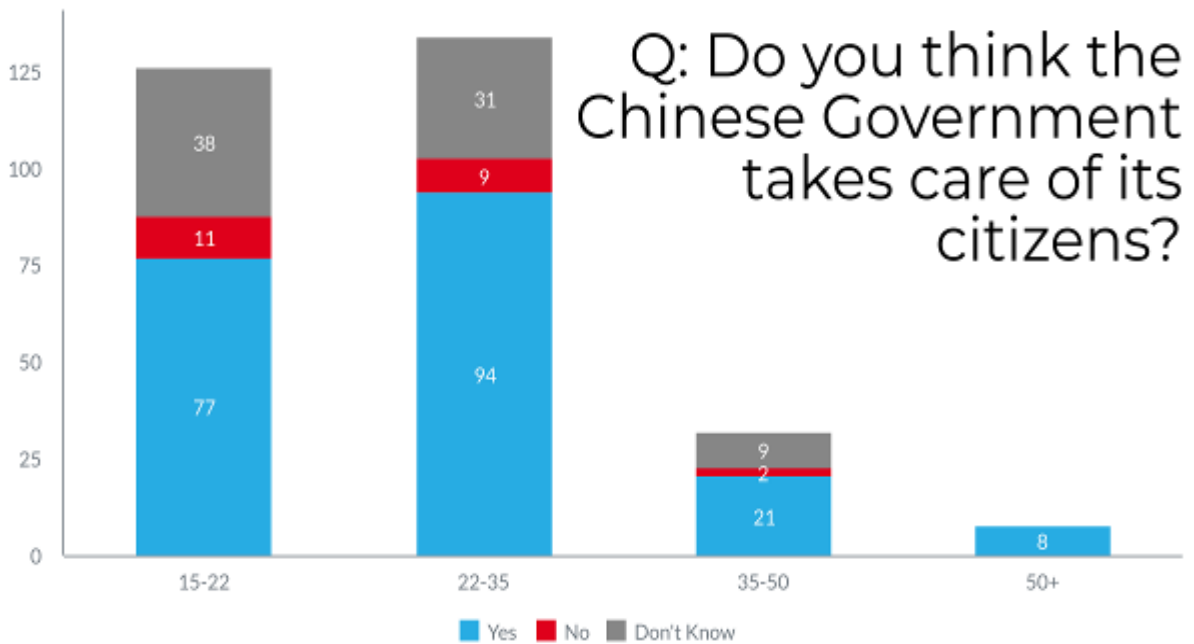
An overwhelming third (exactly 66.67%) felt that China took care of its citizens and that its policies were people-centric, whereas 7.33% of respondents did not believe so. Another 26% did not know enough to respond to this question.



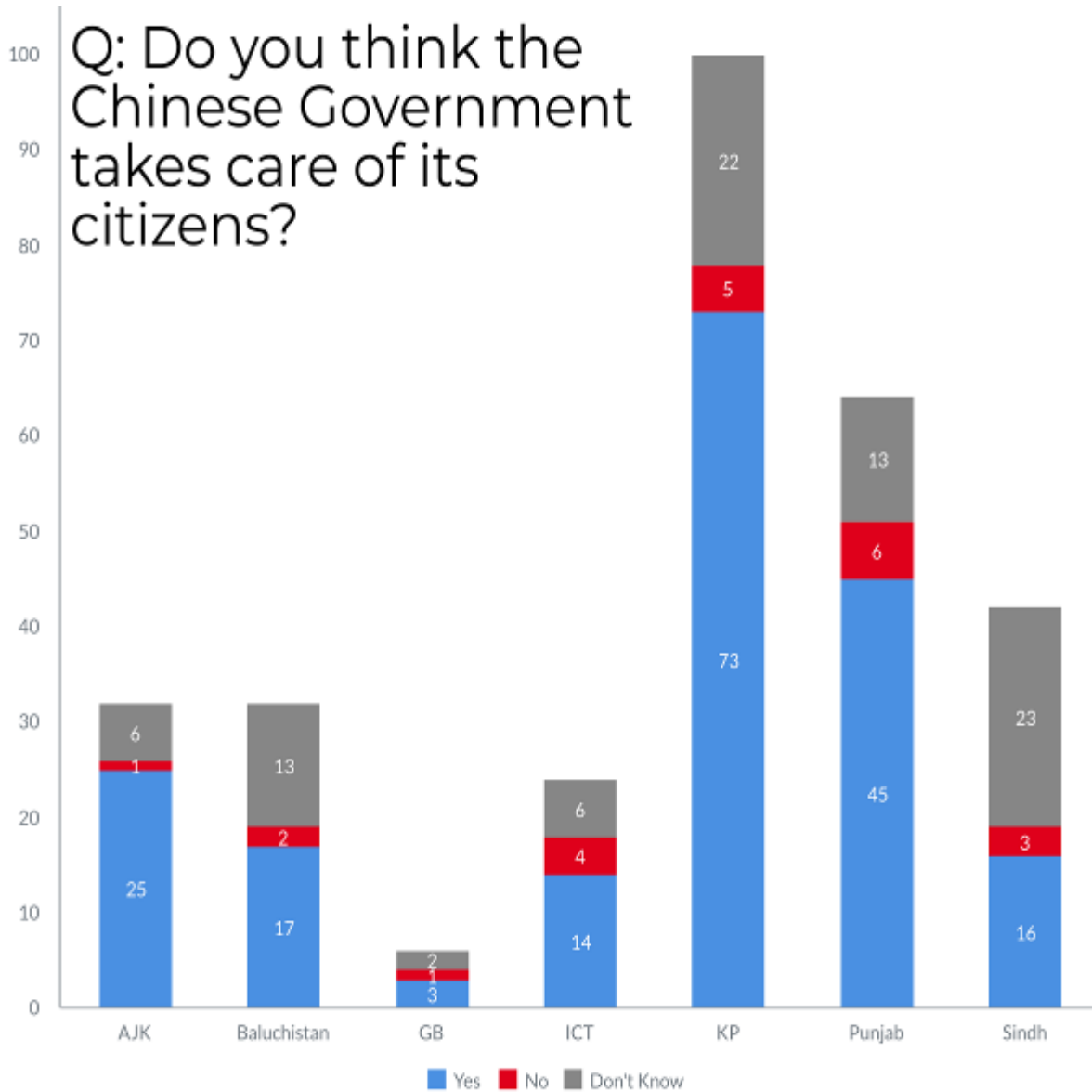
Q: Do you think the Chinese government takes care of its citizens?



An interesting pattern emerges when you juxtapose these responses against respondents' respective ages. Within the 15-22 age category, 8.7% do not think China's policies are people-centric. This percentage drops to 6.7% in the 22-35 age category, then to 6.25% in the 35-50 age category, and finally, it drops to 0% in the 50+ category. This clearly shows that Pakistanis' agreement with the notion that China is citizen-centric climbs the older they get.

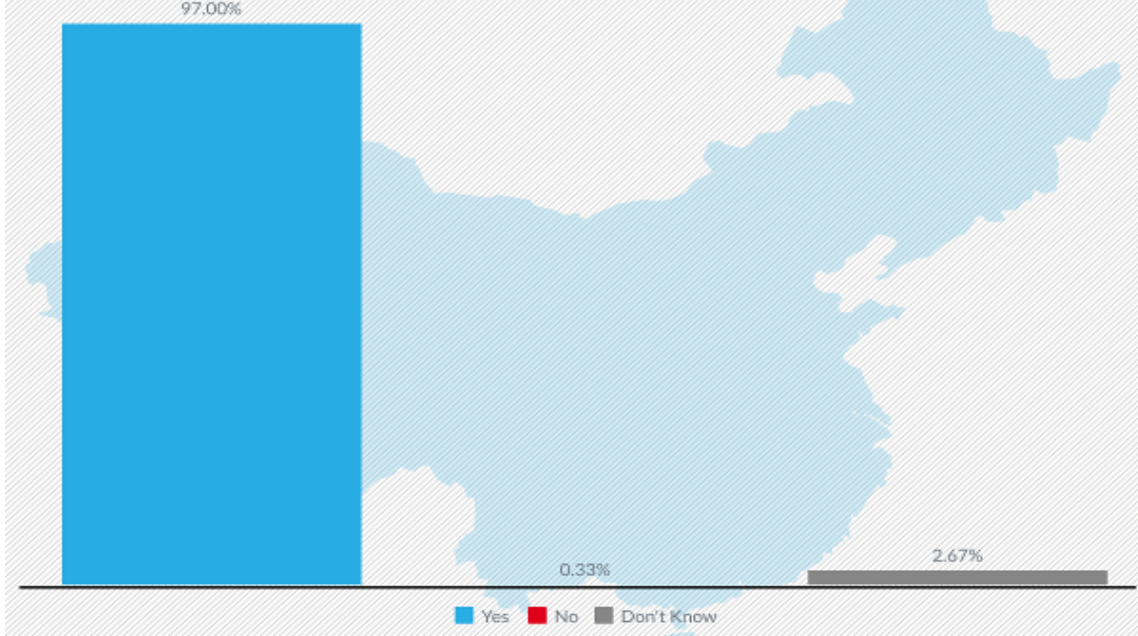


Another interesting way to look at the data is to divide it by the geographic location of respondents. What is interesting is that if respondents are geographically farther from China, the more likely they are to not know the response to this question. This is best exemplified by Balochistan (40.6%), and Sindh (38.1%).



The second question simply asked the binary question of whether respondents felt China had made significant progress in the recent past, and the response was overwhelmingly positive (97%).

Q: Do you think China has made significant progress in the recent past?

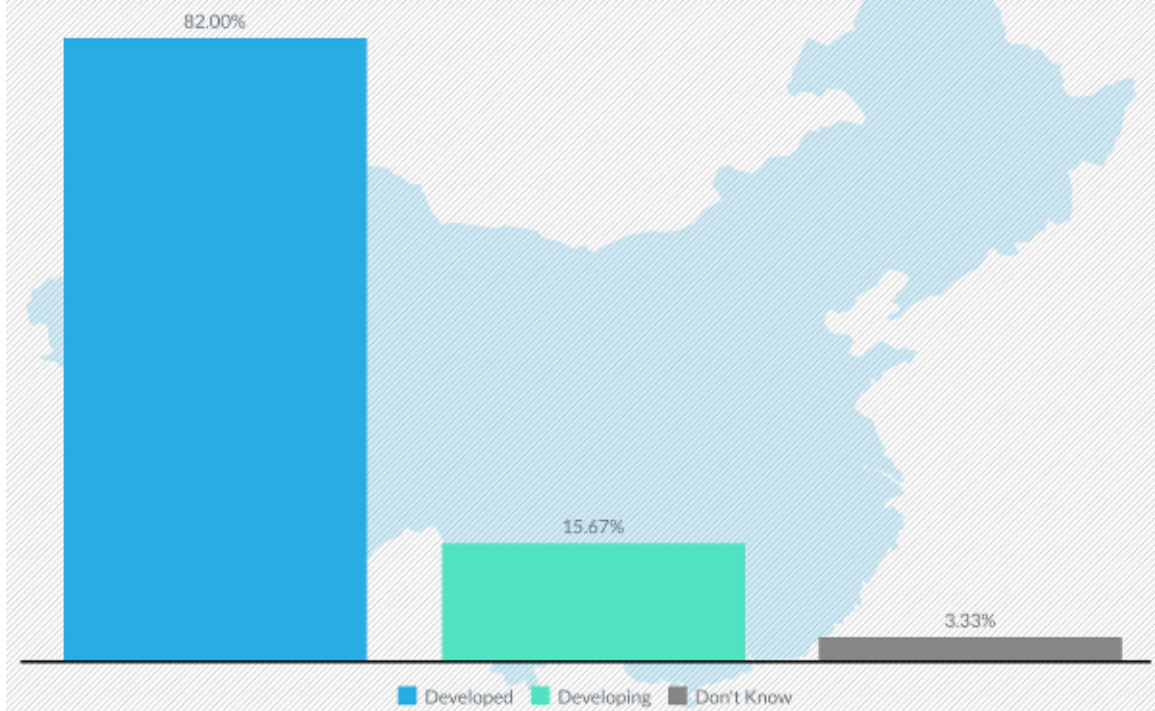


China in the World Economic Order:

Related to the question above, respondents were asked about where China ranks in the world economic order, bifurcated into the reductive developing and developed categories.

An overwhelming majority of 82% believe it to be a developed nation, 15.7% believe it to be developing and only 3.3% did not know the response to the question.

Q: Where does China stand in the world economic order?

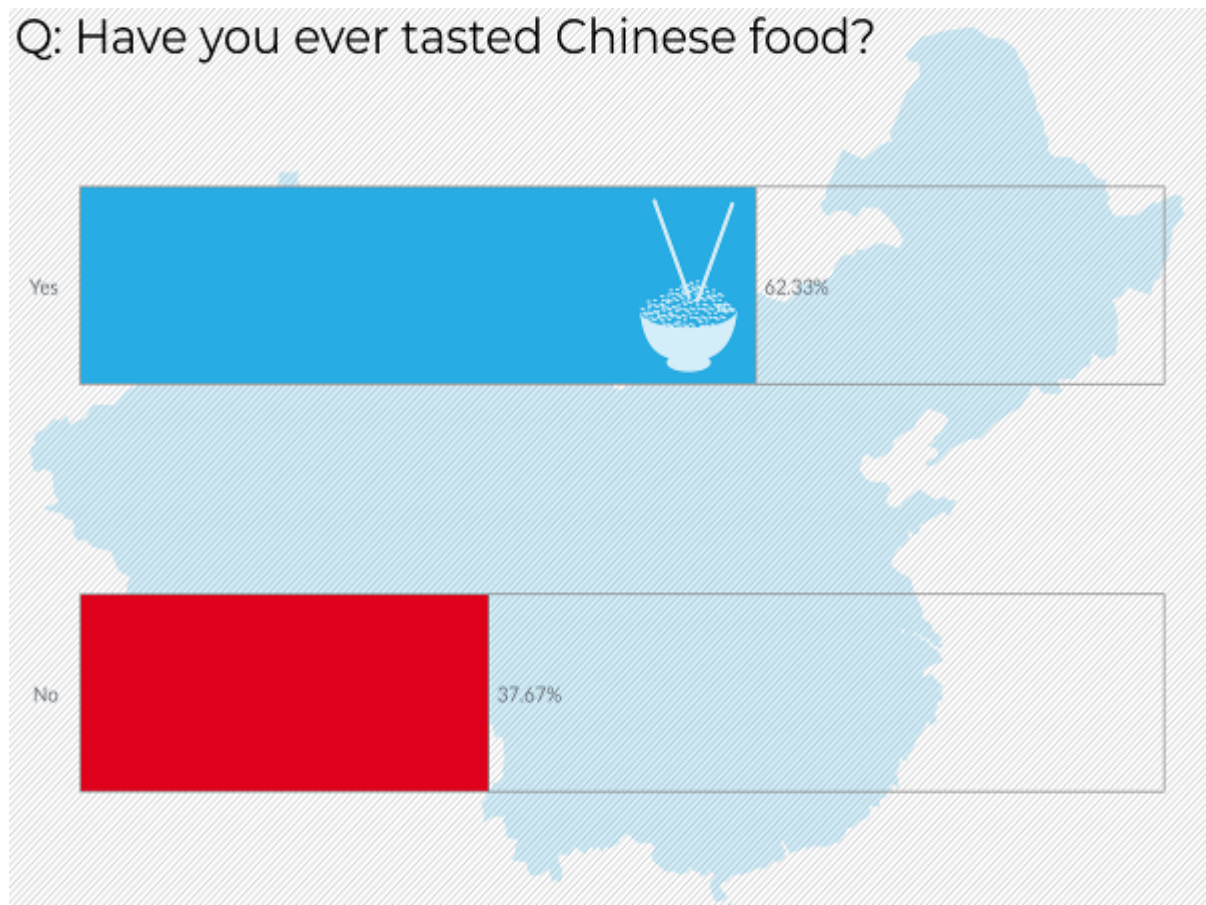


### Chinese Food:

Questions 9 and 10 asked respondents whether they had ever tried Chinese food and if they thought Chinese food was good.

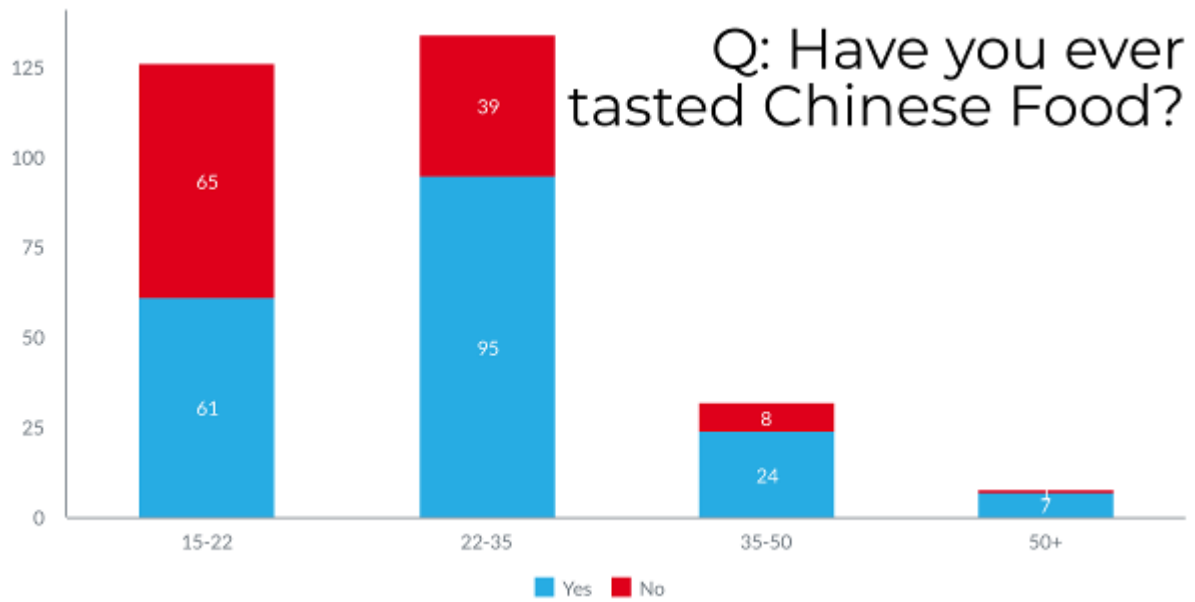
Only 62.3% of survey-takers said they had tasted Chinese food. This question comes with a caveat, however, in that pseudo-Chinese food (also known as Pakistani Chinese food) is a popular cuisine in Pakistan. Practically every restaurant will have “Chinese food” on its menu, even though traditional Chinese food is very different, and these dishes have been altered to be palatable to the Pakistani diet. In other words, many who have responded in the affirmative may never have tried actual, traditional Chinese food.

However, this makes it doubly surprising that 37.7% of people claim they have not tasted Chinese food.



Segregating this data by age is an obvious idea, and predictably, it reveals that as people get older, they are increasingly likely to be exposed to Chinese food, owing to a greater amount of time spent gaining experiences. As may be evident, the red portion of the graph below rapidly dwindles as respondents' age increases. Further, 65.6% of female vs. 59% of male respondents had tried Chinese food.



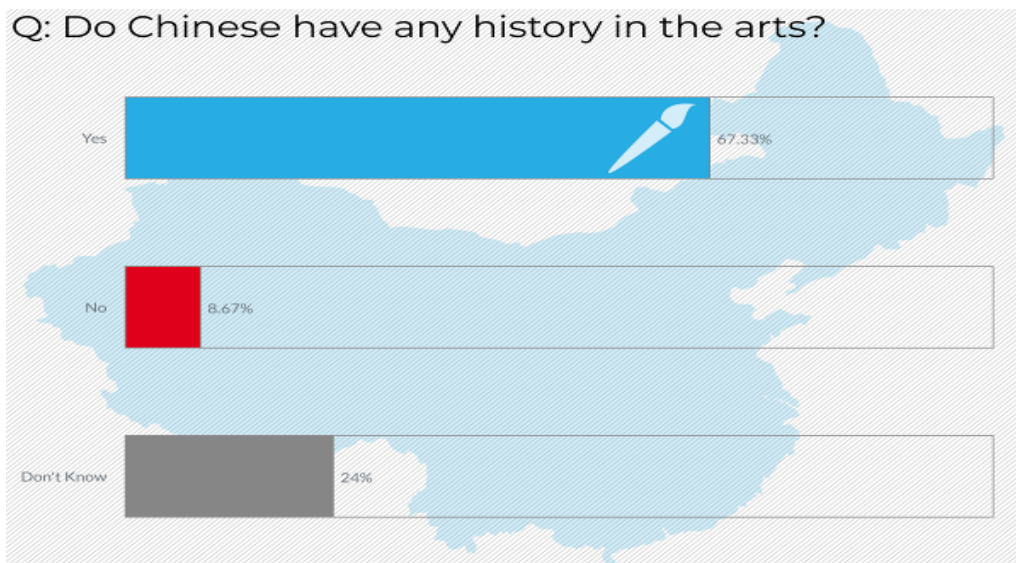


Of the 187 individuals (62.33%) that said they had tried Chinese food, 26 said Chinese food was not good, and the remaining 161 of the 187 (86.1%) said it was good.

China’s Art/History:

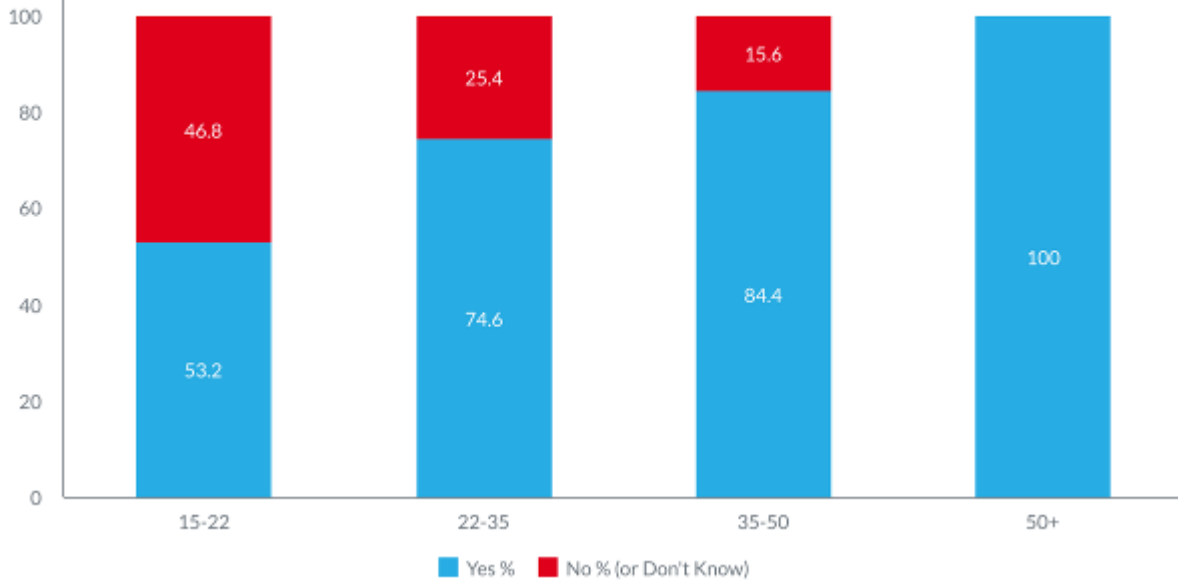
Despite being the fact that China is the oldest civilization and has a very rich culture, most Pakistanis seem to know very little about it. For example, China has many festivals that are celebrated throughout the year but in response to the participants about knowledge of Chinese celebrations, 159 people did not know anything about any of the Chinese festivals or celebrations.

The Chinese New Year was the most common answer given by 72 participants (24%). 6 people knew about the Dragon Boat Festival (2%). The remaining 80 out of the 158 people who responded with yes gave various responses about general information regarding China. In the quantitative question regarding this topic, 67.3% stated they knew that the Chinese had a storied history in the arts. The remaining either said no or didn’t know, which effectively amounts to the same thing.



There was some discrepancy between male and female responses to this question. 73.9% of males believed China had a history in the arts, while a far lesser percentage of females (60.9%) believed the same.

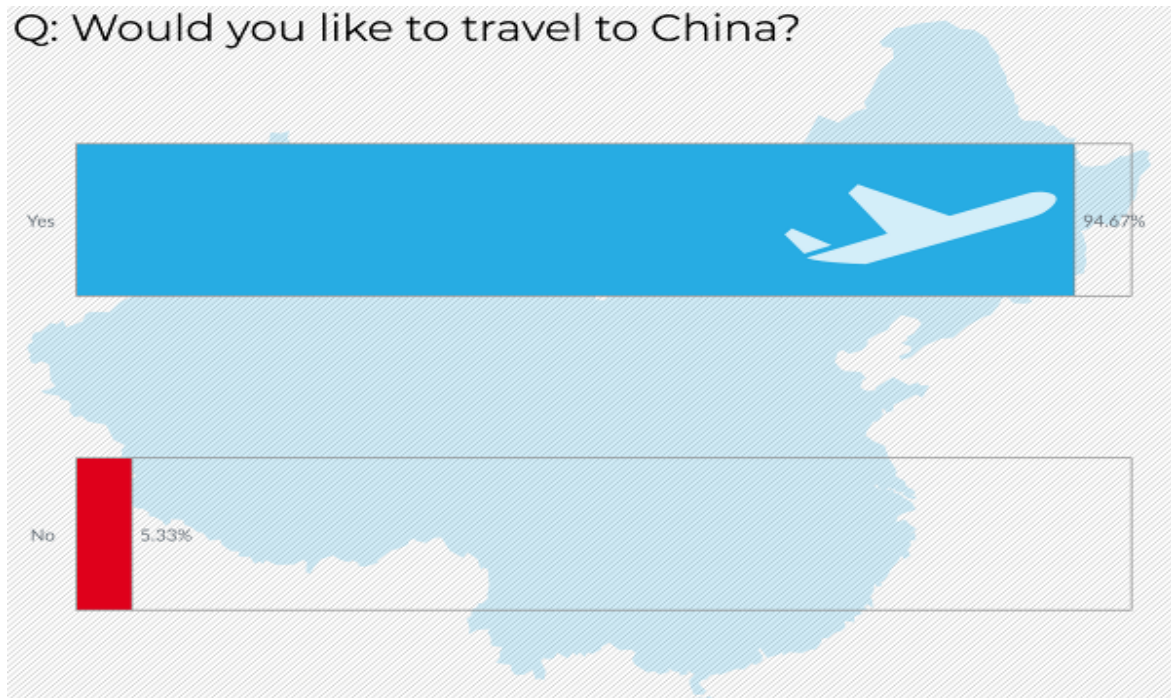
### Q: Do Chinese have history in the arts?



### Travel to China:

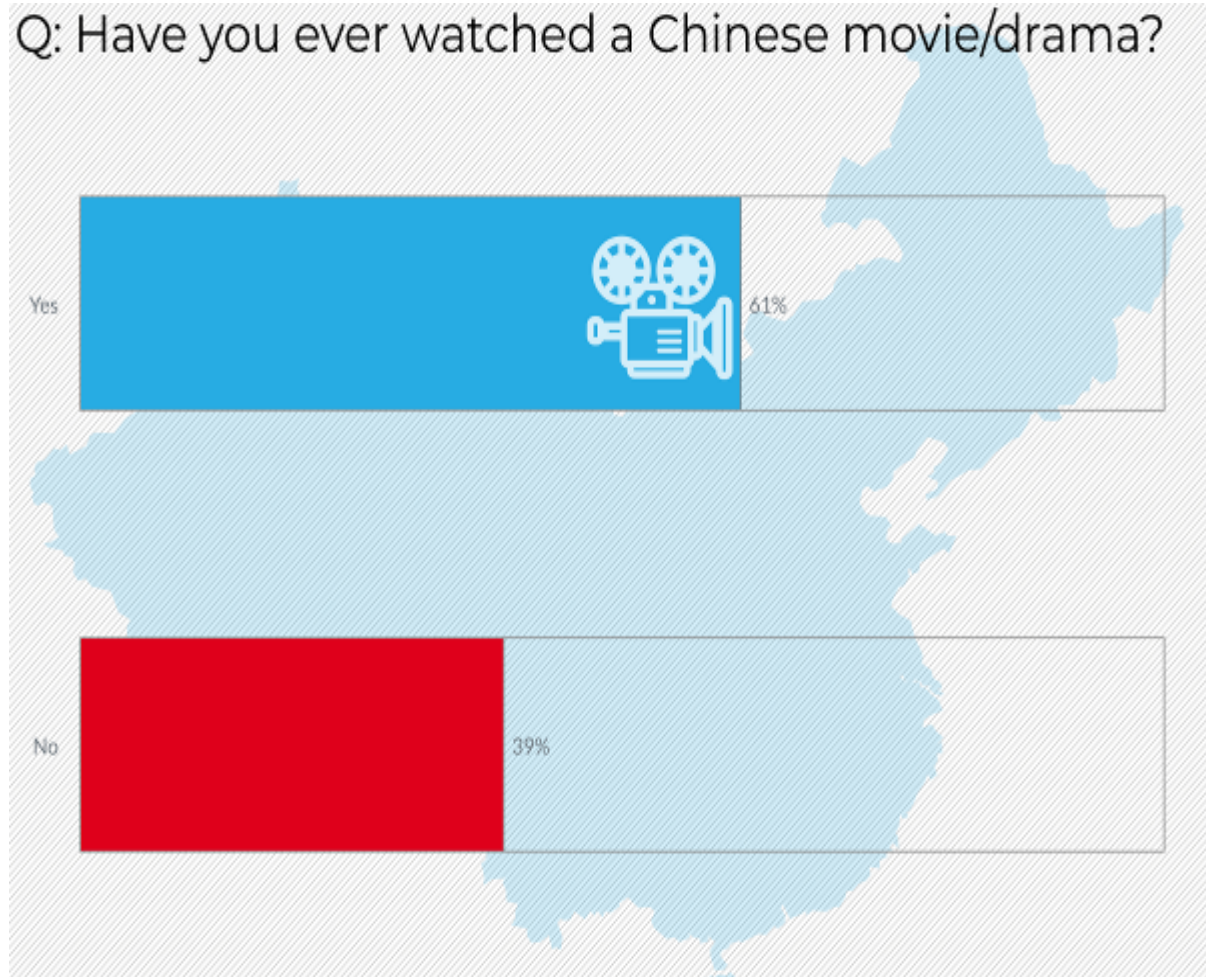
Perhaps unsurprisingly, 94.7% of people of Pakistan want to travel to China. Travelling can be a great opportunity for both countries to make their ties better through people-to-people contacts. Given the sheer volume of respondents replying in the affirmative, further dissection of this data point serves no purpose.

### Q: Would you like to travel to China?



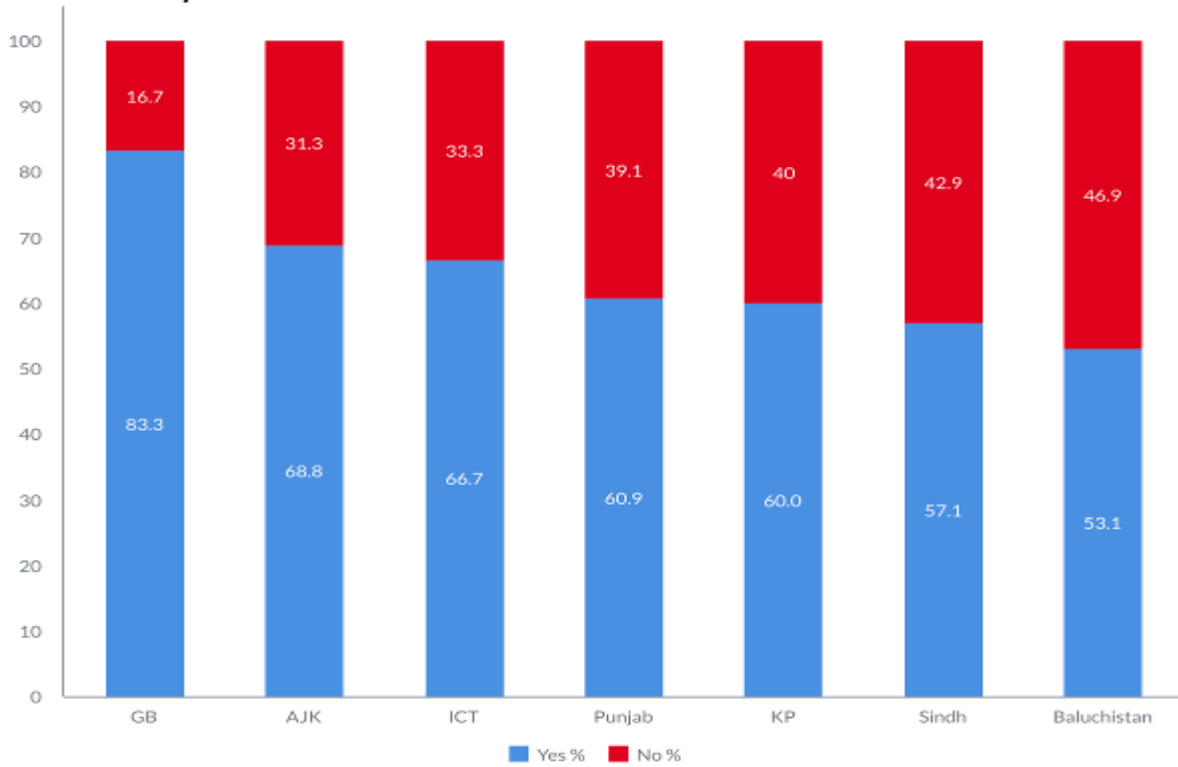
Chinese Pop Culture:

Respondents were asked if they had partaken in Chinese pop culture. The responses immediately identified this as an area that needs work. Exactly 39% have never seen a Chinese film/drama.



However, when this data is looked at from a regional point of view, once again, the likelihood of having seen a Chinese movie decreases with proximity to China. For example, GB neighbors China’s Xinjiang region, and 83.3% have seen a Chinese film or drama. This number drops to 57.1% in Sindh, and 53.1% in Balochistan, the two provinces farthest from China.

## Q: Have you ever watched a Chinese movie/drama?



### Learning more about China:

As established from previous questions, Pakistanis overwhelmingly believe the Chinese to be hardworking and friendly and are quite impressed by the progress the country has made in the recent past. Understandably, 90% of respondents wanted to learn more about China.





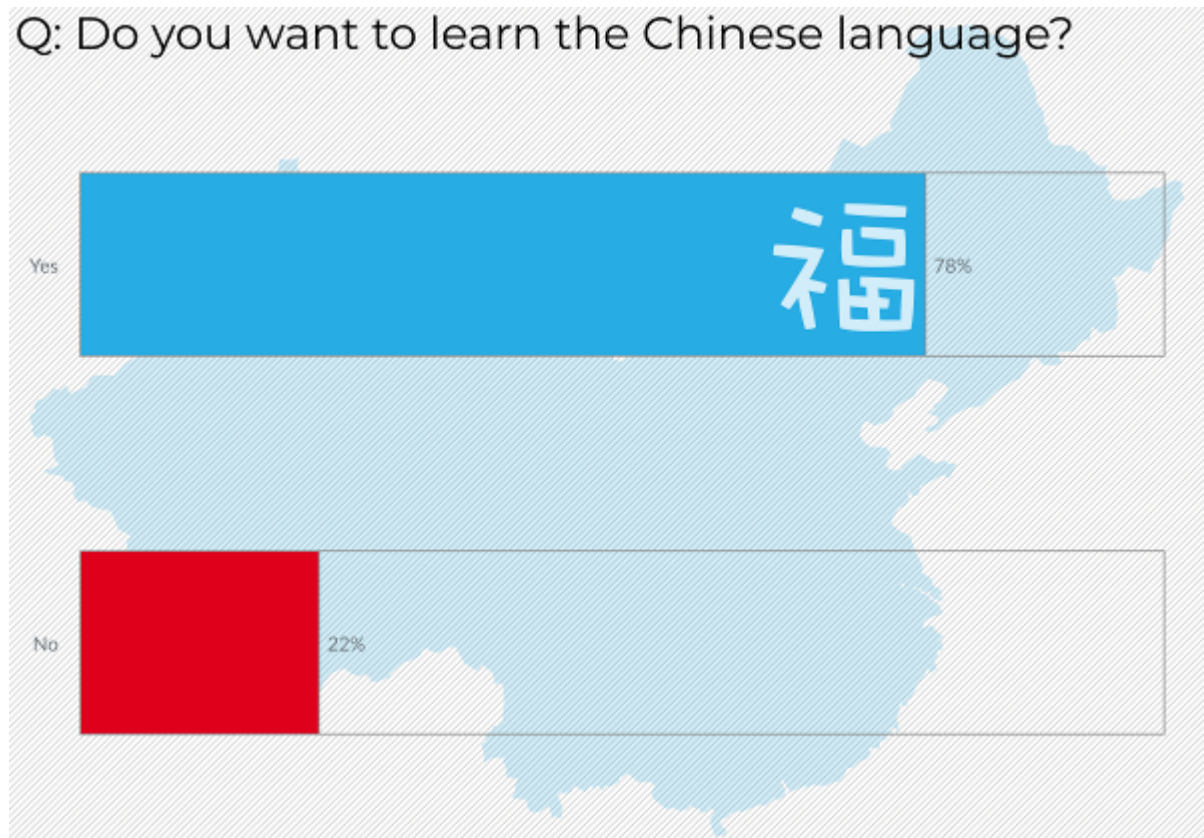
Once again, the wish to learn more goes up with both age and level of education. Along the gender divide nearly twice as many females (19) as males (11), did **not** want to learn anything more about China. The largest chunk of no responses came from students, 23 of which (out of 182), or 12.6%, did not want to learn more, which identifies a clear need to focus education about China on youth.

The quantitative portion of this query revealed diverse answers. Most seemed interested in the Chinese language (28.6%), and history and culture (16.6%), with a smattering of other qualitative responses in the mix.

### Chinese Language:

Language is mankind's most important means of communication. Language can be a means of bridging gaps and bringing people closer. One of the reasons for a general lack of understanding of China is the massive language barrier that exists between the two countries.

When Pakistanis were asked if they would like to learn the Chinese language, over three quarters (78%) responded in the affirmative, with 66 (22%) showing no interest. In the qualitative portion, they identified China's growing influence and economic might as the primary reasons for learning and communicating in the Chinese language.



## Recommendations:

- At matric, below matric, and intermediate levels, the curriculum should include topics on China, its history, geo-strategic position, political and social system, and its relationship with Pakistan should be taught as most individuals with this educational qualification show a neutral or ill-informed outlook towards China. As mentioned prior, 26% did not even know that China has made massive economic progress in recent years.
- Most individuals with higher education, i.e., Bachelors and Masters, perceive China as a positive country or are neutral in their perspective. Given this foundation, educational exchanges at these levels can help in further enhancing these perceptions and can lead to improved people-to-people relations between the two countries.
- Incentives like scholarships and jobs for young educated individuals can help in turning the negative responses into positive ones.
- Both countries can introduce special travel arrangements and easy visa policies such as e-visa or visa on arrival to enhance tourism and people-to-people contacts. As a side note, traveling to China, particularly on the occasion of their special festivals such as New Year (spring festival) can be a great source of learning Chinese traditions, cuisine, and culture.
- Pakistani lawmakers can learn from their Chinese counterparts and create special arrangements and legislation for women. Achievement of women's liberation has been on the agenda of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since the beginning of the PRC. Mao Zedong famously said, "Women hold up half the sky." In 1995, Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin made gender equality an official state policy. This is an avenue for cross-collaboration and learning.
- The data also supports the above. In this survey's responses, 132 of 151 women who participated in the survey said that they are interested to learn about China, 141 of 151 want to travel to China, and 116 of 151 want to learn the Chinese language. The results show that women of Pakistan are keen to learn about China and have enough trust that they want to travel to China.
- Movies and dramas can be a great source of learning about Chinese culture, tradition, and history. Arrangements should be made to release Chinese dramas and movies in Pakistan. Oddly, this chasm is being bridged partially by services such as Netflix, but there are no mainstream efforts made by either Pakistan or China. If Turkish, Indian, and Hollywood movies and dramas can be aired extensively, then why not Chinese.
- There should be independent cultural exchange programs among youth which can be beneficial in learning about Chinese culture, and vice versa.
- Besides track 1, multi-level diplomatic efforts must be started such as track 2 and track 1.5, an area that CRSS has considerable expertise and experience in.
- Collaboration among organizations, especially think tanks and NGOs of both countries, can be very advantageous. Collective research projects will help in knowledge exchange as well as capacity building of both sides while bringing academics and researchers together.
- The Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world plus, it's one of the official languages of the United Nations hence, learning Chinese will be a very beneficial skill for youth empowerment. Thus, more institutions should be established for learning the Chinese language in Pakistan.
- Finally, stereotypical stigmas should be addressed adequately through different grants and projects, to better portray the true image of the two countries to one another.

## Conclusion:

Even though Pakistan and China are considered 'Iron Brothers' and enjoy warm friendly relations, average Pakistanis are not much aware of China, and we suspect the same may be true on the Chinese side. To improve bilateral ties between the two countries, people contacts are inevitable, as exemplified by the bulk of the brief recommendations above.

Since Chinese major investment in Pakistan is in the form of CPEC, which has components in almost all the provinces of Pakistan, it is important to continue to build on our 70-year-old foundation, and create better synergies and understanding between the two peoples. The neutral or negative responses above can be turned positive if the general public starts seeing the fruits of Chinese investment projects, e.g., energy needs being met, road and railway infrastructure, increased job and business opportunities, skill development, etc.

# Pakistan's

## Public Procurement Regime

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# Pakistan's Public Procurement Regime

Decoding the Shortcomings - Proposing the Way Forward

## Why Study Public Procurement Regimes?

Governments across the globe are spending a significant portion of their budgets on procurement. Public procurement spending is estimated to account for 15% of the world's GDP. This is predominantly visible in developing countries with active infrastructure and social programs. Any attempt, therefore, to bring fiscal discipline by efficient allocation of resources and then pragmatically spending must consider procurement to be a fundamental part.

Gains of a good public procurement framework make available additional resources for development and lead to better outcomes of expenditure by assigning the tasks to the best possible service provider. This eventually has a positive bearing on service delivery. Empirical evidence supports that procurement reforms improve spending efficiency by 1% of GDP. This means that this saving could be diverted to other pressing sectors like education, health, and municipal services.

Thus, effective public procurement systems can help governments see better value for money, reduce pressure on public budgets, and leave agencies better prepared to invite private investments. Public funds are scarce and governments must invest with intention. Improving public procurement systems contributes to a vibrant private sector, helps governments get the most out of their investments, and supports growth.

## Background

Historically, public procurement in Pakistan was traditionally regulated by three primary instruments as follows:

1. The Purchase Manual of the defunct Department of Supplies and Disposal, which generally covered the purchase of commodities
2. The West Pakistan Building and Roads Department Code which governs the construction of buildings and roads and the hiring of consultants for this purpose
3. The General Financial Rules of the Federal Government and the delegation of financial power rules

In the late 1990s, however, public procurement was now seen as a critical function of the state institutions as public procurement expenditure share continues to grow in the government expenditure.

Following the World Bank's assessment of Pakistan's then procurement regime and recommendations put forward by the World Bank on basis of this assessment, the Pakistan government worked on introducing legislative and systemic reforms to the public procurement regime. As a result, in 2002 the Government of Pakistan established the federal Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) under the Public Procurement Regulatory Ordinance, 2002. PPRA is designed as an autonomous body tasked with the responsibility of recommending laws and regulations governing public procurement along with monitoring the application of procurement laws and performance of federal procuring agencies to improve governance, management, transparency, accountability, and quality of public procurements. Consequently, the Public Procurement Rules were promulgated in 2004 to establish and maintain a robust and efficient procurement regime in the country.

Except for Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have also established their respective procurement authorities and designed their procurement laws, although with slight variations but majorly all in line with the federal PPRA rules. The Sindh Public Procurement Rules are more exhaustive, they also provide an independent grievance redressal arrangement and a framework for regulating public-private partnership (PPP) procurements. The Punjab PPRA has adopted federal rules while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has notified the NWFP Procurement of Goods, Works, Services, and Consultancy Services Rules. As regards Balochistan, the Public Procurement Act was promulgated in 2009 but rules have not been notified as yet. In Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, procurement laws have not yet been introduced.

## Shortcomings of Public Procurement Regime in Pakistan

Over the years, PPRA rules have seen few amendments, but no significant changes have been made in the initial ordinance and consequent rules. Thus, there remain many shortcomings and flaws despite nearly two decades since the authority was put in place.

The major criticism of the PPRA ordinance and rules is the lack of coherence between the two. While in actuality, the rules must be in line with and following the spirit of the ordinance, the PPRA ordinance and rules seem like two documents on completely separate wavelengths.

The ordinance, in many places, has been formed using vague terminologies with only the basic (sometimes unnecessary) details and lacks necessary explanations on many fronts. The ordinance is also missing basic principles of the procurement regime, which instead have been mentioned in the rules. Including the rules of procurement in the ordinance will not only increase the worth of the ordinance but also provide a much-needed legal framework and support to these principles. Additionally, no regulatory ideas that the rules shall follow have been discussed in the ordinance. The ordinance just establishes the procurement authority but fails to define the main regime of procurement, which must have been included in the ordinance to strengthen the base for the PPRA rules.

Additionally, we have too many procurement regulations. There is something to be said about cutting down human intervention and involvement and using established, state-of-the-art IT packages for public procurement. If someone does not comply, the file will not move in the system. This function can also be outsourced to ensure efficiency and transparency. The fact of the matter is that the experiment of regulatory authorities and centralized procurement systems has failed in Pakistan.

Among things that the ordinance and rules do include, a lot has been left to subjective interpretation which is highly problematic for any legal framework and guiding rules. This adds to the overall inconsistency of the procurement framework by creating a massive gap between the ordinance and consequent rules. The definition of corruption and fraudulent activities has neither been defined nor has it been linked to any specific corruption laws outside the framework of the PPRA ordinance. This creates a massive bottleneck in procurement procedures due to a lack of clarity on what may come under the umbrella of corruption.

Besides, mis-procurement has been equated to corrupt and fraudulent activities. Without a clear definition of corruption otherwise, in addition to unclear approval mechanisms, terming mis-procurement as corrupt or fraudulent activities is not only problematic but also kills the efficiency and effectiveness of the rules. As a result, most procurement officers would be unwilling to approve procurements, and in cases where they would approve such procurements, the time costs attached will increase in a bid to ensure absolute compliance with the rules which though are not well-defined.

In parallel, there is a need to improve the bidding rules and procedures as well, as currently in case of a single bid at the first call of bids cannot be accepted regardless of its merits, but a single bid will automatically be awarded the contract if no other bids appear even during the second call. This causes a severe delay in such cases by not awarding single bidders the tender in the first attempt as the entire process needs to be repeated. The option to negotiate a price with the winner after awarding of tender, while ensuring no exploitation is also lacking from the ordinance despite its possible benefits in reducing costs where possible.

Additionally, while the PPRA was envisioned to bring about robust and efficient reforms in the procurement regimes, the limitation on splitting or regrouping of proposals is a source of inefficiency in the current framework and needs to be looked upon. The lack of flexibility in the PPRA ordinance and rules despite it being aimed at ensuring efficiency and bringing about the greater public good reflects poorly on the performance of PPRA.

Furthermore, the concept of Public-Private Partnerships is still in its formative phase at the national level. At the federal level, the regulatory and legal framework for the PPPs is not backed by legislation. The federal PPRA Rules are silent regarding PPP procurements. At the provincial level, however, some progress has been made in Sindh and Punjab. Line departments at both federal and provincial levels suffer from capacity constraints as there is a dearth of professionals having expertise in managing PPP transactions. The private market for PPPs is also underdeveloped.

## Policy Recommendations - The Way Forward

The public procurement regime, without any doubt, necessitates comprehensive reforms.

**Firstly**, PPRA should be strengthened through operational independence and financial sustainability. To transform the PPRA into autonomous, neutral, and independent regulatory bodies, the mechanism for the constitution of PPRA Boards may be reviewed. Inclusion of representatives of private-sector stakeholders (such as trade bodies), civil society, Auditor General, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), a representative of opposition members in the National Assembly may be considered. The Managing Director may also be selected from the public/private sector through an open competitive process. For financial autonomy, the PPRA may request the Ministry of Finance/ Finance Departments to prescribe a formula for funding their activities so that there is predictability in the expected resources from the government. Any institution working on a government budget will never get true independence.

**Secondly**, there is a dire need for amendments and revisions of rules. The legal framework may be reviewed and amended periodically to address the gaps and weaknesses, improve transparency and facilitate efficiency and economy in procurement processes. For instance, to mention a few may include: value for money assessments; prescribing timelines for different steps in procurement processes; enabling provisions for e-procurement; specifying consequences of mis-procurement, and specific penalties for bid-rigging or use of corrupt, fraudulent, collusive, or obstructive practices in procurement and so on.

**Thirdly**, there should be a second-tier grievance redressal forum. PPRA shall make arrangements to develop a second (independent) tier for the redressal of grievances. This will help the public procurement system in better process management and accountability of public officials which will ultimately lead to efficiency in procurements. PPRA Boards may deliberate and decide on the contours of such a tier. To ensure that the public procurements do not suffer inordinate delays, a timeframe could be given within which these complaints can be filed. The PPRA Board can also consider a standstill period which will mean that if a complaint is filed within this period, the Board could bar the

procuring agency from signing the contract till the complaint is resolved. The second-tier office should duly publicize its decisions and keep a record of the complaints about the identification of common issues and persistent aberration from the rules/ norms.

**Fourthly**, the PPRA shall develop procurement regulations, standard bidding documents, and model manuals for goods, works, and services. These regulations and manuals may be developed in consultations with the stakeholders.

**Fifthly**, PPRA should formulate a legal framework for public-private partnerships. Fiscal limitations in countries have led to innovative approaches to the provision of infrastructure. To bridge the growing deficit between the cost of the infrastructure and the resources available, and to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of infrastructure services, Public-Private Partnerships have emerged as a growing element of public sector procurement. To provide legal support to PPPs the federal and provincial governments may introduce a comprehensive legal and institutional framework that provides clear guidelines and procedures for the development and implementation of 14 Public-Private Procurement Partnerships in sync with international best practices.

Lastly, an exceedingly important reform area is that PPRA must introduce E-procurement, which is the future. International experience suggests that technological innovations such as e-procurement and electronic reverse auctions can enhance the efficiency of procurement, eliminate bid-rigging, strengthen transparency and achieve value for money. The digitalization of procurement processes eliminates the direct interface between procurement officials and bidders and thereby significantly reduces the chances of bribery and corruption.

## Conclusion

The bottom line is that without changing this procurement regime, the Government of Pakistan cannot utilize its resources efficiently. The crucial point here is to cut down on excessive regulations to reduce rent-seeking, automate for transparency and efficiency, and outsource the management of procurement as the present bureaucracy (and its mindset) is simply not equipped (personally or technically) to achieve these goals.

CRSS Policy Dialogue

PAKISTAN 

BANGLADESH

Relations



# Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations

## Icebreaking between Islamabad and Dhaka: a window of opportunity?

January 20, 2021

**Speakers: M. Shaheeduzzaman, Amb. Naseem Ferdous, Amb. Rafiuzzaman Siddiqui, Imtiaz Gul**

Indeed, we haven't been able to maintain that heart-to-heart closeness of relationship that perhaps should have been natural being so much in common. But the fact is that certain realities are often overlooked in our relationship. The geo-strategic limitations of Bangladesh are surrounded almost by all sides by India and suffer considerable geopolitical disadvantage because of the limited access to other countries compared to that of Pakistan.

There is a perception in Pakistan that Bangladesh has failed to reciprocate Pakistan's gesture of reciprocity. Pakistan has to understand Bangladesh's geopolitical realities and at the same time go ahead and take certain initiatives so that we are drawn much closer than what we were in the past. Despite not having territorial contiguity, Pakistan and Bangladesh should have had the same type of relations with each other as India maintains with Nepal due to commonalities in religion.

Air travel between Pakistan and Bangladesh is only two hours and yet we are such distant neighbors. Despite having some of the world's most beautiful places, Pakistan has failed to promote tourism with Bangladesh, whereas Bangladesh immensely contributes to the world economy when it comes to tourism.

People of both countries face a lot of difficulties in getting visas, which is one of the main reasons behind the missing people-to-people connection. Issues like these should be highlighted on both sides at the state level. The door of dialogue should always be open because until and unless we don't allow our people to meet one another, there will be no improvement in stabilizing the relationship between both countries. It is very important to start foreign office consultations and economic activity, unless that has started sincerely there is no way for improvement.

To ensure good healthy relations with Bangladesh, Pakistan must come up with an apology or official statement of regret for what happened in 1971. That acknowledgment has to be accepted by Pakistan to remove any feeling of enmity from the people of Bangladesh towards Pakistan.

There are two narratives and we have to find ways to reconcile the two narratives: the apology, acknowledgment, and the need to move on.

## CRSS Policy Dialogue

March 01, 2021

**Speakers: Barrister M. Sarwar Hossain, Shirin Naomi, Imtiaz Gul, KU Moonis Ahmar**

The United Nations recommendation on Bangladesh for promotion from a least developed country to a developing country is a positive certification from the world body on which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajid stated that this achievement is the outcome of the twelve years' hard work and tireless efforts of planning and policies.

In the past, both Pakistan and Bangladesh shared a traumatic and harsh memory but over time the people-to-people relationship has improved, and both the countries respect each other, although there are binary narratives and disappointments in the political aspect in terms of human-to-human interactions there is no problem. Investment or a bilateral trade agreement could be a starting point to having a good relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Initiatives should be taken at the government level to strengthen people-to-people, and we should move forward leaving our old grudges behind. Therefore, we need to have good relations with the regional countries because, after World War II, the US introduced the Marshall plan as the European recovery program which made Western Europe economically stable. So, South Asian countries should all work together to bring regional stability which will result in the economic stability of the people and society collectively.

Two opinions have emerged, as far as the people of Bangladesh are concerned. The first opinion is that regardless of what has happened in the past there is still enormous scope and opportunities to diminish fences between the two countries and to deepen not only economic but cultural, academic, and political relations as well. The second opinion is primarily of the elites of Bangladesh and how Pakistan was viewed by them as an oppressor and exploiter.

Speaking of academic cooperation, there has not been any significant interaction between the two countries. Over the years universities in Pakistan have tried their best to collaborate with the universities of Bangladesh, but the response has always been cold which is very unfortunate.

There is a very clear understanding that the youth is not aware of the history of the trauma that both countries have seen. History books should be revised and instead of promoting hostility, mistrust, and suspicions, it is time that the two countries should get over the negative sentiments and start afresh.

## CRSS Policy Dialogue

April 22, 2021

**Speakers: Amber Shamsi, Sajjad Ur Rahman, Imtiaz Gul**

It is always better late than never to start a dialogue. Bangladesh's Prime Minister Ms. Hasina Wajid greeted Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Pakistan Day, March 23, 2021. Similarly, Pakistan greeted Bangladesh on 50 years of Bangladesh's Independence which turned out to be a highlight in the media. If there aren't any major developments happening around, what will the media talk about? Media as a whole has become nationalistic and politicized. Before placing demands on media, can journalists avoid fabricating and propagating fake news? That is a big responsibility and a big check on professional journalists.

As journalists and writers, we should all unite for peace and it is only possible if we remain not politically or ideologically polarized because the media's job is not to propagate ideologies.

Despite having business relations both the countries still lack people-to-people contact. Tourism is another source of improving Pak-Bangla relationships and should be promoted at the state level.

Both the countries share a very brutal history and sometimes it is very hard to accept the present consequences of what happened in 1971. That is the main reason that none of the countries has taken



any initiative of improving the relationship. We cannot ignore India's role in the 1971 war and how influential their role was during that period.

There are outstanding examples of countries having war and vexing issues but we cannot move forward without having an honest conversation. China continues to trade with Taiwan without Taiwan having intended any apology to China, similarly, the US never rendered an apology to Japan for nuclear attacks. Mahmood Ur Rahman's commission report has been released in portions. Copies of the report have been distributed among the journalists yet we cannot talk about it. These are the things we are not taught in our history books so forums like these policy dialogues will move that conversation forward, improving people-to-people contact because the people of Pakistan see Bangladesh as a success story.

## CRSS Policy Dialogue

May 27, 2021

**Speakers: Arju Afrin Kathy, Mohsin Gul, Ahsan Bhuiyan, Fatima Rind**

Both in Pakistan and Bangladesh, almost half of the population is comprised of youth. The relationship between both countries has always been intense. Regardless of numbers, let us acknowledge the 1971 incident and accept that something inhuman did happen only then we can move forward instead of carrying the baggage which will only take both countries further away. It is a huge injustice that is not appreciated at all. Brutal decisions were made but it doesn't mean we need to continue doing that. Rumi and Shams said, "Forgive the faults of others."

These are the complex conversations that we have at the policy table and it is very important to open the spaces between young people across regions to share their reasons and perspectives. However, it's all emotional and needs to be rational. Through education and economic trade, Bangladesh and Pakistan can have good relations. Trade is an important element. Anything happening must be in favor of both nations. We should not be waiting for visas to visit Dhaka.

Upon studying, we analyzed that there's so much in common in South Asian countries like economic conditions, security threats, concerns, etc. We can collectively work on these things by letting go of our past and doing some constructive things. Moving beyond nationalistic identity can allow us to build regional strengths together and that is where a combined identity is.

Higher education in Pakistan is excellent but struggles with child literacy and child mortality rate. Whereas in Bangladesh primary education, child literacy and the mortality rate has flourished. Cultural and educational exchanges may improve relations further. We truly apologize for what our ancestors have done. They were wrong and bad did happen. Both countries should take lessons from each other and exchange cultures in building peace among both countries.

Women's experiences are so common in both regions. In the past, we were working together as one region. Through social media and tourism, we can add further colors. Platforms like sports, cultural exchanges, and arts can help immensely in strengthening people-to-people contact. As there is a huge fan following for players and artists in both countries.

Therefore, acknowledging the baggage of the past and moving forward is the only solution to bringing both countries together.



There is a shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics and it is of greater importance to look at this aspect. Asad Durrani's quote 'forget about conventional warfare, the real bomb is the present world's economic bomb. We need something to consider and something to chew

## Climate Change

June 15, 2021

**Speakers: Dr. Ainun Nishat, Fozia Parveen, Saleemul Haq, Meeran Malik**

According to major global assessments, the south Asian region is always flagged in red or black in the list of countries vulnerable to climate change. The combination of climate change effects in both Pakistan and Bangladesh are not the same but the result is the same, whether it's heatwaves, drought, flooding, or cyclones.

There is a regional body called SAARC, which has applied to be a negotiation bloc in the UN but in the grand scheme of things it is not an extremely effective regional body due to political tensions overriding regional cooperation. In the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change where unfortunately South Asia is not a single group. We are indifferent camps in the negotiation which is very unfortunate despite having similar positions on climate change.

If you compare the problems of Karachi, they are the problems of Dhaka as well. It can only be resolved by making sure that our cities are resilient to urban flooding. Urban flooding is a major issue for places like Quetta because when it rains heavily in surrounding hills, a huge amount of sand and silt chokes the drainage system.

Protective measures against urban flooding are identification of low-lying areas (ponding), inundated congested areas, widening, desilting, and dredging of water/sewage drains, back up electricity for sewage disposal stations, preparation of hazard maps, removal of encroachments from sewage drains, serviceability of pumping stations, capacity building of MC's e.g., heavy-duty dewatering pumps. The academic collaboration between both countries is very important and should encourage joint collaborative research between countries so that people on both sides can be educated and should come up with indigenized solutions for factors that cause climate change.

Food Security livelihood security and water security are major priorities of Bangladesh. Lately, Bangladesh was considered a food exporting country but due to climate change, Bangladesh had to import food in the last three years.

The new element that has come into the negotiation process is the transparency mechanism which is going to bother countries like Nepal, and Bhutan including Bangladesh, where capacity building is low as compared to Pakistan where capacity building is better and academic plus management level is relatively stronger.

## Economic cooperation and trade in goods and services is the answer to improving Pakistan-Bangladesh relations

Islamabad, September 28, 2021

There are a lot of countries in the world with historical baggage, but visionary and pragmatic leadership helps them to come together and build on the commonalities such as medical and health sector exchanges, poverty alleviation programs, overcoming water and energy crises, dealing with the emanating refugee crisis and tackling climate emergency.

These were the remarks made by Ambassador Riffat Masood while speaking at the sixth and final webinar in the series “Pakistan–Bangladesh Relations” organized by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), earlier today. Speakers included Brig. Gen. M Sakhawat Hussain, author, columnist, former Election Commissioner, analyst; Mr. Afsan Chowdhury, journalist, columnist, and researcher, from Bangladesh, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Police/justice sector specialist, former IG Police, Ambassador Riffat Masood, career diplomat, Pakistan’s former Ambassador to Iran, and Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director, CRSS from Pakistan.

Appreciating CRSS’ efforts, Ms. Masood, added that Pakistan’s strict visa regime is not directed towards Bangladesh only, other countries also face issues in this regard. A lot has been done by Pakistan to ease the visa-issuance process but still, bottlenecks exist. Dialogue and interaction on common issues is the only way to mend the relationship between the two countries.

Brig. Gen. M Sakhawat Hussain highlighted that Pakistan and Bangladesh have shared 25 years of existence. The new generation in both countries does not carry the same feelings about 1971 as that of the older generation. Therefore, the exchange of views and people-to-people contact is easier in the current times. Without intellectual exchanges and people-to-people connections, both countries can’t build and grow together.

Shedding light on the importance of the economic relationship between the two countries, he said that though Bangladesh has huge volumes of imports from Pakistan exports are meagre. A lot can be done on the communication front by easing the visa regimes, facilitating direct flights, and establishing visa facilitation booths in Dhaka to provide visas to Pakistan.

Adding to the comments of his colleagues, Dr. Shoaib Suddle said that both countries should focus on their shared interests and should ignore regional spoilers. The best way to handle the issue of historical baggage is to either freeze the unsettled issues or tackle them gradually. He added that countering terrorism, violent extremism, and promoting regional integration can be some areas for both countries to build upon.

Moderating the event, Mr. Imtiaz Gul said that Pakistan and Bangladesh have been moving in circles. Stakeholders from both countries should keep talking and try to connect the governments on common traditional and non-traditional challenges.

In his closing remarks Brig. Gen. M Sakhawat Hussain stated business, cultural, and people to people ties should be enhanced to improve bilateral relationships and to achieve the goal of a balanced South Asia.

Ambassador Riffat restated that SAARC is an important forum that unfortunately has not made much headway although it has great potential. Both countries should use this forum along with other South Asian countries. China has important economic stakes in the region. It is investing in both Bangladesh and Pakistan and both these countries along with other countries in the region should cooperate using

Chinese investment and technology to target poverty alleviation efforts. Economic cooperation and trade in goods and services are the answer. Already Pakistan and Bangladesh are trading in the textile sector. We can expand this and bring in other sectors including the services sector to enhance our trade. She said that climate change and water issues are an important sector in which very good cooperation can take place including sharing of best practices.

Lastly, Ambassador Masood recognized that in her view Bangladesh does not want a simple apology. There are other conditions attached to it which may include financial ones.

Dr. Shoaib in his closing remarks highlighted that both countries should contribute and play their respective role in improving bilateral ties. This can only be done by forgetting past grievances and building on shared interests.



## The Center

### CRSS Background

The Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) is a think tank/advocacy center launched in September, 2007. Founded by noted security expert and media personality Imtiaz Gul, it is committed to the cause of independent research, nonpartisan analysis, and informed advocacy. The goal is to help people inside and outside Pakistan understand this nation of 212 million people.

As an advocacy center, CRSS is dedicated to trigger critical thinking through discourse anchored in global democratic values such as socio-political diversity, rule of law, equal citizenry, and acceptance of diversity, fundamental human rights, all at the intersection of empirical research in security studies.

### CRSS Core Values

CRSS strives to embed the national conversation in constitutionalism, and rationalize it over extremism and sectarianism. CRSS believes the path to peace is through embodying fundamental human rights, specifically:

- strict adherence to the rule of law, and stringent implementation
- informing the public on civic education, especially good governance and public accountability
- promoting equal rights for all citizens of Pakistan
- championing women empowerment
- providing training and opportunities to youth to veer them away from radicalization through critical thinking

CRSS' programming reflects its core values, which CRSS believes can, along with time-tested methodologies in strategic communications, impactful message development, research and advocacy result in a more tolerant and cohesive Pakistan.

You can find past and current CRSS projects by clicking on the respective links.

### CRSS Publications

CRSS produces several publications annually. Our flagship publications are the NAP Tracker, an annual audit of the counter-terrorism/counter-extremism National Action Plan (NAP) of the Government of Pakistan; and the Annual Security Report, a measure of the state of security in Pakistan by gauging the number of violence-related casualties across the country.

In addition, our most recent publication was the Role of Madrassas, which provided answers to why parents continue to send their children to madrassas. CRSS also regularly publishes papers, commentary and analysis by our research fellows from around the world. You can find all of our publications freely online here, or collect copies free of cost from our offices in Islamabad.

You can also visit the CRSS Blog here, as well as the website of our sister organization Afghan Studies Center.

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