



RESEARCH PAPER

Pakistan-Turkey Relations: Cultural and Religious Ties

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ABSTRACT

The historic, cultural and Muslim brotherhood relations between Pakistan and Turkey have a long history. This imperative research tries to highlight the cultural and religious ties between the Islamabad and Istanbul. Since the creation of Pakistan, both the countries, Turkey and Pakistan, always have the historic relations particularly in the fields of cultural and religion. The primary and secondary sources have been utilized under the descriptive research method in completion of this research article. This study explores that both the countries have historic cultural as well as religious relations and always stands with each other's stances towards the culture and religion of Islam. The study further finds that Istanbul always firmly stands with the Islamabad's stances towards cultural enhancement and religious matters in the country as well as around the globe. It also suggested that cultural and religious as well as economic, military and political relations can be enhanced through more agreements, visits of high level officials, and public-to-public ties.

KEYWORDS Cultural Ties, Pakistan, Religious Ties, Social Ties, Turkey

Introduction

Cultures and religions between different countries are the most important factors, bringing them closer from one country to another. Cultures, along with their moral destinies, date back centuries and form the basis and function of their attitudes, and of their attitudes, old and widespread. The basic thing is that they share Islam and are getting along because of Islam. As Islam spread, the Turks voluntarily accepted Islam; hence, people live in different countries with the same religion and culture. This is passed down from generation to generation. Various peoples managed this process according to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. The Cultural Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1953, is implemented through cultural exchange programs. The current cultural exchange program ends in December 2006. Although many Pakistani students take advantage of scholarships, the percentage of Turkish students coming to Pakistan is very small. Educational institutions need to make connections. Islamabad's Institute for Strategic Studies (ISS) and Ankara's Center for Strategic Studies (CSR) signed a landmark agreement in May 2003. There is also a need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges through exchanges between cultural organizations on both sides and encourage the tourism industry to take the lead. The Turkish Embassy in Islamabad is stepping up visits to Pakistan by the Turkish Cultural Corps. A similar Pakistani group should be sent to Turkey. Moreover, the two countries share a common religion, Islam. According to the Turkish government, about 99% of the population is Muslim in Turkey and about 96% of the population is Muslim in Pakistan, so religious unity is assured. Both countries have a strong tradition of Sufism, and clerics often come into contact with each other (Anas, 2022).

Literature Review

It has been seen that number of scholars have done the work on the different perspectives such as military, economic, social, educational, religious and cultural but still finds gap to do work on it. Such as " Pak-Turkey relations: On the common ties " written by Hussain, 2008, explained how Pakistan and Turkey relate to one another in a number of areas, including politics, defence and security, economics, culture, and education. The researcher talked about a variety of subjects, such as shared support for democracy, the war on terrorism, and initiatives to boost trade and investment. The two nations' close relationship has been strained by their divergent views on Afghanistan, which are based on their distinct national interests (Hussain, 2008).

Another scholar Colakoglu, S., & Sakaoglu, M. E. T. (2016), explained that "Relations between Turkey and Pakistan: Towards Multidimensional Regional Integration" This report provides a thorough review of the situation of Turkey-Pakistan ties right now. The authors start by looking at how the two nations' relationship has changed over time, taking into accounts both recent developments and a slow institutionalisation process. They point out that Turkey and Pakistan have established strong political, military, and economic ties and have frequent communications at the highest levels of government. To address regional and global trends, particularly those with political and economic ramifications for the Middle East and Central Asia, Turkey and Pakistan have been collaborating. The two nations share a vision for a peaceful and prosperous area, and their interests complement one another (Colakoglu and Sakaoglu, 2016).

Park, B. (2013), further discussed the Turkey relations with Muslim states in his account "In a Globalised world: People, State, and Foreign Policy in Modern Turkey". He discussed that provides a thorough review of modern Turkey within the framework of a continuously globalising globe. Politics, economics, international relations, religion, and recent history are only a few of the topics covered in the book. From the founding of the republic to the present, the author charts the development of Turkey's domestic political and economic institutions as well as its foreign policies. It also discusses how the EU and the Turkish movement have influenced Turkish policies, as well as how globalisation has affected Turkish society, politics, the economy, and foreign policy (Park, 2013).

Pak-Turkey Cultural Interactions

Both Turkey and Pakistan have a rich and intertwined cultural past, and they both have a strong desire to further these ties through official efforts and accords. Devoted efforts have been undertaken since Pakistan's independence to accomplish significant milestones in this area. These efforts eventually resulted in the two governments establishing an important Cultural Agreement in 1953. The future strengthening and development of these interactions is the subject of Article 16 of this agreement, which lays a strong foundation for the subsequent flourishing of cultural ties. The leaderships of the two countries agreed to strengthen their cultural cooperation during the Turkish President's visit to Pakistan in November 1975, which took place from November 18 to November 24. As part of this programme, it was decided that the National Commission, as described in an earlier agreement, would meet frequently to discuss prospective policies for maximising the diplomatic value of cultural links. The issue was then brought up again in 1981 during General Zia ul Haq's visit to Turkey, and it was confirmed that real actions would be taken to strengthen the cultural partnership. Protocols for a three-year exchange programme were inked in support of these initiatives during the 1981 visit of Turkish General Kenan Evren to Pakistan. To promote cross-cultural understanding and develop bilateral connections, the parties decided to start a student exchange programme. Pakistan held the Izmir Trade Fair, Turkish Industrial Exhibition, and celebrated Turkish Week as part of this effort to introduce Pakistanis to Turkish customs and culture. With the intention of establishing an

atmosphere favourable to scientific and technical research, an agreement was struck between the Middle East Technical University of Ankara and the University Grants Commission Islamabad encouraging the interchange of students and educational delegations. Driving advancement in the fields of society, economics, and education was the key goal. Pakistan Television and the Turkish Broadcasting Corporation also agreed to work together, as did Radio Pakistan and the Turkish Radio Broadcasting Corporation. These important accords acted as a stimulus for the extensive exchange and blending of cultural concepts between Pakistan and Turkey.

A new agreement between Pakistan and Turkey concentrating on cultural interactions from 1993 to 1996 was signed in November 1992. The agreement covered a range of cultural and artistic topics, including the organisation of exchanged displays of traditional handicrafts and the movement of discussion groups and artists. Additionally, both nations agreed to sponsor film festivals and invite filmmakers to take part in film weeks hosted by their respective film industries. The deal also included the exchange of priceless publications and records in the areas of archaeology, art history, architecture, and monument repair. Both governments decided that they would jointly host international conferences and seminars that would include specialists from each other's countries as participants. The goal of this extensive agreement was to promote mutual respect and collaboration between Pakistan and Turkey. Universities in both nations offered scholarships to students, which boosted the cooperation between the two nations. These scholarships, which were designed to support intellectual endeavors, were available for undergraduate and graduate study. Furthermore, initiatives were taken to improve the environment for research and publishing by encouraging collaboration in the library sciences, facilitating staff exchange programmes, and encouraging the exchange of books. A healthy sports environment was also promoted as part of the relationship, which went beyond academia. As part of their collaborative efforts to strengthen sports links between the nations, the governments committed to encourage the trade of sporting products and to provide venues for training and other sports-related activities (Abdullah, 2020).

Religion

Islam is the common religion of both countries. Both nations are followers of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and believe that the last messenger of God will bring revelation to mankind. And both countries believe in the last book "Quran". The same is true for five prayers. And during Ramsan, all Muslims in both countries must fast from morning till night. Turkey is influenced by Arabic, Greek, Persian and Turkic-Mongolian cultures. Turkey was occupied by many regions, the Persian Empire, ancient linguistic influences. The Pakistan region (Indus Valley) was occupied by the Achaemenid Empire, dating back to the 5th century. The Turkish region has too many European and Greek ancient civilizations. Pakistan is also influenced by Greek culture. With many Greek empires expanding into the subcontinent, most notably Alexander the Great's invasion, Gandhara remains an important ancient Greek legacy in Pakistan. The traditional peoples of Iran and Greece dominated Central and South Asia and delved into their influence (Akturk, 2015).

Sufism

Sufism developed because of Islamic jurisprudence or fiqh. Sometimes their views are opposed, affecting cultural relations. Sufism developed especially in the subcontinent and regions of Turkey. Turkic followers of Central Asian Sufism teachers, they influence the sages of Karasam. Sufi teachers from Pakistan and Turkey share the same beliefs and views that have helped strengthen cultural ties (Awan, 2019).

Language

The cornerstone of any culture and the defining identity of a nation lie in its language. Language serves as the binding force that unites individuals within a community. In the

cultural context of Pakistan, the national language, Urdu, holds a significant place and has been notably influenced by Turkey. The term "Urdu" finds its origin in the Turkish word "Ordu," which translates to "horde" (Younas, 2012). As a result of this influence, numerous words in Urdu have pure Turkish roots. The importance of Urdu is deeply intertwined with Pakistan's freedom movement. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Urdu gained prominence as the language of Muslims. This significance was further emphasized when the British government replaced Urdu with Hindi as the official language. In response, Muslims across the sub-continent rallied to defend their language, fueling the cause of Muslim nationalism and the struggle for independence. This collective effort eventually evolved into an organized constitutional and political movement that sought the creation of a separate homeland, Pakistan. Additionally, Urdu holds a prominent and noteworthy position in Turkey, with several Turkish universities boasting dedicated Urdu departments. These efforts are aimed at fostering cultural kinship and promoting mutual understanding through language exchange. To facilitate this cultural exchange, significant scientific and artistic works are being planned for translation from Turkish to Urdu, making them accessible to the people of Pakistan. In a recent development, a considerable number of Turkish students have been enrolled at Allama Iqbal Open University, where they are receiving education in the Urdu language.

Architecture and Education

Pakistan's landscape boasts an array of national-level buildings, skillfully crafted by accomplished Turkish architects. We find a collection of renowned structures designed by these talented professionals, each showcasing the distinctive and captivating essence of Turkish artistry. These buildings stand as testament to the harmonious fusion of Turkish architectural prowess with Pakistan's iconic landmarks, exemplifying the captivating allure of Turkish design principles (Dawn, 2008).

Pakistan and Turkey have maintained a commendable degree of educational collaboration, which is exemplified by mutually agreed-upon exchange programmes at various academic levels. With both countries' educational institutions actively participating, this collaboration has been strengthened even more. Notably, the Pak-Turk Research Mobility Program was jointly established by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) of Turkey and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, providing funds for scholars on both sides to undertake their research projects (HEC WEBSITE). In addition, established, long-standing exchange programmes give students from both nations the priceless chance to study at each other's top universities. As a result, a large number of Pakistani students are currently studying in Turkey, and Turkish students have been accepted into multiple institutions all throughout Pakistan.

These exchange initiatives have not only facilitated cultural understanding between the two nations but also paved the way for the enhancement of educational systems accordingly. The cooperation in the education sector has particularly contributed to bolstering research efforts in diverse fields, notably in the realms of science and technology. Collaboratively, Pakistani and Turkish scientists and researchers are engaged in joint ventures, exploring various programs and initiatives to drive progress and innovation in their respective fields. This ongoing partnership in education and research epitomizes the depth of camaraderie and knowledge-sharing between Pakistan and Turkey, fostering a thriving academic environment for mutual growth and advancement.

In various cities across Pakistan, Turkish-operated schools catered to primary and secondary education, delivering international standard education to Pakistani children while fostering a sense of cultural harmony and collaboration. However, the Pak-Turk school system in Pakistan underwent significant changes following the ban of the organization led by Fatehullah Gulen in Turkey in 2016. The organization faced allegations of being involved in plotting the 2016 military coup against Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government. As a result, the administration of these schools transitioned to Turkish authorities, now overseen by the Maarif Foundation. Despite the transformation, it is essential to underscore the remarkable

level of cooperation in education demonstrated by this school system. Its foundation was firmly laid upon providing education adhering to international standards, which has left a lasting impact on the students' learning experience and cultural integration. Cooperation in the field of education extends beyond school systems and encompasses vocational training as well. Both nations regularly teach their employees, officials, and academics, giving them access to the most recent tools and methods. Diplomats from both countries receive specialised training in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation that was signed on October 25, 2009 between the Foreign Service Training Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and the Foreign Service Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. By working together, we hope to promote harmony, unity, and cooperation when pursuing foreign policy. By extending their engagement to include vocational training, Pakistan and Turkey are further consolidating their shared commitment to enhancing mutual understanding and professional competencies.

Films and Dramas

The collaboration in this domain is not one-sided; rather, it extends reciprocally between Pakistan and Turkey. Numerous Turkish dramas and films have been broadcasted in Pakistan, fostering a cultural exchange between the two nations. In the face of security challenges that affected Pakistan's entertainment industry, movie production experienced a significant setback. To address this void, Indian content was aired on entertainment channels. However, with strained relations between India and Pakistan, Indian authorities discriminated against Pakistani artists, leading Pakistan to retaliate by banning Indian content. To bridge this gap, Turkish dramas were translated into Urdu and aired on entertainment channels. This initiative not only filled the void left by the absence of Indian content but also created an atmosphere of fondness and appreciation for Turkish culture and traditions among the Pakistani audience. Through this exchange of Turkish entertainment, a mutual sense of affection and understanding was cultivated, further strengthening the cultural ties between Pakistan and Turkey (Rafiq, 2021).

Food and Cuisine

The art of cooking and the distinctive use of spices set apart various cultural dishes and cuisines. Turkish food, known for its delightful taste and rich flavor, enjoys immense popularity worldwide. In Pakistan, people relish Turkish cuisine, evident from the presence of numerous Turkish restaurants and bakeries in major cities. Each year, a Turkish food festival is organized in the country, further showcasing the love for Turkish gastronomy. In a remarkable celebration of 70 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Turkey, a week-long food festival took place in Islamabad in 2017. This event, jointly hosted by a five-star hotel in Pakistan and the Turkish Embassy in Islamabad, showcased the delectable delights of Turkish cuisine, offering a delightful culinary experience to the attendees. The festival served as a testament to the enduring bond and mutual appreciation between the two nations, not just at the diplomatic level but also through the celebration of their shared gastronomic heritage. The culinary affection between Pakistan and Turkey goes both ways, as Pakistani foods have also gained popularity in Turkey. A considerable number of restaurants in Turkey offer the delightful taste of Pakistani cuisine, catering to the Turkish people's taste buds. Among the most cherished dishes worldwide, Biryani holds a special place in Turkey, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Renowned for their tantalizing spiciness and delightful flavors, Pakistani foods have garnered admiration in Turkey and beyond. In celebration of their culinary heritage and cultural exchange, Pakistani food festivals are organized in Turkey, with the Pakistani Embassy in Ankara taking the lead in hosting these delightful events. These festivals provide an excellent opportunity for the Turkish community to savor the diverse and delectable offerings of Pakistani cuisine. The mutual love for food between the two nations symbolizes the strong bond and appreciation for each other's cultural richness, fostering a delightful exchange of flavors and culinary traditions (Aziz, 2016).

Standing Strong against Islam phobia

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a "phobia" is an illogical and unexplained fear of a certain thing, circumstance, or people. In actuality, phobia, which goes beyond specific things or situations, can include any dread exhibited through speech, actions, or feelings. There is a long history of racism and religious discrimination, and there have long been negative attitudes about Muslims. The events of September 11, 2001 only served to exacerbate these attitudes. In its 1997 report on Islamophobia, the Runnymede Trust emphasised the pervasive prejudice against Muslims at the time. Iran and North Korea are the only two nations at the moment on the blacklist. Pakistan was placed on the grey list in October 2019 with harsh recommendations, and because it had only complied with five of the 27 recommendations, there were worries that it would be blacklisted in the upcoming session in February 2020. However, Pakistan's time-tested buddy, Turkey, stepped in to avert its blacklisting. Turkey highlighted that Pakistan should not be held accountable for political games because of the inescapable circumstances brought on by the war on terror. President Tayyip Erdogan assured Pakistan of unshakable support and promised further aid in the future, stressing a partnership built on love and respect (Shah and Li, 2020).

Different definitions shed light on the pervasive issue of Islamophobia, underscoring the need to address and combat prejudices and misconceptions about Muslims to foster a more inclusive and tolerant society. The hostile and antagonistic attitude towards Islam and Muslims has deeply wounded the sentiments of Muslims worldwide. Over the past two decades, Muslims have been unfairly held responsible for various law and order issues, especially in Western Europe and America. This rise in anti-Muslim sentiments has led to deteriorating conditions for Muslims living in these regions, where they face exclusion from social, civil, political, and economic spheres, making survival under such harsh conditions challenging. Western countries have passed discriminatory laws targeting Muslims, and this animosity is not confined to just governmental circles; it has become pervasive in the general population as well. The 2008 Gallup Survey shed light on the western population's attitude and beliefs towards Islam and Muslims, revealing bigotry, discrimination, and the propagation of hatred. This hostility towards Muslims has not only affected individual lives but has also had international repercussions. Muslim-majority states, such as Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, have suffered severe oppression, with alarming human rights violations reported by independent organizations. However, the world community, particularly the West, has remained largely indifferent to their plight. Similarly, long-standing freedom movements in Palestine and Kashmir have been unjustly labeled as terrorist activities. This unjust portrayal has significantly hindered the Palestinian and Kashmiri causes, as the Western media, civil society, and governments turn a deaf ear to their calls for freedom and human rights. Addressing and countering these prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory policies is essential to promote understanding, tolerance, and peace among diverse communities and to foster a more just and equitable global society (Ahmad, Raja and Shah, 2022). Following the tragic events of 9/11, Muslim states experienced unprecedented losses, with Middle Eastern countries bearing the brunt of irreparable damage.

Other Muslim nations also suffered significant losses in terms of lives and resources. Pakistan stands as a glaring example of a country deeply impacted by the war on terror. The loss of millions of lives and incalculable economic damages has left a profound scar on the social fabric, leading to enduring political instability. These distressing consequences can be directly or indirectly attributed to the growing hostility against Muslims and Islam in the West after the 2001 incident. Incidents hurting Muslim sentiments have escalated, with several reports of targeted violence against Muslims, such as the recent tragedy in New Zealand, where 49 innocent worshippers lost their lives in a mosque attack carried out by a white supremacist. These events are frequently covered in the media, perpetuating the cycle of hurt and mistrust. Moreover, Muslim emotions are further wounded by the publication of caricatures of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him), restrictions on wearing hijab, and the desecration of the Holy Quran through acts like setting it on fire. These actions have been widely reported in the Western world, yet concrete measures to prevent such incidents have

been lacking. Instead, the principle of freedom of speech and expression is often cited, granting people the liberty to engage in hurtful actions without consequences. This approach has exacerbated the already dire situation, fueling tension and division between communities. Addressing this issue requires fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and empathy, promoting dialogue and cooperation among different faiths and cultures. By recognizing the importance of mutual respect and embracing diversity, societies can build bridges of understanding and work towards a more harmonious and peaceful world for all (Awan, 2019).

By taking a firm stance against discrimination and advocating for peaceful dialogue among civilizations and faiths, Pakistan demonstrates its commitment to fostering a world where religious diversity is respected and protected. Through its proactive approach at international forums, Pakistan strives to create an environment of understanding and mutual respect for all religious and cultural backgrounds (Ahmed, Amir, and Ahmad, 2020).

During the 74th annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, delivered a resolute address denouncing the rise of Islamophobia. In his speech, he emphasized the rights of Muslims who have been enduring oppression across the globe and called upon the world community to refrain from attributing the actions of individuals to their religion. Prime Minister Khan cited examples such as the Tamil Tigers and Japanese Pilots, who engaged in acts of terror, yet their religious identities were not held responsible for their actions. He unequivocally stated, "Terrorism has nothing to do with religion." Furthermore, Prime Minister Khan addressed the unfair labeling of Muslim freedom movements as terrorist activities by the West, expressing his concern over the discriminatory attitude of the global community towards Muslims. Through his speech, he aimed to shed light on the misconceptions and prejudices surrounding Islam and Muslims, advocating for a more balanced and understanding approach towards the Muslim community worldwide (Kulaklikaya and Nurdun, 2010).

Turkey, in a similar vein, has vehemently condemned the prevailing anti-Muslim sentiment globally. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has garnered praise for his unwavering support of the Muslim cause and his efforts to combat Islamophobia. During the 35th ministerial meeting of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, he candidly addressed the world community's treatment of Muslim sentiments, stating, "Those who claim to defend democracy and human rights turn a blind eye to the abuse of Muslims and migrants in their own lands." Furthermore, in his address at the 74th meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, President Erdogan presented a map of Palestine, shedding light on the brutal oppression and humiliation faced by Muslims in the region as their state was gradually encroached upon. His strong condemnation of the US decision to relocate their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was seen as a demonstration of leadership in the Muslim world. Throughout its history, Turkish leadership has consistently stood in solidarity with the cause of Muslims worldwide, demonstrating its commitment to protecting their rights and challenging discriminatory practices. President Erdogan's outspoken advocacy for Muslim rights has earned him recognition as a leader in the global Muslim community, striving to counter Islamophobia and promote a more just and equitable world for all. Pakistan and Turkey have forged a united front to combat Islamophobia through joint efforts. In a formal announcement made during the 5th meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, both nations expressed their determination to work together against extremist ideologies and hatred directed towards Muslims. This significant development occurred on the sidelines of the 74th United Nations General Assembly, where Pakistan, Turkey, and Malaysia came together to address the impact of Islamophobia. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohammad, in a show of solidarity, agreed to establish an English-language channel aimed at countering the growing ideas of extremism targeting Muslims worldwide. During their speeches at the UN General Assembly, the three leaders further supported each other's causes and emphasized the importance of safeguarding the rights of Muslims globally. They shed light on human

rights violations against Muslims in places like Myanmar, Palestine, Kashmir, and other regions. With a collective vision, Pakistan, Turkey, and Malaysia intend to involve more Muslim nations in their joint endeavor to combat Islamophobia, signaling their commitment to fostering greater understanding, respect, and tolerance among diverse cultures and religions (Yilmaz, Saleem, Pargoo, Shukri, Ismail, and Shakil, 2022).

Conclusion

The relations between the Pakistan and Turkey have good history and have been judged through number of events and stayed strong always. Both the countries are Muslims and both have good gestures for each other. This study thoroughly evaluated the cultural, social and religious relations between both the states and found that Istanbul and Islamabad always stand with each other on the perspectives of cultural issues, religious issues and social issues as well as supported each other in all the times such as earth quick, floods, United Nations floors and number of other stages.

The study further explored that both the countries firmly stand with each other on the issues of Islam phobia and terrorism. Number of things such as food and cuisine, poetry and literature, films and dramas, education, architecture, culture, Sufism, religion, and many common factors also match with each other, hence, the peoples as well as governments also respect to each other.

Recommendations

It is further recommended that authors should further explore the relations between Pakistan and Turkey on different perspectives such as military, economic, political and social.

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