

CHINA'S CULTURAL SOFT POWER IN BANGLADESH: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES (2000-2020).

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ABSTRACT

Cultural dominance is one of the most significant aspects of soft power strategy in global politics. The most influential countries employ cultural soft power to consolidate their positions on international platforms to enhance their national interests. This study explores China's cultural soft-power strategies in Bangladesh by examining its achievements and challenges. It identifies that China has extended its cultural resources to considerable levels in Bangladesh, including arranging cultural programs and festivals, exchange programs, support for higher education, cultural institutes, media, cultural content, and infrastructure development. However, China faces several challenges in achieving its soft power objectives owing to cultural barriers, perception of political manipulation, and proper management of facilities. This study recommends that China requires to develop initiatives to

reduce the country's challenges. This study followed a qualitative research method, based on primary and secondary sources. This study fills a crucial gap in the understanding of China's efficacy in Bangladesh. A comprehensive insight into China's cultural soft power will help policymakers to heighten bilateral relations and contribute to academia, such as international relations, diplomacy, and other intellectual horizons related to Bangladesh studies.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, studies on China's use of cultural diplomacy in Bangladesh as a tool for soft power have become increasingly significant. China aims to improve its reputation and dominance in South Asia by strategically focusing on projects, including media programs, infrastructure development, and linguistic and cultural exchanges (Alam & Hasan, 2023; Chen, 2018). China has a considerably higher presence in Bangladesh. Bangladesh became a member of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2016. According to reports, the Awami League administration prioritised 17 projects, which included building roads, railways, power plants, river tunnels, port renovation, and information and communication technology development. China has been an increasingly important partner in Bangladesh's defense industry; from 2015 to 2019, 74% of Bangladesh's purchases of weapons came from China (Hasan, 2023).

The growing presence of China in Bangladesh has accelerated concerns for other superpowers to achieve their strategic objectives. The United States, India, Japan, the European Union, and China Russia all engaged in Bangladesh from different levels, which manifested the crucial dynamics of geopolitics in this region. They used several resources and mechanisms to strengthen their presence in Bangladesh. Cultural diplomacy is a soft power tool that is employed in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a rigorous study to explore the puzzle of how China has incorporated cultural soft power in Bangladesh and the extent to which the country has achieved it. Accordingly, this study explores the nuanced ground of China's cultural soft power policy in Bangladesh, tackling a major research question: the degree to which China has succeeded in realising the objectives of its cultural soft power policy, and the complications produced in policy implementation (Pulami, 2021; Zaharna, 2014; Zhang, 2010).

The research findings have practical implications for policymakers and diplomats to enhance a more mature understanding of China's cultural soft power in Bangladesh. This study aims to create a significant link between academic knowledge and real-world decision making in the field

of international relations and diplomacy by thoroughly examining the body of existing literature and primary sources. Furthermore, its practical significance also extends to informing diplomats and politicians of the advantages and disadvantages of China's cultural endeavours, enabling more focused and efficient approaches to developing bilateral ties. As a result, this research has great potential to contribute to scholarly discussions as well as real-world decision-making in the fields of cultural diplomacy and international relations.

Existing research indicates that China's cultural soft power strategy in Bangladesh is based on a multidimensional approach that includes media initiatives, infrastructure development, and linguistic and cultural exchanges (Alam & Hasan, 2023; Chen, 2018). Scholarly research further indicates that a comprehensive evaluation of China's soft power impact necessitates an awareness of both the difficulties and efficacy of these measures (Pulami 2021). This calls for a comprehensive assessment that considers all facets of cultural impact, including language, art, and media initiatives.

Although China's cultural soft power initiatives in Bangladesh have been more prevalent, a thorough and significance analysis of the policy's success and the difficulties it encounters remain inadequate. Previous research has mostly concentrated on certain facets of China's cultural soft power projects, including infrastructure development or linguistic and cultural exchanges, without offering a comprehensive analysis of the entire strategy. Moreover, a large portion of the literature is founded on insufficient frameworks or empirical data, which leaves a vacuum in our knowledge of Bangladeshis' perspectives and actual experiences with China's cultural soft power outcomes.

This study first analyses the theoretical basis of soft power to explore the nature of soft power theory; second, it discusses China's soft power policy in Bangladesh; third, research methodology; fourth, China's soft power achievements and challenges; fifth, it provides policy recommendations for improvement; and finally, it ends with a conclusion.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The Soft Power Theory proposed by Joseph S. Nye in 1990 suggests that a nation's influence is measured by its ability to attract and persuade others, relying on attraction rather than coercion. This theory is particularly relevant to understanding China's soft power strategy in Bangladesh, which is evident in initiatives such as language and cultural exchanges, media programs, and infrastructure development (Nye, 2000). Cultural soft power, defined as a nation's capacity to shape perceptions through cultural avenues rather than military or economic dominance, is a concept central to international relations (Nye 1990). This influence is exerted through strategic endeavours in language and cultural exchanges, media programmes, and infrastructure development (Chaudhary, 2022). These initiatives serve as channels to strengthen diplomatic ties with other nations and promote a country's values and culture. Countries contribute to

the intricate fabric of diplomatic relations by participating in these cultural exchanges, underscoring the significance of soft power in the dynamics of the modern world.

Nonetheless, as many academics have noted (e.g., Gill (2007) Kuhn, (2019); Chaudhary (2022), China's soft power policy is a complex approach that crosses the diplomatic, cultural, economic, and defence domains. China places strong priority on high-level visits, diplomatic cooperation, and Track-II diplomacy to strengthen political connections and work together to address global issues (Kravchenko, 2022). China's economic soft power is demonstrated by its substantial investments in international infrastructure projects and its active engagement in trade partnerships, which fosters economic development and interdependence (Gill, 2007; Kuhn, 2019). China's defence soft power is demonstrated in the area of defence through security dialogues, cooperative initiatives, and capacity-building programs that strengthen military networks and promote stability in the region (Chaudhary 2022). Cultural activities that encourage worldwide cultural interaction and display China's rich heritage, such as the construction of Confucius Institutes and active participation in cultural events, create mutual appreciation (Chaudhary 2022). This multifaceted approach underscores China's commitment to positive global engagement, aiming to foster positive relationships, enhance understanding, and solidify its dominance on international platforms.

CHINA'S CULTURAL POLICIES IN BANGLADESH

To increase its influence and fortify bilateral relations, China has adopted a comprehensive cultural soft power strategy in Bangladesh that places strategic emphasis on media initiatives, infrastructure development, and linguistic and cultural exchanges (Chaudhary, 2022). China has offered vivid avenues for exhibiting customs and heritage, encouraging shared experiences, and strengthening cultural ties through active cultural programs and festivals. Initiatives such as research projects, professional partnerships, and student exchange programs have all facilitated knowledge sharing at the same time, enhance education and career opportunities, and foster long-lasting bonds. China's scholarship facilities and access to higher study at its institutions enable the collection of brilliant minds and promote intellectual collaboration, which is clearly in line with the Soft Power Theory.

The development and maintenance of Confucius Institutes act as central cultural centers that advance intercultural communication and language learning. China's recognition of and alignment with local preferences further enhances the receptivity of initiatives, fostering cultural resonance. China's creative expressions and rich cultural legacy are exhibited in the media through joint ventures with Bangladeshi media organizations and the manufacture of a wide range of cultural products, including music, films, television series, and internet resources. Concurrently, China's soft power appeal has increased, and long-lasting

cultural ties are fostered by strategic investment in cultural infrastructure, such as museums, cultural centers, and exhibition spaces. In Bangladesh, China's cultural soft power is solidified through symbolic cultural cooperation in infrastructure development that strengthens cultural linkages and positive attitudes (Chaudhary 2022). From the above analysis, this study can develop a framework of analysis by investigating the following characteristics of the cultural soft power China employed in Bangladesh:

- (1) Cultural Programs and Festivals
- (2) Exchange Programs
- (3) Higher Education Opportunities
- (4) Cultural Institute, Confucius Institute
- (5) Collaborative Media Ventures
- (6) Availability of Cultural Contents
- (7) Infrastructure Development

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach that combines a variety of data collection and analysis techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of China's cultural soft power policy in Bangladesh. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the nuances of individual perceptions, experiences, and cultural dynamics that shape the reception and effectiveness of China's cultural soft power initiatives. Accordingly, data were collected from official policy documents, media reports, academic publications, social media posts, and online forums. This study will provide insights into the goals, strategies, implementation, and public discourse surrounding China's cultural soft power policy in Bangladesh.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHINA'S CULTURAL SOFT POWER IN BANGLADESH

China's cultural soft power in Bangladesh has generated several noteworthy successes, demonstrating a systematic and comprehensive approach to augmenting its reputation and dominance within the country. This section critically examines the extent to which China has successfully achieved its cultural soft-power policy goals in Bangladesh.

Cultural Programs and Festivals

China's calculated emphasis on cultural programs and festivals has produced admirable achievements, fostering favourable outcomes. By organising joint events and festivities, both countries have actively participated in a vibrant interchange of customs, development mutual understanding and appreciation (Mirza, M. N., Abbas, H., & Nizamani, M. Q. 2020). The two countries signed a cultural agreement in 2002, which included a cultural executive program that was reiterated in 2008 and 2012. As a result, distinguished scholars and artists from Bangladesh and China visit each other annually to display their work (Islam, 2014). Bangladesh and China host several cultural events annually. China and

Bangladesh forged a people's friendship. Over the course of two days, the National Art Hall in Dhaka hosted the "Chinese Culture Tour to South Asia 2015". The Bangladesh China Moitree Somity Association and the Shilpokala Academy were responsible for organizing it. Thirty of the most expensive and renowned Chinese artworks were on display during the event. The show was admired by people of all ages. Pictures were selected to highlight the significance of Chinese philosophy, mysticism, nature, and civilization.

These festivals are lively manifestations of the rich tapestry shared by China and Bangladesh, featuring customs, art, music, and gastronomic pleasures. The activities not only amuse but also educate and foster cross-cultural understanding and a deeper appreciation of one another's heritage. A significant number of cultural exchanges took place between 1991 and 2017 to maintain and enhance cultural relations. One significant event was the 1997 cultural exchange trip to China by a delegation from Bangladesh's cultural community, which paved the way for bilateral visits and cooperative projects. The implementation and extension of a cultural executive program in 2002, 2008, and 2012 serve as additional testaments to promote intercultural understanding.

The yearly exchanges of distinguished artists and scholars, as well as the 2010 China-Bangladesh Friendship and Brightness (Ophthalmic) Trip, are examples of long-lasting cultural ties between the two countries. Mutual cultural troupe exchanges, dance performances, and participation in international festivals reinforce the bond between friends and culture. The shared passion for sports and delegations from various sports also contribute to the dimensional character of cross-cultural interactions (Quiyum and Jahirul, 2021). The increasing popularity of Chinese food among Bangladeshis indicates the significant influence of cultural intersections. Launched by the Chinese Ambassador in 2015, the Chinese Food Festival manifested cross-cultural exchanges in the culinary arts. Chinese restaurants and hotels have proliferated throughout Bangladesh because of the appeal of Chinese food, greatly enhancing cultural ties between the two countries (Karim and Islam, 2018).

Several types of Exchange Programs

The notable accomplishment of China's cultural soft power policy in Bangladesh is the facilitation of broader student exchange programs, professional alliances, and intellectual partnerships. These initiatives serve as cornerstones of robust bilateral engagement in the educational domain, fostering meaningful connections between Bangladeshi and Chinese scholars and professionals (Pulami 2021). These programs and collaborations offer a dynamic interchange of knowledge, ideas, and expertise, facilitating a comprehensive academic and professional exchange between the two nations. Students and professionals from China and Bangladesh benefit greatly from this educational collaboration because they are exposed to a variety of academic and professional backgrounds. This amazing experience fosters mutual respect for one another's cultures and advances both partners' academic and professional

development. Collaboration on research projects is another way in which ideas are shared, and it enhances scholarly viewpoints and advances in a variety of disciplines. This concerted intellectual effort fosters educational growth and a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic landscapes of both countries, strengthening the foundation of academic connections between China and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's focus on increasing its capacity is consistent with these goals, especially as the country strives to become a developed nation by 2041. The administration's proactive attempts to promote South-South partnerships, particularly with neighbouring Asian countries, demonstrate a commitment to advancing educational advancement (Hussain and Islam, 2016). The Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP) between Bangladesh and China's Yunnan Province is a leading example of this partnership. Under this initiative, Chinese expert trainers actively assist their Bangladeshi counterparts in strengthening their abilities in a variety of areas, such as student exchange, teacher development, and information sharing. The cooperation endeavour includes scholarship possibilities, with the first batch of 85 Bangladeshi students scheduled to attend Yunnan-affiliated colleges in September 2023. The successful conclusion of this program emphasizes the importance of cross-border collaboration in education and demonstrates the beneficial influence of China's cultural soft power activities in Bangladesh.

HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN DIFFERENT CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

China's commitment to offering scholarships and opportunities for higher study at many prestigious Chinese institutions is vital for developing a good overview and strengthening educational linkages between Bangladesh and China (Chen, 2018). Scholarships and access to higher education at prominent Chinese institutions are critical components of Bangladesh-China educational partnership. These possibilities enable ambitious Bangladeshi students to achieve their academic goals by providing access to high-quality education in various subjects. In addition to easing financial difficulties, scholarships promote cross-cultural relationships and facilitate academic exchanges.

Enrolling Chinese institutions exposes students to advanced educational systems, cutting-edge research facilities, and a highly competitive academic environment. This experience helps Bangladeshi students learn about diverse academic methodologies and cultures, promotes personal growth, and broadens their perspectives. The mix of academic experience and cultural immersion greatly adds to students' overall development, equipping them to become global citizens capable of facing the problems of an interconnected world. This effort demonstrates China's dedication to promoting education and talent development as well as developing strong educational relations and long-term partnerships between the two countries. Notably, there is strong encouragement for students to study Chinese in universities such as Shanto Mariam

University, the University of Dhaka, North South University, and Bangladesh University of Professionals. Many Bangladeshi university students now have even more educational options thanks to the Chinese government's Confucian scholarship program (Kabir, 2017). China and Bangladesh are actively collaborating on skill development initiatives to bolster economic productivity, highlighting their shared commitment to human capital development (World Bank 2018). This collaboration extends beyond economic spheres, as evidenced by the growing presence of over 700 Chinese citizens in Bangladesh, primarily concentrated in Dhaka and Chittagong (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This signifies burgeoning mutual understanding and cultural exchange between the two nations.

Moreover, Bangladeshi students are increasingly drawn to China's diverse educational landscape, demonstrating a strong desire to pursue bachelor's degrees and further education within its institutions (China Education International Exchange Association, 2024). This trend further underscores the deepening of ties and cross-cultural engagement between the two countries.

Confucius Institute

The development and functioning of Confucius Institutes are important milestones in China's cultural soft power operations in Bangladesh. These institutes are significant players, serving as hubs for Chinese language instruction and cultural interchange, thus increasing China's influence in Bangladesh (Zaharna 2014). Globally, the establishment of Confucius Institutes is a strategic drive by China to propagate its language and culture, encouraging partnerships with academic institutions throughout the world. These institutes, managed by the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) in collaboration with Chinese universities and affiliated organizations, have three primary goals: (1) to promote cultural exchange, (2) to provide Chinese language education, and (3) to facilitate business engagements and cultural festivities, such as Chinese song contests and Spring Festival celebrations (Paradise, 2009).

Hanban, a Chinese government-affiliated organization, positions Confucius Institutes as non-profit educational institutions dedicated to fulfilling the growing global demand for Chinese language instruction and enhancing international understanding of the Chinese language and culture (Hanban, 2023). The Chinese government provides financial support to all Confucius Institutes worldwide, with an estimated annual cost per institute of approximately \$100,000 (Johnson, 2020). Notably, universities in Bangladesh, such as North South University and Dhaka University, house Confucius Institutes, showcasing China's commitment to promoting its culture within Bangladeshi higher education institutions (Confucius Institute at North South University, n.d.); Dhaka University, n.d.).

Dr. Zhou Weiwei, a director of the Confucius Institute (in Bangladesh), emphasizes the offering of Chinese language and cultural training programmes to many sections of the Bangladeshi community, including

students, professionals, and businesses. Furthermore, they provide Confucius Institute scholarships to Bangladeshi students, allowing them to study at prestigious Chinese universities, such as Beijing Language and Culture University, Yunnan University, and Xiamen University. Simultaneously, Chinese companies, such as Newey's International Company Ltd., make considerable investments in Bangladesh, focusing on the housing requirements of those studying or working in Dhaka. This effort goes beyond fixing housing issues; it creates job possibilities, fosters mutual understanding, and promotes reciprocal cultural interchange between Chinese and Bangladeshi citizens. While some high-ranking Chinese officials view Confucius Institutes as academic rather than political, downplaying their role in expanding China's soft power, their undeniable contribution to shaping China's global image is consistent with the larger strategy to increase the country's appeal and soft power (S. Rahman, 2019). Bangladesh is a fascinating example of how this tactic works in the context of China's cultural soft power strategy.

Collaborative Media Ventures

Strategic alliances with Bangladeshi media outlets are critical to China's success. These collaborations have played a critical role in the worldwide diffusion of cultural content through collaborative ventures in the television, cinema, and news media. China has efficiently addressed various audiences in Bangladesh through joint efforts, leading to a positive reception of Chinese cultural items (Chen, 2018). Chinese dramas, documentaries, and cultural programmes have been broadcast on television through collaborations, providing Bangladeshi viewers with an insight into the diverse and multifaceted Chinese community. These programs not only entertain but also act as cultural ambassadors, promoting a better understanding of Chinese customs, values, and ways of life.

Joint collaborations in the film industry have enabled the exhibition of Chinese films in Bangladeshi theatres, thereby establishing a cinematic bridge between the two nations. This interaction not only brings Chinese narrative and cinematic skills to Bangladeshi viewers but also creates a space for cultural conversation and appreciation. In news media, joint initiatives have improved coverage of China-related news, events, and trends. (Rahman, 2019). By actively interacting with Bangladeshi media sources, China has been able to portray a more balanced story, resulting in a better-informed public and increasing intercultural understanding.

Diverse Cultural Contents in Media and Communication

China's media programs are largely observed because of the wide range of cultural content they provide. This strategy has been crucial in developing a complex cultural narrative that connects Bangladeshi viewers and promotes the widespread enjoyment of culture (Alam & Hasan, 2023). Media content that highlights a variety of aspects, such as historical viewpoints, customs, and modern life, brings the richness of Chinese

culture into life. Films, Internet materials, and television shows provide vivid windows into the richly varied fabric of Chinese culture. Documentaries examine breathtaking landscapes and cultural legacies, while lifestyle programs provide peeks for current Chinese living. Chinese plays offer insight into historical events and cultural customs.

This richness of cultural material not only entertains but also teaches Bangladeshi viewers, helping them discover and comprehend all aspects of Chinese culture. The deliberate display of historical richness, traditional values, and the dynamic character of modern China helps construct a sophisticated cultural narrative. As a result, Bangladeshi audiences have a deeper understanding of the richness and complexity of Chinese heritage. This method has proven to be successful, as evidenced by the excellent reception of Chinese media materials in Bangladesh. China has successfully attracted the attention and interests of the Bangladeshi public by providing a complete and diverse picture of Chinese culture. This achievement demonstrates the usefulness of leveraging cultural content as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, in addition to China's overall success.

Developing Infrastructure in Cultural Centres, Museums, and Exhibition Spaces

China has made strategic investments in Bangladeshi infrastructure development projects, including the building and maintenance of cultural centers, museums, and exhibition spaces. These initiatives strengthen cultural soft power relations in addition to strengthening economic relationships. China's building and financing of cultural centers, museums, and exhibition halls serve as concrete markers of the two countries' flourishing cultural cooperation. Alam and Hasan (2023) assert that these architectural wonders serve as evidence of mutual dedication to promote a more profound comprehension and admiration of Chinese art, history, and technical innovations in the context of Bangladesh. The historical and cultural legacies of both countries were vitally preserved and showcased by museums funded by the Chinese government. By selecting displays that emphasize common histories and cultural influences, these museums help to tell stories of interconnection. Visitors may interact with artifacts, artwork, and historical tales that bridge the divide between China and Bangladesh, promoting a feeling of shared cultural identity.

Finally, China's financial support for infrastructure development initiatives, along with symbolic cultural exchanges, manifests a purposeful and sophisticated strategy to strengthen its cultural soft power in Bangladesh. Beyond the obvious advantages of better infrastructure, these cooperative initiatives create a story of shared enjoyment and cultural affinity. In addition to helping to restore sites physically, China's active engagement in conserving Bangladesh's cultural legacy fosters long-lasting cultural ties between the two countries. This multi-pronged approach strengthens Bangladesh's cultural ties with China, promoting a favourable response and expanding the nation's comprehension of Chinese culture.

CHALLENGES OF CHINA'S CULTURAL SOFT POWER IN BANGLADESH

China's efforts to implement cultural soft power in Bangladesh encounter various challenges, necessitating a comprehensive examination to grasp the obstacles hindering its success.

Accused of Propaganda tools through Educational Exchange Programs and Knowledge Transfer

There are problems with executing educational exchange programs and guaranteeing successful knowledge transfer. The smooth integration of Chinese educational programs into the Bangladeshi environment is impeded by differences in educational systems, curricular alignment, and various academic agendas. Resolving these disparities requires careful consideration and calculation of the changes. Hasan and Alam (2023). Through scholarships, educational exchanges, and the founding of Confucius Institutes, China increased its soft power influence in Bangladesh. Although these programs have been effective in promoting Chinese language and culture and giving Bangladeshi students the opportunity to study in China, problems have emerged (Jasmin, Sakib, & Shishir, 2023). There have been questions expressed concerning the Confucius Institutes' educational standards and the possibility that Chinese propaganda may be spread by means of these initiatives.

Proper Management of Scholarships and Higher Education Opportunities

Despite China's great efforts to provide scholarships and higher education opportunities, issues remain in ensuring accessibility and inclusion. Economic inequities, inefficient knowledge, and bureaucratic barriers may restrict the accessibility and efficacy of these activities, necessitating targeted interventions and systematic communication plans (Chen, 2018). China deliberately uses scholarship and higher education opportunities to strengthen its soft power influence in Bangladesh. These programs are critical for building stronger educational relationships and boosting China's educational diplomacy. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2020) reports that there are more than 20 collaborative educational programs between the Chinese and Bangladeshi institutions. Nonetheless, issues related to China's scholarship programs have come to light. Questions have been expressed concerning the impartiality and openness of scholarship distributions, as well as the possibility that Chinese universities may enrol applicants who are unlikely to excel academically. China's scholarship programs, which give Bangladeshi students the chance to study in China for a top-notch education while also promoting mutual understanding and collaboration, are beneficial despite these difficulties.

Proper Utilization of Confucius Institute in Bangladesh

The development and operation of Confucius Institutes confront perception and autonomy issues, with concerns about potential political influence and perceived cultural supremacy leading to adversary mistrust. Finding a balance between promoting the Chinese language and culture and maintaining local sovereignty is critical to overcoming these obstacles. Confucius Institutes (CIs) across the world play an important role in advancing Chinese soft power by encouraging the teaching of the Chinese language and culture. Bangladesh has one such institute that opened in 2008 at the University of Dhaka. Offering courses ranging from beginner to advanced levels of Chinese language proficiency, as well as insights into Chinese culture, history, and philosophy, CIs organize cultural events and exchanges throughout the year to help students better understand Chinese culture (Confucius Institute Headquarters 2023). Despite making a substantial contribution to improving mutual understanding and fostering ties between Bangladesh and China, CIs have come under criticism, especially when it comes to their support for Chinese ideology and propaganda. CIs that receive funding and surveillance from the Chinese government via Hanban are accused of selectively reporting historical and policy details and offering a skewed assessment of China's human rights record. Interestingly, CIs may have an impact on Bangladeshi educators and students. Being exposed to Chinese propaganda might result in biased perspectives, which could affect Bangladesh's sovereignty, specifically given that it is a growing nation with a larger youth.

Perceived Cultural Imposition

China's efforts to create cultural soft power in Bangladesh are beset by a significant obstacle, the perception of cultural imperialism. Although China demands sharing its rich cultural legacy, there is a chance that this may be interpreted as an attempt to impose Chinese culture on Bangladesh's unique cultural environment. To effectively tackle this dilemma, a nuanced strategy is required to recognize and honour the local culture. A cautious balance that guarantees respect for and acceptance of Chinese culture without overshadowing or damaging Bangladesh's rich cultural legacy is necessary to achieve success in the use of cultural soft power. Building cultural ties that both countries accept and celebrate requires mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

Communication Barriers

Linguistic and cultural barriers prevent people from communicating effectively, which can result in misunderstood intentions, nuanced translations, and trouble in expressing cultural nuances. To reduce these communication gaps, cultural sensitivity and sophisticated linguistic techniques must be used in the planning and implementation of cultural exchange programs. Communication gaps may be a serious obstacle to Bangladeshi efforts to leverage China's cultural soft power. Both countries

have language and cultural differences that make communication less successful. These variations increase the possibility of misinterpreting intents, mistranslating subtleties, and difficulty appropriately expressing cultural nuances. Addressing communication hurdles involves more than simply linguistic skills; it also necessitates a thorough awareness of the cultural backgrounds of both China and Bangladesh. China may improve the efficacy of its cultural soft power projects by adding proper linguistic techniques and cultural sensitivity to cultural program design and implementation. This strategy guarantees that the intended cultural themes are correctly delivered, resulting in a deeper and more meaningful cultural interchange between China and Bangladesh.

Socio-political Sensitivities:

China's cultural soft power in Bangladesh has a great deal of difficulty negotiating socio-political sensitivities. Diplomatic and flexible approaches are necessary to strike a careful balance between cultural efforts and regional sensitivity, political concerns, and historical background. It is important to acknowledge these sensitivities to cultivate an atmosphere that accommodates China's cultural aspirations. Socio-political sensitivity is a significant obstacle to China's cultural soft power realization in Bangladesh. The challenge is to balance cultural endeavours with the complicated web of regional sensitivities, political complexities, and historical settings. To successfully tackle these obstacles, a flexible and diplomatic strategy that recognizes the complexity of socio-political processes is required. Above all, creating a more responsive atmosphere requires more awareness of these sensitivities and proactive measures to address them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHINA TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN CULTURAL SOFT POWER IMPLEMENTATION

Considering the prevailing challenges of China's soft power policy in Bangladesh, this study provides some recommendations to overcome impediments in the implementation of its cultural soft power in Bangladesh:

Developing Collaborative Framework for Exchange Programs

The Chinese government is required to create more comprehensive frameworks for collaboration that consider academic objectives, curriculum alignment, and variations in educational systems to properly administer exchange programs and knowledge transfer. China should establish mechanisms for ongoing dialogue to facilitate a smoother integration. Customized Educational Initiatives that incorporate educational programs are also needed to align with the specific needs and priorities of Bangladesh. It should offer programs, address local challenges, and contribute to national development aimed at enhancing the relevance of educational exchanges.

Need More vibrancy in Confucius Institute in Bangladesh

The authority of this institute should ensure transparency and accountability in the operations of Confucius Institutes. This can be achieved by requiring CIs to register with the Bangladeshi government and to disclose their funding sources. Additionally, it should diversify educational packages to broaden the scope of educational offerings within Confucius Institutes to present a more comprehensive view of Chinese culture. It involves promoting cultural diversity and avoiding the perception of promoting a specific political or ideological agenda.

Training and Engagement for overcoming Perceived Cultural Imposition

The Chinese government should provide cultural sensitivity training to Chinese diplomats, educators, and cultural ambassadors involved in soft-power initiatives. Training should focus on understanding and respecting the diversity of Bangladeshi cultural landscapes. Furthermore, the government should engage in community engagement that encourages two-way cultural exchanges.

Reducing Communication Barriers

The Chinese government should arrange more language-training programs. It can invest in language training programs that equip Chinese diplomats and cultural ambassadors with the linguistic skills necessary for effective communication. Training can emphasize the local dialects and idioms. Moreover, Chinese authorities should employ local cultural intermediaries who possess a deep understanding of both Chinese and Bangladeshi cultures. These individuals can bridge the communication gap by ensuring that cultural nuances are accurately conveyed.

Dealing with Socio-political Sensitivities

Sociopolitical sensitivity is one of the challenges in Bangladesh. Therefore, the government of China should engage in diplomatic consultations with Bangladeshi authorities to better understand and navigate socio-political sensitivity. It should also establish channels for continuous dialogue to adapt strategies in response to evolving political dynamics. In addition, the Chinese authorities should prioritize a nuanced understanding of Bangladesh's historical and political contexts. This understanding should shape the design and execution process of cultural initiatives and ensure alignment with local sentiments. By implementing these suggestions, China can navigate the complexities inherent in cross-cultural initiatives and foster a more positive reception of its soft cultural power in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

China's multidimensional strategy, which includes linguistic and cultural exchanges, media programs, and infrastructure development, underlines the country's strategic aim to increase its influence in South Asia,

particularly Bangladesh. The accomplishments in linguistic and cultural exchanges, as evidenced by a variety of cultural programs, student exchange initiatives, scholarships, and the development of Confucius Institutes, demonstrate China's dedication to encouraging understanding and collaboration. Collaborative media enterprises and infrastructure development efforts have highlighted the comprehensive approach of China.

However, the study also identifies important strategic challenges for China's soft power in Bangladesh. Educational exchange programs encounter challenges owing to differences in curriculum alignment and educational systems. Concerns regarding the fairness and openness of scholarship awards present operational challenges. While Confucius Institutes promote cultural interaction, they are also criticized for their possible political impact and the propagation of Chinese propaganda. Perceived cultural imposition, communication hurdles, and sociopolitical sensitivities are notable challenges in soft power policies. Moreover, sensitivity to local cultural subtleties, openness in operations, and resolving concerns about perceived influence are all critical factors for the successful achievement of soft power objectives in Bangladesh.

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