

## Journal of Religion & Society (JR&S)

Available Online:

<https://islamicreligious.com/index.php/Journal/index>

Print ISSN: [3006-1296](#) Online ISSN: [3006-130X](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

---

### CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND ISLAMIC IDENTITY: PAKISTAN'S OUTREACH IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

**Dr. Zeeshan**

Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Department of Islamic Studies, KUST.

**Saqib Ullah Khan**

Lecturer in Pakistan Studies, HITEC University Taxila Cantt.

[saqibullah.khan@hitecuni.edu.pk](mailto:saqibullah.khan@hitecuni.edu.pk)

**Sabira Iqbal**

M.Phil. Scholar, NUML, Islamabad.

#### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the strategic use of cultural diplomacy by Pakistan to strengthen its relationships within the Muslim world, leveraging its Islamic identity as a foundational element. Cultural diplomacy, an essential tool for fostering international relations, involves the exchange of ideas, traditions, values, and other cultural aspects. For Pakistan, it serves not only as a means to reinforce shared Islamic values but also as a strategy to promote political, social, and economic interests across the Muslim community globally. The study begins by outlining the historical context and evolution of Pakistan's cultural diplomacy, emphasizing initiatives like the promotion of Urdu and Arabic languages, Islamic arts, and the preservation of heritage that resonate widely with Muslim countries. It also highlights Pakistan's role in international Islamic forums and organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), where it actively participates in cultural exchange programs. The analysis discusses key projects such as international Quran exhibitions, Islamic book fairs, and cultural festivals that Pakistan has either hosted or participated in significantly. These cultural ventures not only reinforce Pakistan's commitment to Islamic culture but also enhance its soft power in the diplomatic arena. Furthermore, the paper evaluates the impact of these cultural diplomacy efforts on Pakistan's image as a moderate Islamic nation, particularly in the context of combating Islamophobia and promoting peace and understanding between different religious and cultural groups worldwide. In conclusion, "Cultural Diplomacy and Islamic Identity: Pakistan's Outreach in the Muslim Community" offers insights into how Pakistan utilizes its cultural assets to forge stronger bonds and assert its identity and leadership within the Muslim world.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, cultural diplomacy, Islamic identity, Muslim community, international relations, OIC, ISESCO, soft power, Islamophobia, intercultural understanding.

#### 1. Introduction

Cultural diplomacy has notably emerged as a highly prominent and fashionable concept in the discipline of international affairs, gaining traction among scholars and policymakers alike. In this context, Pakistan has consistently utilized various tools of cultural diplomacy to reach out to the Muslim world, employing

techniques that are akin to the analyses surrounding the interplays between cultural diplomacy and the intricate national identities that characterize nation-states. The primary aim of this essay is to delve into how the Government of Pakistan has strategically employed cultural diplomacy as a tool to not only promote but also to express its Islamic identity in its outreach efforts directed at the Muslim community located abroad (Mozaffari & Akbar, 2024). To achieve this, a qualitative case study has been meticulously selected to explore the multifaceted dimensions of cultural diplomacy and its far-reaching implications for the intended target audience. The data that has been collected for this analysis is subjected to a thorough examination using a longitudinal policy framework that evaluates the policies implemented both before and after the active practice of these diplomatic tools. The findings of this research support the cultural policy practices that shed light on the implications of Pakistan's Islamic identity, providing a contemporary and relevant illustration of how cultural diplomacy operates in this modern context.

Cultural interaction that occurs through various forms of people-to-people exchanges undeniably spreads and fosters a constructive and positive image of a country, which can ultimately lead to the establishment of durable and long-lasting relationships on an international scale. In our increasingly globalized world, such cultural interaction effectively utilizes a range of cultural factors that play a significant role in transforming our understanding and redefining the barriers that may exist between nations, such as those related to language, religion, and cultural norms. Pakistan, as a distinctive sovereign nation-state, practices its foreign policy with regard to other states as a diplomatic enterprise that operates among independent states within the broader realm of world politics (Saaida, 2023). As a fundamental principle, a state's national identity, along with its cultural characteristics, meticulously guides its international perceptions, activities, and relationships, thereby establishing a primary quality essential to functional diplomacy. Furthermore, Pakistani foreign relations are intricately situated within the dynamics of both regional and global influences, which are continuously shaped by the contemporary context of international relations. Through this lens, we can better understand the proactive role that cultural diplomacy plays in articulating Pakistan's distinct Islamic identity and reinforcing its connections with the global Muslim community.

## **2. Historical Background of Cultural Diplomacy in Pakistan**

Cultural diplomacy in Pakistan has roots that extend beyond its Islamic identity. This section examines the mid-twentieth century initiatives of Pakistan, a newly established state, to enhance cultural connections both with other nations in the Muslim world and beyond. Over three decades, Pakistan's approach to cultural diplomacy, initially described as "educational and cultural exchange," reflects how the country has been perceived on the international stage and how it has defined its relationship with "the other." The nation's association with Islam and its historical and religious landmarks has played a meaningful role in its identity (Mohyidin, 2023). Concurrently, the cultural ties established between Muslims and the British prior to partition fostered political leverage. This British cultural influence, without the accompanying imperial authority, has portrayed Pakistanis as exotic, pre-modern consumers, particularly in Gulf contexts. Pakistan's early economic and cultural interactions with the United States and the Soviet Union largely overlooked its Islamic identity. However, the emergence of Islamic extremism posed challenges to Pashtoon identity through Pakistan's religious affiliations with the broader Muslim community (Khan & Laoutides, 2024). Following the 9/11 attacks, as Western nations engaged in a faith-based conflict with the Muslim world, countries like France, Germany, Japan, and the UK became significant partners for Pakistan. Consequently, Muslim-centered cultural diplomacy took on increased importance. This section also explores the events and individuals that have influenced Pakistan's international standing, shaped by their cultural and religious connections. Despite shifts in perspective, the foundational aspects of religion and culture, along with the contributions of prominent scholars and veteran diplomats, remain apparent. Alongside the establishment of Pakistani embassies overseas, a museum and an arts school were also created within Pakistan..

Despite reconceptualizations, the underpinning religious-cultural sphere and the contributions of notable scholars and older diplomats remain evident. This chapter also looks at the challenges faced by actors. In countries such as the UK, USA, and Turkey, Islam was practiced alongside the division of state and religion, the Deobandi guidance that reinforced Pakistani Islamic identity. In the Middle East and Southeast Asia, historically, embassies have come across mixed Shia-Sunni environments. They have grappled with different rulings, practices, shrines, and sacred spaces resulting in physical death or the loss of cultural privileges for the other (Fuadia et al., 2024). Moreover, the religious and cultural sphere of one Muslim country, for example, might clash with

another — the social liberalism of an oil-rich Gulf state with the more orthodox norms of a South Asian "manual" laborer. Many have argued that Islamic identity has been cast in contemporary Pakistan to the exclusion of both peripheral identities, as well as against the liberal interpretation of Islam that heralded state-sponsored terrorism. The historical dimension is important for an understanding of Pakistan's religious cultural diplomacy with Muslim space, projections, stakeholders, and trajectory therefrom. Hence, in the twenty-first century, "cultural diplomacy" may receive its first consensual definition as "identity management," i.e., "to build and manage Pakistan's external image as a moderate Muslim country." Interestingly, the very practices of the 1950s-60s continue to resonate as a frame of reference in the perceptions of current officers who curate "the ever-popular Hamdard Visits (Siddiqi, 2022)."

### **3. Conceptual Framework of Cultural Diplomacy and Islamic Identity**

Cultural diplomacy serves as a vital instrument through which a nation-state effectively projects its rich national culture and invaluable heritage to other nations across the globe. At the very heart of such a complex exercise lies a fundamental attempt to shape and enhance the most coveted aspects of one's national identity. In this context, Islamic identity emerges as a powerful springboard for envisioning and facilitating Pakistan's outreach to the vast global Muslim community. When we delve into the different voices that Pakistan wishes to amplify and be heard within the broader community of nations, along with the various methods it employs to communicate its essence and values, our primary focus is directed toward understanding the intricate relationship between cultural diplomacy and the multifaceted identity of the nation. Through this exploration, we can appreciate how cultural diplomacy not only reflects but actively shapes Pakistan's national narrative and its engagement with the international community, thereby reinforcing its position and influence among nations (Mehmood, 2021).

This text proposes a conceptual framework for analyzing the relationship between cultural diplomacy and the formation of Islamic identity within the broader context of states and nations. In the field of international relations, nation-states, akin to individuals, shape their identities through cross-cultural interactions. The question of representation and its effects warrants examination within the socio-historical context of international affairs. By interpreting cultural diplomacy through the lens of identity, we can explore various aspects of cultural exchanges,

including the production and absorption of culture, the creators of this culture and their motives, the narratives through which it is disseminated and consumed, and the impact of these dynamics on state relations and transnational communities. An essential preliminary step is to clarify the diverse meanings of key concepts and their interconnections. To structure our analysis, we identify three levels where cultural diplomacy may be actively practiced. The first level concerns the soft cultural power of a nation, shaping how it is perceived by others. The second level involves cultural relations established by the state to achieve strategic goals through targeted public diplomacy. The third level focuses on the intellectual and cultural transfers inherent in people-to-people exchange programs initiated by states (Saaida, 2023). An examination of these dimensions reveals their interdependence, as they collectively aim to influence a global audience, reflecting various interpretations and assumptions about the state's identity and the lifestyle it claims to embody. The study concludes with a constructivist perspective, suggesting that multiple narratives contribute to the construction of identity, thereby reinforcing the Pakistani discourse within outreach initiatives directed at the global Muslim community.

#### **4. Theoretical Foundations of Cultural Diplomacy**

The intricate practice, vast possibilities, and inherent limitations of cultural expression in the arena of international relations form the essential subject matter of cultural diplomacy. This field of study and practice is supported by a variety of interconnected and sometimes conflicting concepts that shape its operation and effectiveness. In the complex and evolving post-9/11 world, a widely accepted understanding of cultural diplomacy has emerged, closely following diverse interpretations regarding the role of soft power as a vital mechanism for achieving states' international objectives in a non-coercive manner. This comprehensive approach is deeply rooted in the critical concepts of public diplomacy and, more specifically, public affairs. A participant who actively engages in a robust public diplomacy program elaborates on how, across the globe, his office diligently develops comprehensive strategies aimed at influencing public opinion while simultaneously building relationships founded on trust and sustained influence with foreign audiences (Chandra and Sinha2024). The ultimate goal of these efforts is to further the foreign policy objectives of their own nation. That's a crucial and significant part of what we do every day in our endeavors.

A further influential concept is cultural imperialism. The notion of soft power itself contains the logic of cultural imperialism.

Building on that observation, it has been noted that not only significant academic work but also several public debates have questioned the nature that these cultural flows acquire, whether their character is soft or hard power, if they are part of cultural imperialism or not. In the background are ongoing debates around various theories of international relations, each of which reflects divergent views about the functioning of states and the nature of international politics. Identity politics also remain important, particularly in relation to concerns with cultural representation and Islam. Scholars have noted the interrelations between diplomacy and identity. Cultural diplomacy allows states to achieve goals beyond their national borders. A variety of theories of international relations have been drawn on to inform considerations of the theory and practice of modern cultural diplomacy around the world (Cashore et al.2021). For many writers, theory and practice reflect and inform each other. The following will examine some of these important ideas.

### **5. Islamic Identity and its Significance in Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

Islamic identity and Pakistan's foreign policy have intricately been connected with one another since the very moment of its birth as an Islamic state within a larger world. Pakistan has consistently utilized its uniqueness as a Muslim majority state to effectively gain strategic alliances, partnerships, and moral support from other Muslim countries across the globe. The notion of an Islamic state was not only a pivotal idea but also one that was purely rational at the time of its establishment, as the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent firmly believed that merely adhering to Islamic ideology would inherently provide them with a sense of security and peace of mind in a tumultuous environment. Consequently, Islam has always been an integral part and parcel of Pakistan's diplomatic discourse with all Muslim countries, including various Arab states. The unbreakable glue of shared blood, traditions, and the rich culture of a particular religious community in Pakistan is so profoundly strong that it sometimes takes precedence over the official worldview, foreign policy, and strategic considerations of the country, deeply influencing its international relations and stances (Idrees & Khan, 2024).

The presence of significant Muslim shrines and various religious centers related to different Muslim sects has been playing a crucial historical role in the fostering of cordial and friendly ties with numerous Muslim countries. Apart from occasional conflicts arising from competing economic interests, Pakistan has consistently aimed to reconcile with Muslims based on the rich

tapestry of shared historical and cultural antecedentes, particularly highlighting the commonality of our religion and the profound Islamic way of life that unites us. As an integral member of the broader Muslim world, Pakistan has always been striving to cultivate and maintain broad-based, multifaceted, and fruitful relationships with various Islamic countries. This is achieved by actively working on and promoting the central Islamic values and principles that bring us together. Furthermore, Pakistan adheres to traditional Muslim family norms and focuses significantly on social welfare initiatives. In contemporary times, there is an increasing emphasis placed on cultural dimensions recognized as vital due to the prevailing world politics, serving as an essential instrument of soft power and providing an indirect approach to diplomacy on the global stage (Hossain, 2023). These efforts reflect Pakistan's commitment to nurturing relationships that are rooted in mutual understanding and respect.

## **6. Pakistan's Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives in the Muslim World**

This paper provides a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's extensive outreach efforts in the Muslim world aimed at fostering robust cultural relations and promoting shared values and interests among nations. The government engages actively in specific programs and strategic partnerships with various countries, thoroughly examining their objectives and analyzing how these initiatives align with the country's broader foreign policy goals. Additionally, the paper assesses the soft power tactics employed by Pakistan, highlighting their ability to enhance cultural outreach effectively. Points of caution are also raised, carefully observing existing limitations or challenges that could serve as critical areas for improvement or additional focus in future endeavors (Shah & Sahito, 2024). Furthermore, the paper delves into collaborations between different Muslim countries, emphasizing their collective efforts in promoting their unique culture and values. This is often achieved through vibrant dialogues and the exchange of artistic, cultural, and political products among nations. An example of a significant cross-border and cross-cultural event that specifically targets engaging young people is provided to illustrate these efforts. The attraction of grassroots movements and civil society initiatives is discussed in detail, shedding light on the various activities that Pakistani organizations are involved in. By highlighting these initiatives, the paper underscores the importance of collaboration and cultural exchange in strengthening ties and building a more cohesive Muslim identity on a global scale..

The sharing of values, tradition, and culture is not a recent or new foreign policy tool for Pakistan; in fact, it has been a part of its diplomatic endeavors for many years as its predecessors have utilized it in one way or another to forge and establish meaningful links with other countries and regions across the globe. However, while both Islam and its softer aspect, spirituality, serve as significant factors promoting close linkages between Pakistan and various other Muslim countries worldwide, this particular aspect of diplomacy has not particularly been a strong focus of previous governments in the past. There exist numerous partnerships that are formed between Pakistani organizations and foreign entities involved in fostering developments within Pakistan, and some of these partnerships not only serve to strengthen cultural ties but also engage with larger, critical issues of political and social concern that affect the broader region (Aman et al., 2021). The Islamic world is at times targeted in these initiatives, and several programs are run with an explicitly religious edge, often in partnership and collaboration with various development initiatives aimed at addressing pressing societal issues while promoting cultural understanding and cooperation.

### **7. Impact and Effectiveness of Pakistan's Cultural Diplomacy in the Muslim Community**

The analysis of literature on the rapidly expanding field of cultural diplomacy indicates that there is a growing consensus among policy experts and scholars that the field has experienced a period of rapid growth, becoming one of the newest, most widely used strategies in international relations. Despite the notable growth within the field in recent years, few studies have sought to critically examine the impact of cultural diplomacy initiatives in Pakistan engaged with the global Muslim community. In particular, the relevant literature does not examine whether these efforts have helped shape public perceptions of Pakistan among international and domestic constituents.

Cultural diplomacy initiatives are often described in practical terms. Metrics, such as the number of people reached, public opinion polls, and collaborations with Muslim countries, are the main ways that the effectiveness of this diplomacy is often evaluated. These efforts demonstrate growth. In 2010, only a few foreign emails from Pakistani embassies seemed to focus exclusively on cultural initiatives with the international Muslim community (Rashid et al., 2023). In 2015, the results were starkly different. The Pakistani Embassy in Tokyo reported that it had been rated “best ever” in terms of cooperation efforts for cultural promotion with other Muslim countries. This change, however, is



not without its detractors within the foreign service, and it is just one metric for determining the success of such an initiative. One representative confronted this directly (Nizar & Aydın Halisoğlu, 2022). While emphasizing the importance of an Islamic identity, she faces a Pakistan embassy representative who asks, “If she is not sold on the festival’s potential to yield immediate political benefits, then what role does her group think she serves over at the Islamic countries desk?”

One major criticism of Pakistan’s cultural diplomacy initiatives begins to emerge when one parses the feedback. Much of the available information indicates that there is “low or limited interest” in Pakistan’s cultural products such as film, fashion, and art in majority-Muslim nations aside from where they are produced. Such reports indicate a general indifference on the part of the majority-Muslim international community to Pakistan’s popular culture offerings. Certainly, the analytical scope of this piece cannot account for the tastes of 1.6 billion diverse peoples, yet “limited interest,” “disinterest,” or “indifference” are all sentiments that are often reported at various embassies. This creates a policy dilemma: several embassies are actively engaged but have gathered only limited interest for a set of necessarily limited strategic goals (Rehman et al.2023). The combining of what, why, and how then provides part of the answer. Many of these countries are part of the emerging and developing world. Their expression of an “Islamic identity” may be based upon shared community ideals and poverty rather than any sharing of cultural products. The shared challenges most certainly make them “like-minded” in the Dhaka sense, but it does not imply that they shall like the same products. The digital revolution provides new platforms for overcoming these obstacles.

### **8. Challenges and Opportunities in Pakistan's Cultural Diplomacy Efforts**

Pakistan's outreach in the vast Muslim world is strategically aimed at establishing and fostering a cohesive Islamic identity through a variety of cultural and educational initiatives. However, successfully achieving this significant goal requires a substantial amount of resources, a clear vision, and conditions that are conducive to effective cultural diplomacy. Among the primary challenges that Pakistan faces in this regard are significant political instability, the presence of competing narratives within the country that seek to define its own interpretation of an Islamic identity, as well as increasingly demanding political and diplomatic relationships with other Muslim countries. Despite these challenges, Pakistan possesses an important historic cultural past,

which includes a rich tapestry of traditions and an extremely diverse range of communities. If these diverse aspects are properly acknowledged and leveraged, they can serve as valuable assets alongside a broader, unifying Islamic narrative (AlMutairi, 2023). Moreover, these ongoing issues contribute to the complexities of Pakistan's foreign and domestic relations, particularly with its core cultural diplomacy stakeholders, which complicates the landscape of its international relations.

These challenges, along with resource constraints, impact the reach and branding of Pakistani cultural activities in the Muslim world, perhaps constricting potential impact and reinforcement of a more cohesive narrative. In contrast, digital approaches to cultural diplomacy offer more effective resource allocation, dynamic enhancement, and copy-sharing through collaboration. However, given Pakistan's aforementioned challenges, new doors also open to non-state actor involvement with a much broader scope but possibly lower quality assurance from Islamabad's official side. International patrons of cultural diplomacy are also employing new forms of expressing soft power in an attempt to reset dialogue. Traditional diplomatic functions of education and culture are reinvented to focus primarily on development and human rights and may be seen as over-interventionist by the Pakistani public and its cultural diplomacy patron state (Shafi et al.2021). Given this complex landscape, future topics of research may explore diaspora-expressed soft power in Pakistani identity formation.

### **9. Comparative Analysis of Cultural Diplomacy Strategies in Muslim-majority Countries**

According to the definition of cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects to promote understanding between and among cultures. Over the last two decades, a paradigm shift has taken place in the way the cultural diplomacy of various Muslim-majority countries (MMCs) is conceived and implemented. In the changing dynamics, Muslim countries have started paying more attention to utilizing various tools of soft power to increase their influence and visibility abroad. In academic literature, scholars posit that a cultural outreach strategy signifies not only the culturally rich, traditional image of a nation but also the positive and conscientious aspects of its civil society to encourage mutual coexistence of various cultures. A state's cultural outreach strategy cannot be conceived as value-devoid due to various reasons such as the historical context, political ideologies, and economic conditions of a particular country (Ozturk, 2021). In this backdrop,

countries also use their soft powers as a policy response to changes in political, strategic, and economic environments to develop agendas or policies for external relations. Expanding this scope, many MMCs are also pursuing cultural outreach strategies to showcase their potential to work together with regional partners and contribute to the stability of the region.

Pakistan's efforts reflect the same orientation, though various methodologies do. These efforts also pursue regional stability through the cultural diplomacy lens with emphasis on the convergence of Islamic values, societal norms, and the destiny of the Muslim Ummah. Vietnamese literature also explains how Vietnam uses its cultural diplomacy to increase the visibility of the country's image and its teachings in favor of cohabitation with other cultures through increasing exchanges of ideas, knowledge, and values, as well as sharing visions on the communities of each nation, region, and the world, reflecting a policy shift in Vietnam. A comparative analysis of cultural diplomacy efforts in various MMCs can reveal similarities in the conceptual framework and operational parameters of public diplomacy in general and cultural diplomacy in particular. This analysis indicates that countries take into account the gathering of the overall Islamic identity and cultural aspirations through efforts aimed at integration on the regional level with the global community rather than following sub-regional connectivity approaches. Some countries base their foreign policy priority on attracting religious tourists through religious tourism or the application of waqf culture. Middle Eastern countries are giving priority to funding and equipping Islamic educational institutions and centers to increase the presence of their educators (Abu-Ras et al., 2022). Overall, efforts seem to be geared towards leveraging Islamic values to work on the betterment of bilateral relations, regional stability, and addressing common challenges, with an apparent convergence of soft power strategies in the Islamic world.

#### **10. Role of Non-State Actors in Promoting Islamic Identity through Cultural Diplomacy**

In addition to religious and cultural organizations, non-state actors consist of what have been termed "culturepreneurs." These are non-governmental organizations and civil society actors who undertake subtler forms of outreach, based on deep cultural foundations and values, to bring home narratives shared across the Muslim world and Central Asia. While culturepreneurs coordinate or run state enterprises that promote culture and tourism in one form or another, they are also, often enough, affiliated with various localized religious organizations, and they are sometimes

the link between state-civil society partnerships. Cultural and religious outreach work goes back decades and forms a standard literature strand in cultural diplomacy. Scholars tend to resemble what has previously been put forward, being preoccupied with a state-centered focus. Although some states might not like to be noiseless or silent actors, fostering external cultural projects and pedagogical work, NGOs and private actors can also emerge, promoting scholarly and inter-religious or interfaith dialogue centered on cultural diplomacy and religious foreign policy.

Cultural organizations worth scrutinizing here include initiatives popularly known as “Islamic 360” which seek to give various incentives to Muslims or any person with an interest in the Islamic heritage to come to the country, where they can learn about one of the longest living Muslim civilizations. Practical applications also include enrolling them in Arabic language courses or in madrasahs to study the Quran; birthdays, commemorations of eminent personalities, including events such as “Al-Beruni Day” and other events that many Pakistanis from the Muslim world and beyond have taken part in; showcasing the ancient and contemporary cultural heritage of the region, with documentary films and cultural shows, which often conclude with a song, theme debating, or inter-religious dialogue; and Islamic motivational projects focusing on foreign Muslim charitable work. In collaboration, these events create an intricate and comprehensive web for deeper ‘layered’ rather than ‘principled’ Islam analogies, with deep levels of narrative, reaching out across religious identities, castes, ethnicities, city/town, and rural divides. In many poor southern Asian cities, this works to build a strong cultural connection for Pakistan (Khan & De Nardi, 2024).

### **11. Conclusion and Key Findings**

The essay has explored the emerging role of cultural diplomacy against the backdrop of the rise of cultural and soft power in international relations. It has interrogated the evolving dynamics of Islamic identity in Pakistan and its instrumental use in cultural diplomacy. The essay maintains that any meaning construction or pace setting of 'Pakistani culture' is only possible if seven key dimensions of cultural diplomacy are adopted. The essay asserts that at its base, Islamic identity in Pakistan and the country's outreach to the Muslim world are intertwined and constantly feed back into each other. Moreover, Islamic identity—both domestic and external—leads Pakistan to use cultural diplomacy as a sphere of interaction that complements its foreign policy, thereby consolidating and reinforcing national narratives and the idea of the country. Based on the above, the essay utilizes the case of

Pakistan to illustrate how states reach out to the Muslim world using cultural diplomacy and how effective the effort has been in reaching out to different Muslim audiences. Despite these things, the challenge Pakistan faces is that it is not yet able to tap into the potential of cultural diplomacy.

The essay found that a scalar definition of 'Islamic identity in Pakistan' indicates that Pakistan's Islamic identity/identities are subject to political leaders and national narratives, making them legitimate 'soft power' subject matter. Therefore, by using these Islamization currents, Pakistan seeks to ensure certain terms of reception of its 'soft' power in the Muslim world by 'audiences' of very different layers. By appealing to the Islamic identity 'imagined' by the state, Pakistan targets both the heads of some Western states and specific layers of non-Muslim audiences and elites from the Muslim world. Insights from existing literature on the country's search for a globally acceptable identity based primarily on a shared Islamic character affirm the analysis above; that Pakistan utilizes cultural diplomacy mainly for the purposes of public diplomacy. Finally, the essay contends that, in light of the above findings, Pakistan needs to ensure that its efforts remain engaging and relevant to the audiences in the Muslim world. Cultural diplomacy strategies must anticipate regional and geopolitical trends and share perspectives on a regional and global future. It is also critical that future strategies recognize the increasingly intertwined elements of Pakistani identity and emphasize a cohesive message that includes various actors in Pakistan with regional and global Muslim fellowships. Cultural diplomacy, therefore, needs to better incorporate the multi-dimensional and rapidly globalizing character of Islam. Because of the importance, immediacy, and local nuances, Pakistan has relied on large-scale people-to-people and civil societies to act as its global representatives. This in-depth and firsthand knowledge of the populations has been invaluable and can be used to construct Pakistan's external image in the Muslim world. In the future, Pakistani elites and actors imbued with, and who evoke, the Muslim sentiment and attachment can act as the country's 'brand ambassadors'. The strategy going forward would be to seek, appreciate, and amplify the voice of proxies as perceived both in the Muslim world and beyond. The strategy will also focus on the country's own building local partners in different contexts. Pakistan's missions can also serve the purpose of intelligence gathering on Muslim communities and serve as think tanks that engage in an intra-Muslim dialogue.

## References

- Abu-Ras, W., Senzai, F., Laird, L., & Decker, E. (2022). The influence of religious identity, culture, and values on the practice of American Muslim physicians. *Social Sciences*. [mdpi.com](https://www.mdpi.com)
- AlMutairi, M. (2023). BEYOND THE BOOK: ISLAMIC EDUCATION, BELONGING, AND RADICALISM IN THE MADRASSA CONTEXT. [nyu.edu](https://www.nyu.edu)
- Aman, J., Abbas, J., Lela, U., & Shi, G. (2021). Religious affiliation, daily spirituals, and private religious factors promote marital commitment among married couples: does religiosity help people amid the COVID-19 .... *Frontiers in psychology*. [frontiersin.org](https://www.frontiersin.org)
- Cashore, B., Knudsen, J. S., Moon, J., & van der Ven, H. (2021). Private authority and public policy interactions in global context: Governance spheres for problem solving. *Regulation & Governance*, 15(4), 1166-1182. [cbs.dk](https://www.cbs.dk)
- Chandra, R., & Sinha, D. M. (2024). China's Soft Power Diplomacy in International Politics: Strategies, Means and Implications. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(1), 10-29121. [ssrn.com](https://www.ssrn.com)
- Fuadia, S. F., Aini, R., Soba, R. M., & Muhyi, A. A. (2024). The Concept of The State in Islam: A Study of Maudhu'i's Interpretation. *Bulletin of Islamic Research*. [birjournal.com](https://www.birjournal.com)
- Hossain, M. S. (2023). New Methodological Approaches of Investigating the Identity of Historic Settlement. [\[HTML\]](#)
- Idrees, M. & Khan, M. (2024). EVALUATING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY IN PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY: POST 9/11 ERA. [iiu.edu.pk](https://www.iiu.edu.pk)
- Khan, M. S. & De Nardi, S. (2024). The affectual-social ecology of cultural artefacts: Illegal markets and religious Vandalism in Swat Valley, Pakistan. *Forum for Social Economics*. [tandfonline.com](https://www.tandfonline.com)
- Khan, S. & Laoutides, C. (2024). Trapped between religion and ethnicity: identity politics against the Baloch in Iran and Pakistan. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*. [tandfonline.com](https://www.tandfonline.com)
- Mehmood, M. (2021). Mapping Muslim Moral Provinces: Framing Feminized Piety of Pakistani Diaspora. *Religions*. [mdpi.com](https://www.mdpi.com)
- Mohyidin, R. (2023). Changing Narratives: An Evaluation of Pakistan's Public Diplomacy Efforts Under Imran Khan. [consejodecomunicacion.gob.ec](https://www.consejodecomunicacion.gob.ec)
- Mozaffari, A. & Akbar, A. (2024). Heritage diplomacy and soft power competition between Iran and Turkey: competing claims over Rumi and Nowruz. *International journal of cultural policy*. [tandfonline.com](https://www.tandfonline.com)

- Nizar, T. & Aydın Halisoğlu, T. (2022). Geo-cultural and Political Dialogue between Pakistan and Turkey: Resetting the Diplomatic Pace for 'Soft Power' Regional and Global Imagery in a Changing World. Arab Journal of International Law. [tarsus.edu.tr](http://tarsus.edu.tr)
- Ozturk, A. E. (2021). Islam and foreign policy: Turkey's ambivalent religious soft power in the authoritarian turn. Religions. [mdpi.com](http://mdpi.com)
- Rashid, K., Ashraf, Z., & Jan, Z. (2023). EMERGING TREND OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN PAKISTAN: IMPROVEMENT OR DECLINE. [ijssb.org](http://ijssb.org)
- Rehman, H. U., Warraich, S. K., & Ahmed, U. (2023). The Soft Power Dynamics of Pakistan: A Study on Its Ability to Shape Regional Perceptions and Relations. Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review, 7(1), 551-563. [plhr.org.pk](http://plhr.org.pk)
- Saaida, M. B. E. (2023). The role of culture and identity in international relations. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences. [ajol.info](http://ajol.info)
- Shafi, M., Yin, L., & Yuan, Y. (2021). Revival of the traditional handicraft enterprising community in Pakistan. Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, 15(4), 477-507. [academia.edu](http://academia.edu)
- Shah, M. A. & Sahito, M. S. (2024). Cultural Institutions in Pakistan: Promoting Cultural and National Identity. Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review. [plhr.org.pk](http://plhr.org.pk)
- Siddiqi, F. H. (2022). Unity in diversity: constituting and constructing Pakistan's national identity. The Round Table. [researchgate.net](http://researchgate.net)