

## Research on the International Exchange and Cooperation in Education under the BRI Based on Review of the Documentary Materials

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### *Abstract*

*Based on case analyses of educational exchange between China and the Soviet Union in 1950s recorded in documentary materials, this study probes into the ways to establish, under the guidance of “the Belt and Road Initiative”, cultural diplomatic relations and educational cooperation among countries and regions along the Belt and Road by giving a chronological study of China’s cultural diplomacy. And on that basis, it further explores how cultural exchange and international relations connect and influence each other with an analysis from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. This study will provide academic support for the Belt and Road countries to carry out cultural exchanges, and it is particularly instructive for them to explore new ways and countermeasures of educational exchange.*

**Keywords:** *the Belt and Road Initiative, educational exchange, Soviet experts, documentary materials, artists studying in the Soviet Union*

### **I. Introduction**

In October 2019, Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China proposed that we need to “strengthen research communication and comparative studies on education between China and foreign countries, draw experience from advanced teaching and educational research achievements from abroad, expand cooperation with foreign educational research institutes as well as enhance communication and cooperation among countries and regions along ‘the Belt and Road’”(referred to as “the B&R countries and regions” hereafter)<sup>[1]</sup>. It is worth noting that the proposal of this strategy fully reflects China’s close attention to international cultural exchanges.

As a major member of B&R countries, Russia has kept close contact with China in cultural exchange and cooperation. 2019 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China; it is also an important stage in the development of Sino-Russian relations since the two countries has established diplomatic relations for 70 years. As a key part in maintaining the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between China and Russia, cultural and educational exchanges are positive in enriching the connotation of Sino-Russian relations, laying a solid foundation for Sino-Russian relations and pushing forward Sino-Russian relations to the next level. Culture is not only the soul of a country or a nation, but also the symbol of its soft power. International cultural exchanges has reached an unprecedented level in this era of globalization, and the collision and conflict between cultures are also heating up. Cultural diplomacy has since become the center of the international political arena, playing a key role in promoting the integration and development of human civilizations.

In the history of China’s cultural diplomacy, the upsurge of cultural and educational exchanges between China and the Soviet Union in the 1950s is of great significance. It not only helps bring the two countries closer, but also lays a solid foundation for China’s international talents training. The current research in this field focus mainly on reviewing the background of the exchange, its effect, or giving a chronological account of the exchange in a certain period; few has discussed the valued experience and inspiration we could draw from history to carry out cultural exchanges under the background of “the Belt and Road Initiative”(referred to as “under the BRI” hereafter). Therefore, with a review of China’s cultural diplomacy with Russia, and case studies on Sino-Soviet cultural exchanges on education, especially art education in certain historical periods, this paper analyses how international

relations and political forces influence China's cultural diplomacy, and summarizes achievements and valued experience gained in the practice of China's cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union, which can serve as a reference to international talents training and cultural exchange between China and the B&R countries.

## II. Sino-Soviet Cultural Exchange in 1950s

### 2.1 Historical Background of Sino-Soviet Cultural Exchange

In October 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. The Soviet Union was the first country to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with China. At that time, China, like the Soviet Union, was a socialist country established after a long period of revolutionary struggle. They share the same social system and mainstream ideology; people of the two countries were living in the same social environment and shared the same values<sup>[2]</sup>.

Chinese scholar has once pointed out that "the international environment in which a country is located and its foreign policies made accordingly are one of the most important factors in formulating its policies on international educational exchange"<sup>[3]</sup>. In view of the international situation at that time, on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1950, leaders of the Communist Party of China signed the *Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (shortened as *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship*) in Moscow<sup>[4]</sup>. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1950, China and the Soviet Union signed the *Agreement on the Conditions for Soviet Experts to Work in China*, which symbolized the beginning of cultural exchanges and friendly cooperation between the two countries, and also started an upsurge for China to learn from Soviet experts<sup>[5]</sup>. In the following decade, "learning from the Soviet Union" became one of the main subjects in Chinese academic field, and Soviet experts offered important advice for China to advance its education as well as perfect its teaching system.

Two years later, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952, China and the Soviet Union signed the *Agreement on the Study of Chinese Citizens in Soviet Institutions of Higher Learning*, according to which selected Chinese students or young teachers were sent successively to the Soviet Union for further study. From 1952 to 1957, as the relations between the two countries stepped into the "honeymoon period", Sino-Soviet cultural and educational exchange was also about to reach its peak, manifested by more frequent exchange of overseas students, employment of education experts, mutual visits of education groups, and translation of books in education, etc. China's "transplant" style of learning from the Soviet Union back then exerted an enormous effect on and was of long-term inspiration for China's cultural undertakings, unparalleled by any other recorded cultural exchange between China and foreign countries. "In addition, for some reason, political or ideological, Russian culture enjoys the most special relationship with China among all western cultures."<sup>[6]</sup> It was a state-dominated cultural exchange between China and the Soviet Union, a highly political, most formal and systematic cultural exchange in the history of the two countries<sup>[7]</sup>, playing an important role in promoting the construction of education system in China.

### 2.2 The Mass Fervor of Studying in the Soviet Union among Chinese

16 years of Sino-Soviet cultural exchange from 1950 to 1966 witnessed a great mass fervor of studying in the Soviet Union among Chinese. The central government sent altogether 8,310 people including college students, postgraduates and teachers to the Soviet Union for advanced studies. They were distributed in more than 200 universities and research institutions located in over 20 cities of the Soviet Union, furthering their study in more than 40 majors such as art, machinery, hydropower, petroleum, iron & steel making, aviation, etc., which are badly in need of talents in China.

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1951, China's first batch of 375 international students, among which 136 are college students, started their journey of study to the Soviet Union<sup>[8]</sup>. However, they were confronted with many challenges and difficulties as a result of lack of experience, hasty preparation and zero exposure to Russian after they got there. Therefore in 1952 when China relaunched the program, it adhered to the selection principle of "fewer but better", established the preparatory school, strictly selected candidates to be included in the program, and finally sent 220

international students to study in the Soviet Union. The following table is a record of international students sent to the Soviet Union in 1951 and 1952.

Table 1 The number of Chinese students sent to study in the Soviet Union (1951-1952)

Year of stay	College students	Postgraduates	Teachers	Total
1951	239	136	0	375
1952	209	11	0	220

—extracted from *History of Chinese Overseas Education (after 1949)*: 220-224<sup>[9]</sup>

The number of Chinese students studying in the Soviet Union was on the rise from 1953 to 1956 when Sino-Soviet relations entered the “honeymoon period” (refer to Table 2 for more details). Since 1953, China has clearly put forward the nationwide unified selection standards for preparatory students to study in the Soviet Union, which is also the first time that the Ministry of Education has promulgated the unified national selection standard, making it clear that political, educational, physical qualifications and age limit are imperative for candidates. Strict and specific rules of selection ensured that only gifted talents with “loyalty, enterprising spirit, positive thinking, good character, strong sense of discipline, research spirit and academic potentialities” can be included in the program. In 1954, 1,375 students were sent to study in the Soviet Union. In 1955, it was proposed that more graduates, less or no senior high school students should be selected as candidates, and 1,932 students were sent to the Soviet Union that year. In 1956, the number grew to 2,085.

Table 2 The number of Chinese students sent to study in the Soviet Union (1953-1956)

Year of stay	College students	Postgraduates	Teachers	International students of fine arts	Total
1953	523	60	0	8	583
1954	1226	149	0	22	1375
1955	1660	239	33	23	1932
1956	1343	619	123	13	2085

—extracted from *History of Chinese Overseas Education (after 1949)*: 220-224

From 1957 to 1959, with worsening Sino-Soviet relations, China asked for more focus on quality instead of scale for the program, as a result of which the number of international students studying in the Soviet Union dropped dramatically, as is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 The number of Chinese students sent to study in the Soviet Union (1957-1959)

Year of stay	College students	Postgraduates	Teachers	International students of fine arts	Total
1957	40	269	174		483
1958	8	235	135		378
1959	65	300	95		460

—extracted from *History of Chinese Overseas Education (after 1949)*: 220-224

The Sino-Soviet relation has been deteriorating since 1960 until it was terminated in 1966. In this period there were altogether 519 Chinese international students sent to study in the Soviet Union, a sharp decline in number compared with that in the previous periods (refer to Table 4 for more details). From July 17<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, the central plenary session of the Soviet Communist Party announced the recall of nearly 1,390 Soviet experts in China. The assignment of students to the Soviet Union is inevitably affected by the change of relations between the two parties and the two countries. The immediate effect of the changes in the international situation, general and specific policies for studying abroad was most evidently shown in the dramatic decline in the number of Chinese international students studying in the Soviet Union.

In May, 1966, China terminated the program of sending students to study in the Soviet Union as a result of the rupture of Sino-Soviet relations.

Table 4 The number of Chinese students sent to study in the Soviet Union (1960-1966)

Year of stay	College students	Postgraduates	Teachers	Interns	Total
1960	158	66	93	0	317
1961	8	30	36	0	74
1962	0	30	16	9	55
1963	0	15	1	1	17
1964	0	3	0	0	3
1965	0	25	28	0	53
1965	47	64	27	0	138

—extracted from *History of Chinese Overseas Education (after 1949)*: 220-224

It is readily seen that the craze among Chinese to study in the Soviet Union in the early days of the People's Republic of China is dominated by the act of two states. Thus the relationship between the two countries has immediate impact on their cultural exchanges. The number of students studying in the Soviet Union is directly proportional to the development of Sino-Soviet relations from the "honeymoon period" to its termination, as is shown in the following figure. The Sino-Soviet cultural exchange dominated by the two governments is inevitably affected by the ups and downs of the relationship between the two countries.



Fig 1: The number of people studying in the Soviet Union (1951-1966)

Although there are ups and downs in the tide of studying in the Soviet Union, its positive effect on the cultural development of new China can not be underestimated. In the field of fine arts, for example, during this upsurge, the Chinese government sent 77 international students to study art in the Soviet Union<sup>[10]</sup>.

Most of the music majors sent by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education to the Soviet Union study in Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music, Leningrad Conservatory of Music and other professional

institutions of higher learning. In 1953, the first group to study music in the Soviet Union included Wu zuqiang, Guo Shuzhen and Li Delun. The second group dispatched in 1954 included Du Mingxin, Huang Xiaohe, Xu Yi, Liu Zhigang, Ni Hongjin, Yan Liangkun and Lin Yingrong. After that, China successively sent more art students to the Soviet Union, including non-degree students Qu Wei, Zou Lu, Meili Qige and Zhu Jian'er, Zuo Yin and Cao Chengyun of harp major, Cao Peng, Zheng Xiaoying and Huang Xiaotong of symphony conductor, Zhong Wei of vocal music, Situ Zhiwen and Sheng Mingyao of cello major, Li Minduo of piano major, Han Li and Wu Feifei of violin major, Liu Shikun, Sheng Zhongguo and Lin Yaoji of short-term study. In Leningrad Conservatory of Music there were also a group of Chinese international students studying art there, i.e., Han Zhongjie, Yin Chengzong, Han Zhongnian, Zhu Tongde, Chen Genmin, Bai Yu, etc. In addition, there was Zhu Li who studied violin at Odessa Conservatory of Music in Ukraine<sup>[11]</sup>. (refer to Appendix 1 for more information)

From 1953 to 1965, China's Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education sent seven batches of students in art major, a total of 33 in number, to the Soviet Union (including majors in painting, sculpture, art history, drama and film stage art, etc.). The first batch set off to the Soviet Union in 1953; it was a group of 4 art students: Li Tianxiang, Qian Shaowu, Cheng Yongjiang and Chen Zun. The second batch followed their journey the next year: 5 art students including Lin Gang, Quan Shanshi, Xiao Feng, Qi Mu'er and Zhou Zheng. The third batch (sent in 1955) were 12 art students: Luo Gongliu, Deng Shu, Guo Shaogang, Wang Baokang, Zhou Benyi, Ma Yunhong, Ji Xiaoqiu, Li Yulan (Chenpeng), Shao Dazhen, Xi Jingzhi, Li baonian and Xu Minghua. The fourth batch (left in 1956) were 5: Feng Zhen, Zhang Huaqing, Li Jun, Wu Biduan, Tan Yongtai. The fifth, sixth, and seventh batches were only groups of 2 art students respectively, and they are Dong Zuyi and Xu Zhiping (left for the Soviet Union in 1957), Cao Chunsheng and Su Gaoli (left in 1960), Situ Zhaoguang and Wang Keqing (left in 1961). Apart from the above 32 students, there were also Li Chun, who studied as a major of art history & theory in Moscow State University, Lv Zhichang, Liu Xinghou and Zhou Kun, who studied art design for films in Moscow Film Institute<sup>[12]</sup>. (refer to Appendix 2 for more information)

These artists received formal collegiate education in Soviet institutions of higher learning, laid a solid foundation in their specialized fields, and came home to engage in art teaching and research in colleges, research institutes and art troupes in different regions of China. Among them are lots of eminent artists such as composer Wu Zuqiang and Du Mingxin of the Central Conservatory of Music, pianist Liu Shikun, violinist Sheng Zhongguo, musicologist Huang Xiaohe, Li Tianxiang, Lin Gang, Luo Gongliu and Deng Shu of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Quan Shanshi and Xiao Feng of the China Academy of Art, etc. They have become the backbone in the development of Chinese art, and also played an important role in training art talents in China<sup>[13]</sup>. Thus the trend of studying in the Soviet Union in the early days of new China, with such a large scale and an enormous effect, has proved to be a unique case in Chinese history of education, sending students to study abroad as well as international cultural exchanges.

### 2.3 Soviet experts and students sent to China

It is difficult to give an accurate number of Soviet experts working in China at that time, because firstly there was no agreement on what is "Soviet expert"; secondly time limit for exchanges varies from one expert to another, and besides, the statistics were incomplete. According to China's archival documents, 10,260 Soviet experts were hired to work in China from the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China to the end of 1958, including 615 Soviet teachers serving in China from 1948 to 1960<sup>[14]</sup>.

In his speech at the seminar on graduation works of students of composition department of Central Conservatory of Music, Soviet expert Arabov mentioned: "experts coming to China for public diplomacy were carefully selected by the Soviet government. They would be investigated in terms of political records and professional competence. Every candidate was expected to fill in forms to ensure his political integrity, after which he would be talked to and officially assigned tasks. In addition to political integrity, they were also required to maintain high level of artistic competence, for they were responsible for disseminating advanced achievements and experiences of the development of Soviet art."<sup>[15]</sup> All Soviet art experts sent to China came from institutions of higher learning in their

country. During this period, the Soviet Union sent educational experts to teach in Chinese colleges and universities to improve their teaching level, so as to help advance the cultural development of China. As Ma Xulun, a Chinese scholar, said: “in the five years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the achievements we’ve made in higher education, together with those in other major undertakings in China, are indispensable from the disinterested assistance of our great friend, the Soviet Union.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Besides, the Soviet Union started to send international students to China in 1954, and 25 students were dispatched to China from 1954 to 1956 (refer to Table 5 for specifics).

Table 5 The number of Soviet students sent to China (1954-1956)

Year	1954	1955	1956
Number	18	4	3

From 1957 to 1965, the Soviet Union sent a total of 183 students to China<sup>[17]</sup>. These students mainly studied in the majors of Chinese and humanities. The following table takes a record of the number of Soviet international students sent to China in this period.

Table 6 The number of Soviet students sent to China (1957-1965)

Year	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Number	80	10	21	0	21	20	0	13	18

The cultural exchange between China and the Soviet Union in the early days of the People’s Republic of China boomed in a specific historical period, and was determined by the relations between the two countries<sup>[18]</sup>. It was in turn the key to advancing Sino-Soviet relations. Chinese scholar Xu Xiaoming claimed that “from a historical point of view, the upsurge of Sino-Soviet educational exchange in this period is natural political results of the development of the cultural exchanges between the two states and nations, and in the meantime it was a sign of maturity for China’s diplomacy.”<sup>[19]</sup>

### III. Reflection on the Sino-Soviet Exchange

#### 3.1 Educational exchange lays the foundation for cultural exchange

“Cultural diplomacy” is an expression first included in the 1934 edition of Oxford English Dictionary. According to this entry, “the British Parliament has created a new means of cultural diplomacy, which is devoted to promoting overseas English teaching”. The focus of a country’s cultural diplomacy now is not limited to the popularization of its language. Some Chinese experts believes that “it refers to purposeful exchanges, usually based on culture-related activities, with certain foreign countries led by the government or official organizations”<sup>[20]</sup>.

As a key part of the cultural diplomatic strategies of the two countries, the upsurge of Sino-Soviet exchanges in the early days of the founding of the People’s Republic of China (1949-1966) is closely related to China’s economic development at that time. Sending students to study in the Soviet Union, on the one hand, fills the gap left by the shortage of talents in China, and on the other hand, it provides long-term support for China to march towards the socialist modernization by means of drawing on advanced experiences in management and technological development from the Soviet Union<sup>[21]</sup>. Moreover, the assistance China has received from Soviet experts and the dispatch of international students help the two countries communicate and cooperate with each other both intensively and extensively in politics, economy, culture and other fields, making significant breakthroughs and also setting a pattern for international talents training in the future.

As an old saying in China goes, “By setting bronze as a mirror one can adjust dressing; by setting history as a mirror one knows ups and downs of a dynasty”. We can set the history of Sino-Soviet relations as a mirror and reference for the future development of the bilateral relations between China and Russia. By studying the history of

Sino-Soviet cultural exchanges, we may avoid repeated mistakes, draw lessons and gain inspirations from it so as to ensure a long-term development of Sino-Russian relations as well as offer a pattern that could be used for reference in developing bilateral relations with “the Belt and Road” countries. We believe that one can “draw lessons from history and then wisely chart the course for the future”<sup>[22]</sup>. Sino-Russian relation is now at its best since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It is on the basis of experiences and lessons learned from the past that the two countries can harmoniously cooperate with each other and make common progress. Therefore, it is in a sense a sample of great value for modern strategic research.

### 3.2 International relations influence policy-making

At the beginning of the founding of new China, the exchanges between China and the Soviet Union are basically official and follow the rule of unified leadership and centralized management, which are conducive to the unified planning, management and resource allocation of China’s cultural exchanges under the guidance of its foreign policy and cultural policy. In this way China is able to see the world and have itself better shown to the world<sup>[23]</sup>. Yet the Sino-Soviet cultural exchange has not been easy, “the primary concern about the identification of ideology and social system has resulted in limited alternatives for sending states (mainly from the Soviet Union), but deficiencies in the management system, manifested by the state-run, internal-control management, determined that the exchange was affected by political relations between the two countries”<sup>[24]</sup>, argued Chinese scholar Li Peng. Some scholars in China further argued that “politics is the most influential factor in the Sino-Soviet exchanges in the 1950s; it has a direct impact on the dispatch of international students to the Soviet Union as well as the introduction of Soviet experts to work in China. In addition to the political relations between the two countries, other factors that influence cultural diplomacy may include its historical background and national psychology”<sup>[25]</sup>. According to Chinese scholar Shen Zhihua, “the ultimate cause of the disputes between the two countries lies in their unequal status and power in the Sino-Soviet relations”<sup>[26]</sup>. Obviously it is inevitable that international relations exert great influence on cultural exchanges between countries.

### 3.3 The imbalance of cultural exchange leads to hidden troubles

In July, 1945, it was pointed out by Chinese national leader that “China is in a situation of economic and cultural backwardness”<sup>[27]</sup>. Back then many other Chinese leaders echoed this statement, acknowledging the backwardness of Chinese culture and advocating active learning from the Soviet Union. Thus it can be seen that compared with Chinese culture, Soviet culture was in a superior position at that time, and to China, the exchange focused on absorbing and learning from the Soviet Union, featuring much more of cultural input than cultural export. In other words, influenced by the international situation, together with the comparatively slow economic development and weak overall national strength of China, its cultural exchange with other countries is more likely to be drawing on and internalizing the experience and achievements of these countries<sup>[28]</sup>. “Imbalance is the root cause of Sino-Soviet disputes”<sup>[29]</sup>. The cultural and educational exchange between China and the Soviet Union is not exactly two-way communication.

The imbalance of cultural exchanges is commonly seen in history, and usually it will lead to hidden problems in the development of international relations. Cultural diplomacy dominated by the government should attach equal importance to “cultural import” and “cultural export”. The “import” and “export” need to be synchronized and conducted based on equality, mutual benefit and respect. Different countries, by means of communication and drawing on valued experience from each other, will ultimately fulfill the task of “cultural import” and “cultural export”, and thus deepen their mutual understanding, share their views and engage in closer and more in-depth cooperation with one another.

### 3.4 Ways and forms of cultural exchange are limited

From the history of China’s cultural exchange with foreign countries, we know that in the mid-nineteenth century, influenced by the international situation, China adopted the policy of “standing firmly on socialist side”, which

determined that it mainly had cultural exchanges with the USSR in limited ways of communication. While nowadays globalization has broken the shackles of politics in cultural exchange, resulting in diversified forms and elements of cultural exchange. As an important form of cultural exchange, educational exchange has occupied a dominant position in a country's cultural diplomacy. It has become popular all around the world and influences almost all areas of society, advancing to a large extent communication and cooperation between different cultures as well as bringing about increasingly significant changes in the setup and order of world culture<sup>[30]</sup>. Therefore, different from Sino-Soviet educational exchange, the current educational exchange in China, under the guidance of "the Belt and Road Initiative", can be carried out both intensively and extensively in much more flexible ways such as the exchange of international students and teachers, international academic conferences, visiting scholars, educational collaborative projects, mutual visits of educational groups, translation and introduction of educational works, distance education and internet courses, etc<sup>[31]</sup>.

#### **IV. Approaches and Strategies for Cultural Diplomacy under the BRI.**

In 2016, the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China proposed the "2016-2020 Action Plan on the Cultural Development under the BRI", making it clear that China's cultural diplomacy follows the basic principles of government dominance, openness and inclusiveness, communication and mutual learning, innovative development, market regulation and mutual benefits. It focuses on perfecting mechanisms of and building better platforms for BRI cultural communication and cooperation, creating BRI brands of cultural exchanges, promoting the prosperity of BRI cultural industries and advancing BRI trade cooperation<sup>[32]</sup>. This proposition has reflected well the wishes of and the general trend for China to carry out cultural exchanges with the B&R countries.

There are two reasons for the study on educational exchanges under the BRI: in terms of its role in facilitating cultural dissemination, educational exchange is so important that it has proved in the history of human civilization to be needed by all nations to help diversify their cultures, and there is no substitute for it in bridging international cooperation; and in terms of its role in facilitating the advance of history, educational exchange is undoubtedly a logical choice for accelerating globalization as well as fostering mutual trust and integration of all peoples in the world.

Any country, for the purpose of seeking cultural progress and social development, is bound to promote educational exchanges with foreign countries. In the age of globalization marked by advanced technology and IT application, educational exchange as a unique cultural activity of human beings is more and more likely to be common in international communication. It contributes not only to the enhancement of overall national strength, competitive power, national cohesion, creativity and confidence of the BRI countries, but also to the improvement of their educational standards as well as to the accumulation of their cultural traditions. Therefore, based on past experience, we will expound on the significance of and strategies for educational exchange under the BRI from the following three aspects.

##### **4.1 Advocating BRI educational Exchange is an important approach of cultural diplomacy**

Culture is the essence of a country; education is the key to national prosperity and people's happiness. Cultural diplomacy is essential to shaping and boosting a country's international image, improving international relations, reinforcing mutual understanding and consensus among different countries, disseminating the native culture and at the same time absorbing and integrating excellent foreign cultures. Educational exchange, as an important channel of cultural diplomacy, creates a fine cultural atmosphere for the realization of the Belt and Road initiative. It is not only able to help strengthen the cultural consciousness and cultural confidence of countries along the Belt and Road, but also help them develop mutual interest, establish stable, lasting relationships, and avoid tensions among them<sup>[33]</sup>. Moreover, through the exchange of values and cross-cultural education, it will enhance mutual understanding, learning and personnel exchange among the BRI countries, and consequently build a more dynamic atmosphere for cultural and educational exchanges among them, enabling different civilizations to benefit from each other in mutual learning and reach the goal of common prosperity.



From the global perspective, the advocacy of educational exchange will advance cooperation among the BRI countries featuring equality, mutual benefit and vitality as well as comprehensively improve regional international influence. From a national perspective, it can help enhance the soft power of the BRI countries and regions, leaving them a space for survival and progress while experiencing cultural collision and cultural cooperation in this age of globalization<sup>[34]</sup>. From a cultural perspective, it connects all countries and has an undeniable effect on strengthening mutual understanding, playing a key role in increasing communication, eliminating cultural differences and reducing cultural conflicts<sup>[35]</sup>. From a political perspective, it is a harmonious and healthy way of communication among different countries.

#### 4.2 Improving BRI cooperation mechanisms is a requisite for cultural diplomacy

In the practice of cultural diplomacy under the BRI, government dominance is the major foundation of promoting cultural exchanges; safeguarding national interests is an important principle to be followed while dealing with international relations. Government-led diplomatic actions will unavoidably be affected by political interests implicated in international relations; hence we need to keep in mind lessons gained in the Sino-Soviet exchanges, i.e., all countries, in the course of cultural exchanges, should try to seek common ground while shelving differences, respect each other and safeguard their own rights and interests. BRI countries and regions, with a vision of building a community of shared future for mankind, and in order to provide effective support to the cultural development under the initiative, should align their strategic planning, promote political negotiations, actively sign and implement intergovernmental agreements on cultural cooperation, make medium- and long-term cooperation plan with joint efforts, build a sound framework and mechanism of educational cooperation, as well as improve the relevant law and regulation system of cultural exchange.

The best way to maintain international relations is to follow the rule of mutual political trust, equality and mutual benefit. In the 1950s, due to the absence of mutual trust and instability of Chinese society, ideological disputes and differences arose in the process of exchange between China and the Soviet Union, which resulted in a breach in the Sino-Soviet relations. We learn from this past experience that it is on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, together with communication and negotiation, that long-term exchanges among different countries can be guaranteed.

#### 4.3 Building BRI platforms of exchange is a practical approach of cultural diplomacy

In recent years, Chinese leaders have put forward the idea of building a community of shared future for mankind. The growing interdependence among countries entails a community of shared interests, responsibility and destiny<sup>[36]</sup>. For the fulfillment of this task, China is now actively promoting the implementation of the Initiative by means of reinforcing communication among BRI countries and regions, integrating BRI regional resources, bolstering common development of regional cultures, building new platforms as well as exploring new ways of exchange and cooperation in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, justice and win-win cooperation. To be specific, we need to:

Firstly, enhance policy coordination among the B&R countries, create more platforms of cultural exchange and educational cooperation, and explore new ways of communication with the aid of modern technologies such as multimedia and network.

Secondly, accelerate the construction of cultural center in the B&R countries and regions. Overseas cultural centers and embassies of China should work closely to build the frontline of its cultural diplomacy, transforming themselves into multi-functional entities that provide needed information for countries along the Belt and Road and accordingly promoting the dissemination of different cultures among them. By performing their duties, which mainly includes offering information service, organizing cultural activities and educational training, they open the window for countries to get an up-close look at other cultures, give full play to the function of transmitting cultures

as well as bridging all peoples to enhance their mutual understanding and friendship, and thus play a positive role in developing friendly relations between China and the B&R countries.

Last but not least, explore new approaches and models of cultural diplomacy with concerted efforts. The B&R countries should expand cultural and educational exchange and cooperation, facilitate cultural exchange among non-governmental organizations under the guidance of the governments, coordinate their policies of cultural exchange and integrate themselves into the globalized world.

## V. Conclusion

There is a long history of China's international cultural exchange, yet it has been uneasy. Social and political factors in certain historical periods exert enormous influence on the practice and development of China's cultural diplomacy; strategies for exchange also vary along with the changes of international situation. In recent years China has made remarkable achievements in developing intercultural relations, consolidating international friendship, enhancing mutual understanding, sharing brilliant culture, promoting cooperation with other countries for common development. However, there are still some imperfections to be further improved.

Therefore, we propose that with the goal of building a community of shared future for mankind, the B&R countries and regions should base their cultural and educational exchange on equality and intergovernmental political trust, and meanwhile establish a sound cooperation mechanism and exchange system, create more platforms of exchange and introduce more ways of cooperation. With lessons gained in the past experience, this study works out new thoughts and new approaches of cultural diplomacy, providing academic support for the B&R countries to get revitalized through cultural exchange. It is highly instructive for establishing a global system featuring openness, inclusiveness, cooperation and mutual benefit as well as upgrading the "soft power" of the B&R countries in an all-round way.

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**Appendix 1:** The list of Chinese musicians sent to study in the Soviet Union

Name	Major	Year of birth	Year of stay	Year of return	Target institutions & universities	Workplace upon return
Wu Zuqiang	Composition	1927	1953	1958	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Li Delun	Conducting	1917	1953	1957	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Orchestra (predecessor of China National Symphony Orchestra)
Guo Shuzhen	Vocal music	1927	1953	1958	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	China Conservatory of Music
Du Mingxin	Composition	1928	1954	1958	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Ni Hongjin	Piano	1935	1954	1959	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music; China Conservatory of Music; People's Liberation Army Academy of Art
Xu Yi	Vocal music	1931	1954	1960	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Lin Yingrong	Cello	1933	1954	1959	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Liu Zhigang	Bassoon	—	1954	—	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Department of Military Culture, National Defense University PLA China

Huang Xiaohe	Violin & Musicology	1935	1954	1961	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Yan Liangkun	Conducting	1923	1954	1958	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Chorus
Zhu Jian'er	Composition	1922	1955	1960	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Studio of News Reels Production; Shanghai Opera House; Shanghai Symphony Orchestra
Qu Wei	Composition	1917	1955	1959	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Symphony Orchestra
Zou Lu	Composition	1927	1955	1960	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Sichuan Provincial Art College (predecessor of Sichuan Conservatory of Music)
Huang Xiaotong	Conducting	1933	1955	1960	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Cao Peng	Conducting	1925	1955	1961	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Symphony Orchestra; Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Zhong Wei	Vocal music	1921	1955	1962	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	China Conservatory of Music
Meili Qige	Composition	1928	1956	1958	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Inner Mongolia Ethnic Opera Troupe
Han Zhongjie	Conducting	1920	1957	1961	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Opera House; Central Orchestra; Central Conservatory of Music
Lin Yaoji	Violin	1937	1960	1962	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Liu Shikun	Piano	1939	1960	1962	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Yin Chengzong	Piano	1941	1960	1963	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Orchestra (piano virtuoso)
Zhu Tongde	Flute	1930	1960	1964	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Bai Yu	Oboe	1940	1960	1965	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Li Minduo	Piano	1939	1960	—	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Zheng Xiaoying	Conducting	1929	1960	1963	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music; Central Opera Orchestra
Zuo Yin	Harp	—	1960	—	Moscow's Tchaikovsky	Central Conservatory

					Conservatory of Music	of Music
Sheng Zhongguo	Violin	1941	1960	1964	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Orchestra
He Fuxing	Clarinet	1939	1960	1963	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Orchestra
Zhao Pingguo	Piano	1932	1960	1962	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Situ Zhiwen	Cello	1933	1960	—	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Cellist, music educator & first class of national player
Zhu Li	Violin	—	1962	—	Odessa Conservatory of Music	Opera Troupe of PLA General Political Department
Han Li	Violin	—	1962	—	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Bian Meng	Piano	1955	1990	1996	Leningrad Conservatory of Music	Central Conservatory of Music
Qian Banping	Appreciation of Music Works	1946	1990	1991	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
Zhang Guoyong	Conducting	1958	1993	1997	Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music	Shanghai Opera House

(PS: Due to incompleteness of data, the year of birth and return of some musicians are unknown)

## Appendix 2: The list of Chinese artists sent to study in the Soviet Union

Name	Major	Year of birth	Year of stay	Year of return	Target institutions & universities	Workplace upon return
Li Tianxiang	Oil Painting	1928	1953	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts;
Qian Shaowu	Sculpture	1928	1953	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	School of Fine Arts, Shanghai University
Chen Zunsan	Printmaking	1929	1953	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts
Cheng Yongjiang	Art History	1932	1953	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Lin Gang	Oil Painting	1925	1954	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Quan Shanshi	Oil Painting	1930	1954	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	China Academy of Art
Xiao Feng	Oil Painting	1932	1954	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	China Academy of Art
Qi Mudong	Stage Art	1922	1954	1957	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	The Central Academy Of Drama
Zhou Zheng	Stage Art	1923	1954	1954	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	China Youth Art Theatre
Li Chun	Criticism of World Art &	1934	1954	1959	Moscow University	Central Academy of Fine Arts

	Art Theory					
Luo Gongliu	Oil Painting	1916	1955	1958	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Deng Shu	Oil Painting	1929	1955	1961	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Guo Shaogang	Oil Painting	1932	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts
Xu Minghua	Oil Painting	1932	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Nanjing Normal University
Zhou Benyi	Stage Art	1931	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Shanghai Theatre Academy
Ji Xiaoqiu	Stage Art	1931	1955	1961	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Art Troupe of PLA General Political Department
Wang Baokang	Stage Art	1923	1955	1961	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Drama
Ma Yunhong	Stage Art	1930	1955	1961	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Drama; Central Academy of Craft Art
Li Baonian	Sculpture	1933	1955	1960	Leningrad Musina Institute of Higher Arts & Crafts (predecessor of Saint Petersburg Art and Industry Academy)	Central Academy of Craft Art
Li Yulan	Art History	1933	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Institute of Fine Arts of China; Central Academy of Fine Arts
Shao Dazhen	Art History	1934	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Xi Jingzhi	Art History	1935	1955	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Craft Art
Wu Biduan	Printmaking	1926	1956	1959	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Feng Zhen	Oil Painting	1931	1956	1962	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Li Jun	Oil Painting	1931	1956	1962	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Zhang Huaqing	Oil Painting	1932	1956	1962	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Nanjing Arts Institute
Tan Yongtai	Art History	1934	1956	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts
Dong Zuyi	Sculpture	1934	1957	1963	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Xu Zhiping	Preservation & Restoration of Ancient Fine	1928	1957	1960	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Museum of Chinese Revolution

	Arts					
Su Gaoli	Oil Painting	1937	1960	1966	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Cao Chunsheng	Sculpture	1937	1960	1964	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Wang Keqing	Sculpture	1933	1961	1963	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts
Situ Zhaoguang	Sculpture	1940	1961	1966	Repin Academy of Fine Arts	Central Academy of Fine Arts