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# **The Characteristics and Functions of International Friendship Cities of China – and Prospects of Local Cooperation in Sino-Poland Relations**

## **Introduction**

International friendship cities mean formal relationships established by local governments from different countries. Cities establish international friendship relations so that their economic, scientific and cultural communication and cooperation can be facilitated. International friendship cities can also be called sister cities. Such a relationship is an important platform for foreign relationships for local governments and forms part of national diplomacy.

Establishing a friendship city relationship is the main way of Chinese local governments in association with overseas local governments. Since Tianjin first established a friendship city relationship with Kobe in 1973, there have been 468 local governments (including provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and cities in China, excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) establishing 2120 international friendship city relationships with 469 provinces (states, counties, regions and so on) and 1431 cities of 132 countries by January 27, 2015.

## **Research Method and Basic Literature**

According to data from the website of the National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries of China and relevant Polish websites and based on relevant policies on international friendship cities of China,

the article mainly applies theories of intergovernmental relations and city diplomacy, analyses the domestic and international distribution of Chinese international friendship cities, studies the content and functions of international friendship cities' cooperation and also analyses the establishing process of such relationships of China. Based on that, the article analyzes similarities and differences in international friendship cities relationships among Chinese and Poland local governments and points out the way to enhance cooperation between local governments of the two countries.

### Literature Review

The current studies can be divided into two categories. One category regards international friendship cities as part of folk diplomacy under the framework of subnational diplomacy and civic diplomacy. At the beginning of the 1980s, Michael Shuman came up with the concept of local foreign policy and pointed out that the activities of cities were feasible as local governments (Ling Wei 2009). At the beginning of the 1990s, James N. Rosenau put forward the theory of two branches of the world. He thought the positions of the states, cross-country actors and local governments were equal (Gong 2004). The typical research fruit of China was *Subnational Governments and Foreign Affairs*, which was published in 2001 with ZhiMin Chen as the author. The book mainly analyzed the dynamics, agendas and forms of subnational governments and studied the impact of the activities of subnational governments on national diplomacy (Chen 2001). In his article, "Cities in the Horizon of International Relationships: Positions, Functions and Political Trends," Gong Tieying definitely raised the concept of city diplomacy, and pointed out the form of city diplomacy was very different from national diplomacy which was a kind of international exchange form. He also pointed out that city diplomacy had three ways: establishing international friendship cities, participating in international organizations among cities and directly contacting foreign cities (Gong 2004).

The other category focuses on the current situation of the friendship cities relationships, points out existing problems and explores ways to develop international friendship cities relationships. In his book, *City Diplomacy: The Role of Cities in International Politics*, Rogier van der Pluijm discussed sister cities as the earliest and relatively universal form of city

diplomacy (Pluijm & Melissen 2007). Many Western scholars who study the international activities of local governments are supporters and advocates of state rights. They are inclined to localism in their studies apparently. Korean and Japanese scholars lay emphasis on comparative studies of East Asian international friendship cities. For example Gang Changmin, a Korean scholar, considers that analyzing sister cities may promote exchanges between Korean local governments and offer help for national diplomacy and cities exchanges (Gang 2011). In his book, *Achievement of Sister Cities Exchanges and Developing Possibilities*, Enokida Katsutoshi, a Japanese scholar, sums up successful international friendship cities relationships, and holds the view that long term sister cities activities can enhance mutual understanding among citizens and improve economic exchanges and cooperation (Enokida 2011). Chinese scholar Zhang Qiusheng takes the relationships between Chinese and Australian provinces as an example. He analyses the current situation and points out economic and trade cooperation should be strengthened based on international friendship cities relationship (Zhang & Zhang 2011). Chen Yongming takes Tianjin and Kobe, which have established international friendship city relationship, as an example and points out that after decades of mutual exchanges and cooperation, such a paired relationship has played a positive role in the development of Tianjin (Cheng 2012).

## **The Distribution of Chinese International Friendship Cities**

### **The Distribution of Chinese Provinces Establishing International Friendship City Relationships**

Today, 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities of Chinese mainland, excluding Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, have all established some kind of international friendship city relationships. Among them, cities of eastern region of China have built 1,099 pairs of international friendship city relationships, accounting for about 52%; cities from the middle region of China have built 628 pairs, accounting for about 34%; cities from the western region of China have built 393 pairs, accounting for about 13% (table 1). Most of the international friendship city relationships are concentrated in the eastern region of China, for the reasons that the eastern region of China has a high level of opening up and internationality, has a good industrial basis and is efficient in receiving

new manners of foreign exchanges. In addition, the operation of international friendship city relationship established by the eastern region of China is well carried out, therefore further promoting the establishment of the international friendship city relationships. While in the western region of China, for the reasons of inconvenient transportation, low level of opening up, and low enthusiasm in participating in international activities, the will of conducting international city cooperation is not strong (Chen 2001).

**Table 1.** Current Statistics of International Friendship City Relationships Established by Provinces, Autonomous Regions and Municipalities in Mainland of China

Region	Number	Region	Number	Region	Number	Region	Number
Jiangsu	267	Shandong	167	Guangdong	146	Henan	92
Zhejiang	95	Anhui	79	Liaoning	79	Fujian	75
Guangxi	86	Hubei	81	Heilongjiang	78	Shanghai	71
Beijing	60	Hunan	65	Jiangxi	67	Hebei	59
Sichuan	62	Shaanxi	67	Jilin	49	Yunnan	54
Hainan	46	Gansu	43	Shanxi	38	Ningxia	43
Chongqing	34	Inner Mongolia	33	Tianjin	27	Sinkiang	27
Qinghai	14	Guizhou	9	Tibet	7		

Note: The table above is sorted out on the basis of official website of China International Friendship Cities Association: <http://www.cifca.org.cn/Web/index.aspx>.

### Overseas Distribution of Established International Friendship City Relationships with China

The top five countries where the local governments have established relationships with Chinese local government are Japan, which has 249 pairs, the United States – 238 pairs, Korea – 151 pairs, Russia – 112 pairs and Australia with 91 pairs, totally accounting for nearly 40% of all international friendship city relationships with China. In addition, according to the first half of 2013 statistics from the official website of Chinese Customs, the top 10 trade companions of China are the European Union, the United States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Russia and Brazil. And these countries and regions that establish friendship city relationships with China also trade frequently with China. Therefore, by exchanging with friendship cities, China can enhance the cooperation among different regions and further promote economic cooperation and development.

**Table 2.** Top 10 Trade Companions of China in the First Half of 2013

	Import and export/ 100 million US dollars	On year- on-year basis	Propor- tion	Export/ 100 million US dollars	On year- on-year basis	Import/ 100 million US dollars	On year- on-year basis
Total	19976.92	8.62	100.00	10528.23	10.38	9448.69	6.73
EU (27)	2592.11	-3.15	12.98	1566.33	-3.88	1025.78	-2.00
US	2440.09	5.57	12.21	1682.64	1.80	757.45	15.02
ASEAN	2105.62	12.22	10.54	1147.04	22.78	958.57	1.74
HK	2066.53	40.19	10.34	1987.49	42.66	79.05	-2.28
Japan	1469.23	-9.28	7.35	708.06	-3.81	761.17	-13.83
Korea	1323.03	8.41	6.62	453.89	2.89	869.14	11.53
Taiwan	1011.36	34.83	5.06	210.14	27.35	801.22	36.94
Australia	631.58	5.90	3.16	168.60	-1.68	462.98	8.96
Russia	431.77	-1.16	2.16	219.40	10.93	212.37	-11.17
Brazil	402.49	-2.50	2.01	163.92	5.62	238.57	-7.40

Note: The table above is sorted out on the basis of the customs information network: [www.haiguan.info](http://www.haiguan.info).

Statistics shows that China has established 745 pairs of international friendship city relationships with European cities accounting for 35% of the total number, 679 pairs with other Asian cities accounting for 31%, 442 pairs with American cities accounting for 22% and 120 pairs with African cities accounting for 6%. International friendship city relationships established by Chinese local governments are mainly located in Europe, Asia and America, while comparatively fewer in Africa and Oceania. There are two major reasons, as follows. On the one hand, countries of Europe and America have a relatively mature experience in the establishment and operation of the international friendship city relationship, therefore the number is relatively large and increases quickly. On the other hand, it is determined by China's Zhongnanhai position and economic development. When establishing international friendship city relationships, local governments of China for the sake of economic development tend to select adjacent cities or cities from developed regions. But in recent years, with the demand of rapid development and market, local governments of China have started to turn to African counties and other medium-developed countries or regions when building international friendship city relationships.

## Content and Manner of International Friendship Cities' Cooperation of China

### Content of Cooperation

The selected objects of international friendship cities in China originally focused on political relationships, but now gradually have spread to consider comprehensive condition, such as historical and cultural foundation, geological position, the implementation of industry and so on. Participants of activities initially were the government, but now they spread to enterprises, nongovernmental organizations and so on. The content of cooperation has also changed, from conducting pure international cultural exchanges to developing science, urban management and other international exchanges and cooperation by building an extensive international friendly city network. The following table shows the main cooperation fields of Chinese, Japanese and the Korean local governments (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Main Cooperation Fields of Chinese Local Governments, Japanese Local Governments and the Local Governments in South Korea

Cooperation field	Education	Culture	Economic	Administration	Medical treatment and public health
Main content	Student exchanges; teachers' visits; the ward of honorary doctorates, etc.	Holding of cultural activities, artists visits, art shows, etc.	Establishment of economic and trade agreements; interchanges between enterprises and cooperation on investment; holding of characteristic product exhibition; exchange visits of experts in the fields of agriculture, industry, commerce; visiting students exchange, etc.	Exchanges on local administrative affairs, experts dispatch, exchange visits of civil servants, city construction, environmental protection and health, etc.	Disaster donation, exchange visits of medical workers, exchanges of medical treatment information, medical installment donation and so on.

Source: International Consortium of Korean Local Self-governing Bodies 2006, p. 14; Yoshitake 1999.

## Exchange Activities of International Friendship Cities

Once the relationship is established, activities of China's international friendship cities are mainly focused on conducting general interchange activities and cooperation under the direction of the central government, without involving the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They include the following aspects in details.

**(1) Cultural exchanges.** Cultural exchange is the foundation of other kinds of exchanges and cooperation. Cultural exhibitions, national concerts, physical games, international exhibitions and any other forms of cultural activities should be held on the basis of mutual respect of each culture, so that people of the international friendship cities can know more about each other and gain more trust. At the same time, cultural exchanges can bring cities opportunities for future economic development and development of other fields.

**(2) Exchange visits of staff.** It mainly refers to the exchange of staff in the fields of science, education, culture and health, short-term investigation of officials and the exchange of teenagers. By the exchanging of staff and the sharing of knowledge, further cooperation is successfully carried out.

**(3) Exchanges and cooperation on economic activities.** The main tasks of the local governments are promoting local economic development and improving the life of the local people. Therefore, cooperating with international friendship cities so that local economy can be driven is a significant task of the local governments. Since China's implementation of the reform and opening up policy, huge foreign funds have been attracted, a large portion of which have drawn support from the platform of the international friendship cities. Through them, overseas enterprises can directly conduct technical cooperation and trade with Chinese enterprises. And with the development of China's economy, more and more Chinese enterprises start to walk out to seek opportunities by commercial investigations, market expansion, resource exploitation and any other activities organized by the friendship associations.

**(4) Participating in international cooperation organizations.** In recent years, in order to cope with some non-traditional security threats, such as environmental contamination, floods, earthquake, etc., local governments can enhance mutual cooperation by joining some international organizations. They also share scientific and technical information so that they can enhance their abilities in solving their own urban problems.

## **Functions of International Friendship City Cooperation**

### **Promoting Local Economy**

The relationship of the international friendship cities is a guarantee for bilateral trade. When foreign enterprises know little about China, the relationship will provide them a platform that will make them feel relieved when investing in China. For example, in 1979, Tianjin and Philadelphia (USA) established an international friendship city relationship. Under the support of the government of the two cities, the GlaxoSmithKline founded TSKF in 1998 in Tianjin. And in 2009, the sales of TSKF reached 1.9 billion Chinese Yuan and the achievement increased by more than 15%.

### **Helping to Solve Problems in the Course of Urban Development**

Through jointly coping with problems in the course of urban development with foreign local governments, Chinese local government may avoid the tortuous path of urbanization and better promote the development of cities. Take Shanghai and Yokohama for example. Since they built the relationship, they have cooperated in the fields of environmental protection, urban planning, disposal of sewage, tap water technology, the introduction of bar codes, etc. Shanghai has learnt a lot of experience from Yokohama, which not only helps improve its capacity in dealing with city problems, but also fosters a group of international talents for Shanghai.

### **Promoting Science-Education-Culture-Health Social Programs**

In the respect to scientific and technical contact, friendship cities jointly develop and promote technical advance by technical cooperation, transfer of technology, introduction of experts, etc.; in respect to education contact, friendship cities may help widen the horizon of Chinese students and teachers and cultivate their knowledge, attitudes and skills by establishing friendship schools, exchanging visiting students, inspectorate and teachers, etc.; in respect to cultural exchanges, friendship cities may



show a new China to the world and let foreign friends know real China by holding cultural festivals, performances, photographic exhibitions, culture shows, etc. In the meantime, it may also enrich the life of our citizens and widen our horizons by exhibiting our exotic culture; in respect to health, by the establishment of friendship hospitals, medical treatment donation, medical treatment item cooperation, etc., jointly launching medical research to promote China's medical treatment cause.

## **Establishing New Channels for International Communication**

The contact of international friendship cities is a form of people-to-people diplomacy and a beneficial supplement under China's overall diplomatic framework. Traditional international contact is conducted under the framework of sovereignty. But with the aggravation of internationalization, non-state actors and transnational forces begin to present a more and more important role on the international stage. These non-state actors and transnational forces do not exercise national sovereignty on the international stage, but they have a certain amount of autonomy. That means they can conduct international exchanges under the authorization of the state. Although local governments are restricted by the central government when conducting international contacts and their relationships may be affected by the relationship of the countries, they may build a way of communication on the subnational level. In particular, when politically sensitive problems between two countries emerge, international friendship cities may act as a bumper for the strained relations of the two nations in the form of people-to-people diplomacy.

## **Establishing Process of China's International Friendship Cities**

China's work on building international friendship cities is mainly to establish concrete procedures based on the local government's realistic condition under the uniform direction of the central government, coordinated and managed by Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

## **Selection of International Friendship City Candidates**

According to the *Friendship Cities Work Regulations*, which was issued in 2005, the target should principally belong to the countries that have established official diplomatic relationships with China. Local governments of all or different levels of China may start from their realistic condition to select proper foreign cities according to their geological position, economic structure, position of urban, implementation of cooperation, etc., based on the principles of equality, mutual beneficial, implementation and joint development.

When selecting a definite object, some applications are also required to consult the National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and local Chinese embassies.

## **Evaluation of the Candidate Cities**

The main things to be considered are whether or not it will be beneficial for improving affiliation on the basis of mutual equality, and whether or not it will have the possibility of conducting further cooperation. It includes the following aspects in details: (1) whether the status of the two cities is equal; (2) features of the industrial structure and geology; (3) historical and cultural background and geological position; (4) whether or not the counterparts have political difference on China's sensitive matter; (5) stability of local politics.

## **Application for Establishing an International Friendly City Relationship**

According to articles 21, 12 and 13 of the *Friendship Cities Work Regulations*, Chinese cities must submit reports for approval when establishing relationships with foreign cities. Foreign affair sections of the relative provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities are responsible for drawing up agreements of the cities which are engaged in applying for international friendship city and report to the National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries for approval and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for ratification. Then, through the presidium of the local government's discussion, the movement is delivered to the Standing Committee of the People's Congress for deliberation and approval. Chi-

nese cities that want to establish relationships with sensitive regions and hot spots, which are confirmed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, must seriously implement China's diplomatic policies and relative policies aiming at particular countries. If the cities establish relationship with cities that have not built formal diplomatic relationships with China, the activities must be carefully conducted under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the activities they conduct must be reported to the national association for verification and be ratified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries 2005).

### **Termination and Suspension of an International Friendship City Relationship**

According to article 42 of the *Friendship Cities Work Regulations*, if the cases below happen, the National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries would log off the relationships or repeal approved documents following the verification of the higher authorities: (1) on account that the changes of the political system of the government and the changes of the administrative districts; (2) on account that the counterparts explicitly terminate or will terminate the relationship for political reasons or any other reasons; (3) on account that the counterpart violates the agreement, publicly supports two Chinas or one China, one Taiwan and reject exchanges with China; (4) the agreement has expired and the counterpart expressed termination of the relationship (National Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries 2005).

According to the *Friendship Cities Work Regulations*, the cases of log-out exist in China. But due to some limitations, relative departments have not logged off these relationships in official documents. Such cases can generally be summed up as termination of the relationship, but once proper opportunities turn up, the relationship of the friendship cities would rebound rapidly, and the cooperation would continue. Take Beijing and Rome for example. In 2009, the Rome Authority disregarded the solemn protests of Chinese government and conferred on the Dalai Lama the title of honorary citizen. The action violated the basic content of the friendly agreements and the Chinese government declared to terminate the official cooperation with the Rome Authority. Thereafter, in 2010, Beijing Overseas Chinese Federation invited an Italian citizen group to visit Beijing, and the friendly relationship of the two cities restarted.

## Current Situation and Prospect of the Development of Friendship City Relationship between China and Poland

China established a strategic partnership with Poland at the end of 2011. In recent years, the pragmatic cooperation of the two countries has developed rapidly and comprehensively, and Poland has kept being China's biggest trade partner in Central and Eastern Europe for seven years. The value of trade was 1.98 billion US dollars in 2003, but in 2013 it increased to 13 billion US dollars. The local governments of Poland have established 23 pairs of friendship city relationships with Chinese local governments, among which 10 pairs are provincial and state friendships and 13 pairs are city friendships. Compared with the 90 cities in Europe and America, the number of established friendship cities between China and Poland is fewer. Poland has 16 provinces, 314 counties and 42 cities with more than 100,000 residents. And the total number of the local government is about 372. But only twenty-three of them have built friendships with Chinese local governments, accounting for about 6% of the total number, which is significantly fewer. Warsaw, the capital of Poland, has not established a friendship city relationship with Chinese cities despite building 12 pairs of friendship city relationships with cities in Europe and America (Table 4). Lodz, the third largest city of Poland, has only established friendship relationships with Tianjin, Chengdu and Guangzhou in China and the number is far below the number of Warsaw, Gdansk, Kalisz and other cities. Tianjin has established 25 pairs of friendship city relationships with 25 local governments in 20 different countries from five continents, whose number is much higher than Lodz's.

**Table 4.** List of Friendship Cities between China and Poland

Chinese cities/provinces	Polish cities/voivodeship	Date
Shanghai Municipality	Pomeranian Voivodeship	1985-07-04
Liaoning Province	Bydgoszcz Voivodeship	1988-11-12
Shenzhen	Poznań	1993-07-30
Tianjin Municipality	Lodz	1994-10-11
Heilongjiang Province	Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	1995-04-04
Anhui Province	Wrocław Voivodeship	1997-06-08
Guangdong Province	West Pomeranian Voivodeship	1998-03-06
Jiangsu Province	Lesser Poland Voivodeship	2000-11-16

Ningbo	Bydgoszcz	2005-10-11
Hainan Province	Lubusz Voivodeship	2006-02-24
Haikou	Gdynia	2006-04-24
Shenyang	Katowice	2006-07-14
Fuzhou	Koszalin	2007-05-19
Jiujiang	Legionowo	2008-08-30
Henan Province	Lublin Voivodeship	2008-09-11
Jiaozuo	Lublin	2010-04-29
Huanggang	Piaseczno	2010-06-18
Huaian	Płock	2010-07-08
Guilin	Toruń	2010-08-29
Changzhou	Zielona Gora	2011-04-27
Bubei Province	Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship	2011-06-07
Fujian Province	Opole Voivodeship	2012-09-09
Foshan	Starogard Gdański	2014-06-10

Note: The table above is sorted out on the basis of official website of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries: <http://www.cifca.org.cn/Web/Search-ByZhou.aspx?guojia=%b2%a8%c0%bc>.

China and Poland once belonged to the socialist planned economy countries. Although Poland has turned into a Western political system, its ideology has many similarities with China. The traces of socialism can be seen everywhere in Poland which makes the Chinese feel cordial. China and Poland established friendship in the socialist era, and the two peoples both have a history of being mistreated. It is not difficult for them to find political resonance and the cooperation of the two countries has political and cultural foundation.

Poland lies in the center of Europe and is China's only way to land interaction with Western Europe and Northern Europe that must be passed. The advantages of the land transportation show once more against the background of frequently haunted pirates in Somalia and increased plane crashes. The leap of the high-speed railway and the maturity of the technology open up a new prospect for land transportation. The Eurasia International Railway starts in Chongqing, through Xi'an, Lanzhou, Urumqi in China, then enters the Republic of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and ends in Duisburg, Germany. It is 11,179 km long, half the length of sea freight whilst carries much more cargo and is cheaper than air transport. The Eurasia International Railway has operated 13 rounds, carried

cargo of 11,560 standardized boxes. Currently, there have been several plans of the idea for the new Eurasian railway. As a section of the railway, Poland can update its domestic section and build new lines at home to make preparations for the new Eurasian railway.

The geographic position of Lodz just lies in the heart of the Europe and thereby has a unique regional advantage. The city should make the most of the opportunities of building the new Eurasian railway. The informal meeting of EU transport ministers announced the new Pan European Railway Network on September 17, 2014. It will start to construct nine lines. This is a good opportunity for the development of Lodz.

## Conclusion

On account of the long distance between Poland and China, establishing international friendship cities relationships is suitable for local governments of the two countries. Currently, a large gap exists between China and Poland in developing international friendship cities relationships. The local governments of Poland should strive to develop such relationships with Chinese local governments so that folk cooperation can be promoted and economies can be pushed forward respectively.

Lodz is located in the inland of Poland and is not in the border regions of the nation, which makes the city unable to participate in sub-regional cooperation organization. Therefore, the focus of international cooperation of Lodz lies in the bilateral cooperation of international friendship cities and the establishment of affiliation with overseas local governments. Not only that, Lodz may also enlarge new bilateral cooperation by friendship cities. For example, Lodz and Tianjin are international friendship cities, while Tianjin and Kobe are friendship cities. Therefore, via Tianjin Lodz may establish international friendship cities with Kobe. In addition, Lodz should also focus on multilateral cooperation widened by the lateral cooperation of international friendship cities. For example, Lodz may conduct multilateral cooperation with Kobe and Tianjin.

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