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Pakistan–Russia Relations and the Changing Paradigm

Hafeez Ullah Khan

Abstract

Moscow and Islamabad underwent a transition to say bye to past and develop a strong and stable relationship on mutual benefits. This paper analyses the factors related to both states building their relations in the perspective of geopolitical, geo-economics, regional and global changes. This piece also sheds light on the regional and global forces behind the closer linking and bringing of Moscow and Islamabad.. The study finds that U.S/India strategic cooperation and the pangs of Afghanistan’s unsteadiness play a crucial role in this regard. The discussion comes to the conclusion that strong relation of Russia with Pakistan does not mean a hostile relation with India as the later was the cornerstone of Moscow policy in South Asia and historical ally throughout the Cold War. The study also recommends that Moscow can play a vital role in easing the tension between the two rival states of South Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Multi-polarity Movement.

Keywords: Geo-Politics, Strategic partnership, balancing, Paradigm

Introduction

In international politics, there is no permanent ally or enemy but only national interests is permanent, likewise every state, Pakistan is also doing the same by having amity with her historical foe Russia (Khan, 2018). In order to boost its positive dimensional relations with Russia, Pakistan has been striving and looking to variegate its foreign policy preferences, It would be a milestone for Pakistan if she happens to be a regional ally of the main world power, strong economy and veto power holder country; Russia. Vladimir Putin has lead Russia to new dimensions and during his reign, Russia’s is rekindling and reviving and gain making waves in the international political scenario and rising as a balancing force by influencing new outlines of the global politics. Against this backdrop, this is high time for Russia to develop its relations with other countries in general. (Naqvi & Masood, 2017).

In the past, the Soviet Union’s alliance with India but bitter relations with Pakistan, and on the contrary, the coalition of Pakistan with the U.S even more complicated this whole situation. The deficit mutual of trust and reliance are fundamentally the result of the sour past which made it hard for the former Soviet Union and Pakistan to cultivate and sustain friendly relation in 2003. Recently Russia started its economic and military relations with Pakistan too, but the former will not take any risk by putting its relations with India at stake since India is the second largest economy of South Asia after China (Zia, 2018).

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Pakistan and Russia Relations: A historical perspective

The Cold war as a period of hostility

In the cold war and especially since 1947, Pakistan always joint hands with the U.S, Russia's opposing actor so there was clear cut hostility between Russia and Pakistan especially after Pakistan carry its support to the Taliban's of Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Even at some stage, there were improved relations among them. Both the states, collaborated with each other for the encouragement of education, ethnicity, trade and commerce from 1947-50 and 1965-69, but overall both the states have unfriendly relations between each other and the reason was the dissimilar and deviating point of views on the regional and international security issues. (Mahesar, 2018) Apart from that, both the states act and worked against each other just on their own interests, geopolitical goals and for security issues in the region but still, there was no bilateral dispute between both the states.

After the Cold War: A Growing Bonhomie:

As most of the times Washington urges Pakistan to 'do more'; accuses Pakistan of providing safe havens to terrorists, and makes Pakistan a scapegoat for all the failures which the US had in Afghanistan, which move forwards their relations to an edge. Since the U.S has begun to demur its American aid, Pakistan needs Russia to boost its economy. Moreover, following the close relationship of U.S and Europe with India, Russia also needs Pakistan for investment and trade sector. Both are having interests so development in both the states can be seen in the recent. (Akram, 2016), Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf proved the first drop and extended the hand of amity and strived to trigger the process to foster a healthier relation after the Cold War by visiting Russia after the invitation of President Putin.

The rationale for Strong Relations with Pakistan

There is no two opinions on the fact that Russia and India enjoy the strategic partnership over the past six decades and will continue to have bilateral relations which Pakistan appreciates but As Pakistan is an economically weak state and have deficit in energy sector and on the other hand Russia is one of the largest exporters of the energy like oil and gas. For Russia, Pakistan could be their employ to export energy and there can be collaborations on the other sectors too. It is the era of multilateralism; states go towards those states where they see their interest. Pakistan and Russia accentuated mutual attempt for peace and restoration of Afghanistan in 2011. Various deals on collaboration in the fields of agriculture and energy were signed on the visit of Pervaiz Musharraf. Russian defense minister visited Pakistan in 2014 and waved off obstructions on the provision of ammunition to Pakistan by signing treaties on the extension of defense and armed relations other than the agreement for Mi35 helicopters' auction to Pakistan. Russia and Pakistan, both have calculated their national interest and came to the conclusion that there is no way other except to generate bilateral institutional and military relations between them after the

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number of factors like U.S tilt to India because to contain China and many other factors. Some of the main reasons of Pak/Russia relations are:

India/U.S Strategic Partnership

It was in 1998 when a proposal was made by the Russian Prime Minister Primakov. According to his recommendation, Russia, India and China should make a strategic triangle in opposition to the United States which was not materialized by New Delhi. Rather India was dubious regarding the strategic support of the cooperation between Russian and Pakistan. On the other hand, the old of Russia on the weapons market of India was at risk on account of the USA-India nuclear pact and escalating strategic alliance of the US and India in view of the fact that India had remained a significant ammunition market for Russia. These regional orientation developments coerced Russia to modify its policy goals. Despite the numerous official visits of Putin to India no success was on the cards for Russia in drifting India away from its strategic partnership the USA. Russia's imperfect capacity to keep India out of reach of Washington is confirmed. As a result, this put an end to Russian collaboration with India in South Asia and Russia began establishing ties with Pakistan (Khan, 2016)

Instability of Afghanistan

Regional coalitions are altering as Pakistan analyses her distressed relationship with the United States and strive to avoid being blacklisted and blamed for "not taking action on some of the entities and individuals designated as terrorists by the UN". Russia recognizes Pakistan's importance for a peaceful political settlement in Afghanistan is very well known to Russia. Analysts believe that Russia is petrified by the increasing existence of Islamic State militants in neighbouring Afghanistan. Recently Russia named a voluntary consul to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which limits Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan and is known for the IS headquarters. The IS presence in northern Afghanistan's border regions with Central Asia is another reason for dismay in Russia.

For Russia existence of Islamic State's (IS) in Afghanistan is the greatest peril to Central Asian solidity. Russia observed that the long-lasting presence of the U.S and its allies in Afghanistan is not suitable for Russia's long term goal. So there is no other way except to work for the stabilization in Afghanistan, and without the help of Pakistan, it is tricky and impossible (Dawn, 2018). Being a victim itself, Russia is very receptive to volatility and drug-trafficking from Afghanistan via Central Asia. Pakistan can bring stability to Afghanistan and ultimately Central Asian solidity will be certain.

CPEC and Significance of Indian Ocean

Russia's geopolitical interests have gradually relocated to East from West in the post-Crimea period. The Russian economy has been badly affected by the imposed Western sanction and low oil prices in global markets. For the revival of its economy,

Russia is in search of new Asian markets and strategic collaborators owing to the shifts in the global course. An obvious change in Russia's policy of South Asia can be observed and Pakistan seems to be holding massive significance for Russia. The main reason appears to be in Afghanistan in addition to getting access to the Arabian Sea and beyond through CPEC. The geographic situation of Pakistan in Asia is an open secret, because of its geographical setting, and the perspective to unite Eurasia Union with Indian Ocean (Korybko, 2015).

North-South Gas Pipeline

A most desired energy pact of \$1.7 billion for laying a liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline from Karachi to Lahore was signed by Russia and Pakistan on December 23, 2014 (Abbas, 2016) In late 2019, the North-South gas pipeline, that is 1122-km in length with a 42-inch diameter, which is expected to be completed in 2020, will be built from Karachi to Punjab which will transport 12.4 billion LNG per annum in these two cities of Pakistan. The main features of the Boot project (Build own operate transfer) have been finalized and will be investigated and approved by the officially authorized teams of both the states i.e. Russia and Pakistan. Russian companies will get access to the new markets and will provide orders for Russian industrialized enterprises and will enhance non-oil exports. (Celov & Iden, 2018) In the first 25 years after the building of the pipeline, it will be managed and controlled by Russia. The expenses for gas delivery will help the company to return the reserves and investments and make revenue. After the completion of 25 years, the control of pipeline will be given back to Pakistan and then Pakistan will manage and operate it (Dawn, 2015). On January 28, 2018, a Russian oil and gas delegation visited Pakistan in order to endow in the energy sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Russian delegation and KPOGCL (the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Limited) sealed a deal of establishing an oil-refinery in Kohat that had the capacity of purifying 20,000 barrels oil per day1 on January 31 (The Frontier Post, 2018).

Military relations: considerable feature of Moscow/Islamabad Relations:

Pakistan was on the top of the list of the countries which are brutally shaken by the extremism and terrorizes. Pakistan military did a lot of effort by performing military operations to combat and eradicate all kind of activities in surrounding areas of Pakistan/Afghanistan border and in the tribal areas. Since 9/11 to 2012, Pakistan roundabout has carried out several main (251) and small (735) operations to eradicate terrorism (Roy, 2016). Pakistan's proficiency in dealing with the rebellious has always been praised by Russia, who is quite keen to carry out the mutual counter-terrorism exercises with Pakistan. On the other hand, the US keeps demoralizing the progress of Pakistan in fighting terrorism. Developing ties with Pakistan can render a valuable opportunity to Russia to learn from the Pakistani experience and tackle with the destabilizing forces that intimidate its own territory. Russia is well aware that Pakistan's south-western and north-western vicinities are a tricky terrain for direction-

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finding and fighting. Hence the Pakistani military's success against the militant forces in this region epitomizes Pakistan's competence.

Russian prime minister even slammed the Salala Check post attack by US-NATO forces which took more than twenty Pakistani soldiers' life and proclaimed it as an intolerable infringement of a state's independence.

Defence Deals

In 2014 there was an agreement of defense cooperation, which talks about to endorse arms control conducts, encouragement of military, economic, counterterrorism efforts, promotion of global security among both the nations (Dawn newspaper, 2016). Four combat helicopter named as MI-35M were being sold to Pakistan from Russia and two major drills on counterterrorism had also being done in each other's states under the defense cooperation deal. Navies of both the countries also later took part in mutual antidrug exercises executed in the Arabian Sea and a Pakistani warship also contributed in the major Russian Navy Day parade; the most recent marine collaboration that took place in St. Petersburg. Russian leaders often admire Islamabad for abolishing terrorism from Pakistani whilst the American leaders are always incredulous of Pakistan's sincerest efforts in this regard. Russian ambassador Dedov commented in a seminar about the cooperation between the states and said that our state is also facing similar threats that destabilize the Russian internal security, so the anti-terrorism cooperation is significant among both states. He further said that Russia will continue to support and will give practical backing to Pakistan. . Russia and Pakistan both have remained vocal about the materialization of Islamic State's Afghan branch, which is known as ISK-P, in "ungoverned spaces" of the war-shattered country (Gul, 2018). Various destabilizing factors counting terrorists, trans-border militants, and religious extremists are a great menace to Russian internal security and stability. Afghanistan's unsteady political and security setting has gravely affected regional security and stability. Thus, both Russia and Pakistan are working together for the stability of Afghanistan. Both the states have also started working on Afghan peace process; there was a meeting between Russian ambassador and Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmud Qureshi, where they promised to continue work of regional initiatives and Afghan peace process (Ali, 2019).

Military Exercises:

There were joint military drills named as 'Druzhbha-2016', Russian word which means friendship, between Russia and Pakistan in 2016. In spite of India's request to postpone the drill on account of the terrorist attacks in Uri and LT Gen endorsed in on Twitter that these drills will bring values on both sides. Indians did not expect these drills to be held between these states. Russia's attention has also been grabbed by the Pakistani military forces that played a vital role in wiping out terrorism. Russia has remained a victim of insurgency so the military to military contact in anti-terror

activities is imperative for Russia. Till 2018, there was 3 bilateral military cooperation among these two states.

Russian Air Defence Systems

Pakistan is keenly fascinated by Russian air defence systems, Su-35 Jets, and T-90 Tanks.³¹ Currently and is greatly interested in purchasing them. Both the countries are holding talks regarding this. Still, Russian seems to be reluctant a cautious for the deal of military hardware to Pakistan that can be utilized for any purposes other than counter-terrorism operations. Would Russia take such a risk is involved in such a defence partnership with Pakistan which could worry India is yet to be seen (Zia, 2018).

Collaboration in Economy:

Moscow stands 6th largest economy in the World and after EU; China is the Russian second main collaborator in the field of trade and business. The Eurasian Economic Union is considered to be a counter system to the EU which was supported through economics pillars including, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and Eurasian Development Bank. Russia is a part of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and G-20 and has been hunting to search for its natural resources of petroleum and gas to boost its economic status. As far as Russia and Pakistan's cooperation is concerned, both states collaboration in the economy can be seen somewhere in the past as well. (Owais, 2007) There were trade relations between both the states in 1956 where cotton and leather were being exported by Pakistan whereas the Soviet Union founded PSM which is Pakistan steel mills. Later on, both the states adopt another bilateral Intergovernmental trade agreement in 1999 by replacing the 1956 contract. (Nawaz, 2019). The initial series of the Commission meetings were arranged in 2002 followed by the second in 2012 and third on 28 November 2014. On the request of Russian President, his Pakistani equivalent Asif Ali Zardari is on his three-day official visit went to Russia. Both the heads of the states stressed upon building reciprocally advantageous economic assistance between both the states, which was supposed to be approved by the Russian and Pakistani Intergovernmental Commission on Economics, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation and in September 2010, its initial meeting was held in Moscow. (Dawn, 2011)

SCO as Factor for Growing Relations

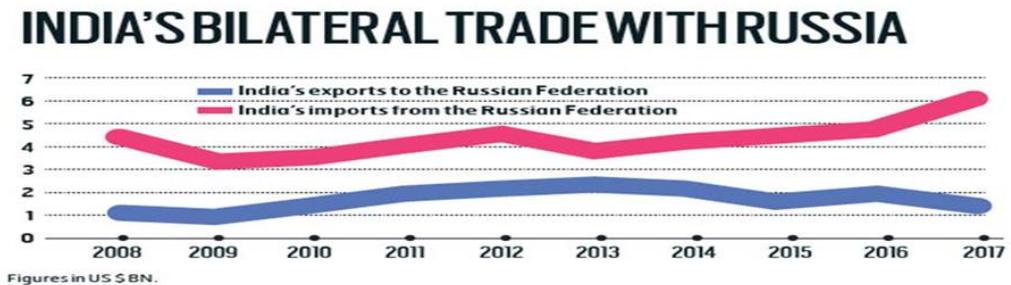
SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) is a highly beneficial opportunity for Russia, China and Pakistan to sit together and contemplate over the security concerns and uninterrupted incorporation. Pakistan was able to be a permanent member of SCO by the support of China's but without Russia's help, it would have been unfeasible. The prime minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin approved and supported Pakistan for permanent membership of SCO in 2011. As institutions provide interaction and information between the states likewise SCO is also a factor in bringing both states

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together. During the 17th meeting of the Heads of the State Council Summit 2017 in Astana, India and Pakistan became complete members of this organization. Profound support to SCO has been provided by Russia to tackle terrorism, extremism and separatism through a collective regional approach. For that reason, regardless of stressed relations between India and Pakistan, the Indian legal expert's delegation attended a three-day meeting of Legal Experts Group of Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure hosted by Pakistan in May 2018.

Russia Relations with India (Balance b/w India and Pakistan)

India and Russia have been engaged in inconsiderable strategic cooperation in the fields of defence, diplomacy and intelligence sharing. Both the states enjoy an innate friendship which has fully fledged and built up over the past decade. Soon after independence, India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) drew closer diplomatically. Indian stance over Kashmir was always backed up by USSR at the United Nations. Both of them got engaged with each other through strategic ties and joint manufacturing of defence technologies, mainly weapons and related equipment was commenced. Even today, most of the weapons and equipment are imported from Russia into India for example, aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, surveillance and reconnaissance aircrafts/helicopters, up gradation of Sukhoi aircrafts, joint manufacturing of SU-30 MKI aircrafts, T-90 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) and renovation of diverse weapon structures. (Khattak, 2018). But as soon as Russia sensed the US/India strategic closeness; she began to develop relations with Pakistan also. The sprouting Russia's strategy towards South Asia has been underpinned by the Sino-Russia partnership which aims at forming a multi-polar world order. But Russia will try to balance between India and Pakistan due to a number of factors. Both the states Russia and India share deep historical friendship and history sometimes plays a major role in shaping the policies of states, secondly, India has a huge market and is an economic hub in South Asia. Both the states have strong trade relation even after Russia's better relations with Pakistan.



Source: BW business world

There are a number of defense agreements between India and Russia. Also, both countries are working together in several multilateral forums like the BRIC, the SCO

and RIC (Russia, India and China) (PURUSHOTHAMAN, 2015) Russia will not fully isolate itself from India; it will try to have good relations with both the states. If think optimistically Russia can reduce the hostility amid New Delhi and Islamabad by paying the role of mediation in the future under the umbrella of SCO. We can take this stance as an example of Russia trying to balance between India and Pakistan as on every occasion Pakistan is routinely blamed for sponsorship of terrorism and as the main threat to regional stability. On the other hand, India always promotes Pakistan for mounting Islamic extremism. Meanwhile, Russia has successfully reserved positive relations with both India and Pakistan and always stayed silent to charge either country for the prevailing terrorism in South Asia. It's a fact that in comparison Russia's economic and security links with India are far more important geopolitically than those with Pakistan. Russia has been trying to play its role effectively by offering to arbitrate stress between India and Pakistan and beneficially striving to combat terrorism which has authorized her to employ a highly effectual balancing policy in South Asia. It is assumed that if Russian diplomatic propositions is of any assistance in alleviating the tensions between India and Pakistan, it will be easy for the Kremlin policymakers to stretch Moscow's access to a new important markets for Russian military equipment; draw attention to Russia's powerful eminence on the world arena, and lay bare the Russia's capability to exercise substantial pressure in the Asia-Pacific area (Ramani, 2017).

Way Forward/Conclusion

India and USA assert to be "natural allies" after fifty years of chaotic relations in particular de-hyphenating India from Pakistan which is the non-NATO ally. In the same way, Moscow and Islamabad are getting acquainting with each other after numerous decades of acrimony to balance the situation in the region. As stated above that Russia will not leave the partnership with India too so Pakistan must learn this lesson from Russia. Pakistan should plan a solid and steady reallocation in its foreign policy and must focus on expanding its foreign alliances and extend fine relations with all main powerful countries in the world. If Pakistan continues with this mindset and intention, this will result in the betterment of regional peace and affluence. Having strong friendly terms with Russia already, China will take the development of Pak-Russia relations as a good positive initiative (Abbas, 2016).

Pakistan-Russia mutual relations in the existing geostrategic milieu are still fragile and but the 'initiative has been taken and the ice has thawed. Countless opportunities are lying ahead for both the states to improve economic collaboration by escalating the joint trade and commencing the gas pipelines scheme. Having talked about the political and diplomatic facades, both countries have reached a point of understanding on regional security issues i.e. the presence of ISIS in Afghanistan. The 'defence cooperation agreement' is a commendable project in defence sector but a great deal of further commitment with each other is required in the fields of technology and cooperative military endeavours if both of them are desirous of to changing their

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relationship into a ‘Strategic Partnership’ in the future. It’s advisable for both the countries to be cooperating with each other recurrently in all spheres to enlarge the mutual relations (Malik, 2019). In addition, Pakistan and Russia can mutually work under the sponsorship of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization for the solidity in the region. Since both the countries share mutual interests, the further fortification of their reciprocal relations in the future is highly probable (Mian, n.d).

Pakistan and India also took part in a multi-nation military exercise named as Peace Mission 2018 held in Russia. Moscow through her orders can help in resolving the territorial disputes in India Pakistan relations and maybe this balancing of Russia with India and Pakistan can further decrease the tension between India and Pakistan too in the long term. One of the most influential partners of Russia and India's adversary i.e. of Pakistan is China. Having a better bond will Pakistan is momentous for Russia to enhance its influence in the area (The Economic Times, 2018). The future cooperation of both the states can help in curtailing the emergent radical entities and terrorism which have seriously intimidated the regional peace and solidity as well as economic growth predominantly since Afghanistan’s clash commenced which both the regions enclose on all sides. Prospects of fortifying the liaison through business, investment and partnership in energy and defense sectors are enormous provided Pakistan and Russia disregards their resentful past. (Khan & Altaf, 2013). So it is the need of the hour for Russia and Pakistan both to have cooperation for their own and region’s integration.

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