

Pakistan And Russia: Past And Present Shift In Regional Dynamics

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Abstract

The Relations of Pakistan and Russia (former Soviet Union) started on diplomatic grounds on May 1 1948. Both countries have close and cooperative relations based on International mutual cooperation and trust. The relations between Pakistan and Russia lost their warmth after the state visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to USA. In Cold War period Pakistan took side with America and joined SEATO and CENTO against USSR. On the other side India was the member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), that's why Soviet Union was more close to India. After the disintegration of USSR and the formation of Russian Federation, relations between Russia and Pakistan seemed to move forward towards normalization. Russia backed Pakistan's permanent membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which was very much valued by Pakistan's Government. Meetings of Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Chiefs of Armed Forces and other officials of both the countries shows the level of relations of both the countries. Pakistan and Russia relations focused mainly on the safety and reliability of their nuclear weapons, exchange of anti-terrorism experiences and cooperation in drugs control.

Keywords: Pakistan, Soviet Union, Russian Federation, SEATO, CENTO, NAM, SCO, Pak-Russian joint military exercises, Defense cooperation, Trade agreements, United Nations resolutions, Kashmir Dispute and Russia,

Introduction

The Soviet Union is generally perceived as the dominant external power in South Asia.¹ Soviet involvement and existence building in this Asian region has proved to be more efficient and strong than those of its two rivals, The United States and China.

Over the last twenty years, the USSR has built its presence in three Asian regions, the west, the south, and the south-east, using primarily two foreign policy tools, development assistance and politico-military involvement in local "anti-imperialist" disputes.

When Khrushchev reached India in 1955 he didn't bring any offer of military assistance. India was not involved in any disagreement with the imperialist powers. India, however, did have a dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, and Pakistan was the military partner of the United States. Khrushchev's surprise bid of Soviet political support for India in its dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir and his similar offer to Afghanistan a little later in the Pakhtoonistan conflict with Pakistan did amount to involvement in local conflicts.

The image of USSR projected by Soviet leaders to all of Asia was the image of socialist

development, that is, of the wonderful expansion of military and economic power of Russia under the Soviet System and the capacity and motivation of the socialist block to assist the “peace-loving anti-imperialist” newly incepted nations such as India in their political and economic development.

2. Research Questions and Methodology

This study tried to answer some of the following important dilemmas.

1. Why Pakistan didn't give importance to USSR in the past?
2. What setbacks Pakistan suffered due to bad relations with USSR?
3. Which super power was in the national interest of Pakistan?
4. Friendly relations with Russia are important for the security and development of the region?

In the light of the above, the studies of reference literature about the friendly relations were in the favor of Pakistan. This study also analyses the loss received by Pakistan due to bad relations with USSR. This study also reviews the current friendly relations between Pakistan and Russia. This research is qualitative in nature. Descriptive-cum- analytical methodology has also been employed in this study. The dilemmas having historical facts are narrated with descriptive methodology and the reason and impact relationship between different events, enigmas and activities are treated with analytical methodology.

3. Review of Literature

This test provides a factual evaluation of the existing literature focusing their important issues and significance of the study and to highlight their shortcomings. The study would provide an insight about the previous work to clarify the difference between previous and new studies.

Michael Brecher wrote in his book “The Political Biography,” India and Pakistan both viewed each other as independent threats and as reasons of their internal disunity. With independence, India had a new set of frontiers to defend and develop. By the early 1950s, its security circumstances came to be dominated by Pakistan in Kashmir and by China in the Himalayan ranges of the sub-continent; the security of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal loaded India with an “imperial” defense dependability too large for its resources.²

The military accord of the United States with Pakistan in 1953 not only formulized the strategic cleavage between India and Pakistan but also linked this cleavage with the global conflict between the two Cold-War blocks. However, this did not unbearably increase the defense burden of India, because India was enjoying military assistance from USSR and development aid from both super powers USSR and the US. In early 1960s, however, a pledge of strategic balance in the sub-continent came from parallel Soviet and American support to build up India as a countervailing power in Asia in relation to the Chinese People's Republic and from a US proposal with British assistance to remove the deadlock on Kashmir.

According to Chester Bowles, former US ambassador to New Delhi, Nehru approved to “support a genuine effort by the US Government to negotiate a political settlement that could end the fighting in south-east Asia,” which include core issue of Kashmir.³

The promise proved to be fleeting. The Indian Government resented the arm-twisting by the United States and Britain to force it to make concessions to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and India abandoned its half-hearted conciliatory moves when China, in a tour de force, concluded a border agreement with Pakistan, conferring tentative sanctions on Pakistani control of two-thirds of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.⁴

The Indians were pleased and satisfied, because United States had lost her conflict-controlling role in sub-continent while Soviet Union had been acknowledged as sole super power in the region.

Bhabani Sen Gupta wrote in his book “The fulcrum of Asia: Relations among China, India, Pakistan and the USSR” It was widely expected that United States could not possibly come to help to Pakistan in an Indo-Pakistani military conflict. This expectation was confirmed in the war between India and Pakistan in September 1965. For the first time the United States remained officially neutral in the war involving one of its allies. The USSR and China faced each other as direct contenders in the sub-continent. In a major strategic initiative, Moscow intervened in the India-Pakistan war, armed with the theory of geographical propinquity. Moscow stated that the conflict was taking place in an area close to the borders of the Soviet State, compelling Moscow to offer its diplomatic services to bring the two warring parties together. At the same time Soviet Union warned the other countries to keep out of the conflict. Soviet Government claimed that South Asia, being geographically close to the USSR, was a natural sphere of Russian interest.⁵

After the Tashkent agreement, Moscow brought significant changes in the strategic design for South Asia. The visit by the Shah of Iran to the Soviet capital in 1965 had led to an improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations, and in 1966 a program of Soviet economic and military assistance to Iran was initiated.

The main effect of Tashkent accord was the withdrawal of Soviet support for the Indian stand on Kashmir and Russia adopted a posture of “neutrality”, which paved the way for a diplomatic initiative to improve relations with Pakistan. The transfer of Soviet military aid to Pakistan, however small in quantity, involved the

risk of alienating India. The Soviets, however, took the risk.

There was resentment and anger in India, but the times had changed, and it did not cost Moscow too much. Kosygin personally assured Indian leaders that the Soviet Union continued to regard India as the kingpin of its South Asian policy and explained that a soviet presence in Pakistan was the only way to diminish Chinese influence and block “imperialist intervention” against Indian interests.⁶

Indo-Soviet Treaty 1968 Proposed by Kosygin, Indians were reassured that almost immediately after the first transfer of military equipment to Pakistan, an economic conference of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India will be held with Soviet participation. The Afghan Government, prompted by the Soviet Union, offered to host the proposed conference, which never took place because of the Pakistani refusal to attend. Thus the first attempt to unfold the Soviet Strategic design came to nothing, although as a price for economic and military aid, Pakistan agreed to close down the extensive US intelligence facilities in Peshawar.

The Soviet Union was the first major power to intervene openly in the Pakistani crises of East Pakistan. Since 1968 Soviet relations with Pakistan had produced more frustration than friendship. The Soviet leaders had risked Indian displeasure by transferring military aid to Pakistan, but they neither had been able to loosen the ties of Pakistan to China nor win the support of Pakistan for the regional economic grouping that Moscow had been wanting to create.⁷

The Soviet leaders had hoped that Yahya Khan would yield where Ayub Khan (De Facto ruler of Pakistan) had been stubborn. Yahya Khan had led to the protocols for the supply of soviet military equipment to Pakistan. He paid his second visit to Moscow in June 1970 this time as president; he

agreed to expand Soviet-Pakistani collaboration. The Soviet Union was to build the first steel plant in Pakistan and to help Pakistan develop nuclear energy for peaceful use. The first manifestation of the improved relationship was the five-year trade agreement concluded between the two, covering the period 1970-75.

The reasons behind the Soviet intervention in Bangladesh crises were many. The Soviets wanted a friendly regime in Pakistan, a Prime Minister who would be willing to deepen the country's relations with USSR; loosen its ties with China; and under Soviet protection, proceed to build mono-political co-operative relations with India. The elections of 1970 created opportunities that the Soviet leaders regarded with hope and enthusiasm. The Pakistan constituted the hard-core pro-China, anti-India, and therefore anti-Soviet, element. If the Awami league; led by Mujeeb-ur- Rehman, could form a government in Pakistan, the prospects of Soviet-Pakistani relations would improve significantly and a new leaf could be turned on relations between India and Pakistan.

Another factor also weights with the Soviet leaders. If the Bangladesh struggle were allowed to turn into a protected nationalist guerrilla war, it would radicalize the eastern flank of the sub-continent and pose the dangerous challenge to the Indian political system. From this point of view it was also essential that the struggle be won relatively quickly by the Awami league and its leaded, Mujeeb-ur-Rehman.⁸

According to the article of Hindustan Standard titled "Chanchal Sarkar", Explaining India's stance on East Pakistan's conditions that on April 03, 1971, Nikolai Padgorny sent a message to Yahya Khan in his capacity as head of Soviet State, expressing concern, sufferings and the privations of the people of Bangladesh and urging a immediate stoppage of the bloodshed and a "peaceful political settlement" with the elected

leaders of the people.⁹ In itself the message was an assertion of the role of the Soviet Union had acquired in 1966 as a conflict manager in the sub-continent. Podgorny's message drew forth no immediate US reaction, but there was a counter message from Chou En-lai.¹⁰

Kuldeep Nayar wrote in his article "Distant Neighbours: A Tale of the Sub-continent" that Yahya Khan not only ignored the Kremlin warning, which was followed up diplomatic pressure, but also appeared in July to be succeeding with US help, in setting up a civilian regime in East Pakistan with the participation of the section of the Awami league leadership. The Indian foreign Minister returned almost empty-handed from a worldwide diplomatic mission. During his brief visit to New Delhi in July, Henry Kissinger volunteered the chilling warning that in the event of Chinese action across the northern border, India could not expect US intervention. The Indians saw Pakistan as successfully coordinating its policies with Peking and Washington. India stood isolated even in the Third World.¹¹

USSR and India-Pak War of 1971

During East Pakistan crises the biggest diplomatic explosion occurred, which was the secret journey of Henry Kissinger to Peking that was arranged through the good offices of Pakistan and the announcement of an upcoming Nixon visit to China. The Sino-American diplomatic breakthrough created identical perceptions in India and the USSR of an emerging "alliance" between the United States and China that would be directed against the Soviet Union. Since Pakistan was a firm ally of China, the new Sino-US linkage could work in South Asia only to the detriment of India. Perceptions of looming threat to the vital interest and even the survival of India cemented the Indo-Soviet relationship on August 09, 1971, with a twenty-year treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-

operation. The Soviet Union was committed under the treaty to meet the security needs of India in the event of aggression or threat of aggression.¹²

The treaty generated the most stimulating debate on foreign policy in the history of India, a debate that was conducted not in terms of idealism of the non-alignment of yesteryears but in terms of power politics, spheres of influence and mutual gain. The test of treaty according to the elite consensus, lay in how India could use it to gain its own strategic objectives in the sub-continent, namely by securing Bangladesh by risking war with Pakistan, if necessary, but without getting involved in a war with China.¹³

The war was very much in the air even in October and November, as India Gandhi returned from Moscow with the assurance of Soviet help if she were compelled to intervene militarily in Bangladesh.¹⁴

The war was fought between India and Pakistan for two weeks in December. Pakistan received (Inter Arma Silent Leges) no support from either of its major allies, China or the United States. The Soviet Union on the other hand, stood firmly by India. Two days after the outbreak of the war, the Soviet Union warned all nations to keep out of it: the message was obviously addressed to Peking. The Soviet Union blamed the war on the refusal by Pakistan to come to a political settlement with the elected leaders of the Bangladesh people. It called for the immediate ending of the bloodshed, and in United Nations Security Council it voted three resolutions backed by The United States and China calling for an immediate cease-fire. When the US government dispatched a naval task force into the Bay of Bengal, presumably to intervene in the Bangladesh war, the Soviets moved naval units into the same waters. The Soviet ambassador assured the Indian government that the Soviet Union “will not allow

Seventh Fleet to intervene” in the Bangladesh war.¹⁵

While doing so Moscow risked a collision with the two other major powers because it was convinced that neither China nor the United States would physically intervene on behalf of Pakistan. As soon as the war broke out, the White House reconciled itself to the emergence of Bangladesh; the United States and China were more worried about the Indian intentions for the West Pakistan, more specifically the parts of Jammu and Kashmir under Pakistani control. An Indian attempt to recover these portions of Kashmir could have led to a wider war.¹⁶ This neither the Soviets nor the Indians wanted, Indra Gandhi declared a unilateral cease-fire immediately after the Pakistani surrender in Bangladesh. Whether she did this on her own or under Soviet pressure, it was considered to be a success of Soviet diplomacy during the war. It earned the USSR credit from Nixon himself for restraining India from a “Conquest of West Pakistan.”¹⁷ This tribute enabled the Pakistani elite to see the Soviet Union as a savior of Pakistan.¹⁸

India was holding 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and was in physical occupation of several thousand miles of Pakistani territory, including a “new line of actual control” in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan caught in the trauma of major military defeat was faced with a rising tide of ethnic rebellion in Sind, Baluchistan and the NWFP.¹⁹ It appeared that India had enough leverage to bend Pakistan to formal acceptance of its predominance in the sub-continent.

After the War

Prime Minister Bhutto (De Jure ruler of Pakistan) turned the position of weakness of Pakistan to a position of strength. The essence of Bhutto's strategy was flexibility and intransigence. His main objective was to prevent a united front of

India and Bangladesh, backed by Moscow, that would rest from him the diplomatic recognition of Dacca and his agreement to enter into co-operative relations with India. Bhutto thus got his summit meeting with Indra Gandhi in Shimla in July 1972, where in return for a major concession on Kashmir, (that is for recognition of the new Indian line of control and an agreement not to change the status quo by force) he obtained Indian withdrawal from the Pakistani territory occupied in the war.²⁰ The mellowing impact on India of his concession on Kashmir transported Bhutto in 1973 to the achievement of his next objective, which was to effect the repatriation of war prisoners, still without recognizing Bangladesh. An agreement of tripartite repatriation was finally reached in August 1973 between India and Pakistan, with the concurrence of Bangladesh.²¹

Bhutto's final triumph came in February 1974. On the eve of a Pan-Islamic conference in Lahore, a delegation of foreign ministers of seven Islamic countries flew to Dacca and worked out an agreement under which Bhutto traded his recognition of Bangladesh government for dropping of the proposal to try the 150 Pakistani for war crimes. Bhutto killed three birds with a single stone: he got the war crimes trials dropped; he recognized Bangladesh without submitting to pressure from India; and he got Mujibur Rehman, despite his adherence to secularism, to share the Lahore platform with other leaders of the Islamic World.²²

Bhutto had visited Moscow twice from 1972 to 1974 although economic relations were resumed, he was not able to persuade the Soviet leaders to resume military aid.

Criticism on Pakistan was also turned down by Soviet Union. On such issues as Sino-Pakistan friendship and the resumption of US arms sales to Pakistan Soviet Union criticized Peking and Washington.

Soviet Union looked with great displeasure at Pakistan's participation in CENTO naval exercises. On the whole Pakistan's relations with Soviet Union remained cold.

Kashmir Dispute and the Role of USSR in the United Nations

In January 1962 Zafarullah Khan brought a delegation to the United Nations, protesting against certain humiliating speeches by Indian Statesmen calling for the "liberation" of Azad Kashmir. Zafarullah Khan described the failure of direct Indo-Pakistan negotiations since Dr. Graham's last report and he once more sought the mediation of the United Nations. The discussion in the Security Council continued in a desultory manner until June. Ireland tabled a draft resolution which added to the resolution of 02 December 1957 urging the Governments of India and Pakistan to enter as soon as possible into negotiations on the Kashmir question "with the view to its ultimate settlement according to the Jus Gentium. The Soviet Union, of the five permanent members, vetoed, so the Russian delegate Platon Morozov observed the Irish draft "in the interests of peace and security"; and, since the Soviets had the power of veto (which they now exercised for the 100th time), by which they covered the reality. Morozov made it clear that in Soviet eyes no wrong could be found with India's foreign policy. Nehru was absolutely right over Goa and in Kashmir his position was correct beyond argument.²³

With the Soviet veto thus permanently in place, the United Nations offered a black prospect for meaningful initiatives on Kashmir.

If the Kashmir dispute could be resolved under the above mentioned draft resolution presented by Ireland and beautifully initiated by Zafarullah Khan in 1962 then the Indo-Pak war of 1965 would had not been fought.

USSR Stand on Kashmir Dispute

Russia firmly opposed Pakistan's reported move to present the Kashmir issue in U N Security Council saying the council President cannot impose any issue as majority of its members are against it. 'This issue is not on the agenda of the world body', visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri V. Fedotov told reporters when asked about reports that Pakistan, which recently took over as President of UNSC, proposed to raise the Kashmir issue in Statu Nascendi. Fedotov, who had meetings with External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha and Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, said the Security Council President 'cannot impose' any issue and majority of council members were against raising of the Kashmir issue. The 'central problem' is not Kashmir but that of terrorism and training camps for terrorists operating in Pakistan. Welcoming the recent initiatives taken by both India and Pakistan, he said Russia was trying its best to 'encourage and stimulate' this trend. He said his country is looking forward to the visit of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee later this month. 'The visit will be another step towards strengthening and consolidating relations between India and Russia,' Fedotov told reporters. Vajpayee will travel to St. Petersburg for the 300th year anniversary celebrations of the historic city and also hold annual summit-level meetings with President Vladimir Putin. Fedotov said during discussions he had conveyed Russia's condemnation of continuing acts of cross-border terrorism. 'However, recent statements by new Delhi and Islamabad have demonstrated that there is certain hope of the change for the better emerging in the relations between the two countries. 'Russia welcomes such developments and would like to see that every chance is given to the resumption of peace dialogue,' he said. Expressing satisfaction over the concerted actions of India and Russia against international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, he emphasized 'we reject double standards in this campaign and the attempts to justify terrorism'.

He said there were some countries which looked at the issue of terrorism in the political context. 'That is a mistake'. Describing his discussions here as 'very useful and substantive', he said 'given the fact that the next general Assembly of the UN will have a challenging agenda, we have agreed to continue the exchange of views on a broad range of international issues'. New Delhi, has 'highly valued' Russia's support to India's candidature for a permanent seat in an enlarged UN Security Council. Fedotov said both sides have reaffirmed the 'proximity of approaches' to securing the central coordinating role of the UN in addressing such vital international issues as the struggle against international terrorism, drug trafficking, post-war reconstruction of Iraq, situation in Afghanistan and the middle East peace process.²⁴

Discussion

Shift in Pakistan and Russian Relations

During Cold War, relations between Pakistan and Russia (former Soviet Union) were at their lowest ebb. Pakistan was the ally of USA and was not the member of Non Aligned Movement (NAM). However In these circumstances Russia and Pakistan went many projects of cooperation. These Projects were Pakistan Steel Mills, power projects in Punjab, Guddu thermal power plant and Oil and gas development projects.

Governmental Level dialogues between the two countries assisted them to enter a new paradigm of cordially relations. Russian back up for the membership of Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was a true gesture of friendship²⁵. This Russian support was very much valued by Pakistan. Russia subside the Pakistan-India military issues of Pulwama attack and shooting down of Indian Mig-21 in SCO meetings.²⁶ On November 5, 2018 Pakistan Premier Imran Khan met with the Prime Minister of Russian Federation Dmitri Medvedev. Foreign

ministers of both the countries met twice in the same year. During the SCO high level meetings. Both the countries conducted negotiations in the fields of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Science & Technology, Water and Power, Heavy Industries, Arms Production, Textile Production and Medical facilities.

Government officials and Parliamentarians from Pakistan have been visited Russia in October 2018 to attend International conference in Moscow. In December 2017 former Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Ayaz Sadiq went to Russia to attend a conference called "Parliamentarians against Drugs". In October, 2017 a delegation of parliament participated to 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Saint Petersburg. In December 2017 Russian Chairman of State Duma visited Pakistan to participate in a conference called "Challenge of Terrorism and Inter-Regional Connectivity".

Trade relations of the two countries grow very fast since ever. Pakistan exported cotton, surgical and sports goods, textile, leather, polymer fabrics, rice and fruits have shown enormous growth as compared to the past. Pakistan also imported machinery, iron and steel, paper products, tyres and rubber products, chemicals and fertilizers in large quantities. Pakistan and Russia formed Inter-Governmental Cooperation(IGC) on Economic & Scientific and Trade cooperation in 2010. The fifth session of IGC was held in Moscow from 28 to 30 November 2017. Pakistan and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement on the construction of North-South Gas Pipeline(NSGP) from Karachi to Lahore in October 2015. In 13 October 2017 an Inter-Governmental Agreement was signed between the two countries for "Liquefied Natural Gas". A Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) has also signed between the Pakistan and Russia for "offshore gas pipeline project" in September 2018. Defense cooperation between Pakistan and Russia has increased steadily. In November 2014

both countries signed "Defense Cooperation Agreement"²⁷. Pakistan Chief of Army Staff visited Russia in April 2018. Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff visited Russia to Participate in Joint Military Exercise" Peace Mission 2018"²⁸. Participation of Naval Ships of both countries in Naval parades and exercises organized in both countries. In 2017 Pakistan Navy conducted naval exercise "Aman" in which Russian Naval ships also participated.²⁹ Pakistan and Russia conducted their joint military exercises by the name of "Friendship" every year.³⁰ Under the flag of SCO, Pakistan participated in SCO member states joint military Anti-Terrorist Command Staff Exercise called" Peace Mission 2018" in Chelyabinsk, Russia. Mr Alexel Frolkin, Deputy Director Federal Service for Military of Russian Federation visited Pakistan to attend 1st session of Pakistan- Russian Military Technical Cooperation in March 2018.³¹ In 2018 National security advisors held high level security dialogues in Moscow. Experts from the Strategic Plans Division from Pakistan conducted dialogues with Russian experts to discuss possibilities of cooperation in strategic and nuclear issues.³²

CONCLUSION

Pakistan and Russia has decades long relations gone through so many ups and downs but both the countries have managed to put their relations on track. When Pakistan was in alignment with America, Russia Pakistan relations were very cold, but still Russia tried to cooperate with Pakistan in the field of Industry and economic development. Russia built Pakistan Steel Mills at Karachi, Guddu thermal Power Plant and oil and gas development programs. After the war of 1965 between Pakistan and India, Russia mediated between the two warring parties and held Tashkent Conference in 1966. In the Cold War era Russia had friendly relations with India and Russia vetoed all the resolutions about the settlement of Kashmir Dispute in United Nations.

Russia also backed India on her illegal occupation of Portuguese island Goa. Russian Federation emerged on the map of the world after the disintegration of Soviet Union,. Russia wants to keep its armed forces and nuclear weapons in controlled capacity to ensure an active and advanced deterrence. Pakistan and Russian has similarity in their foreign policy and strategic goals. Due to which both countries paved the way of cooperation both in Industrial, economic and defense sectors. Pakistan and Russia want to shape their nuclear deterrence compact, effective and accurate. They also want to make their armed forces highly trained and professional force capable to perform in all times and in all terrains. Pakistan and Russia have entered in a new era of bilateral friendly relationship. Both the countries have made high level interactions on political and strategic level. Parliamentarians from both sides visited respected countries frequently. Trade relations between both countries are on rise day by day. Military and defense relations are also strengthening by organizing joint military exercises of Russia and Pakistan armed forces. Cooperation in defense field and arms development is also in progress between the two countries.

NOTES

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