

PROSPECTS FOR ISLAMABAD-MOSCOW CONNECTIVITY IN A NEW MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

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ABSTRACT

Friends and foes keep changing in international relations national interest is the only permanent feature of this system. Hence, the recent developments in international politics also shaping a new global structure in the form of multipolarity that brings new avenues of connectivity and collaboration for both Pakistan and Russia. This paper sheds light on the future of Islamabad-Moscow engagement, keeping in view their convergence in energy security, economic assimilation, and international peace and stability. This study explores the underpinnings of significant projects namely the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that have the potential for strengthening their bilateral ties. The paper also examines Moscow's strategic vision vis-à-vis Asian continent by viewing Islamabad's strategic significance as a door to South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, and so forth. Furthermore, this research wraps up by giving prominence to the challenges and opportunities for enhancing Islamabad-Moscow diplomatic bonding in a new global order.

Keywords: *Energy Security, International Peace and Stability, PSGP, CPEC, Diplomatic Ties, World Order.*

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INTRODUCTION

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union took place in 1949, which coincided with the onset of the Cold War, a period characterized by intense geopolitical rivalry. The turning point of global supremacy occurred during the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Pakistan and the Soviet Union were unable to establish friendly and cooperative relations because of the difficult political context created by the US-Soviet global power struggle during the Cold War (Khan, 2024). The shifting international order and global political landscape caused many ups and downs in their relationship. However, putting the past behind them, Pakistan and Russia are moving toward amicable ties and expanding their areas of collaboration for mutual gain as they recognize the shifting regional and global landscape. Both Islamabad and Moscow now have new channels for organized discussions and collaboration thanks to multilateral forums, particularly when it comes to national security, energy cooperation, and the necessity of a coordinated response to new challenges in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the larger Eurasian region. Moscow and Islamabad have cultivated a renewed understanding within the geo-strategic domain, emphasizing economic considerations while acknowledging the significance of multilateralism in shaping the regional nexus (Hanif, 2013). Russia recognizes Pakistan's strategic importance in Eurasia, particularly concerning the stability of Afghanistan, whereas Pakistan regards Russia as a prospective diplomatic partner with particular relevance to geo-economic and regional security matters. Moscow aims to extend its influence beyond its traditional security sphere to encompass South Asia; however, it confronts challenges posed by Western-imposed sanctions, which have prompted Russia to intensify its pursuit of interests within the region (Naqvi, 2015). These events motivate both nations to indicate a move away from bilateralism and toward more comprehensive international arrangements. The majority of the academic discussion on Pakistan-Russia ties is still restricted to multilateral forums in spite of these significant advancements. The article makes the case that the

strengthening of ties between Pakistan and Russia is a reflection of a larger local and geopolitical shift instead of just bilateral issues. A trend towards multipolar engagement and policies that put connectedness, common strategic steps, mutual interests, and stability above old ideological barriers is seen in their growing cooperation inside multilateral frameworks (Morgulov, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The two countries have established an amiable and increasingly cooperative partnership on both the political and economic fronts in the context of the changing global environment. Islamabad and Moscow have a common goal of working together on regional economic development, peace, and stability through cooperative structures (Amin, 2023). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) full membership of Pakistan in 2017 was backed by Russia, one of the biggest turning points in recent history. This was significant since it showed that Moscow understood Pakistan's importance in the area. In 2024, President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a meeting outside of the 24th SCO Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.

A new agreement between Moscow and Islamabad has emerged in the geostrategic sphere, emphasising economics but acknowledging the influence of multilateralism on the regional nexus.

In terms of Afghanistan's stability, Russia recognises Pakistan's strategic significance in Eurasia, while Pakistan sees Russia as a potential diplomatic partner, notably in the areas of geo-economics and regional security. Moscow wants to expand its interests in South Asia outside its immediate security area, but it is under pressure from Western nations that are enforcing sanctions.

The Geopolitical Landscape is changing

Faiza Bashir and Noreen Naseer (2018) analysed that aspiring to a multipolar world in which Moscow views itself as an influential

pillar, Moscow and Islamabad have similar views on security and regional integration. Russia's larger plan for the Eurasian region is in line with Islamabad's backing for the establishment of a multipolar system (Allison, 2004). With an emphasis on politics, economy, and defence, the study looks at how Moscow and Islamabad might take advantage of the shifting geopolitical environment to further their foreign policy goals (Khan, 2019).

Factors Influencing the New Strategic Alliance between Russia and Pakistan

Strategic and Fiscal Need: For the purpose to solve its own energy scarcity, Pakistan views Russia as a vital energy cooperation partner. Pakistan's strategic location as a gateway to South Asia and its proximity to infrastructure projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also help Russia (Zaidi & Saud, 2021).

Security Interests in Common: Terrorism poses a threat to both Russia and Pakistan, especially in Central Asia. The destabilisation of regional security by extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has led to cooperation between Russia and Pakistan on counterterrorism efforts (Fozia et al., 2019).

A Historical Revisits: During the onset of the Cold War, interaction has undergone substantial change, overcoming long-standing hostility stemming from Russia's affiliation with India and Pakistan's alliance with the United States. These changes demonstrate a practical change in foreign policy that puts shared interests ahead of disagreements over ideology (Rahman, 2007).

Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation through Initiatives like CPEC and PSGP

Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP): A key component of Pakistan-Russia economic cooperation is the PSGP project. The pipeline, which is intended to move LNG throughout Pakistan, strengthens Russia's standing as a South Asian energy provider while also improving Pakistan's energy security. Supporting this energy infrastructure

helps Pakistan achieve its objectives of stabilising its energy sector and increases Russia's economic influence in the area.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A key component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC greatly enhances Pakistan's regional connectivity by supplying cutting-edge infrastructure, which indirectly helps Russia. In order to get access to South Asia and incorporate it into its Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) programs, Moscow has indicated interest in working with other countries on CPEC projects. Enhancing regional trade and infrastructure is common objective made possible by this trilateral synergy (Naqvi & Masood, 2017).

Strategic Option: Russia can balance U.S. dominance, increase its influence in South Asia, and connect its Greater Eurasian Partnership with existing economic corridors by joining CPEC.

Physical and economic connectivity throughout Eurasia is enhanced by both PSGP and CPEC, which supports Russia's long-term objective of building integrated transcontinental infrastructure to support its Greater Eurasian Partnership agenda. This collaboration diversifies Pakistan's economic dependencies and strengthens its relationships with non-Western powers (Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) 2025).

The Impact of Multipolarity on Islamabad–Moscow Collaboration

The transfer of global power among various centres of influence, or multipolarity, has a significant impact on Pakistan-Russia ties in a number of ways.

Expansion of Coalitions: To lessen its reliance on any one ally, particularly the United States, Pakistan aims to diversify its alliances in a multipolar world by cultivating ties with China, Russia, and other key nations. Russia uses a similar diversification approach to lessen its reliance on India, its long-time friend, and increase its economic and geopolitical influence in South Asia.

Strategic convergence in a Multifaceted World: Pakistan and Russia have been able to identify shared objectives under multipolarity, including combating terrorism, ensuring energy independence, and maintaining regional security in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Both countries can work together in ways that go beyond conventional bilateral arrangements thanks to this alignment (The Moscow Times, 2025).

Integration into Regional Organisations: The impact of multipolarity is best illustrated by Pakistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which is backed by Russia. In order to promote mutual benefits through multilateralism, both countries use these platforms to coordinate their security, counterterrorism, and economic cooperation programs (Naz, 2021).

Unlocking significant bilateral potential requires overcoming regional rivalry and historical mistrust in Pakistan-Russia ties, which are at a pivotal point in time. In contrast to Russia's strategic cooperation with India, Pakistan's longstanding ties to the United States and the legacy of Cold War hostility have historically prevented greater interaction. Recalibrating ties is made easier by changing geopolitical realities, such as the advent of multipolarity and changes in the balance of power in the world (Raza, 2018). In order to overcome economic limitations on both sides—Pakistan's budgetary difficulties and Russia's sanctions-induced restrictions—new structures for collaboration that capitalise on shared advantages without escalating risks will be needed. It takes sophisticated diplomacy that minimises conflict while balancing strategic objectives to navigate the complicated regional environment, especially the triangle between India, Russia, and Pakistan and Pakistan's increasing alliance with China (Rauf, 2019).

Even with these obstacles, there are plenty of chances to make Pakistan-Russian relations stronger and more diverse. With initiatives like the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP) and LNG supply agreements providing real advantages in line with Pakistan's pressing energy demands and Russia's objective of broadening its

markets, energy cooperation stands out as a cornerstone (Rauf, 2019). In addition to fostering trust, defence cooperation—characterized by cooperative military drills and arms sales—aligns their common objectives in counterterrorism and regional security. Additionally, they could greatly increase their political and economic influence in Central and South Asia by working together on Afghanistan's reconstruction and larger regional connectivity projects—integrating frameworks like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (Khan, 2019). These collaborative pathways establish a strategic basis for a partnership that, while considering historical and geopolitical complexities, is progressively characterised by pragmatic cooperation and mutual interests.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as its primary analytical framework. The investigation concentrates on the military relations between Pakistan and Russia within the broader context of international politics and regional security dynamics (TIAT, 2018). The analysis specifically addresses the feasibility of military cooperation between the two countries, taking into account historical shifts, shared security challenges such as terrorism, and the evolving strategic interests of both states. Furthermore, the study situates these considerations within the inherently volatile nature of international political environments. a systematic examination of Russia's post-9/11 initiatives to enhance strategic relations with Pakistan provides insight into the cautious nature of Russia's approach toward Pakistan. This implies a qualitative, historical, or descriptive research methodology focused on analyzing prior events and diplomatic engagements. However, explicit details regarding data collection methods, theoretical frameworks, or analytical techniques are not provided.

Objectives

- To analyse the geopolitical convergence between Pakistan and Russia.
- To evaluate the strategic importance of PSGP and CPEC for bilateral ties.
- To explore Russia's vision in Asia and Pakistan's role within it.

Research Questions

- What factors shape the emerging Pakistan–Russia strategic partnership?
- How do projects like PSGP and CPEC enhance bilateral engagement?
- How does multipolarity influence Islamabad–Moscow cooperation?
- What challenges and opportunities define the future of Pakistan–Russia relations?

Emerging Geopolitical Environment

Moscow and Islamabad share aligned perspectives on security and regional integration, both aspiring toward a multipolar world order in which Moscow envisions itself as a central actor. Islamabad endorses the emergence of such a multipolar order, thereby aligning with Russia's broader strategic objectives for the Eurasian region (Bordachev, 2018). This study explores how Islamabad and Moscow can capitalize on the evolving geopolitical landscape to advance their foreign policy goals, with a focus on political, economic, and defense dimensions.

Convergence in Geopolitical and Security Outlook: An Appraisal

Russia's strategic pivot toward Islamabad is driven by transformations in the international power structure, Moscow's assertiveness, and its intent to counterbalance American influence in Eurasia. Russia's engagement with Pakistan is further propelled by regional security imperatives, strengthened China-Russia relations, and the complex security dynamics in Afghanistan. Concurrently,

Pakistan seeks to diversify its foreign policy partnerships, valuing Russia's status as a major power with veto authority at the United Nations Security Council and membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, particularly amid deteriorating relations with the United States (Weiguo, 2019). The evolving geo-strategic landscape in South Asia is characterized by India's expanding regional role, supported by the United States, Islamabad's strategic balancing efforts, and shared interests in Afghanistan, all of which influence Moscow's relations with Pakistan. Pakistan leverages its geographic position, robust military capabilities, nuclear arsenal, and influence within the Islamic world to assert geo-strategic significance in its engagement with Russia. While India is realigning away from Moscow toward the United States, Russia endeavors to maintain a delicate balance in the region following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, recalibrating its relations with Pakistan accordingly (Рокнифард Ю, 2019).

Uncertain Outlook of Regime Stability in Afghanistan

The future trajectory of Afghanistan serves as a foundational element for convergence between Russia and Pakistan, as both parties concur that Washington's strategy has failed to secure lasting peace in the conflict-ridden country. Stability in Afghanistan remains paramount for Islamabad and Moscow, as well as for broader Eurasian security and economic collaboration. Pakistan and Russia have engaged in consultations aimed at facilitating an Afghan-led peace process, thereby creating strategic space for a coordinated approach to establishing peace across Eurasia (Rana, 2019).

The 'grey zone' encompasses activities such as irregular warfare, cyber-attacks, and disinformation campaigns, which constitute both immediate and long-term security threats. Grey zone warfare represents an emergent challenge to state security, manifesting across varying degrees of intensity, including aggressive, moderate, and persistent actions (Khan, 2019). Both Pakistan and Russia have been targets of grey zone tactics, prompting national security advisors from both countries to discuss enhanced cooperation in defense,

space, cybersecurity, nuclear domains, and intelligence sharing.

Multilateralism as an Agent of Building Common Understanding

Pakistan's diplomatic relations with Russia extend to multilateral platforms such as the Heart of Asia Conference and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), where both countries seek to bolster cooperation. The SCO provides a forum for Islamabad and Moscow to jointly address challenges related to terrorism, extremism, and separatism, with both parties advocating for an expanded role of the organisation (Bashir and Naseer, 2018). The realization of the SCO's objectives is contingent upon strengthened regional cooperation, presenting an opportunity to enhance Pakistan-Russia relations and forge unified positions on matters of mutual interest. Geopolitical developments serve as catalysts for geo-economic opportunities, enabling Pakistan and Russia to pursue multilateral economic initiatives aligned with their shared interests. Russia perceives the U.S.-led unipolar system as an impediment to global progress and supports the transition toward a multipolar world order, as evidenced by initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), BRICS, and the SCO. In response to diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions imposed by Western powers, Russia is actively exploring eastern markets for its energy exports, including Pakistan, which is considering the procurement of more affordable Russian oil (Serenko, 2020).

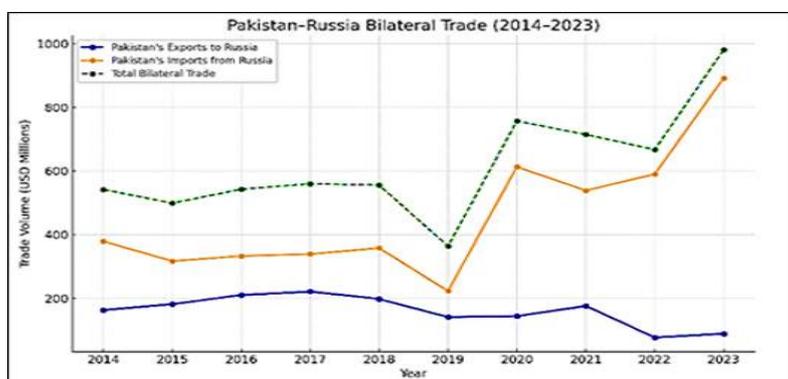
CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Following 9/11, Russia has undertaken deliberate measures to strengthen strategic ties with Pakistan, advancing cautiously toward cooperation. In June 2014, Russia initiated negotiations to supply Pakistan with advanced war helicopters aimed at combating drug trafficking, a move that elicited surprise from the international community. The United States and Europe expressed concern, with some analysts suggesting that Russia sought to capitalize on NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan by exacerbating regional instability to augment its influence post-withdrawal. Certain experts contend that

Russia's current strategy involves fostering a regional balance of power through collaboration with Pakistan, marking a departure from its previous exclusive focus on India. The discussions between Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the June 2019 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit garnered considerable media attention. The historical trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations underscores that national interests are the predominant drivers in international relations, superseding considerations of sentiment, friendship, or enmity (Awan, 2024).

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, descriptive, and analytical in nature. It draws extensively on historical events, expert opinions, and media reports to examine the evolving strategic relationship between Pakistan and Russia. The authors focused on Russian initiatives to enhance bilateral relations following the events of 9/11, highlighting key developments such as the 2014 negotiations for the provision of advanced war helicopters to Pakistan and the discussions held during the 2019 Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. The analysis is framed around the premise that national interests constitute the primary drivers in international relations. To substantiate their arguments, the paper relies on secondary sources, including news articles and expert analyses. The economic relationship between Pakistan and Russia holds considerable promise, driven by complementary strengths and mutual needs (Serenko, 2020) Pakistan's rapidly expanding consumer market, expected to rank sixth globally by 2030 in PPP terms, presents a lucrative opportunity for Russia's diversified industrial and energy sectors. Russia's \$2.02 trillion economy, supported by substantial reserves and expertise in civilian nuclear technology and vocational training, can provide Pakistan with critical resources and knowledge transfer. This partnership is further underscored by Pakistan Business Council's estimate of an unrealized export potential of approximately \$2.8 billion to Russia, highlighting significant room for growth in bilateral trade (Morgulov, 2023).

Energy and food security form key pillars of this cooperation. Pakistan's annual energy demand growth exceeding 8% aligns strategically with Russia's position as a leading global exporter of natural gas and oil, offering Pakistan an alternative and reliable energy supply. Additionally, Pakistan's substantial imports of wheat and edible oils, markets where Russia commands significant shares globally, create opportunities for enhanced trade diversification (Csurgai, 2017). Geopolitically, Pakistan's strategic ports at Gwadar and Karachi provide Russia with crucial overland access to the Indian Ocean, facilitating new maritime routes and market linkages. Conversely, Russia's transit corridors through the Caspian, Volga, Don, Black Sea, and Baltic regions offer Pakistan streamlined access to European markets, bypassing traditional maritime chokepoints fraught with geopolitical tensions. This geographic synergy not only strengthens economic ties but also enhances regional connectivity and strategic alignment for both countries.



Source: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP); Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS); Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP); UN Comtrade Database; Russian Federal Customs Service (FCS); World Bank and IMF Trade Summaries.

Western countries constitute over 50% of Pakistan's export market, underscoring this dependency. Consequently, deepening economic relations with a sanctioned Russia entails inherent risks to this established relationship. From Moscow's perspective, trade volumes with China (\$240 billion) and India (\$65 billion) significantly exceed the \$1 billion trade with Pakistan, indicating that Islamabad has yet

to emerge as a priority market (Csurgai, 2017). While economic engagement has faced challenges, regional diplomatic efforts demonstrate greater potential, with both nations aligning on the integration of Pakistan into Eurasian connectivity initiatives.



Source: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/the-eurasian-economic-union-ambitions/>

Russia's interest in integrating Pakistan into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reflects a strategic effort to deepen economic ties and expand regional connectivity. For Pakistan, engagement with the EAEU represents an opportunity to access the broader markets of Central Asia and Eurasia, thereby reducing its traditional reliance on limited trade corridors. This linkage could facilitate diversified trade routes and enhance economic cooperation in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing. By leveraging Russian-backed frameworks, Islamabad aims to strengthen its regional presence and capitalize on emerging economic partnerships beyond its immediate neighborhood (Inter State Gas Systems, 2025).

Complementing this, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) offers a vital platform for fostering economic integration between Pakistan, Central Asia, and other member states. Unlike the EAEU, which is primarily a customs union, the ECO's broader mandate focuses on comprehensive economic collaboration, including trade facilitation, transport connectivity, and investment promotion (Atri,

2023). For Pakistan, ECO serves as a critical mechanism to deepen commercial engagement and unlock new avenues for market access. From Russia's perspective, ECO provides an additional channel to engage with Pakistan and the wider region, supporting its geopolitical and economic objectives through multilateral cooperation. Together, the EAEU and ECO frameworks could synergistically enhance the depth and scope of economic relations between Pakistan, Russia, and Central Asian countries (Government of Pakistan, 2024).

To realise the full potential of this relationship, both parties must address existing structural impediments. Primarily, economic cooperation should be institutionalized by integrating bilateral trade within regional frameworks. This entails the proactive pursuit of formal trade agreements that link the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), thereby positioning Pakistan as a strategic conduit connecting South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. To actualise and institutionalise cooperation and collaboration in the aforementioned areas, both countries have agreed to convene an Intergovernmental Commission in Moscow later this year (Atri, 2023). The mutually agreed objectives and aspirations to enhance bilateral relations are comprehensive, encompassing sectors such as defense, diplomacy, energy, infrastructure, and the economy. These commitments lay the groundwork for strong and cordial ties, fostering constructive engagement between the two states. Should these goals be realised, they will cultivate a mutually beneficial bilateral relationship, advantageous not only for Pakistan but also for Russia and the broader South Asian region. This evolution in relations reflects Moscow's shifting perspective on Pakistan since 2010 (Hussain, 2024).

According to the report, Pakistan-Russia ties have undergone a significant and complex transition, moving from hostility and diplomatic estrangement during the Cold War to a complete strategic alliance in the twenty-first century. This massive change, which reflects a realignment of goals and shared understanding of strategic

advantages, is supported by changing geopolitical environments, overlapping regional security concerns, and merging economic interests. The principal findings and analysis are as follows: Pakistan and Russia have moved from a restricted commercial and diplomatic distance to a more expansive and dynamic strategic alliance. A noticeable improvement in bilateral relations, heightened military collaboration, and improved political communication are the hallmarks of this development. Pakistan's leadership has reached a bipartisan consensus on the development, indicating a long-term commitment to expanding cooperation with Russia in a number of areas (Hussain, 2024). The pragmatic attitude used by both countries to move past complaints and take advantage of new chances for mutual gain is also shown by this evolution.

The growing alliance between Russia and Pakistan represents a more extensive realignment in world geopolitics. Pakistan is positioned strategically to be a possible linchpin in the changing international order, as China and Russia are challenging the West's unipolar dominance (Chaliha, 2021). With Pakistan acting as a vital connection between South Asia and Central Asia and Eurasia, this realignment increases regional connectivity and influence and allows both nations to pursue a more multipolar global order. Regarding regional stability, especially in Afghanistan and Central Asia, Pakistan and Russia have serious worries. Together with the growth of terrorist organisations, Afghanistan's ongoing instability creates common security threats that need for coordinated actions (Clary, 2022). According to analysts, there has been more convergence between Pakistan and Russia than either country now has with the United States as a result of their strategic objectives aligning in these areas.

A framework for cooperative security efforts and regional diplomacy aimed at advancing peace and counterterrorism is fostered by this convergence. Pakistan's location presents significant potential as a commercial and energy corridor linking South Asia and China with Central Asia and Russia (Embassy of the Russian Federation in Pakistan, 2025). Important industries including energy, infrastructure

development, and agriculture are all areas of economic collaboration between the two nations. Notable agreements highlight the real-world economic advantages supporting the strategic relationship, such as the construction of gas pipelines and agreements for discounted crude oil deliveries (Gul, 2024). By integrating regional markets and diversifying Pakistan's energy supplies, these measures promote economic growth and interdependence (Khan, 2019). Significant progress has been made in the defence aspect of the partnership between Pakistan and Russia. Russia's endorsement of Pakistan's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2017 was a notable diplomatic achievement. Elevated military operations, collaborative exercises—exemplified by the continuous 'Druzhba' series since 2016—and military training accords have further reinforced defence relations. The United States' reduction of military training chances for Pakistani officers has somewhat influenced these trends, leading Islamabad to diversify its military partnerships. The expanded defence collaboration signifies reciprocal strategic confidence and a collective interest in regional security (Sparke, 2024). Afghanistan as a Common Ground: Both countries continue to focus their collaboration and concern on Afghanistan. The persistent instability and the existence of multiple terrorist groups threaten regional security and economic progress. Pakistan and Russia promote a unified regional strategy to stabilise Afghanistan, highlighting the importance of diplomatic engagement and counterterrorism cooperation. Further demonstrating the changing character of their strategic partnership, Russia's recognition of the Taliban administration in July 2025 is viewed as a practical move meant to promote commercial cooperation and strengthen cooperative efforts to fight terrorism (Clary, 2022).

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Pakistan maintained diplomatic ties that were characterised by suspicion and distance, despite their close geographic proximity. Although early Indian diplomatic efforts boosted Indo-Soviet relations, a diplomatic void was created between Moscow and Islamabad when Pakistan formally established diplomatic connections with the Soviet Union on May 1,

1948. The Soviet Union saw Pakistan as a Western proxy in the 1950s when it joined the US-led Western bloc through CENTO and SEATO, widening the divide. This impression was made worse by events like the U-2 spy plane scandal in 1960. Because to Pakistan's backing of the US-backed Mujahideen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the 1980s saw the height of enmity (Naqvi, & Masood, 2017). Only after the Soviet Union's breakup in the 1990s did efforts to restore and strengthen bilateral ties begin, laying the groundwork for the current phase of normalisation and strategic partnership. Due to practical concerns and a common goal of regional security, economic integration, and geopolitical power, Pakistan and Russia have both strategically recalibrated, as seen by this extensive transition. The partnership's trajectory points to further strengthening of relations, which may have ramifications for the larger South Asian and Eurasian regions.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan-Russia relations are positioned to capitalize on their converging interests to promote regional peace and security within the Eurasian context. Russian engagement in the region is informed by political and economic dynamics following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, alongside pressing security imperatives, notably counterterrorism. Pakistan's strategic focus should encompass both regional bilateralism and multilateralism, fostering a counterterrorism-specific framework of understanding with Moscow that addresses broader regional concerns, particularly those related to Afghanistan. Pakistan and Russia have intensified their counterterrorism cooperation through joint military exercises, notably the Druzhba series. This collaboration is further institutionalised via formal agreements, high-level dialogues, and the establishment of a dedicated counter-terrorism working group, which collectively facilitate sustained engagement and strategic planning. Pakistan's active participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), supported by Russia, provides a substantive platform for advancing regional security cooperation. Russia's engagement with Central

Asian states through the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) remains instrumental in maintaining regional stability. Concurrently, the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) enhances cooperative efforts to counter extremism and terrorism, enabling Russia, Pakistan, Iran, and China to collaborate effectively within the region. Furthermore, Russia's advocacy for regional economic integration through the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) constitutes a significant element of its broader strategic objectives. The key findings of the paper demonstrate that Russia-Pakistan relations have transitioned from a history of enmity to a more substantive geo-strategic partnership. This transformation is principally driven by the abandonment of ideological constraints and evolving geopolitical dynamics, resulting in what the study terms a 'Machiavellian common cause,' whereby both states pragmatically pursue shared interests. Notable findings include: prior to the 21st century, Pakistan and Russia exhibited clear patterns of hostility; the relaxation of ideological barriers alongside geopolitical shifts has incentivized closer bilateral relations; the study identifies significant factors across multiple phases and leaderships that have realigned the priorities of both nations toward one another; and the application of a three-level analytical framework—encompassing individual, state, and systemic factors—has elucidated the enablers and constraints shaping this evolving relationship. The study ultimately concludes that maintaining a balance of interests remains essential to the complex and multifaceted nature of Russia-Pakistan relations, as each country seeks to capitalise on convergent opportunities while independently advancing its geopolitical agenda.

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