



Pak-Russia Relations: Prospects For Peace And Stability In South Asia

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Abstract

In international relations states maintain relations to get their national interest. This research work is about growing Pak-Russia relations. Despite the worse history of Pak-Russia relations there are a lot of opportunities to observe friendly ties between both states. With All the opportunities both states are facing some problems while promoting their relations. Both Russia and Pakistan need to find and avail these opportunities to ensure peace and stability in South Asian region. Friendly relations between Pakistan and Russia have positive consequences for both states. These bilateral relations are very important for the economic growth and prosperity of the region and it could possibly ensure peace and stability in the entire region of South Asia. The paper argues that both states need to accept the reality of international relations and to bring positive changes to their policies towards each other. This is important not just to benefited mutually but for the betterment of the whole region.

Key Words: Pakistan, Russia, Bilateral Relation, Prospects, Peace, Stability, South Asia

Introduction

South Asian region has always been under several threats e.g. Afghanistan war and the bone of contention between Pakistan and India is Kashmir dispute. The relations between Pakistan and India always remained unsettled. Russia as an old strategic partner has always

supported India against Pakistan. This probably was the main hurdle in the bilateral relations (Amin, 2016).

The possession of nuclear weapons by both Pakistan and India makes South Asia the most dangerous region of the world. On November 21, 2014 the defense minister of Russia visits Pakistan and meet the defense minister of Pakistan Mr. Khwaja Asif. On that occasion both the ministers signed an agreement on military cooperation. Both states were mainly interested in military relations in order to combat terrorism especially in South Asian region. That visit was an important and turning point in Pak-Russia relations which greatly affect the balance of power in this region. Although the objectives of that treaty may not be implemented but due to this agreement the visit is memorable in the history of Pak-Russia relations. From the very beginning of its independence Pakistan was in conflict with India and the Russian federation supported India both militarily and politically. Russia supply military equipment and training to Indian army, which further used by India in wars and other conflicts in the subcontinent. The technological advancement further helped India to become a nuclear state, on the other side Pakistan were in strong ties with United States of America. Historically Pakistan were entered in too many western alliances like South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CTO). An important thing is that Pakistan never considered Russia as a security threat for Pakistan. Pakistan's decision to move towards west was taken due to Indian engagement and cooperation with Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The decision was based on to contour Indian capability in modern weapons. Since 1954, Pakistan was mainly under military control, it means that Pakistan shared no common value with the west as e.g. democracy.

In the 20th century Islamabad become a training center for Taliban mujahedeen, who were fighting against USSR in Afghanistan. The action was done purely in the support of United States, as Pakistan and Russia have no common border. Both the states have never in conflict with each other. The communist party in Pakistan failed to secure important force because Russia was not in favor of this to support and encourage the revolutionary sentiments of communism to be flourished in Pakistan. Most of the people in Pakistan were engaged in agriculture so Marxism was not so attractive for them. However, Pakistan was in alliance with People Republic of China (PRC) which insured the security of Pakistan. That is the reason that Pak-Russia relation is based on geopolitical factors rather than ideological factor. The point which open up new opportunities of cooperation for both the states in the changing international environment. While analyzing Pak-US relations one can conclude the United States never support Pakistan neither in case of Kashmir nor in wars of 1965 and 1970 against India. Russia was a peace broker in 1965 war while USA allowed India to divide Pakistan and to support the creation of Bangladesh. After all these it will be a great mistake to call United States (US) a true friend of Pakistan (Glogowski, 2016).

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Improvement in bilateral relations between Pakistan and India seems difficult as Russia has maintained strong strategic relations with India. The main reason that Russia was not much interested in relations with Pakistan was that Russia has a strong strategic partner (India) in South Russia (Amin, 2016). As realists argue that in international dealings there is no permanent friend and enemy, it is the interest of a state which compels one to maintain relations with others. Both Russia and Pakistan are doing the same as they have a lot of common interest. Despite their worse history of relations, now one can feel warmth in bilateral relations between Pakistan and Russia (Khan, 2018). In order to boost its relations with Russia Pakistan had already revised its foreign policy, it would be a great diplomatic victory of Pakistan if she became a major regional ally of Russia. In the past Russian foreign policy was very rigid while entering into relations with other states, but during the time of Vladimir Putin, Russia revived its policies and gained new areas of influence in the international political system. For Russia this is the best time to develop its relations with other states of the world, particularly with South Asian states (Khan, 2019).

Pakistan since its independence has bilateral relations with the United States. Usually states maintain relations with each other to achieve their national interest on an equal basis. The long-standing Pakistan-US relation has not been proven effective in bringing peace and stability in the region so far. Consequently, Pakistan has to strengthen its relations with the former superpower and to maintain good strategic relations with a major regional power Russia (Hussain, 2012).

Pak-Russia relations have a history of misperceptions and lost opportunities. All these opportunities missed by both states due to differences in ideology and some international events, primarily because of Pakistan's inclination towards the United States. (Nawaz and Beenish, 2013)

The view was very common in the Russian political circle that any security threat faced by Pakistan would not affect Russia but in the contemporary geo-strategic and geo-political environment Pakistan is strategically very important for the international community. Now Russia's views about Pakistan have changed. Russia too is interested to maintain good relations with Pakistan (Moskalenko and Popychkanov, 2014). Both the states face a number of common issues which need to be resolved by mutual cooperation. Good bilateral relations between both countries can play a key role in bringing peace in the region.

This research seeks to ascertain some moments and to highlight that the present relations of the two countries have contained a series of historical events of great significance. Pakistan and Russia do not have any common border but there are a lot of similar issues facing by both countries. Since 1947 the bilateral relations between both states goes through many ups and downs. In the present era Russia is more interested in South Asia and is willing to

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strengthen relation with all regional states including Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan due to US and India growing ties is looking towards Russia for strategic partnership (M. Taimur Fahad, 2018). Hence this research needs a detailed analysis of Pak-Russia relation particularly since 9/11 to present time. The strong relations between Pakistan and India never mean that the rivalry between Pakistan and India in status quo, as India was a main player and main focus of Russian foreign policy in South Asia. India is also a historical strategic partner of Russia during cold war. Another importance of Pak-Russia relation is that Moscow can play a good role in solving the rivalry between India and Pakistan through Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Khan, 2019).

On one side United States is a strong supporter of democracy, on the other side US ignore democratic norms for their own interest. Because of our partnership with the US over the years, undemocratic regimes flourished at the cost of regional peace. Long dictatorship brings instability in Pakistan which ultimately leads towards regional instability. So that United States as a super power failed to bring peace in the region. Russia a regional power and a permanent member of United Nation Security Council along with Pakistan can play a key role in bringing peace and stability in the region.

Theoretical Framework

In the recent past Pakistan received great human and material loss because of the instability in the region, specifically due to war against terrorism as Pakistan served as a front-line state in the said war.

US growing relation with India to maintain a policy of isolation against Pakistan compel Pakistan to seek friends and enhance relations with other regional powers to maintain balance of power. In this contest, Russia is an important regional power. The other one is China, which is already an all-weather friend of Pakistan.

Here this research study will be based on balance of power strategy. From Russian side if one analyzes the situation, India growing strategic partnership with US and US intentions to control the whole regions through India from Afghanistan is an alarming situation for Russia. Russia is now changing Its policy towards South Asia by maintaining good bilateral relation with all regional states including Pakistan. Here is an important triangle alliance of China, Pakistan and Russia which will balance the power with other regional alliances that US, India and Afghanistan. This balance of power strategy will lead toward regional stability and peace.

The balance of power theory in international relations provide that states can protect their boundaries from external aggression by containing greater power to dominate other states. The theory further says that the stronger state will oppress the weaker one, It is then necessary to make an alliance with other states to balance the power. Balance of power

system is more stable than the dominance of one state. The equilibrium in power will maintain peace as aggression will not be fruitful in any case (Kegley, Charles, Wittkopf, 2005).

In the present case of Pak-Russia relations, the theory of balance of power is more relevant as the South Asian region is under several threats especially after the incident of 9/11. Pakistan support United States in war on terror the relations between Pakistan and America was remain unstable. Furthermore, it is important to mention that growing strategic partnership between India and united states of America become a threat for Pakistan and ultimately for the whole South Asian region. In this regard, it is necessary for Pakistan to build strong and friendly relations with Russia, which will balance the power with India and United States of America. The balance occur in the two groups of states in South Asia will maintain the situation as stable and peace full.

Prospects for Peace and Stability

It is observed in the international community that the very base of state-to-state relations is the achieving of their respective national interest. One cannot consider a state as a permanent friend or an enemy. It shows that the only supreme and primary thing for a state to peruse is national interest. Like other states of the world, Pakistan is also trying to gain its objectives based on national interest. As I mentioned earlier that historically Pakistan choose to be on the western side and instead of the USSR the prime minister of Pakistan visited the United States. But there were some serious reasons behind that decision. Firstly, Pakistan as an infant state was unable to secure its national boundaries because of the lack of resources. In that critical situation have to rely on the west for the security of their territorial boundaries. At that time the then USSR was in a position to assist Pakistan in this regard because the Soviet Union was already passed through a disaster due to the outbreak of the 2nd world war. Russia was in a struggle to recover from the injuries caused by the said world and to regain its position internationally. Secondly, that was the time in Pakistan was passing through a serious economic crisis because the sources provided by the combined India was not enough for the survival of the newly independent state. At that time Russia has also some economic problems and was in action to stabilize the country from the economic crisis which was the outcome of the 2nd world war. That was the reason that Pakistan preferred the United States over Russia to get paid in the form of economic assistance and other materials to overcome the early crisis of the new state. Thirdly as Pakistan were serious security threats from the immediate neighbor India. For that purpose, the Pakistani leader was of the view to get some military assistance from the western block.

There was no other issue with Pakistan to reject the earliest proposal of Russia to Pakistan but the territorial an economic need of the newly emerged state. However ever Pakistan decision to visit Russia was proved not so beneficial for the stability and prosperity of the

region. The relations between Pakistan Russia face many ups and downs since Pakistan independence. There are some drastic changes observed in the bilateral relations of the two countries. With changing Geo-political and Geo-strategic environment Russia it's the foreign policy towards South Asia and maintains ties with all the countries of this region particularly Pakistan is the main concern for Russia in the region. Both states took a lot of initiatives to strengthen their bilateral relations. There is a bundle of opportunities in the way cordial and progressive relations sided by some limitations upon both states.

Pak-Russia relations are very fruitful for the two states, not only for Pakistan and Russia but for the whole South Asian region. The basis of the above discussion will answer the question related to peace and stability in South Asia. Pak-Russia relations if so enhanced and developed would be a reason for the prosperity of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, and for the whole region. Both states have identical interests related to Afghanistan to ensure peace there, economic development of both states, to boost the efficiency of CPEC along with China, which will have positive consequences for the states of this region. Further expansion of US influence in the region is also a matter of concern for both states specifically for Russia. In collaboration with Pakistan Russia would keep an eye over the entire region and the activities of the superpower United States of America.

The possible solution for the long-standing revelry between Pakistan and India and the prevailing mistrust on the Kashmir issue could be resolved through the strong historically of India the Russian federation.

Peace in Afghanistan

With the outbreak of terrorism in the international community and the support of Pakistan with the Taliban government in Afghanistan was a serious cause of tensions in Pak-Russia relations. After the 9/11 attacks on America, the US started a war against terrorism in which Pakistan become a front-line state to combat terrorism. Following that war on Terror Pakistan opposed the Taliban government in Afghanistan which pave the way for both Russia and Pakistan to come closer. The initiation of the Afghan peace process and to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan is the common objectives of both countries.

The growing US-India relations were blocking the ways of development for Pakistan. In that very situation, Russia was the best option for Pakistan to seek support and Assistance. For the enteral peace and stability of Pakistan the peace and stability in Afghanistan is inevitable. The statement based on the principle that if you want peace and harmony in your own state you need to ensure peace and stability in your neighbourhood by supporting the ways and means which can cause prosperity and stability in your neighbourhood. Mr Shabir Ahmad Khan in his article stated that "there is a perception that the US desires a long-term military

presence in Afghanistan to supervise the surrounding states and therefore least interested in peace of Afghanistan. Pak-Russia cooperation on peace in Afghanistan is thus imperative and will be beneficial for peaceful integration between Central Asia and South Asia". According to the statement mentioned above both countries are very much concerned about the Afghan peace process. Russia is in a continuous struggle to eliminate terrorism from Afghanistan and Pakistan in this regard are appreciated and supporting Russia.

Pak-Russia strategic partnership could seem dangerous to some of the regional and international states. But the bilateral relations have double sides which will affect the region as a whole. Due to the common stance on Afghanistan issues the cooperation between both states along with the other regional players could possibly ensure peace in Afghanistan on the other side the economic cooperation between Pakistan and Russia could further bring other economic giants to the region. Along with these, the Chinese project of CPEC is another important factor that can make the South Asian region an economic hub.

Russia introduced new ways like economic social and legal measures in order to eliminate possible security threats from Afghanistan. The "anti-drug security belts" initiative was part of the Moscow strategy; it will secure all the borders of Afghanistan to prevent the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. In this regard, many meetings were held to develop cooperation with Pakistan in the war against drug smuggling and terrorism. Pakistan has the capability to become a partner of Russia to combat its problems of terrorism and narcotics, as Pakistan had already experienced in the war against terrorism. Both states have common groups which are working together on counterterrorism and to bring about strategic stability in the international community (Mian, 2015).

As compare to Pak-US relations, the relationship between Pakistan and Russia could be more fruitful for the peace and stability of Afghanistan, and further, it will lead towards regional development and prosperity.

A Peaceful Solution of Kashmir

Pak-Russia relations has the potential to resolve the issue of Kashmir. India as an old strategic partner of Russia on one side may oppose the growing cordiality between Pakistan and Russia but on the other side, India should be convinced to resolve their differences with Pakistan. In this regard, Russia can play a positive role as in the past, both states were convinced by Russia to set together and to come to a conclusion in the form of the Tashkent declaration.

Sultana, Fatima and Afshan stated the views of Russian President Vladimir Putin in their article in which he said," there is no other country in the world with which Russia has such 'deep cooperation in delicate areas including missile technology, and its benefits from

cooperation with India". There is no doubt on the fact Russia and India enjoyed a trustful and cooperative relationship. So, those cordial relations on the other side of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation many times offered assistance to India and Pakistan throw out their differences and solve their problems which is a hurdle in the bilateral relations of the two states. And Kashmir is the most important issue between both countries to be resolved. Pakistan and India should happily welcome the efforts of the Russian Federation in this context (Sultana, Fatima, Afshan, 2019).

The above discussion implies that Pak-Russia relations will not only be beneficial for them but also for India. Because these relations have the potential and opportunity to try to end the Kashmir dispute. Which is the bone of contention between Pakistan and India. There is an important point that wants to resolve the issue of Kashmir bilaterally but Pakistan is of the view that the involvement of other regional and international powers could bring about the solution of the Kashmir issue. Due to strong relationships with Russia may be convinced to resolve the issue with the help of Moscow.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an organisation that can play a positive role in enhancing relations between the two traditional rivals. As the leading state of the SCO in collaboration with the member state including Pakistan could make it possible for the peace and stability of the entire region. Further Russia can be a good player in decreasing tensions between Pakistan and India and this Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can provide the most suitable environment to increase warmth in the bilateral relations of the two rivals. Further, the platform should encourage the two neighbours to set together and resolve their issues through peaceful dialogues. Kashmir will be the first among all the problems between them (M. Taimur Fahad Khan, 2018).

The growing cordiality between Pakistan and Russia have the possibility of the solution of the Kashmir issue. Which not only ease the tension between the two countries but will bring peace and stability in the whole region and will further, encourage the two states to have relations based on cooperation in different aspects of life such as economic, energy, education, cultural, technological, scientific and industrial.

Decrease USA Influence

Pak-US relations remain very unpredictable over history there were times of extreme cordiality and at times the Faced the period of troubles between both countries. Recently both states have a serious lack of trust. There is a clash of interest in both states specifically the Afghan peace process, terrorism and growing cordiality with China. The United States has a history of worsening relations with Russia and now with India, there is a great deal of cooperation and strategic relations. The strategy of the US is to increase its influence over the entire region and to provide a tough time to the bilateral relations between Pakistan and

India. Through India, the US have to keep an eye on the whole region from Afghanistan and to serve their national interest.

Although the US is an old ally of Pakistan but never support Pakistan stance on the issue of Kashmir. Even though history witnessed that the US provide no assistance to Pakistan in the wars of 1965 and 1971. It was Russia who provides a platform to both countries to end the dispute. In 1971 American supported the partition of Pakistan. As a consequence of war, the East Pakistan separated from Pakistan. On the basis of these facts, one can easily understand the US is not loyal to Pakistan (Glogowski, 2016).

The United States of America supported long term military presence in Afghanistan to set as watchdog in Afghanistan to supervise all the region, therefore it indicates that US intentions towards the Afghan peace process weren't so real (Khan, 2016). US approach towards the South Asian region is only to increase its influence on the entire region and serve their interest baby becoming a hurdle in the China-Russia growing partnership. In this regard Pakistan will provide a way to Russia through cordial relations between them to confine the US in South Asian region.

Economic Development

In the international community states build diplomatic relations in order to serve their interest, either in form of economic assistance or in the advancement of technology and to seek help for the security of their national boundaries. Russia revived foreign policy towards South Asia one of the examples. Another important concern of Russia to come closer to Pakistan is to reach warm water of the Arabian Sea and to share the benefits of CPEC. Russia is providing assistance to Pakistan in the energy, gas and other economic sectors. The growing economic relations between both states can provide new opportunities for all the states of the region to get benefits from that opportunities.

The involvement of the major power in the region and a high rate of investment from Russia will attract the entire world community enter into South Asia and invest their money, as South Asia is cheap the market for the developed states. With the expansion of economic development between Pakistan and Russia, the whole region will be benefited from the fruits. So, Pak-Russia relations could prove better for the economic development of South Asia.

Conclusion

Despite the history of worsening relations between Pakistan and Russia, both are now eagerly interested to have a cordial relationship with each other. Improvement in their bilateral relations in the last two decades is occurring at a very fast rate. Both states are assisting each other in their particular sphere of influence. If one state is to provide technical assistance the other is rich in manpower. Russia supported Pakistan in military exercises

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and arranged joint exercises for that purpose. Cooperation between both states is not confined to the field of defence. It can be seen in agriculture, energy, education, culture, science, and, technology.

As compared to the US, Russia is more interested in the stability of Afghanistan and more loyal to its cause. Further Russia believes in collectivism rather than individualism. Pakistan in relation to the United States lost its resources but the United States is not satisfied with the efforts made by Pakistan in the so-called war against terrorism. By analyzing Pak-US relations and their consequences for Pakistan and the whole region I conclude that the then decision of the Pakistani leader to join the western side was wrong because these relations have no fruits for the peace and stability of the region. By maintaining better relations with Russia, Pakistan can get its desired objectives to stabilize the economy of Pakistan and to ensure the security of South Asia, as Russia is also making efforts to bring peace to the region.

The growing US influence in the South Asian region is to some extent dangerous for the stability of Afghanistan and the region at large. The USA as a superpower is failed to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan and that is why Pakistan inclined itself towards Russia. Pak-Russia relations will meet the challenges over there but with mutual efforts and cooperation, both states could restrain the US expansion in South Asia.

Pakistan should pursue a foreign policy based on cooperation and bilateral relations on equal footing. In the light of that policy, Pakistan should remain in touch with all major power and have cordial relations with them. This will pave the way for regional peace and stability. However, Pakistan should assure the United States that its relations with Russia would not harm the strategic interests of the US in South Asia. China has also maintained good relations with Russia so that China would appreciate and encourage partnership between Pakistan and Russia. The very objective of Pak-Russia relations are not to harm any other states but to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan and further increase development in the whole region.

This research promotes the author to further extend the topic and do more research on the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Russia and explore new ways of development and cooperation between the two countries. Another important state in this region is China. In the future, author will study the triangle of states, Pakistan, Russia and China. The objectives of cordiality among the three and its consequences for South Asia and the whole international community.

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