

**RUSSIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST-COLD WAR  
PERIOD, 1991-2014**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University*

*for award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**Russia-Pakistan Relations in the Post-Cold War Period, 1991-2014**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of the University or any other University.

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## CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated to my Parents & my beloved Husband

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## List of Abbreviations

1. BOOT – Build Own Operate Transfer
2. CARICC – Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre
3. CES – Common Economic Space
4. CPEC – China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
5. CSCE- Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
6. CSTO- Collective Security Treaty Organization
7. DCFTA- Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
8. FPCCI – Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
9. FSMTC - Federal Service of Military- Technical Cooperation (Russia)
10. FTA – Free Trade Agreement
11. ICCI – Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry
12. INCSR – International Narcotics Strategy Report
13. ISAF-International Security Assistance Force
14. MAPs- Membership Action Plans
15. MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
16. NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
17. NDN- Northern Distribution Network
18. NSGP-North-South Gas Pipeline Project
19. OBOR- One Belt One Road
20. OPCW- Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
21. OSCE- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
22. PfP- Partnership for Peace
23. QCCM- Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism
24. RATS- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
25. SEATO – Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
26. SCO- Shanghai Cooperation Organization
27. TDAP – Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
28. TTP- Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
29. UNODC- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
30. USSR-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As India-US deepens their strategic ties, Cold-war animosity between Russia and Pakistan is disappearing and the two sides started bolstering ties with one another. As we know, during the period 1947 to 1991, Pakistan was an ally of the United States, and India though remained non-aligned, was highly tilted towards Soviet Union. These strong ties continued until the end of Cold-War and in fact, it continued until recently. But in the last few years, it has been observed that there is growing diplomatic and military engagement between Russia and Pakistan.

Russia, the successor state of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, even after its break up has significant might in terms of its influence, resources and global power and still strong in terms of its military power. But in the recent years, for economic reasons, it is looking for new friends in Asia<sup>1</sup>. In South Asia, it was India who has always been the largest recipient of Russian military equipment and Russia-Pakistan relationship has always been strained because of past mistakes (Rauf 2016). However, when Russia realized that its long-standing partner India is diversifying its arms procurement, it decided to lift its self-imposed arms embargo on Pakistan, who wants to upgrade its army and weaponry and lessen its reliance on the United States<sup>2</sup> (Rafiq 2015). This growing engagement between Russia and Pakistan is not only limited to military sales, as both the countries are seeking opportunities to boost their economic and energy cooperation as well. The first-ever strategic dialogue between both the countries took place in Moscow on 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> August 2013. “Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Jalil Jilani led his country's delegation and the Russian delegation was led by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Gennadievich Titov. Pakistan's Ambassador to Russian Federation Alamgir Babur and Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Igor Morgulov also took part in the dialogue”<sup>3</sup>. “The topics that were discussed ranged from economic, political, and defense cooperation to regional and international security issues. Other issues discussed during this meeting pertained to disarmament, counter

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<sup>1</sup>URL: <http://pakobserver.net/pak-russia-relations-growing/>

<sup>2</sup> URL: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/pakistan-russias-new-best-friend-13945>

<sup>3</sup> URL: <http://strategicstudyindia.blogspot.in/2013/09/collage-voice-of-russia.html>

terrorism, drug trafficking, global security, enhancing cooperation in various fields and expanding bilateral trade” (Indian Strategic Studies, 8 September 2013). This strategic dialogue between Russia and Pakistan is the manifestation of the changing direction of their relations.

The present day Russia has to deal with two major issues on the foreign policy front: first, how to help save the post-Soviet states and second, how to deal with the demands of the economic realities more than ever. At the regional level, Russia has been improving its ties with China, because Russia is in need of Chinese help owing to its successful economy whereas, China wants Russia’s support in terms of energy supply and distribution of transport networks for the flow of goods to and from Europe (Rashid 2016). Russia has also mollified Pakistan. “In the near future, Pakistan may offer a land route to Russia to let its goods have access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea by giving access to Gwador port or else Russia may achieve that target through China”<sup>4</sup>. It seems the post-9/11 era not only brought Washington and New Delhi closer to find out the course of action to cooperate but has also brought Islamabad closer to Moscow on both bilateral and multilateral fronts including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It is not wrong to say that the developments in the post-Cold War were slow and less noticeable but the post-9/11 geopolitical shift is speedy and powerful among the countries of Asia (Daily Times, 12 January 2016).

Why suddenly Russia has warmed up to Pakistan? Well the answer may be in the global relations. **Firstly**, the terrorist attacks on US on 9/11 and forced imposition on Pakistan by the United States to withdraw its support for the Taliban. This transformed the whole sequence of events and changed Russian impression about Pakistan’s actions in the region. **Secondly**, Pakistan’s geo-strategic location and the instability of Afghanistan is an important factor which has compelled both the countries to move beyond their staggered history. **Thirdly**, India’s growing strategic ties with Washington and the signing of Indo-US nuclear deal and shifting of its arms procurement to the US, UK, France and Israel. **Fourthly**, the sanction on Russia by the Western countries, because of the Crimean accession in 2014, brings Russia closer to Asian countries. In Asia, where

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<sup>4</sup> URL: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/13-Jan-2016/pak-russia-relations-certain-realities>

there is an enormous economic opportunity and burgeoning markets, some scholars look at Pakistan as a huge market for armaments. Russia's relation with China has also been improving in the recent years and it significantly improved when the West started putting heavy sanctions on Moscow. It can also be pointed out that since China is an old partner of Pakistan and has always backed the latter in matters of international conflicts, therefore, becoming friends with Islamabad can be an excellent way to get closer to China (Tikhonova 2016).

Relations between Russia and Pakistan have historically been frosty and were never smooth, especially during the Cold war period, but instead of its strained relations both the sides from time to time took initiative to improve their relations. Pakistan soon after its creation on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947 had to face tremendous difficulties territorially, economically and financially. In 1949, when Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan received invitations from Soviet Union and the United States, he chose to visit the latter with the hope that his country will get more economic assistance from the United States than the Soviet Union. Also Pakistan's help to the United Nations during the Korean War by denouncing North Korea's move as a clear case of encroachment prevented the development of friendly ties with the Soviet Union (Kaushik 1971). It can be said that during the Cold war period there was absence of trust and presence of mutual suspicion, as Pakistan became a member of the US led military alliances: SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955. The intention of US in making Pakistan a member of the aforesaid military pacts was to restrain the then Soviet Union. In fact, Soviet relations with Pakistan throughout remained unfriendly and soured (Hanif 2013). "Pakistan's unfriendly attitude resulted in increasing Soviet inclination towards India with Soviet Union becoming the chief supplier of arms to New Delhi, thereby aggravating the balance of power in South Asia"<sup>5</sup>. However, against this background of suspicion, there were exchanges of cultural and industrial visits from both Russia and Pakistan. In August 1956, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Pakistan signed an agreement on trade and accordingly both the countries conferred each other the most favoured nation status (Owais 2007).

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<sup>5</sup> URL: <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art4han.pdf>

In May 1960, the U-2 spy-plane incident led to tense bilateral relations but fortunately it did not last long. Soon after the incident, USSR offered a long-term loan of \$30 million for oil exploration in January 1961, a barter deal in August 1963 and an air agreement in October 1963 which improved the diplomatic ties. In April 1965, President Mohammad Ayub Khan visited Soviet Union which was first direct personal contact between the highest leaders of both the countries since its inception and this led successful conclusion of three agreements on trade and economic cooperation and cultural exchange. In January 1966 there was again barter deal, in April 1968 Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin paid a visit to Islamabad and in 1969 Soviet Defence Minister Andrey Grechko visited Pakistan in an attempt to improve relations. But in 1971, relations soured between both the countries, with the signing of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation treaty between Soviet Union and India. The Soviet Union played an influential part in the break-up of Pakistan, through its stand at the United Nations Security Council and by giving military support to India during the war between India and Pakistan in December 1971. However, the secession of East Pakistan brought Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to power and he decided to adopt a more pragmatic foreign policy approach (Owais 2007).

The worst phase of their relationship continued for ten years i.e. from 1979 to 1989 when Pakistan assisted in the conduct of the US led guerrilla war of the Mujahedin against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This hostile phase ended with the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. But again in the later part of 1990s, another source of tension arose in the event of Pakistan's backing to the Taliban in the Afghan civil war and the acceptance of their government as the legitimate power, which Soviet Union considered harmful for the entire region (Hanif 2013).

However, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the U.S.A. put immense pressure on Pakistan to withdraw its support for the Taliban and to join the US and NATO led war against terrorism in Afghanistan as a leading state. This changed the course of action and altered Russian impression about Pakistan's actions in the region. A major development in Russia-Pakistan relations post 9/11 was the visit of President Pervez Musharraf to Moscow when Vladimir Putin, the President of Russian Federation

invited him in February 2003. “This historical visit of Musharraf and his earlier rendezvous with Vladimir Putin at Almaty and Kuala Lumpur indeed bolstered the morale of both the countries. As a result, both the sides concluded three agreements to boost diplomatic and cultural relations and to bring solution to visa and immigration problems”<sup>6</sup> (Hanif 2013). Then next in 2004 was the subsequent visit to Islamabad of Igor Ivanov, Russian Foreign Minister and a delegation from the Russian State Duma headed by its Vice-Speaker later in the same year. As relations improved between the two countries, so did Russia support Pakistan’s admission to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an Observer state in the year 2005 (Hanif 2013) and recently in 2017 Pakistan also became a full member.

The visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail E. Fradkov to Pakistan in the year 2007 was considered as the first high-level visit by a Russian leader after nearly four decades, in fact the first by a Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. In the recent years, both the countries have shown interest in having strong political, strategic and economic ties. Both have been looking for possibility of increase mutual cooperation in different spheres through joint economic projects such as: oil and gas, power, railways, steel production, telecommunications and IT. Russia, has offered Pakistan collaboration in the areas of space, satellite technology, oil exploration, transportation projects and in the aviation field. Another manifestation of the evolving Russia-Pakistan relationship is the lifting of its self-imposed arms embargo on Pakistan and signing of a military cooperation agreement on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to expand their military ties during the first visit of a Defence Minister of the Russian Federation after 45 years. This milestone military pact has been signed by General Sergei Shoigu from the Russian side and from the Pakistani side Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. The agreement allows exchange of information on politico-military issues, collaboration in counter terrorism and initiating businesses with each other. Further, on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015, the two countries signed a landmark defence deal that includes the sale of four Mi-35 ‘Hind E’ attack helicopters to Pakistan; thereby, giving opportunity to Islamabad to get defence weapons from Russia

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<sup>6</sup> URL: <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art4han.pdf>

(Rauf 2016). Therefore, the recent developments in the military sector between Russia and Pakistan can become a new dimension of their relationship.

Another landmark was achieved on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015 with a \$2 billion inter-governmental accord between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Pakistan to build the North-South Gas Pipeline Project (NSGP) from Lahore to Karachi. The agreement was signed by Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation Alexander Novak and Pakistan's Federal Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. It is expected that the issue of energy crisis in Pakistan's central and northern regions, which is hampering its economic growth can be resolved with the construction of the NSGP. China Pakistan Economic Corridor<sup>7</sup> is another beneficial assignment which is not only meant for China and Pakistan but also for the region. Hence, if Russia would become a part and finance this project, it can alleviate economic and security situation in the region. However, the only irritant factor in the CPEC project is that it crosses Gilgit-Baltistan area of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and if Russia joins CPEC, then it can hamper Russia-India relations in the long run (Rauf 2016). So far, Russia and Pakistan have held three major joint military drills since 2014: two naval drills known as Arabian Monsoon 2014 and Arabian Monsoon 2015, they were supervised by superiors of the Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation. The focus of these two were on combatting crime groups and blocking drug traffic. And the third one is the recently concluded Druzhba 2016 joint military drills. However, in comparison with the naval exercises, "Druzhba-2016", were real military exercises with combat troops, having the task of eliminating illegal armed groups and other combat and training tasks in mountainous areas (Topychkanov 2016). It was observed that soon after the joint military exercises, Russia was given access to warm waters of Gwadar port<sup>8</sup>, its recently Chinese-built port on the Gulf, which is close to Iran

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<sup>7</sup> CPEC will ensure Chinese energy security by linking it with the Middle East. The idea behind the CPEC project is to connect Kashgar in Chinese Xinjiang province with the port of Gwador, which is in South Pakistan and is an entry point to the Gulf of Oman.

<sup>8</sup> Gwadar port is not yet completely functional and it is mostly encircled by dissident forces from Balochistan province and neighbouring Afghanistan. The increase capability of the Gwador port is because of its Chinese-built network of roads that will ultimately join up with the Chinese border in northern Pakistan. So far, Pakistan has not confirmed if it would allow Russian warships to dock there, but they have already granted landing rights to the Chinese navy.

and opposite Oman (Rashid 2016). Furthermore, there is a concern compounded after Russia and Pakistan held their first ever foreign office consultations on the matters of the region in Islamabad on 14th December 2016. The Pakistani delegation was led by Ahmad Hussain Dayo, Director General (West Asia), while the delegation from Russia was led by Alexander V Sternik, third CIS department Head at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (Roy Chaudhary 2016). It was also decided that the next meeting on consultations will be summoned in Moscow in 2017. Moreover, Russia, is working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. These recent interactions between Moscow and Islamabad amidst shifting geo-political and geo-strategic trend along with emerging inter-regional economic possibilities and threats to regional stability have driven both the countries to define a new era of friendship (Masood 2016).

As Russia and Pakistan is keen to expand its political, economic and strategic ties, it is seen that in the post-Cold War period, the two countries have started evaluating their past policies and proposed various foreign policy initiatives to establish cordial relations. Russia understood the potential of Pakistan and has started considering it as an investment destination. Moreover, in the fight against terrorism, Russia does not want to exclude Pakistan, as it is of the view that so far by not including Pakistan, they have gained nothing. While deteriorating Pakistan-United States relations have compelled Pakistan to look for new allies in the region, but Russia's growing engagement with Islamabad is mainly prompted by the strategic location of Pakistan. And as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) expected to cut down its troops from Afghanistan post-2014, Russia worries that state failure and power vacuum will increase the influence of religious extremists in the region which will spread to southern regions of Russia through Central Asia. Thus, its impression about Pakistan as an important player made the regional environment suitable towards advancing Russia-Pakistan relations. However, there is a nuanced relationship between the two countries due to India and the US factor and because of host of regional issues such as impasse over Iran's Nuclear Program, Syrian crisis, conflict over Ukraine etc. The effects of these



factors cannot be ignored and has to be dealt carefully while looking at their bilateral ties. Nevertheless, formation of close connections “between the top leaders” of Moscow and Islamabad and both the countries eagerness to open a new episode in their bilateral relations will not only benefit the two countries but it will also benefit the region.

Although, the intensity of rapprochement between Russia and Pakistan started with India signing its nuclear deal with the United States in 2008. But it can be pointed out that the recent Russian foreign policy shift is because of Russia’s stalemate with Europe. As Russia is embroiled with the West over the crisis in Ukraine, followed by the Western sanctions as a result of the Crimean accession, makes its harder its reliance on Europe and thus it has started looking towards Asia. In other words, it can be said that the EU-NATO coalition against Russia, has been responsible in driving Moscow closer to Asian states. In Asia, where ample options and markets are prospering, Pakistan shows up as an important state for Russia because of its important strategic location. Although, Pakistan has its own structural problems, it is considered as one of the growing economies in Asia who is looking for solid partners in economic and defence sectors. Therefore, with the changing regional and international scenario, Russia no longer finds difficulty in forming a strategic relationship with Pakistan (Rauf 2016).

## **Research Focus**

### Review of the Literature

The relationship between Russia and Pakistan has been very uneven. But now the course is changing especially, after the break-up of Soviet Union in 1991, September 11 attacks on the United States and with the scheduled withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan. It is very interesting to learn how the South Asian region is becoming a new fascination for Russia and how geopolitics and geostrategic factors playing a definite role. There are Government documents, speeches by the political leaders and experts, books, articles, dissertations and thesis by research scholars, newspaper reports and website reports. Though there is plenty of literature available on the topic. However, certain aspects of the relationship have not been adequately dealt in. The current research would make an

attempt to fill up the gap in this research. The available literature is reviewed under the five sub-themes, such as-

- **Regional Geopolitics and Russia-Pakistan relations**

With the exit of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989, followed by the Soviet break-up in December 1991 and the end of four decades of Cold War produced favourable circumstances for a fresh start in Russia-Pakistan relations and both the countries took this opportunity. Regarding this, Azizian and Vasilieff (2003) writes, the departure of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the end of Cold War with the break-up of Soviet Union and democratic changes in Russia and Pakistan in the late 1980s offered amazing options for both the countries to forget their long years of enmity and suspicion and thus form relations based on mutual benefit.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan has a strategic advantage, serving as a bridge and corridor to connect different regions and this makes the former an attractive spot for Russia to realize its strategic goal. Therefore, the current developments between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Pakistan, high-level visits between them, the latter's potential role in the SCO, and Russia-China-Pakistan interactions under the changing geo-strategic environment can bring positive impacts to the Central and South Asian region. In this regard, Ahsan (2004) writes that the effects of globalization and events of 9/11 have made countries to concentrate more on regional politics and forming regional blocks. The writer believes that Russia's policy in South Asia is largely issue-driven and the region is strategically important to Moscow because it is in proximity to the former Soviet states on its southern periphery. Rashid (2012) opines that the formation of close connection "between the top leaders" of Moscow and Islamabad and both the countries eagerness to open a new episode in their relationship will not only benefit the two countries, but it will also benefit the region. Talukdar (2014) is of the opinion that Pakistan's geo-strategic position will help Russia in validating its actions in Central Asia and South Asia and thereby curtail US influence in the region.

However, there is a nuanced relationship between Russia and Pakistan because of its respective positions on international issues such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. In this

regard, Pakistan's Advisor to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz (2013) said that solution to the crisis in Syria is only through peaceful talks and emphasize that its position on Syria stands on the ethics of international law and UN Charter to respect integrity of the nation, to follow the policy of non-military and non-intervention and resolution of disputes or transfer of power through peaceful negotiations. The Russian President Vladimir Putin (2013) is of the opinion that "there shall be peaceful dialogue to enable the Syrians to formulate a compromise plan for their own future. President Putin said that we are not protecting the Syrian government, but international law"<sup>9</sup> (The New York Times, 11 September 2013). Ashraf (2014) in his article stated that the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin shares a view that Russia is trying to safeguard the interests of ethnic Russians which comprised 59% of Crimean population, who feel vulnerable by the spreading of lawlessness towards the east from Kiev. He further stressed that Kremlin is not asserting its will but instead backing the free choice of the local people.

Russia won't develop its relations with Pakistan at the expense of India. With respect to this view, Khan (2012) argues, Russia has its own foreign policy options and therefore, in spite of Indo-U.S. strategic treaty and strong economic and trade relations between China and India, Moscow prefers India as a close ally and therefore, relationship with Pakistan won't be at the expense of India. Rajorshi Roy (2013) is also of the opinion that the current Russia-Pakistan interaction is because of the situation in Afghanistan and the ways to resolve it than any other reasons. He believes that "the size of India's weapons market, capability to pay in hard currency and Russia's own special and privileged position with India is something which Pakistan can never match"<sup>10</sup>. While, Richard Sakwa (2014) is of the opinion that Pakistan is more like a basket case and therefore, cannot be a reliable partner but it is strategically important to maintain stability in Afghanistan. He also shared the view that Moscow and New Delhi are close allies and of course, Russia won't develop relations with Pakistan at the cost of the latter.

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<sup>9</sup> URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html>

<sup>10</sup> URL: [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/RussiaandPakistanNewEquation\\_rroy\\_040613](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/RussiaandPakistanNewEquation_rroy_040613)

- **Impact of India and US on Russia-Pakistan relations**

Relationship between Russia and Pakistan had always been influenced by the India and US factor. They perceived each other with mutual suspicion and negative mindset, Russia with an Indo-centric view and Pakistan from the viewpoint of western perception. Azizian and Vasilieff (2003) are of the opinion that from 1960s onwards, USSR-Pakistan relations were formed by Pakistan's political and military affiliations with the United States and China and Russia's relationship with Pakistan was always subordinated to the "Indian factor". Dikshit (2012) stated in his article that ex Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh had requested Russian PM Dimitry Rogozin during his visit to India in July 2012, if President Vladimir Putin of Russian Federation could defer his visit to Islamabad in October 2012 so that the vision of the India-Russia summit meeting which was going to happen in November 2012 remain intact. Sharma (2014) writes that it is because of the Indian factor, Russia showed coldness towards Pakistan's sustained efforts over the years to mend the ties between them. He is of the opinion that India certainly does not approve of Russia getting closer to Pakistan and for Russia it could not have annoyed the Indians. Contrary to the above discussions, Blank (2012) views that the opportunities provided by the deteriorating US-Pakistan alliance and the worsening of situation in Afghanistan, made Russia understand that it must consider Pakistan independently and not from the perception of India, to support and protect Afghanistan and Central Asia. Jha (2014) also writes, with the increasing danger of internal stability, Pakistan is keen to diversify its weaponry to a source that can supply arms at a cheaper rate and also to a healthy alternative that comes with a much smaller cost on the domestic political front.

It can be said that with the changing global scenario, Russia wanted to diversify its foreign policy options and try out other players in the region especially when India is getting closer with the US and other European countries. In this regard, Kundu (2012) is of the view that in the post Cold-War period, there is growth in Indo-US strategic engagement; therefore, increasing interactions between Moscow and Islamabad was quite a normal move. Both the countries are now prioritizing their national interests, while developing their bilateral relations. Hanif (2013) opines that Russia's increasing engagement with Pakistan can be seen in the context of India's closeness with the

United States after the Indo-U.S. strategic friendship treaty. Akhlaque (2013) writes that Russia is no more centered on India and does not look at its relations only through India-centric. It seems Russia has started looking from other angles as well. Also, the changing geopolitical and geostrategic trend including the Indo-US nuclear deal has speeded up the process of cooperation among the countries in Asia. Contrary to the above discussions, Guriev (2013) is of the opinion that Russia does not care about India and US getting closer, it considers US as its enemy and its main concern is regional security and stability of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of ISAF, for which it considers Pakistan to be an important strategic player and thus they are ready to work with any power to bring stability.

- **Issue of Terrorism, Drug-trafficking and Afghanistan**

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan in the 1990's, particularly its assistance to the Taliban, did not provide favourable circumstances that would have benefited the two sides since Russia considered these elements as threat to its security. But the change in world politics after 9/11 led to a shift in Pakistan's policy towards foreign relations, which in turn changed Russian perception towards Pakistan. In this regard, Ahsan (2004) writes that Pakistan's relations with the former Soviet Republic was never smooth. However, the shift in Pakistan's Afghan policy in 2001 helped in improving its relations with Russia. The latter welcomed Pakistan's role as a leading country in the fight against international terrorism while offering joint efforts to curb terrorism. Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Karachi reported that the global menace of international terrorism which is alarming the world at the onset of 21<sup>st</sup> century kind of unified almost all the countries, including Russia and Pakistan. In this joint struggle, the new phase of Russia-Pakistan relations began. Hanif (2013) writes, in the aftermath of September 11 attacks on the United States, when Pakistan gave up its support to Taliban and joined the US and NATO led fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, it changed the entire course of actions and this altered Russian impression about Pakistan's position in the region. It now sees Pakistan as an important strategic player who can be part of any strategy to bring an end to the crisis in Afghanistan and thereby bring peace and stability in the region once the withdrawal of US troops takes place.

As the US led NATO troops making provision for its drawdown from Afghanistan post-2016, Russia fears that state failure and power vacuum in the country will lead to rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian countries and from there it will spread to southern parts of Russia. So there is a growing engagement between the two, as Russia sees Pakistan's strategic importance in maintaining peace, security and stability after the withdrawal. Regarding this issue, Purushottam (2011) is of the opinion that Russia's outreach to Pakistan is a part of its effort to stabilize volatile Afghanistan, and also part of its multi-vector diplomacy and desire to play a more meaningful role in Asia. Blank (2012) writes, henceforth, the drawdown of ISAF forces from Afghanistan, Russia sees Pakistan as an important player and thus it has boosted its relations with the latter. Kundu (2012) writes, at present Russia is getting more engaged in the regional matters primarily to stabilise Afghanistan before the expected withdrawal of ISAF. Apart from the danger of Islamic fundamentalism, Russia is also worried about the increasing trafficking and flow of drugs from Afghanistan to Russia via Central Asian States (CAS). Roy (2013) also writes growth and development in Afghanistan is the main reason behind Russia's increasing interactions with Pakistan. With the expected withdrawal of ISAF post-2014, there is tremendous uncertainty, for which Russia believes that Pakistan has an important leverage to bring stability in the region. Sharma (2013) writes post-2014 Afghanistan may turn into a tinder box again with the activities of Jihad. Therefore, the writer argues to maintain security and stability, Russia is getting closer to Pakistan. He also added Syrian crisis as another reason for this growing engagement.

Though Russia and Pakistan have come closer by forgetting their old differences, suspicion and mistrust still prevails because of Pakistan's nature of yielding to Western pressures. In this regard, Global Research (2012) writes, President Vladimir Putin might have postponed his visit to Islamabad because Kremlin must have sensed something wrong in its aspirations in Afghanistan as Pakistan weigh down in front of U.S. whims and its policy at the diplomatic level is usually tilted towards West, particularly the United States.

- **Political Relations**

Russia's new multi-vector foreign policy and diversification of its market has led to formation of close connection "between the top leaders" of Moscow and Islamabad. Regarding this, Owais (2007) writes that Pakistan and Russia can gain a lot from a positive relationship. Keeping in view the changed political and economic conditions at the regional and international level, despite their past differences, they have forged closer relations in recent years. This is particularly reflected in high-level contacts and state visits during the last five years. Hanif (2013) writes in 2011 the then Russia's PM Vladimir Putin openly backed Pakistan's aspiration to acquire full membership of SCO. He also offered support in the growth of Karachi Steel Mill and in the energy sector he was ready to provide technical assistance for the Guddu and Muzaffargarh power plants and the development of Thar Coal Project. The writer also stated that after cancelling the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Pakistan in October 2012; immediately thereafter, Russia and Pakistan exchanged three crucial visits of officials towards the end of 2012 which helped in mitigating any misconceptions in this regard. Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Karachi also stated that in the last few years Moscow and Islamabad have been encouraging to establish regular inter-Parliamentary ties. There have been Russia-Pakistan Joint Working Groups on Counterterrorism, International Security and Strategic Stability. In fact, it is a matter of deep satisfaction that the views of Russia and Pakistan on many international problems such as: settlement of crisis in a peaceful way, to form the multipolar world order, to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to strengthen the international law principles in relations between states are kind of converging. Talukdar (2014) writes that Pakistan is in need of military hardware and Russia can step in. Thus, Pakistan can be a new market and a potential buyer for the sale of Russian arms. A new seller-buyer relationship can be forged between Russia and Pakistan.

Amidst the growing Russia-Pakistan partnership there are certain irritant factors which act as a constraint in their relationship. In this regard, Shah (2012) writes, the Afghanistan conflict had continued to spread its darkness over the Russia-Pakistan relations. However, it seems in the Afghan conflict, the interests of both the countries

collide because of its fear and anxiety, mistrust and concern about the regional security interests. In fact, both the countries are significant stakeholders in the outcome of the conflict. Another irritant factor in the Russia-Pakistan relations is the sale of Russian weapons to India. Pakistan strongly criticise Russia-India military relationship and it feels that if Russia continue the sale of military weapons to New Delhi, it will further deteriorate the balance of power in the region, which is already heavily tilted towards hegemonistic India. Sareen (2012) remarked that India pays hard currency for arms purchase from Russia, while Pakistan will expect it for free since it does not have any money to pay for big ticket purchases. He is of the opinion that Pakistan is a basket case and without foreign aid it will continue to slide.

- **Trade and Economic Relations**

With the dwindling American aid, Pakistan wants Russian financial aid in terms of investment for restoring its economy and in the recent years, with India getting closer to the US and Europe, Russia looks at Pakistan as a good place for its investments and trade. There are vast opportunities for cooperation in various sectors, especially in the fields of energy, infrastructure development, telecommunication, space technology, steel production, oil exploration and gas etc. With respect to this, Kundu (2012) writes, after the end of Cold War there are logical shifts taking place, Russia and Pakistan now ready to enhance trade and economic relations through investment and joint assignments especially, in oil and gas sector, infrastructure development, metal industry and agriculture sector. Expanding defence ties by holding joint military exercises are also under consideration. In his opinion, this shift mainly occurred due to the deteriorating Pakistan-US relationship. Khan (2012) reports that the Russian leader in June 2009 SCO summit was reported to have expressed its eagerness to develop good relations with Islamabad in all important spheres, including military, economy and oil and gas sector. The writer is of the opinion that with the formation of close connection between the top leaders of Moscow and Islamabad and the eagerness of the two sides to open a new episode in their relationship is not only in the interests of the two countries but it will also serve the interests of the region.



Yousaf (2012) writes the increasing interaction between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan can be used to develop lasting economic cooperation. Moscow has in fact, showed its interests to be a part of TAPI, CASA-1000 energy project and the Pakistan Steel Mill. He is also of the view that Islamabad could actually formulate projects for Moscow's cooperation in the execution of large-scale infrastructure assignments in the country, which can ultimately lead to improvement in their relations. Hanif (2013) writes Pakistan not only have strategic aspirations in the region but also seeks Russian cooperation to revive its economy which can be driven by global factors but have its own pace of growth. It desires for Russian economic aid in the form of FDI and cooperation in the technological sector; specifically, oil and gas. Whatsoever, Moscow is likely to respond to these requirements along with increase in trade volume. Akhlaque (2013) reports the two countries have been finding ways to increase bilateral relations through joint economic assignments for example: oil and gas, power, railways, telecommunications and IT. Moscow has extended cooperation to Islamabad in oil detection and in its main transportation assignments. "Both the countries also had cooperation in the sphere of space and satellite technology and in the aviation field"<sup>11</sup>. They have also shown keenness to cultivate robust defence and political connections. Talukdar (2014) opines that Moscow recognise Islamabad as a significant player in the South Asian region because of its immense possibilities in the economic sector. It wants to increase bilateral trade and cooperation with Pakistan in different areas of economic activity and thus encouraging its investors to invest in Pakistan for joint ventures and investment.

Russia has lifted arms embargo on Pakistan and currently negotiating on Mi-35 Hind attack helicopters with the later. In this regard, Denisenstev and Makienko writes with New Delhi expanding its arms market and military orders from China dropping, due to increase production capacity of its own defence industries, it is essential for the Russian Federation to look for a new market to fund its huge defence industry. The writers shares the opinion that knowing about Pakistan's desire to modernize its arms and equipment and its own requirement for a responsible defence market, has led to lifting of its arms

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<sup>11</sup> URL: <http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Aug-2013/first-ever-pakistan-russia-strategic-dialogue-begins-in-moscow-today>

embargo on Pakistan. Former Australian defense attache to Islamabad Brian Cloughley (2014) says, “Both India and Pakistan have found, to their distaste, that although US defense products are very good, they are inordinately expensive and very costly to run. It makes sense to go for reasonably priced equipment that is not over-complex and doesn’t take a fortune to acquire and operate”.

Despite huge potential for developing commercial and economic cooperation between Russia and Pakistan, their relations in the economic realm is very slow and not upto the desired level. With respect to this, Global Research (2012) writes Russia’s main worry is Pakistan’s sluggish approach with regard to large assignments in the energy sector, for example: Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000), building of railway trails and main roads from Tajikistan to Pakistan. In fact, Moscow was keen to participate in the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, offered to finance and assist in building other projects, although until now no progress had been noticed in these directions. Syed (2014) writes previously, Russia had criticized Pakistan for having no substance in the talks between them. Problems such as: missing of bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement and Free Trade Agreement and continuation of unsettled financial squabbles for example: the matter of 160 million dollars of Russian money retained by Pakistani banks has been hindering the development between the two countries.

Seeing the economic potential of Pakistan, the present situation in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, rising India-US relationship, deteriorating US-Pakistan relations and Russia- US confrontation on number of occasions, Russia-Pakistan proximity is quite an expected move as we know allies and foes in international politics keeps on changing according to the changing situations.

### **Rationale and Scope of the Study**

Russia after the geopolitical realignment in the post-Cold War period is now thinking of its strategic and economic interests based on a multi-vectored approach. It is of the view that Pakistan’s geo-strategic position in the region will help in validating its actions in Central Asia and South Asia which in turn will contain the US influence in the region. It also looks at Pakistan as an important player to maintain peace and stability in

Afghanistan after the expected drawdown of ISAF troops, post-2014. Adding to this is Pakistan's economic potential and growing India-US relations.

As far as Islamabad is concerned, it cannot afford to ignore the important role Russia has been playing in the international field since last couple of years by using its veto power. So of course, any initiative coming from Russian side is welcomed and reciprocated by the Pakistani government. Also with deteriorating US-Pakistan relations, the latter want to diversify its foreign policy options. Another factor that led to Pakistan's inclination towards Russia is Indo-U.S. strategic relationship and the ties between India and Afghanistan which Islamabad thinks is an effort to set up India's military importance in Afghanistan and whereby may have the aim to encircle Pakistan. But it seems, in the confrontation between Russia and the United States over regional issues; Pakistan's geo-strategic importance has been increased and it is in a position of interest for both Moscow and Washington.

This study will therefore, add scope to understand how geo-politics and geo-strategic factors play a definite role in structuring the behaviour of both Russia and Pakistan. The study will confirm the connections between different variables like historical factors, regional security, foreign policy, geopolitics, geostrategic, geo-economics in understanding Russia-Pakistan relationship in the post-Cold war period. Additionally, this proposed study will fill up the gap in this research and be a pointer towards future research in this direction.

The present geo-political situation seemed to be in favour of advancement of Russia-Pakistan relations. But there can be some obstacles in carrying forward this process; since India, some Muslim countries and the US may try to hinder the process as they are not comfortable over this evolving relationship and therefore, may like to constrict the development through difficulties that one might like to explore. Thus the scope of the study is also to analyse the problems and prospects of this relationship.

## Research Questions

- What are the reasons behind Russia's engagement with Pakistan in the post-Cold war period?
- How the developments in Afghanistan are affecting Russia-Pakistan relations?
- How Russia and Pakistan's respective position on Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine impact their bilateral ties?
- What are the implications of growing Russia-Pakistan interactions on Russia-India relations?
- Can Pakistan being a former ally of US, stay away from its undue pressure while moving ahead with Russia?
- Is growing India-US relations leading to engagement between Russia and Pakistan?
- How are the political and economic relations between Russia and Pakistan changing in recent years?

## Hypotheses

- Following the withdrawal of US led NATO troops; Pakistan has emerged as an important regional player to bring political stability in Afghanistan.
- Russia's relation with India has an impact on its relations with Pakistan

## Research Methodology

The main thrust of this research examines the potential relationship between Russia and Pakistan as understood from various available sources in the advent of emerging geo-politics, geo-economics, and geo-strategic scenario; firstly, exit of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, dissolution of USSR in 1991, US attacks on 9/11, issue of international terrorism and stability of Afghanistan following the expected withdrawal of

U.S. led NATO forces post-2014; secondly, growing US-India ties, deteriorating Pakistan-US relationship, Pakistan's stand on Syrian and Ukrainian issues and finally, economic potential of Pakistan. This study will analyze in details the prospective role played by the above factors in this relationship. Thus, the research will be based on historical, descriptive, analytical, comparative, and deductive methodology.

The proposed research is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary sources are the official websites of President of Russia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Pakistan, Embassy of the Russian Federation, Islamabad; Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Moscow; Embassy of India , Washington DC; Washington DC- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs- Government of India and such other sources as archival materials, official documents, newspaper reports, published and non-published interviews on Russia-Pakistan relationship by strategic and economic experts would be used as per availability. Much of the information required for this research has been obtained from secondary sources, particularly those published by Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), relevant books, articles, research papers, peer reviewed research journals and submitted M.Phil dissertation and PhD thesis on Russia and Pakistan related topic. The research has collected relevant data and information from various libraries, institutions and meeting experts and academicians as a part of field study to Moscow (Russia).

As far as variables are concerned, in the first hypothesis withdrawal of US led NATO troops is an independent variable and dependent variable is the emergence of Pakistan as an important regional player to bring political stability in Afghanistan by Russia. In the second hypothesis, Russia's relation with India is an independent variable and the impact of Russia-India relation on Russia-Pakistan relation is a dependent variable.

## Chapterization

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the research design. It talks about the research objectives, research questions, hypotheses and will explain the rationale and scope of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Geopolitical context of Russia-Pakistan Relations**

The second chapter of the theses discusses about the geopolitics of the region which have a direct influence on Russia-Pakistan relationship. It talks about the emerging cooperation among Russia, China and Pakistan under the changing geopolitics and geo-strategic environment. Then it talks about the regional issues such as impasse over Iran's Nuclear Program, Iraq and Syrian crisis, conflict in Ukraine etc. which bears an impact on their bilateral relations. It also talks about the factors such as- India's influence, growing Indo-US ties, deteriorating Pakistan-US relations, tense Pakistan-India relations and Russia-US confrontation.

### **Chapter3: Evolution of Russia-Pakistan Relations**

The third chapter gives the historical overview of Russia-Pakistan relationship. Firstly, it talks about the USSR and Pakistan relations, soon after the inception of the latter. Secondly, it talks about the opportunities provided for Russia-Pakistan cooperation after the exit of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 and the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991. Finally, the chapter talks about the changed Russian impression about Pakistan's role in the region after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and consequently, the decision of Pakistan to give up on Taliban and to join the U.S. led NATO troops as a front-line state to fight against terrorism.

### **Chapter 4: Political and Economic Relations**

The fourth chapter talks about the political and economic dimensions of Russia-Pakistan relations such as the diplomatic visits, high level talks and defence ties etc. It examines the policy objectives of both Russia and Pakistan and the possibility of increase

cooperation between them through joint economic projects in the areas such as energy, oil exploration, power, railways, steel production, agriculture etc.

### **Chapter 5: Terrorism and Drug-trafficking in AfPak**

Firstly, the fifth chapter of the thesis talks about the menace of international terrorism threatening the world. Secondly, it talks about the connections between narcotics trade and terrorism and the increasing illegal trafficking of drugs to Russia from Pakistan via Central Asian states. Thirdly, the chapter talks about Russia and Pakistan's effort to combat terrorism and the role of SCO in combatting terrorism and drug-trafficking. Finally, the chapter talks about the developments in Afghanistan, impact on the regional security after the drawdown of ISAF troops and the growing engagement between both the countries, as Russia sees Pakistan's strategic importance in maintaining peace, security and stability following the scheduled withdrawal of US led NATO troops.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Finally, in the concluding chapter of the theses the entire Russia-Pakistan relationship in detail has been evaluated. It has also evaluated the opportunities and the relevance of this relationship in the context of post-cold war developments. Basically, the main findings of the entire work constitute this chapter. It has restated the research problem and summarized the implications of the study.

## CHAPTER 2: GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF RUSSIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

### Definition of Geopolitics

“Geopolitics is the study of the effects of geography on international politics and international relations. It is the method of studying foreign policy to understand, explain and predict international political behaviour through geographical variables. These include evaluation of area studies, climate, topography, demography, natural resources and applied science of the region. Geopolitics focuses on political power in relation to geographic space. In particular, territorial water and land territory in correlation with diplomatic history.”<sup>12</sup>

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica geopolitics is the “analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations,” whereas Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines geopolitics as the “study of the effect of a country’s position, population, etc. on its politics.” Rudolf Kjellen, the founder of the word, Geopolitics, described it as the “theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space.” On the other hand, notable geopolitical theorist Karl Haushofer gave the definition of geopolitics as an “ambitious science”: “geopolitics is the new national science of the state, a doctrine on the spatial determinism of all political processes, based on the broad foundations of geography, especially of political geography.” Thus, geopolitics always has a national bias unlike “geography or political geography”<sup>13</sup> (Semra Rana Gokmen, August 2010). In connection with this viewpoint another definition of geopolitics given by Charles B. Hagan is that “geopolitics is a contemporary rationalization of power politics.”

One of the main points of commonality of geopolitical theorists is their effort to understand the interrelation between geography and history. Therefore, geopolitics can also be interpreted as a fusion of history of political processes and geography.

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<sup>12</sup> URL: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geopolitics>

<sup>13</sup> URL: <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12612289/index.pdf>



## Theory of Geopolitics

The relation which continues to exist between man and his physical environment has been the bone of contention at least since the time of the Greeks. Karl Ritter in early 80's wrote a vast work in order to trace the relationship between man and his geographic position. "Although, we can say, geography is related to the study of purely natural phenomenon such as climate, topography, soil and resources. But, it can also study social organization such as social practices and customs, as well as the process of earning a livelihood"<sup>14</sup> (Charles B. Hagan, 1942). This is in fact, economic and social geography and the journey from "economic and social geography to political geography" is very brief, since political establishments and their processes constitute a significant component of "social and economic organization."

The popular name associated with political geography in the modern context is Friedrich Ratzel. His theory explains political geography as:

"The core of political geography is the state. The state according to Ratzel is a fragment of humanity on a piece of soil. The fragment of humanity is organized and is bound to its soil by ties which take on the character of an organism. He asserts that the political community acts in very much the same manner as an individual being. His conception is very similar to the organic theory of state and its peculiar quality rests in the relation to territory, or as Ratzel prefers, to space (Raum). Since, the state cannot exist without its territory or space, the latter is extremely important in political life"<sup>15</sup> (Charles B. Hagan, 1942).

This theory is based on organic theory of state and the state is characterized by its expansion. Also, the decay and death of a state is defined by static boundaries. For instance, a growing state will keep on expanding, but a dying state will keep on contracting. However, the process of expansion over the frontiers may vary in different circumstances.

Ratzel also gives significant importance to the position of the state. "Importance is given to neighbours, to climate, to topography, and to problems created by position but the impact of space on ideas, on possibilities of expansion, and on density of population

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<sup>14</sup> URL: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.2307/2125653>

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

comes under examination in his theory. For Ratzel, space enjoys some intrinsic value and takes on a metaphysical character”<sup>16</sup> (Charles B. Hagan, 1942). The concept of ‘space’ relates to Ratzel’s conception of organic theory of state and spatial organisms that wants space in which there is possibility of growth. His theory of state as an organismic character has its relation to soil and the high value which he attributes to space. In fact, his theory of ‘space’ reappears in current geopolitics.

One of the main experts on geopolitical ideas is the English geographer, Halford J. Mackinder (born 1861). According to Mackinder, “the earth’s land surface can be divided into islands (Hagan 1942). He named the inter-linked continents of Asia, Africa and Europe as the World Island and the other continents are considered as offshore islands and outlying islands.” According to his theory, “Heartland<sup>17</sup> is at the centre of World Island. Thus, if the Heartland could be united into one big political unit, it can actually control the World Island and thereby can rule the whole world.”

Due to political speculation, there is emergence of contemporary theory of geopolitics led by the Swedish political scientist, Rudolf J. Kjellen (1864-1922). It seemed, Kjellen was dissatisfied with the contemporary study of the state and was influenced by Ratzel’s theory of political geography. While, looking for more substance for the state, Kjellen found the possibilities of geography. Thus, the concept of geopolitics according to him talks about the matters involved inside the territory of a state, its shape and pattern, and resources including natural and physical both. It was Kjellen who found the term geopolitics and was appropriated by the contemporary German school of geopolitics. Since Kjellen was influenced by Ratzel, thus many of Ratzel’s basic notions reappear in his theory. If we compare, Ratzel treated the state as an actual organism rather than as a metaphor and thus he emphasized the growing and decaying characteristics of that organism.

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<sup>16</sup> URL: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.2307/2125653>

<sup>17</sup> The concept of Heartland according to Halford J. Mackinder is the area ruled by then Russian Empire and later by the USSR

Though there is difference between the term political geography and geopolitics but it is likely to blend with one another. “Political geography deals with historical and factual account of changes that takes place in the states and observes the state in the circumstances of rest. On the contrary, Geopolitics notice and contemplate upon the impact of geographical necessities on the political events and shifts in the political systems of the state. It observes the states in its changing form”<sup>18</sup> (Hagan 1942). Karl Haushofer, the dominant figure in German geopolitics, talks about geopolitics as an art of political dealings and struggle for existence of the political systems in the living space of the earth. Thus, “Geopolitics is explained as the theory of political events unified into their geographical setting. This theory is based on scientific foundations of political geography”<sup>19</sup> (ibid). Its intention is to provide knowledge for the management of state policy and to reduce the gap between theory and action. So far, the connection between geography and geopolitics in terms of their implications has been progressed more in Germany than any other country (ibid). “There are various meanings and connotations of Geopolitics such as: Classical geopolitics, neo-classical geopolitics, subversive geopolitics, non-geopolitics and post-structuralistic geopolitics.”

### **Characteristics of Geopolitics**

Firstly, as an organized branch of study, geopolitics analyse state’s character as a living organism. The circumstances of growth, birth, functions of life and death are examined analytically to determine the operational legislation. The history of politics seemed to be a storehouse from which the geo-politician formulates their basic principles.

Secondly, it is strongly believed by the supporters of geopolitics, at least the German school, that states shows its inclination towards expansion; i.e. irresistible desire to move from narrow space to wider space.

Thirdly, the theme of geopolitics takes into consideration problems of population, conflict between states, people’s generative instincts that can lead to colonization in

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<sup>18</sup> URL: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.2307/2125653>

<sup>19</sup> ibid

different forms such as: race, ethnicity, nationalism and any other motive based on which a state can expand.

Fourthly, geopolitics provides “tools and guidance for political action.” It is classed as “an applied science, that is intended to guide practical politics up to the point where it has to depart from the sure ground of science.”

Fifthly, no rigid geographic determinism is applied in geopolitics.

Sixthly, geopolitics is opposed to the “principles of sound business” and the creation of “mono-cultural areas” which by that very fact, are deprived of their national dependence.

Seventhly, a whole philosophy of space has grown up in geopolitics, but its central concept of ‘Raum’ cannot always be translated by space. Geopolitics has been called “a combination of geography and history so that the normal three-dimensional space is made to appear as a combination of time and space which would seem to correspond to the four-dimensional time-space conception of relativistic physics”<sup>20</sup> (Werner J. Cahnman 1948).

Eighthly, with the introduction of biological concepts such as “life” or “force”, it added a dynamic aspect to previously static concepts such as “space” or “field”. Friedrich Ratzel’s law of “growing areas” actually refers to the growth of political units rather than of mere spaces, also points in the same direction.

Therefore, Geopolitics can be summarized as an effort to look for a deterministic principle which can check on states development. The main factor which determines rest on geographic conditions and it is in vast amount materialistic in nature. Basically, we can say geopolitics rationalizes power politics in the present-day world.

### **Eurasian Notion of Geopolitics**

When we talk about, recent developments between Russia and Pakistan, it is very important to understand the geopolitical context. We should understand what made

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<sup>20</sup> URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00045604809351983>

Russia move towards Asia. As we know, Russia wants to increase its geopolitical presence in its sphere of influence and beyond. And therefore, when we talk about Russian geopolitical theory, the Eurasian school of geopolitics is the dominant school in contemporary Russia. In this context, Eurasian Geopolitics and the Geopolitical thinker Alexander Dugin<sup>21</sup> and his Theory of a Multipolar World can be discussed.

The main crux of the Theory of a Multipolar World is that civilization is not one, but many. To counter the Hegemony of the West is the major aspect of the theory of a Multi-polar World. “The theory believes that Western civilization’s pretension to universalism is a form of the will to domination and an authoritarian discourse. It is actually their strategy of suppression and hegemony”<sup>22</sup> (Alexander Dugin 2014). “While, the Theory of a Multi-polar World stressed to move from thinking in terms of one civilization to a pluralism of subjects and urged to take civilizations as subjects” (ibid). Unlike realist, it is civilizations not states. The theory talks about an intra-civilizational one; it speaks about integration of regions, limiting itself to the context of civilizational borders and not about ‘global’ integration. Thus, this theory believes in deconstructing the authoritarian discourse of the West and reconstructing the civilizational identity (ibid).

Eurasian geopolitics believes in the establishment of a multi-polar world order, where there will be no dictatorship of the United States anymore or of any other country or actor of world politics. It thus, opposes hegemony of the West, expansion of America and its liberal ideas and supports the unique Russian civilization, its religion, and tradition. Moreover, Eurasian Geopolitics not only opposes Western values and ideas, but also pro-Western and Moderate thinkers present in their own Russian soil; especially, the Liberals (Alexander Dugin 2015).

The logic of Eurasian geopolitics can be explained by the Ukrainian crisis. The protest in Ukraine had begun as an assemblage of a few thousand students wanting that the

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander Dugin is the founder of the contemporary Russian school of Geopolitics and also the leader of the International Eurasian Movement. It is alleged that he plays an important role in contemporary Russian foreign policy.

<sup>22</sup> URL: <http://4pt.su/de/node/1247>

government of Ukraine should agree to conclude an Association Agreement with the EU. For Ukraine, giving approval and signing the accord would have been a significant step and therefore, would change its centuries-old inclination towards Russia and the east. However, on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the protest reached a critical turning point when “President Viktor Yanukovich, struck a surprise deal with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which Russia bought 15 billion dollars in Ukrainian bonds and slashed the price on natural gas by a third”<sup>23</sup> (World Affairs Journal, Nadia Diuk 2014). This news proved that the President of Ukraine would not give in to the conditions of the protest demand. By January 2014, the Euro maidan Movement took a dramatic turn and protestors in large numbers came to the streets, stronger than before. Therefore, this development in Ukraine is yet another indication of ongoing struggle for ideological and geopolitical hegemony between Russia and the West (ibid). Nevertheless, Eurasian geopolitics will remain the same i.e. sovereignty, multi-polarity, and complete independence from American domination (Dugin 2015).

### **Emergence of NATO, SEATO and Warsaw Pact and its relevance**

It is very important to understand the history of NATO, SEATO and Warsaw Pact, to understand the geopolitical and geostrategic trend that is taking place in the present world. Below, the emergence and relevance of each military pact has been discussed in the context of Russia-Pakistan relations.

### **NATO Enlargement and its Relevance to Russia-Pakistan Relationship**

“NATO was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union”<sup>24</sup>. Soon after the end of the World War II, conflict started between the Western nations led by the U.S. and the Communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The establishment of Communist regime in many of the areas which USSR had seized from the Nazi Germany during the Second World War provoked the Americans and the West to find ways to stop further growth of Communism. During this period, it was widely believed by the West that

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<sup>23</sup> URL: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/euromaidan-ukraine%E2%80%99s-self-organizing-revolution>

<sup>24</sup> URL: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato>

strong in all terms: be it economic power, military power or politically integrated Europe is essential for the containment of communism across the continent. “As a result, Secretary of State George Marshall introduced a European Recovery Program of vast economic aid to Europe in the year 1947. It was a political initiative that gave grants to friendly nations to help them restore their war-damaged economies”<sup>25</sup>. This Program not only helped economic integration of Europe but also boosted the notion of common interests and collaboration between the U.S. and the European countries. But it seemed USSR’s unwillingness to be a part of the Marshall Plan and disallowing the East European states to accept the financial aid led to increase east-west division in Europe.

In February 1948, a violent seizure of power in Czechoslovakia from the democratic government, sponsored by the Soviet Union brought the state securely into the Communist block. These events provoked the United States to follow an aggressive approach towards the Soviet Union. A few days after the incident, the U.S. leaders recognized the need to have joint discussions to formulate a joint security pact with the Western allies. The process acquired further momentum when in 1948, USSR closed off road access to Berlin; thereby, obligating the United States, France and United Kingdom to airlift supplies to their part of the German territory which was divided between the West and the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

Finally, on 4th April 1949, the discussions between them concluded and the Foreign Ministers from 12 countries met in Washington D.C. to sign the treaty on collective security known as North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was mainly a security agreement, with Article 5 declaring that a military aggression against any of the member countries would be treated as an aggression against them all. “The original membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) comprised of Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and the United States”. Since then NATO became a symbol of strength for the Western countries including the United States.

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<sup>25</sup> URL: <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/formation-of-nato-and-warsaw-pact>

As we know, after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, Russia as a legitimate inheritor had to face a lot of problems at the domestic and international level ranging from collapsing economy to national security concerns. It was during this time the West made a critical decision and as a result on 7 February 1992, Maastricht Treaty was signed by the European community, which called for “deepening the organisation and transforming it into the European Union (EU)”. This treaty also led to the constitution of a common currency called “Euro” in January 1999 (Walker 2015). However, this assurance of “deepening” came at the cost of “widening”.

Until mid 1993, there was no serious discussion of NATO enlargement in the West. But the topic was raised by “President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic and President Arpad Goncz of Hungary on their visit to Washington in April 1993 and informed the US President Bill Clinton that their countries wished to join NATO as soon as possible.” Other Central European countries; especially, former members of the Warsaw Pact followed suit the decision of Prague and Hungary and their reason was very clear. As stated by the Estonian President Lennart Meri, “the only way to keep Russian troops away from reoccupying his country was for Estonia to be in NATO and protected by the American nuclear umbrella” (Walker 2015).

Consequently, with Washington’s suggestion NATO endorsed the “Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme”. The members of PfP were allowed to have “joint military exercises with NATO, work on interoperability<sup>26</sup> with NATO equipment and procedures, participate in joint peacekeeping and humanitarian operations and consult with NATO in the event of security threats” (Walker 2015). Therefore, in January 1994 at the NATO Summit in Brussels, PfP was approved. Further, the allied powers announced that “NATO expansion would reach to democratic states towards our East, as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe” (NATO Brussels Summit Declaration, 1994).

“PfP was open to all former Warsaw Pact countries, including Russia, and it was assured that enlargement would neither isolate Moscow nor lead to a new division of Europe.”

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<sup>26</sup> The meaning of Interoperability is the capability of a system to work with another system.



However, the Partnership for Peace programme was not successful in appeasing Moscow. The vigour of Russian dissatisfaction to PfP was evident in President Boris Yeltsin's statement of September 1995 where he asserted that "it will mean a conflagration of war throughout Europe for sure" (Walker 2015). Nevertheless, NATO carried on with its expansionist plans. And accordingly in September 1995, an Enlargement Study was issued where the criteria for accession was laid out. The Alliance confirmed that after having a talk with the applicant countries it would declare its verdict at its 1997 Summit for the first round of accession countries. As it was noticed, "the first round was limited to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary; which joined in early 1999. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in March 2004; Albania and Croatia did so in April 2009 and with Montenegro joining in 2017, it became the 29<sup>th</sup> member of NATO" (ibid). Through its "Partnership for Peace" program NATO seemed to extend its reach into Central Asia.

It is essential to point out that the whole process of expansion was not only objected by Moscow but it was also protested by many American policy makers. Therefore, the then American government made another effort "to arrive at an institutional arrangement that would square the enlargement circle." As a result, "NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act of the Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1997 which gave sole authority to the UN Security Council to use force against a sovereign member state" (ibid). While, a clause on NATO force dispositions, the Act stated that "in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces" (Walker 2015). However, "NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999, went against Russian expectations. In the pretext of exercising its right of collective self-defence, NATO was clearly engaging in an out-of-area operation" (Walker 2015). This action clearly proved NATO's intention. Another, critical factor in Russia-NATO relations was the issue of Georgia and Ukraine joining the alliance and recognition of Kosovo's independence from Serbia on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008 with the support from the United States, London, Paris and Germany (Walker 2015).

It can be argued that even after the end of Cold War, the successor state Russia has a constant sense of fear of encroachment by the Western countries in its sphere of influence. As seen by political elites and foreign policy experts of Russia, the security situation along the border areas of Russia is insecure and adds to the internal challenges facing the country<sup>27</sup> (Rumer 2016). According to them, NATO poses a constant security threat to Russia's sphere of interests. It was on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2004, more than a decade ago, NATO went through vast expansion in the history. "Seven new states from Eastern Europe became members; few of them were the ex-members of the Warsaw pact." It was observed that in the last three rounds of enlargement from 1999 to 2009, NATO has added 12 new members from Eastern Europe and at present it has 29 total members with the inclusion of Montenegro in 2017"<sup>28</sup> (Jamie Shea 2014).

According to Jamie Shea, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, "the enlargement process as a move away from great-power politics and stresses that the interests of smaller states were finally taken into account". While, Russian experts are of the opinion that although the new members feel a sense of independence from Russia but the whole process of enlargement had made NATO's relationship with Russia all the more challenging. For Russia, coming of NATO closer to its borders meant its importance is being rolled back in the region and this justifies the feeling of anxiety and insecurity. According to Stefan Meister, Head of the Robert Bosch Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, "The Russian perception of an ever-growing NATO is also one of the key factors that caused the Crimean crisis. After Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was removed from power, the Russians feared that in the end they will also lose Ukraine to NATO and then NATO really would be knocking on the gate". However, Jamie Shea completely refutes the belief that there is any sort of connection between expansion of NATO and the Crimean crisis. According to him, "The cause of Crimea is not NATO. It's the collapse of the Soviet Union and nostalgia to reconstitute elements of that old political system" (Jamie Shea, 2014).

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<sup>27</sup> URL: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/russia-and-security-of-europe-pub-63990>

<sup>28</sup> URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/is-nato-expansion-to-blame-for-crimean-crisis/a-17527361>

From Moscow's viewpoint, its behaviour in Ukraine characterized a series of necessary protective measures, rather than objectionable and expansionist measures and it was expected to avert severe geopolitical imbalance in the region, which is a consequence of NATO expansion towards Central Europe and Eastern Europe. While, supporters of NATO were of the opinion that the intention of expansion was not a unfriendly step against Russia, but to make Russia's border safe and secure, which would only profit Moscow. But on the contrary, Russian perception was absolutely different, emphasizing the presence of antagonistic military power at its frontiers. Another factor which has shaped Russia's perception of threat was the strife in the former Yugoslavia. Although the government of Russia had strongly protested NATO's interference in Yugoslavia but the argument put forth by the West that it was based only on humanitarian grounds (Rumer 2016).

It is not wrong to say that also on the basis of ideology; the leaders of Russia are against the post-Cold War security order of Europe. "They oppose the United States and the European intention alleging that in the disguised pursuit of expanding their sphere of influence, the West try to encourage democracy around its frontiers" (Rumer 2016). In fact, they are of the view that these efforts have led to instability and insecurity in the neighbouring countries and in the process has also tried to sabotage Russia's own internal stability. At the alliance's Bucharest summit in 2008, President Putin delivered a warning to NATO saying that "membership to Georgia and Ukraine constituted a direct threat to Russian security. In fact in the aftermath of the war in Georgia in 2008, the then President Dmitry Medvedev declared that countries around Russia's periphery as Russia's sphere of privileged interests" (ibid).

"With the change of administration in the United States in 2009 and other imperatives such as: Afghanistan war, Iran's nuclear program, Libya crisis; the focus seemed to have shifted for a brief period of time from the issue of expansion of NATO". It was also observed that Russia during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century enjoyed a significant upliftment in the economic front. It seemed with the increasing economic upliftment and stabilization of domestic politics, the government of the Russian Federation started taking an important position at the international sphere compared to 1990s. It became a

full member of the G8 grouping and maintained its strong position on important global matters. During this period, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin made a very strong statement at the Munich Security Conference in 2007:

“NATO enlargement is a provocative unilateral land grab by the U.S.-led alliance seeking to expand its sphere of influence. He further stated that in putting its military forces right up to Russia’s border, NATO was in violation of assurances given to Russia at the end of the Cold War and concluded his statement by saying that this unilateral, unipolar, U.S.-centric security model, is unacceptable” (Rumer2016).

Soon after the election of Vladimir Putin as the President of the Russian Federation in the year 2012 for his third term, he elevated the idea of integration of Eurasia. He introduced the idea of “Common Economic Space, than eventually proceeding to a political one i.e. Eurasian Union, a regional counterweight to European Union” (Rumer 2016). This strategy of President Putin is directly opposite to “European Neighborhood Policy” of EU, bringing the countries of Eastern Europe closer to EU by offering “Association Agreements”. The motive of these agreements is to “promote political, economic, and rule-of-law reforms in countries of Eastern Europe and encourage their closer political and commercial ties to the EU”. Therefore, “the National Security Strategy that Putin signed into law on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015, identified the United States and its allies as the principal threat to Russia, as the West seeks to hang on to its dominant position in the world” (ibid).

It seems when President Putin declared his vision of integration of Eurasia, many countries of Eastern Europe for example: Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine were already in the middle of negotiations to join the European Union. Among them, Ukraine is the most important because it is the critical bridge between Russia and Europe. But it was noticed during this time that the Government of Ukraine was simultaneously negotiating with Russia to be a part of its integration scheme; and also with the EU to sign the “Association Agreement”. “Russia viewed Ukraine’s accession to EU as a incorporation into the Western institutional order and a backdoor path to eventual NATO accession.” Therefore, Ukraine signing the “Association Agreement” was clearly seen by Moscow as the first step towards EU membership which in the course of time will transform to NATO membership. Now, this would not only mean “presence of

NATO within 300 miles away from Moscow but also mean that key Ukrainian defense enterprises that supplied the Russian military with critical components would be located in NATO territory” (Rumer 2016).

“Another important reason for Russia’s dependence on Ukraine has to do with energy supplies to Europe. Ukraine is the critical transit country through which Russian gas exports to Europe is being delivered using the Druzhba pipeline that passes through Ukraine” (Rumer 2016). As it has been reported, the United States always wanted to reduce Europe’s energy dependence on Russia and in the pretext of protecting the energy pipelines want to curtail its supremacy in the region. Therefore, definitely Ukraine’s possibility to join NATO would mean Russia’s “loss of power and influence” in the continent. That is why, it is not wrong to say that the severity of Russia’s response to the crisis in Ukraine reflects Russian threat perception, “of potential loss of Ukraine to EU and eventually NATO”<sup>29</sup> (Rumer 2016).

However, it was noticed that with the actions of Russia in Ukraine and subsequently in Syria, there was a wave of shock which led to revision of Russia’s military capacity and its application. Senior NATO officials responded by calling it as “the most dangerous threat to Europe”. Therefore, NATO took the decision “to station U.S. led NATO troops and pre-positioning of equipment, including heavy U.S. equipment in the frontline states from the Baltic to the Black Sea to defend against Russian aggression and thus establishment of rapid response and broader response forces” (ibid). From Moscow’s viewpoint, “NATO’s reinforcements of the Baltic States and Poland have broken yet another major promise given by the allies i.e. not to permanently station substantial combat forces on the territories of new members” (ibid). But as claimed by the West, this step was taken seeing “the current and foreseeable security environment”, as there is a potential threat against the states in the Baltic region and the other members of NATO (Rumer 2016). “And now Sweden which was neutral for nearly two centuries, and Finland neutral since 1948, are having active debates about joining the alliance. However, the biggest challenge facing Russia along its western frontier is the unsettled conflict with Ukraine” (ibid).

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<sup>29</sup> URL: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/russia-and-security-of-europe-pub-63990>

Therefore, the emerging security order is kind of increasing the chances of future trouble in the name of defense and deterrence. “The NATO membership of the Baltic States was seen as a hostile alliance by the Russian military planners, which is only 100 miles away from Saint Petersburg, and the current buildup of NATO capabilities in the Baltic states is occurring less than a two-hour drive from Russia’s second most important city” (Rumer 2016). It has been observed that “Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine have become the battlefields, that being pulled in different directions in the geopolitical tug-of-war between Russia and the West. In fact, lacking NATO’s guarantee to provide security, they remain in what Moscow perceives as its sphere of privileged interests” (ibid). And therefore, it is ready to use all means including military power, to retain that sphere. Despite this antagonistic relationship, U.S. and its partners need Russia’s cooperation, or at least wants its approval on regional and international matters, for example: the situation in Afghanistan, crisis in Syria, Iran’s nuclear program etc. And in these matters of international concerns, Russia has played an important part by playing its global role. However, it is noticed that the current situation has left Kremlin with no strong and solid partners in Europe. There is a state of profound mutual insecurity as both Russia and NATO are at each other’s doorsteps, far closer than it has ever been (Rumer 2016).

So far, there are two “institutionalized platforms of cooperation between NATO and Russia known as Partnership for Peace Programme (which Russia joined in 1994) and NATO-Russia Council” (Padrtova 2012). But it was observed that all types of connections under NATO-Russia Council were stopped in April 2014 in reaction to Russian aggression in Ukraine. In fact, in September 2014, at the NATO Summit in Wales, “NATO leaders condemned Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine and demanded that Russia comply with international law and responsibilities”<sup>30</sup>. It was again at its Warsaw Summit of July 2016, “Allied leaders reiterated their concerns about Russia’s destabilising actions and policies, which go beyond Ukraine and include provocative military activities near NATO borders stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, as well as the risks posed by its military intervention and support for the

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<sup>30</sup> URL: [http://nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/topics\\_50090.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/topics_50090.htm?selectedLocale=en)

regime in Syria”. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that Russia and NATO have deep-rooted and continuous disagreements (NATO, 16 June 2017).

“Undoubtedly, NATO enlargement has brought some benefits to its new members, for example: it has helped integrate former Warsaw Pact members into Europe, reduced the risk of interstate conflict among the former communist countries of Central Europe, deterred Russian invasion and allowed new member-states to spend less on security while modernising their defence forces”. Nevertheless, it can be argued that expansion of NATO is the chief cause of a “dangerous geopolitical struggle for influence between the East and the West” (Walker 2015).

To talk about NATO’s relevance in the context of Russia-Pakistan relations; firstly, will talk about Russia-Pakistan shared interests in brief; secondly, about NATO-Pakistan relationship and then finally, how Russia and Pakistan’s individual relationship with NATO can have an impact on Russia-Pakistan bilateral relationship. When it comes to relations between Russia and Pakistan, some Pakistani experts argue that shared strategic interests, new regional alignments and reduced role of the U.S. in the Middle East are major factors behind the growing military cooperation between Russia and Pakistan. Ikram Sehgal, a Karachi-based defense and security expert writes that the two otherwise longtime foes, which have fought each other through proxies in neighboring Afghanistan in the 1980s, have found "a lot of common interests" to boost their defense ties in the recent years. According to the analyst, Moscow had traditionally relied only on Syria and Egypt for its role in the Middle East; however, of late it has reduced its reliance on the two old allies, and focused on making a new regional alignment involving Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, China and to an extent even Afghanistan (Agency 2017).

Talking about NATO-Pakistan relations, the conflict in Afghanistan is a crucial factor in this relationship; especially, with regard to “mutual interests of bringing peace, security and stability” in the region. “Several high-level political talks between NATO and Pakistan have addressed narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan and the issue of Afghan refugees along with other issues of concern. Allied leaders at the NATO Summit in

Chicago in May 2012 reaffirmed that countries in the region, particularly Pakistan have important roles in ensuring enduring peace, stability and security in Afghanistan and in facilitating the completion of the transition process”<sup>31</sup>. Other than NATO led ISAF mission in Afghanistan, both have exchanged regular meetings at different levels. “High-level political exchanges have taken place, including visits by the former and current NATO Secretary General”<sup>32</sup>. In fact, previously, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari had visited the Headquarters of NATO. It seems NATO has also made available selected training classes for Pakistani military personnel. “With the adoption of a more efficient and flexible partnership policy in April 2011 by the Allies, it paved the way for increased practical cooperation and political dialogue with partners across the globe. This means, like other partners, Pakistan will have access to NATO’s Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM), if the country wishes to develop a formal bilateral programme of cooperation with NATO”<sup>33</sup> (NATO 2016).

But since, Russia shares antagonistic relations with NATO; therefore, improving relations between NATO and Pakistan won’t have a positive impact on Russia-Pakistan relations. An important aspect of Russia-Pakistan rapprochement and NATO’S relevance in this regard is after the scheduled withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan post-2016; “approximately 10,000 American servicemen would stayback in Afghanistan. Those troops will need supplies of food, fuel and other products which will be delivered to Afghanistan via tried and tested routes through Russia and Pakistan and therefore, this require coordinated effort by both the countries”<sup>34</sup> (Abbas 2016). As we know, Northern Distribution Network (NDN) is already controlled by Russia through which ISAF cargos are being carried and Pakistan too has allowed the use of the Southern Route from Karachi to Chaman and Torkham (ibid).

“In 1994, the Pakistan Armed Forces contingent joined the United Nations Protection Forces in Bosnia (UNPROFOR) to support NATO's operations during the Bosnian war

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<sup>31</sup> URL: [http://www.otan.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20160414\\_2015-nato-encyclopedia-eng.pdf](http://www.otan.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20160414_2015-nato-encyclopedia-eng.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> ibid

<sup>33</sup> ibid

<sup>34</sup> URL: <http://www.ipripak.org/russias-revival-opportunities-and-limitations-for-pakistan/>



and it is since 2004, Pakistan is designated as a Major non-NATO ally” (New York Times, 2004). Also, in 2007 Pakistan and NATO “formed a joint initiative called Joint Intelligence Operations Centre (JIOC) in Kabul and it was designed to enhance intelligence coordination among NATO, ISAF and Pakistan”<sup>35</sup>. As it is seen, there is scope for mutual cooperation between Pakistan and NATO; but it has been observed that Islamabad has some reservations with the operational issues in Afghanistan and frequent airspace violations by NATO aircraft into Pakistan. In fact, after the 2011 NATO attacks in Pakistan, the latter had blocked the Southern Route of supplies to Afghanistan (for a brief period of time), boycotted the Bonn Conference and also ousted the US air force from its base at Shamsi. In spite of these obstacles, according to sources from NATO, “Pakistan's continuous support for the efforts of NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan remains crucial to the success of NATO's mission”<sup>36</sup>.

Observing these developments and interactions between Russia, NATO and Pakistan, it can be said that in international politics states act according to their national interests and the differences between NATO-Russia and NATO-Pakistan seemed to have taken place, when their respective national security interests were at stake. Undoubtedly, NATO is the biggest security architecture in the world, but if we follow realist theory, “states work only to increase their own power vis-à-vis other states”. And as the realists claims “the world is a harsh and dangerous place and state’s primary interest is self-preservation. Therefore, they believe that the only certainty in the world is power” and that is why states must seek power. Same is the case with Russia, with the changing geopolitics; it is trying to protect itself against the nefarious expansion of NATO, which the alliance tries to accomplish “in the name of democracy, equality and human rights”. In fact, the allied powers including the United States, all are seeking power in the pretext of NATO. The United States wants to maintain its Super power status by maintaining the unipolar world but Russia, on the other hand, wants to oppose it by preserving itself and its neighbours in the post-Cold war world. It wants a multi-polar world by curtailing the hegemony of the United States. It is true that Russia too wanted to reclaim

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<sup>35</sup> URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO%E2%80%93Pakistan\\_relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO%E2%80%93Pakistan_relations)

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

its global power status and therefore, there is a conflict of interest between the U.S. led NATO and Russia.

However, in the case of NATO-Pakistan relations, the latter is a developing country and it is trying very hard to make its imprints and improve “its relations with the major powers of the world”. There are times, when Pakistan had conflict of interests with the United States and NATO, but it cannot afford to dictate the rules, it can only follow them. Aftermath September 11 attacks, the country is stealing the limelight because of its role in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking, the situation in Afghanistan and also because of its important strategic location; but it has realized that the only way to maintain its posture in the global world is by being a neutral country in matters of important regional and international issues. At the most, it can take sides either with Russia and China or with the U.S. and the allied powers. When Islamabad’s relations with Washington got deteriorated, it started looking towards Russia and the sanctioned hit Russia on the other hand, who was “looking for partners in Asia”, found a potential ally in Pakistan. As I said, there is conflict of interest even between Moscow and Islamabad, but at the end the states will act per their own national interest i.e. self-preservation, to survive in the global world where only power (military power) defines superiority. So, every state is right in their own way of preserving themselves.

“It can be said that for matters of international terrorism and geopolitical uncertainty, NATO remains not only relevant but essential”. As the biggest security architecture in the world, it is responsible to maintain the global security balance and for that matter Russia and Pakistan cannot completely ignore or reduce its role, unless it is replaced by security architecture of equal caliber.

### **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954**

“The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was formed by the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan in September 1954 and the purpose of the organization was to prevent communism from gaining ground in the region.” Mostly, the members were from outside Southeast Asia but seemed to have an interest in the area. “Australia and New Zealand were interested in Asian affairs because of their geographic position in the Pacific. Great Britain and

France had long maintained colonies in the region and therefore, was interested in developments in the greater Indo-China region. But for Pakistan, the appeal of the pact was the potential for receiving support in its struggles against India”<sup>37</sup>. And for the U.S. it viewed the region as an important frontier and thus SEATO was crucial in its fight against Communism.

The Headquarter of SEATO was in Bangkok, Thailand. It used to perform only few legal functions and it has no military forces of its own. “It only sponsored a variety of meetings and exhibitions on cultural, religious and historical topics, and the non-Asian member states used to sponsor fellowships for Southeast Asian scholars”. Besides these activities, the charter of SEATO was extremely crucial to the American justification for its involvement in the Vietnam War. The United States used the organization as its justification for refusing to go forward with the decisions of the 1956 elections which intended to reunify Vietnam and instead chose to maintain the divide between communist North Vietnam and South Vietnam at the 17th parallel.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, it was observed that with the inclusion of Vietnam under the protection of SEATO and with the unfolding of the war, it gave legal authority to the United States to continue its involvement in the internal matters of the country.

“As we know, during the Cold War period, Pakistan had to align itself with the US by becoming part of CENTO and SEATO to respond to its security concerns from India and in this regard we can say its foreign relations were guided by the realist theory of international politics”<sup>39</sup> (Hanif 2013). According to the realist theory, as explained by Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980) and George Kennan (1904-2005), “states are sovereign and they are primary actors and since there is anarchy at the world stage because of the absence of a central controlling authority to regulate state behaviour, states try to defend their interests through coercion and use of force. Hence to defend themselves against aggression, the states either try to maximize their power or seek alliances to create and maintain the state of balance of power”<sup>40</sup> (ibid). Therefore, Pakistan who became a

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<sup>37</sup> URL: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>

<sup>38</sup> ibid

<sup>39</sup> URL: <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art4han.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> ibid

sovereign state only on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947 and because of its weak economy wanted to seek alliance with a big power like the United States which can help in its survival. And since, for the latter, the objective behind Pakistan joining the military treaties was to curtail the Communist influence, it led to strain relations between the USSR and Pakistan. As a result, Soviet Union's inclination towards India increased and Pakistan also remained U.S. friendly "to the extent that it acted as an US ally in organizing the Afghans' resistance guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, until the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in the year 1989" (Hanif 2013).

Though, Pakistan had joined SEATO with the hope of getting financial assistance from America because of its serious economic and security problems. But, SEATO because of its military limitations "could not commit itself to defend Pakistan in the case of an Indian attack". So neither in India-Pakistan conflict of 1965 nor in 1971 India-Pakistan war it could provide assistance.

"Unlike NATO, SEATO had no independent mechanism for obtaining intelligence or deploying military forces, so the potential for collective action was necessarily limited. Moreover, because it incorporated only three Asian members- Phillipines, Thailand and Pakistan, it faced charges of being a new form of Western colonialism."<sup>41</sup> Also, because of "linguistic and cultural differences", it acted as a hindrance for SEATO to achieve many of its aims. Therefore, withdrawal of members from the organization was noticed by the early 1970s. In fact, Pakistan and France stopped supporting American actions in Vietnam and eventually both the nations' withdrew in the early 1970s. In the year 1973, Pakistan officially left SEATO, because "it had failed to provide any assistance in its ongoing conflict against India". Also, after the Vietnam War was over in 1975, the very reason for its creation disappeared. As a result, SEATO was officially dissolved in the year 1977 and it is not wrong to say that the pact was short lived and failed to provide favorable results. Nevertheless, NATO continued to exist until now and its expansion is a major source of concern for Russia.

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<sup>41</sup> URL: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>

## **Warsaw Pact: The Communist Alliance in 1955**

“The formation of the Warsaw Pact was in some ways a response to the creation of NATO, but it did not emerge until six years after the Western alliance came into being. It was more directly inspired by the rearming of West Germany and its admission into NATO in 1955.”<sup>42</sup> The Pact has eight member-states who pledged for mutual defense in case of any attack on any member. It seemed “their relation was established on the principles of mutual non-intervention (in the internal matters), respect for national sovereignty, and political independence”. However, almost all the members-states were indirectly under the control of the USSR. “The founding members of the Warsaw Pact comprised of the following communist governments: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, People's Republic of Albania , People's Republic of Bulgaria, Czechoslovak Republic , German Democratic Republic, People's Republic of Hungary, People's Republic of Poland , People's Republic of Romania” (World Heritage Encyclopedia).

“Like NATO, the Warsaw Pact focused on the objective of creating a coordinated defense among its member nations in order to deter an enemy attack.”<sup>43</sup> Although, the Pact was formed in response to unification of West Germany in 1955 but it was chiefly prompted by the Soviet desire to retain its control over the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Actually, it was an instrument in the hands of the USSR to exercise solid control over the Central and Eastern European states. In fact, “the Warsaw Pact's largest military engagements were aimed against its own members- in 1956 against Hungary and in 1968 against Czechoslovakia.”<sup>44</sup>

With the disintegration of the Communist regime in the USSR, eventually, the people of “Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Albania, East Germany, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria started overthrowing their Communist governments from 1989–1991”. It was finally on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1991, Warsaw Pact announced at a meeting of the member-states in Hungary to disband the organization. It can be said that Mikhail Gorbachev’s introduction of policy of Perestroika (economic restructuring program) and Glasnost

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<sup>42</sup> URL: <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/formation-of-nato-and-warsaw-pact>

<sup>43</sup> ibid

<sup>44</sup> URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw\\_Pact](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Pact)

(openness and transparency in government) led to non-violent breakdown of the Soviet socialist block. In fact, it is not wrong to say that Moscow's non-interference policy totally ended its ideological supremacy and military command over the countries of Eastern Europe. While, NATO on the other hand, continued to exist until now and over the course of time has acquired new member-states from Eastern Europe. But this expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization was not favourably accepted by the Russian leaders and therefore, became a source of contention "between the East and the West" even after the end of Cold War (Rogov 2009).

Many in the successor state of Russia thought that NATO would dissolve eventually, "as there was the widely prevalent view that there would be a new all-European collective security system including Russia, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as proposed by the U.S. Secretary of State Jim Baker in 1991"<sup>45</sup> (Rogov 2009). However, this forecast was never realized. Though, "Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe" (OSCE) came into being but it had a very minimal role to play. Instead, the role of NATO became dominant. And for NATO, "since it had already lost its mission of collective defense, because nobody could pose a threat against the military alliance in the post-Cold war world, it became necessary to come up with a new purpose and as a result, the slogan: "Out of area or out of business" caught the attention."<sup>46</sup> It can be said that NATO kept growing and expanding in the pretext of protecting democracy, human rights and maintaining peace and stability in the world (ibid).

### **Implications of Theory of Geopolitics**

The post-cold war period is marked with a remarkable shift in the pattern of relationships among the nations in international politics. It is observed, a new strategic scenario is witnessed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and "fall of the Berlin Wall". As a result of these two important developments, "now U.S. is the only Superpower on the horizon of world politics" (Gojree 2015). With the end of cold war, it has brought about new issues and new priorities for the Superpower. Now ideology

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<sup>45</sup> URL: [http://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=PE\\_HS3\\_0107](http://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID_ARTICLE=PE_HS3_0107)

<sup>46</sup> ibid

based rivalry of cold war politics do not determine relations among nations, instead shared interest determines their foreign policies.

The political cleavage was developed substantially between traditional Islamic and Western values. The presence of US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan was employed to pressurize Iran's government into curtailing its nuclear capability, in order to ensure the strategic superiority of Israel in the Middle East. The US strategy of war was complemented by theoretical debates for justification and the projection of a perceived strategic threat. However, it can be observed that the conduct of the two Gulf Wars shows that these strategies were directed towards the promotion of a geopolitical order which ensured US superiority in matters of economic and military dominance (Malik 2015). "The theory of radical geopolitics has traced the roots of US foreign policy from a critical political-economic perspective, seeking to determine the relative importance of political factors and economic forces in shaping foreign policy. It builds on David Harvey's (2003) conceptualization of two logics of power and deploys a geopolitical logic and a geo-economic logic to interpret political events" (Mercille and Jones 2012). According to geopolitical logic, the need occurs because of the desire of capitalism to expand geographically and the geoeconomic logic is a tacit practice put forward by the state officials in order to keep up the credibility of their states internationally. It has been noticed that after the end of Second World War, foreign policy of the United States has pursued the geo-economic logic to a great extent, while conforming to geopolitical logic. For example: The crisis in Iran is the result of; firstly, America's desire to control the energy resources of the country (a geo-economic logic) and secondly, American officials' urge to maintain the credibility of the United States; while, confronting Iranian defiance to its hegemony in West Asia (a geopolitical logic). It can be said that radical geopolitics analyse the connections between both the logics and its influence on making "foreign policy of the United States" (Mercille and Jones 2012).

Below the implication of 'radical geopolitics' is explained by giving an account of various events that has been taking place in the Asia-Pacific region and the resulting geopolitical struggle between the East and the West for its sphere of influence. The study shows how these events are shaping Russian foreign policy by shifting its

direction towards Asia particularly Pakistan and China. But since the study is about “Russia-Pakistan bilateral relations in the post-Cold War period”, so focus of the thesis will be mainly on Russia-Pakistan relations.

### **Geopolitical and Geo-economic logics behind the Iranian crisis**

“The Middle East accounts for approximately two-thirds of world energy reserves, and Iran holds the world’s second largest reserves of gas and third largest of oil.” Therefore, the main reason which prompted the United States to intervene in West Asia is to “control the amount of oil released in the World market, its geographical allocation and the destination of petro dollars” (Mercille and Jones 2012). There are two additional factors which led to American intervention; firstly, to get access to oil for its consumption and promising benefits for its oil companies in the Middle East. Therefore, it can be contended that “the US desire to control Iran’s vast energy reserves is a fundamental factor that pushes US officials to seek to maintain a friendly relation with the regime in Tehran. This is just a geo-economic logic but this motivates policy makers to react forcefully when Iran challenges US hegemony, because failing to respond decisively in matters of defiance could encourage challenges elsewhere, a geopolitical logic” (Mercille and Jones 2012).

The Shah of Iran with the help from the United States and Britain was brought to power and therefore, until 1979 he maintained friendly relations with them by signing an agreement which left sufficient amount of oil under their control. However, in the year 1979, the Islamic revolution ousted the Shah and established a Theocratic regime which was in power until 1989. During this regime, Iran was completely hostile to the United States interest in the region (Mercille and Jones 2009). It is not wrong to say that “the current round of sanctions and its nuclear crisis pretext should be seen as the latest chapter in the United States attempts to discipline Iran” (ibid).

Since, Iran is rich in energy and is positioned in an unfriendly regional environment; therefore, the county has its own security concerns; especially taking into consideration its geographical location. And it is because of these security reasons, Iran had developed nuclear bombs. Amirahmadi (2017) explains that “nuclear geopolitics is a



new concept. While, 'geopolitics' refers to the political significance of places and spaces in international relations, 'nuclear geopolitics' would mean the spatial distribution of nuclear facilities, its significance and the problem it creates, or solutions it offers, for international relations." To analyse the nuclear geopolitics of West Asia, we can have many conclusions. To start with, "in the Middle East, there is only one country that is a nuclear power, and that country is Israel. Iran is the next candidate for becoming a nuclear power even if it insists to use the technology for energy production and other peaceful purposes only" (Amirahmadi 2017). Of course, countries like Russia, China, Pakistan and India can be rationally included in the "Middle East nuclear geopolitics because they have nuclear bombs and are connected in multiple ways to this particular geopolitical space." As we know, Russia and China had built and tested their nuclear bombs before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1967, as per the norms of "Non-proliferation Treaty". While, for Israel, India and Pakistan, they never signed the NPT and tested their nuclear weapons by disregarding the NPT and the international community. And if Iran would develop nuclear weapons, "it will be the first NPT signatory to do so in the Middle East." The logic behind this nuclear geopolitics is "Russia built its bombs to counter the American bombs; China built its bombs to counter the Russian bombs; India built its bombs to counter the Chinese bombs; and Pakistan built its bombs to counter the Indian bombs. But it seems the chain breaks when it comes to the reason for Israeli bombs as it is built proactively rather than reactively" (ibid). Proactively, because Israel's rivals in the region, the Arabs so far have no nuclear weapons and if we consider Pakistan, it built it years later. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that "Israel is solely responsible for the nuclearization of Middle East proper as the US is responsible for global nuclearization" and that is why; it can be said that development of nuclear weapons in Iran was a reaction to these developments taking place in its neighbourhood (Amirahmadi 2017).

The United States in order to discipline Iran under the pretext of the United Nations, proposed a resolution to put sanctions on Iran and it was observed that though, Russia and China were against harsh sanctions, they did not veto the resolution. As a result, Iran was ready for negotiations. However, Russia feared that "the U.S. and some of its allies might take military action against Iran if the nuclear talks fail which would result into a strong destabilizing impact on regional security and was also worried about the

possibility of regime change in Iran.” However, after many discussions, in the year 2015 Iran signed a nuclear deal with the World powers on the condition that they will stop their nuclear program and the West will lift their sanctions. Professor, Pavel Baev from the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, remarked that “the most valuable Russian contribution to the Iran nuclear deal was refraining from playing the role of a spoiler. He thinks the main influence was China, who wanted the deal to be concluded as it wants to expand the energy business with Iran and thus wishes from Beijing cannot be ignored by Moscow in the present state of Russia-China relations” (Bernstein 2015).

For Pakistan, “it has been planning to build a pipeline to import natural gas from Iran with the help of China for years, but work on the proposed pipeline was in a halt due to international economic sanctions on Iran” (Tanzeem 2015). To point out, Islamabad has an acute energy deficiency because of which its economy suffers; especially, its industries and agriculture. It is even worse during summers because its requirement for electricity increases. Regarding this, Pakistan’s Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said, “The solution to some of these problems lies in importing more natural gas. Gas is 50 percent of Pakistan’s total energy needs today” (Tanzeem 2015).

Now, it seems “with the lifting of international sanctions on Iran in the year 2016, Pakistan is hoping to become one of the early beneficiaries of a nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1, by finally completing the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. But funding for the expensive project, expected to cost about \$2 billion, which is yet another obstacle for cash-strapped Pakistan.” Here, comes the role of China as an investor because of its economic potential, “China will provide 85 percent of the \$2 billion required to build a liquid natural gas terminal at Pakistan’s southern port city Gwadar” (Tanzeem 2015). Gwador port appears to be at the center of “China Pakistan Economic Corridor” and once this corridor is completed, it plans to link Gwador port with China's Xinjiang province through “network of highways, railways and pipelines” which would significantly lessen the trade time and cost between China and Middle East and to Europe. In fact, some Pakistani experts share an opinion that “with the lifting of

sanctions on Iran, trade with their neighbour will significantly improve and much of the Iranian oil that was floating around in the black market will now be formalized.”

### **Geopolitical and Geo-economic aspect of the Afghan War**

“Since 19<sup>th</sup> century, Super powers have been playing the Great Game in the region lying across Central, Southern and Southwestern Asia. And in this ‘Game’ Afghanistan, which strategically connects these geographical segments of Asia, has historically been the heartland of struggle between Britain and Russia to have control over Central Asia.” (Oriental Review, 18 March 2013). And in the present situation, “with the energy resource becoming one of the major contending factors for rivalry among major powers, importance of Central Asia has increased further due to its energy resource potential. However, gaining access to those resources and controlling their export routes is not possible for any extra-regional power without having strong military presence in the region” (ibid). Therefore, heavy presence of armed forces in Afghanistan is essential for the United States to achieve its interests in the region. As this will provide the stage through which America can deter possible rivals in the region and eventually control gas and oil pipeline routes emerging from Eurasia. Since, Afghanistan comes under a projected pipe line route under TAPI project; therefore, “US intervention in Afghanistan has to be analysed from the perspective of US geo-strategic and geo-energy objectives, rather than from the US projected perspective of elimination of global terrorists” (Oriental Review, 18 March 2013).

The Eurasian landmass is a geopolitical struggle for power between the East and the West in order to control the vast energy resources. It is not wrong to say that if the United States could control over this huge landmass, it will lead to geo-strategic and geo-economic domination of the country which not only provide control over this region but beyond. Therefore, “energy-resources provide the logic to understand US policy of politically dominating the entire region through control over Afghanistan” (ibid).

The attacks on Afghanistan by the U.S. led NATO forces took place in the year 2001, but the arrangements for the war started since 1999 with the passing of the Silk Road Strategy Act passed by the US Congress in the year 1999 “outlines the basic policy

approach of US for the acquisition of energy in the Eurasian region. However, the Act was amended in 2006 which then declared energy security as the prime reason for the US to stay in Afghanistan.” Therefore, it can be argued that in the pretext of securing energy, it is trying hard to acquire more energy and these actions are justified in the name of maintaining peace, security and stability in the region. Afghanistan became the main seat of the struggle because at that time, it was the only country in the region which gave a pretext for U.S. to intervene. “The post 9/11 Western saga of Taliban’s misrule and their refusal to hand over Bin laden helped preparing the Western mind to attack and dismantle the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. But the irony is that, in the 2006 amendment of the Act, no reference was made to Al-Qaeda or Bin laden” (Oriental Review, 18 March 2013). The reason for military presence in Afghansitan was not based on terrorism according to the provisions of the Act. Nevertheless, “there are other policy statements which do declare elimination of terrorism as one of the main objectives of US, but this shows the discrepancy between the policies stated and the actions taken and thus creates a contradiction in US entire anti-terrorist and anti-Taliban agenda” (ibid). In fact, the whole picture gives the idea of “political manipulation, resource exploitation and regional domination.” And since, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was against the spirit of the Afghan people; therefore, powerful opposition was inevitable. In fact, every day their resistance is growing and thus making it immensely hard for the U.S. led NATO forces to maintain its army in the country (ibid).

Going back to history of Afghanistan, it all started after the Soviet forces invaded the country. The Americans with the help of Mujahedeen trained in Pakistan started a civil war in Afghanistan which prompted USSR to withdraw finally in the year 1989. Since then there were many regime change in the country and with the different factions of Mujahedeen fighting for power in the state, it became a failed state. There was then the US led NATO forces came into Afghanistan to stop the civil war as there was no security and safety of lives and property and since, US always considered very important to manipulate the vast energy resources of the Eurasian region.

For Russia, since Afghanistan is a buffer state, the latter has always been strategically important and as ISAF was suppose to curtail its troops post-2016, Russia fears that with

the power vacuum, the Taliban will come back to power and thus radical Islamic groups will spread their influence in the Central Asian countries and through these countries, it will spread to Russia. Here, comes the strategic importance of Pakistan. As Pakistan is strategically located in a way that it shares borders with Afghanistan and since the former has past links with the Taliban, it can act as an intermediary while working on a peaceful resolution of the problem after the scheduled withdrawal of ISAF forces. But due to worsening of conflict and declining security situation in the country, which is a result of political apathy and an “unsteady performance of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)”, the President of the United States Barack Obama declared that he will stop the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. The President said, “While America’s combat mission in Afghanistan may be over, our commitment to Afghanistan and its people endures.” He further stressed, “As commander in chief, I will not allow Afghanistan to be used as a safe haven for terrorists to attack our nation again.” Therefore, “under the new plan the current number of troops is approximately 9,800 and this will remain unchanged until the end of 2016 or early 2017. After that U.S. military presence will drop to 5,500 which will be located in Kabul and military bases in Bagram, Jalalabad, and Kandahar” (The Diplomat, 16 October 2015). These three bases are important from the point of view of “close-air support missions, ongoing counter-terrorism operations, and drone strikes operated by the CIA against militants”.

### **Russia’s Geopolitical and Geostrategic interests in Afghanistan**

“Russia’s support for the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), an alternative supply route for the ISAF cargos to Afghanistan through Russia and Central Asia, shows its strategic interest in the region” (Ranson 2012). It seemed, with deteriorating Washington-Islamabad relations after US unilateral operations in Pakistan against Osama-bin-Laden, and closing down of supply routes via Pakistan’s territory to Afghanistan – “the Northern Distribution Network became a sort of advantage card for Russia” (Zulfiqar Shah 2013).

It can be said that Afghanistan’s important geopolitical significance is in “Russia’s wider Central Asian policy and its claim to a great power status as it connects all the important regions like Central Asia, Middle East and Southeast Asia” (Pawar 2011).

“The geo-economic interest is testified by Afghanistan as a source of vital hydro-carbon reserves, iron-ore reserves, copper, gold, lithium, etc and thus, Russia wants to keep a check on formidable economic rivals in the country” (Pawar 2011). Afghanistan can also support Russia by giving access to South Asia and China to diversify its energy exports via its territory and therefore in this context, Russia’s interest in the “TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project” is noticed. Further, “Russia has vital security interests in the success of the international coalition in Afghanistan because it wants to curtail the flow of illegal-drug trafficking and restrict the movement and activities of radical Islamic groups and terrorist activities” (Pawar 2011).

Russia is a major global power with veto rights in the United Nations Security Council and also an important member of the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)”. And as Pakistan is concerned, in the changed geopolitical settings, it has realized to build up ties with all the main regional actors including Russia. It further considers that finding a political agreement before the withdrawal of the international forces from Afghanistan will extremely help in achieving domestic stability in its own country, which has been negatively affected by the crisis in Afghanistan. And since, global actors like the United States, who is involved and wish to bring an end to the conflict, it becomes essential for Islamabad to be a part of the process to bring peace and stability in the country and thus collaborate with Russia in its efforts. “In view of these strong credentials, Pakistan needs stronger ties with Russia particularly when the US seems inclined to giving India a major role in the post- 2014 Afghanistan” (Hanif 2013).

Since Cold War days, Russia and Pakistan had mutual differences and mistrust and one of the significant reason was because of Pakistan’s recognition to the Taliban government and the Chechnya rebels. These differences continued ever after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, after the September 11 attacks, things started changing as Pakistan reversed its Afghan policy and joined the fight against terrorism as a frontline state. “In fact, it is believed that whatever success the antiterrorism coalition has achieved in Afghanistan to dismantle the Taliban regime and destroy the al Qaeda network, would not have been possible without the active support

and help of Pakistan” (Rahman 2011). And it seemed Moscow and Islamabad found common interests for engagement only after Pakistan’s role in fighting terrorism was fully recognized by the international community. Another factor which did set the process of normalization of relations between both the countries is India’s strategic ties with the United States.

### **Ukrainian Crisis and the Geopolitical Factor**

The Ukrainian statehood has two views: the monist and the pluralist view and there is always a bone of contention between the two. “The **monist view**, which asserts that the country is an indigenous cultural and political unity repudiates the tsarist and Soviet imperial legacies and reduces the political weight of Russian-speakers by moving the country away from Russia towards Europe. According to this view, the challenge since its independence in the year 1991 has been to strengthen the Ukrainian language” (Sakwa 2015). While “the **pluralist view** emphasises the different historical and cultural experiences of Ukraine’s various regions and argues that building a modern democratic post-Soviet Ukrainian state is not just a matter of good governance and rule of law but it also requires an acceptance of bilingualism, mutual tolerance of different traditions, and devolution of power to the regions” (ibid).

As we know, the present Ukraine is made up of many historical events and it was the inability on the part of the government “to give constitutional form to the distinctiveness of the people of Ukraine caused the February 2014 revolution.” Moreover, the pattern of religious affiliation is equally complex. Below it has been given:

“A 2016 survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre found that about 65.4% of the population declared to be adherents of various types of Orthodoxy Christians, 7.1% just Christians, 6.5% Greek Rite Catholics, 1.9% Protestants, 1.1% Muslims, 1.0% Latin Rite Catholics, Judaism and Hinduism around 0.2% each and further 16.3 % declared to be non-religious and do not identify with any of the above faiths” (Sakwa 2015).

It was noticed that “after a divisive debate, Article 2.2 of the 1996 Constitution declared that Ukraine is a unitary state and that its territory is indivisible and inviolable” (Sakwa 2015). Thus, the basic problem which the independent Ukraine confronted with was to

find the acceptable political system that can constitutionally represent this diversity. However, the impasse over internal developments and the new found East-West divide had made the situation worse.

Since, the formula of integrated nationalism<sup>47</sup> in Ukraine could not incorporate the diversity, by giving them constitutional recognition; therefore, civic inclusion remained partial. The official language of the country is Ukrainian which was the only language of the state and thus for all formal work Ukrainian language is supposed to be used and Russian language became more of a language in private life. Therefore, “such inconveniences and demonstrative assertion of Ukrainism provoked a constant sense of resentment.” It can be said that the monist view is popular in the western part of the country, while the pluralist view is more powerful in the eastern and the southern parts. “For the Ukrainian nationalist parties who represent the monist view are attracted by the fact that enlargement of Wider Europe to the post-Soviet space and Ukraine will roll back the Russian influence by limiting its geopolitical pretensions” (Sakwa 2015).

As we know, the “Association Agreement” was an EU driven instrument to merge Ukraine into Wider Europe and since, many years the discussions on the topic had been carried on in a complete technical way. “At the heart of the agreement was the sweeping liberalisation of EU-Ukraine trade, with the Ukrainian economy reducing and in due course removing tariff and non-tariff barriers to become more open for goods and services from the EU” (Sakwa 2015). However, “unlike the agreements with the Central and Eastern European states, there was no promise of eventual membership. In fact, the Accord enforced Ukraine to endorse the EU *acquis communautaire*<sup>48</sup> which comprised of the 100,000-odd pages of laws and regulations and kind of exclusionary in nature; especially, towards Russia.

“Ukraine matters to Russia as an issue of survival, apart from thousand years of shared history and civilization, whereas for Brussels or

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<sup>47</sup> Integrated nationalism runs along the fascist lines by trying to unite people with a single language, culture and mythology.

<sup>48</sup> *Acquis communautaire* is the amalgamation of different legislative acts and decisions of the court “which constitute the body of European Union law.”



Washington it is just another country in the onward march of the West. The Ukrainian border is a mere 480 kilometres from Moscow, and thus the whole issue assumed an existential character. The Russian military has traditionally used Ukraine's space for its strategic depth, and this advantage would now be lost if Ukraine merge with Wider Europe" (Sakwa 2015).

Since, the economies of Russia and Ukraine are highly interdependent and Russia being the largest trading partner of Ukraine was concerned about number of clauses mentioned in the Association Agreement. It can be said that "EU asserted exclusivity in security and economic matters, which would have become operative as soon as Ukraine signed up at the Vilnius summit of 2013. Although couched in classic European language of peace and development, the agreement in effect announced a formal state of contestation with Russia over the lands in between" (Sakwa 2015). But inspite of all the challenges, EU was determined to get the President Yanukovich sign the agreement in Vilnius.

For Ukraine, the Association Agreement was posed with a stark choice, which it was avoiding since long time. "Yanukovich is not pro-Russian, but he understood that the Agreement would force the country to undertake radical changes that could threaten his own position" (ibid). Nevertheless, the European Union went ahead and decided the release date for Yulia Tymoshenko<sup>49</sup> on May 2013, as this was one of the conditions to sign the Association Agreement. But it became obvious that no matter what, Yanukovich have to conclude the agreement even though she suffers in jail. Thus, on November 21<sup>st</sup> before the year ended, President Yanukovich declared that he needs more time to decide on the agreement (Sakwa 2015).

In reality, the Association Agreement had no such immediate actual benefit, but the reforms it would bring could damage an already dangerous situation. While, "Moscow on the other hand, offered a \$15 billion loan and a hefty discount on the gas price. Therefore, on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the deal was signed, and an addendum was signed to the gas agreement of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009 that reduced the price of natural gas for Ukraine

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<sup>49</sup> Yulia Volodymyrivna Tymoshenko is the first female Prime Minister of Ukraine who was convicted of fraud and misappropriation of power on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011. However, with the support from EU, she was released from jail on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014, by revising Ukraine's criminal code that decriminalized her actions.

by one third, from \$410 to \$268.5 per tcm” (Sakwa 2015). However, this deal does not mean that Yanukovich had closed the European Union option; he just wanted to play safe as he was also trying to improve its relations with China. In fact, it can be said that the crisis in Ukraine was the result of culmination of sharpening domestic differences and weakening international relations. Ukraine had always tried to benefit from the differences between Russia and the West, but this time, the game proved dangerous (Sakwa 2015).

It can be analysed that the bureaucratic oligarchic system of rule and “the use of corrupt practices to the country as a whole, provoked a radicalisation of public opinion, which was reflected in the 2012 parliamentary election results. And at the same time, the Ukraine crisis was also gathering pace as the Atlantic and Eurasian integration poles radicalised their positions” (ibid). However, the Association Agreement with the EU acted as the stimulant factor.

The immediate factor which triggered the crisis was adoption of 12 anti-protest laws by the Supreme Council of Ukraine after 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014. This led to outburst of public anger and intensified the violence because it enforced oppressive punishments against organisers of demonstrations. As there was no proper discussion on the measures and adopted in a hasty manner. “Soon a civic protest movement turned into an armed struggle within the span of just a few weeks. The focus broadened out from European issues to become an insurrection against the corruption, nepotism and general malfeasance of the Yanukovich regime” (ibid).

Thus, the nation moved towards civil war with the killing of 28 people on 18<sup>th</sup> February and with the culmination of bloody clashes into violent mass unrest on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014. “With violence spreading, on the night of 20-21 February, the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and France, together with the head of the Continental European department of the French foreign ministry, Eric Fournier, flew to Kiev and brokered a deal with Yanukovich” (Sakwa 2015). But the deal was completely rejected by the Maiden Council<sup>50</sup> on 21<sup>st</sup> February and demanded relinquishment of Presidential

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<sup>50</sup> Maiden is the Council that was formed earlier to coordinate actions among leaders and to advise them.

responsibilities by Yanukovych, to release the protestors from jail, to sign the Association Agreement and to revert to the 2004 Constitution (ibid). And as the security apparatus melted, it became clear that Yanukovych life was in danger. So he had no other option but to leave Kiev.

It can be noted here that during Cold War days, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics though did not have direct confrontation but had fought many proxy wars for example: in Afghanistan, Africa and elsewhere. Therefore, “in the new era of the cold peace, the Ukraine crisis became one of these proxy wars. The Atlantic powers consistently underestimated the autonomous character of the Donbass rebellion and instead placed all responsibility on Russia”. Even if, we accept that it was supported by Russia, the extent of direct military assistance is a matter of dispute.

Kiev’s major concern was to avert Russia from establishing its everlasting influence “in the form of a frozen conflict in the region.” They expected that the defeat of the rebels would curtail Kremlin’s existing influence over its policy making. “However, the attempt to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis was pursued bilaterally in negotiations between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The key issues were the stabilisation of Ukraine’s border, establishing a framework for Ukraine’s economic recovery, and an equitable and enduring energy agreement” (Sakwa 2015). As a result of the talks, it was decided that Crimea would be granted devolved powers in order to maintain the territorial integrity of the nation and “the deal would be underwritten by a multi-billion-dollar compensation package for the loss of the rent it used to receive for the Sevastopol base” (ibid). It seemed again in Berlin, the “foreign ministers of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine” tried to strike a deal.

“The crisis has had a devastating effect, with Donbass exports to Russia in the first half of 2014 falling by a third, driving down living standards and exacerbating unemployment and political discontent. Therefore, the tide of war once again turned, and the rebels broke out of the encirclement around Donetsk to seize the port of Novoazovsk and threatened to retake Mariupol” (ibid). As a result, the insurgent forces won Ilovaisk and the Ukrainian army suffered a loss.

This event led to a new series of reports citing that Russian armed forces assisted the fighting. However, Russia by denying the reports demanded inclusive and representative national government of Ukraine as its demand for federalisation was already in abeyance. “With peace talks in prospect and the Ukrainian military position crumbling, the US once again stepped up accusations that Russian forces were directly involved in combat operations. At the same time, in mid- August of 2014, the Ukrainian parliament adopted legislation that would potentially allow Kiev to impose over 20 different types of sanctions against Russia, including stopping the transit of Russian gas” (Sakwa 2015). “Also, a trilateral working Group of Russia, Ukraine and the EU was formed to work out a strategy by 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for managing mutual trade in the new conditions.”

“The session of the Ukrainian parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014 that ratified the EU Association Agreement also adopted ‘special status’ legislation granting wide-ranging autonomy for the rebel-occupied parts of the Donbas, about a third of the territory, but only for three years. A separate law adopted in the same closed session, granting an amnesty to participants in the fighting, except those who had committed serious crimes” (ibid). However, Petro Poroshenko, newly elected President of Ukraine, who was elected on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2014 emphasized that “the creation of the special zone in the Donbas did not mean federalisation, but only the delegation of powers for three year” (ibid).

It seemed, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko has some convergence of interests with regard to the issue of peace and stability. Though, many in Kiev and Washington wanted to continue the military offensive in order to clean the area from insurgents but Moscow wanted to resolve the problem completely. Since for Kremlin the whole aim of Russian aggression was not territorial but for strategic space. “In fact, for the ceasefire to turn into peace the status of Donbas would have to be resolved, the geopolitical role of Ukraine to be decided, and the structural division of Europe to be overcome. According to Professor Richard Sakwa, a Pan-European peace conference was the only way through which this could be achieved” (Sakwa 2015).

Morton Kaplan stresses, “The dictates of geography make it nearly impossible for Ukraine to reorient itself entirely to the West since it is too enveloped by Russia to ever be completely tied to the West. In fact, Crimea gives Russia its only access to a warm-water port”. Further, F. Stephen Larrabee, a senior political scientist at the RAND Institute in his email to Business Insider shared his view by writing, "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. However, if Russia were to regain control over Ukraine with its 46 million people, major resources and access to the Black Sea, Russia would automatically regain the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state.”

One of the immediate consequences of an increasing tension between the West and Russia could be the closing of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), the alternate supply route of ISAF cargos to Afghanistan through Russian territory. “Additionally, a number of key gas pipelines from Russia to Western Europe run through Ukraine. Europe gets 24% of its gas from Russia, and half of that i.e. 80bcm a year passes through Ukraine” and if Russian gas giant Gazprom shuts down these pipelines completely, Europe’s gas supplies would severely hit (Sakwa 2015). Furthermore, Ukraine acts as a buffer state between NATO countries and Russia and there is a close historical and cultural affinity between both the countries. In geopolitical terms, the expansion of NATO to Ukraine will threaten the security interests of Russia whereby the Western countries can easily attack and enter Russia through the porous border that both the country shares (Walker 2015).

Ashraf (2014) in his article stated “Russian President Vladimir Putin maintains that Russia is trying to protect ethnic Russians which comprised 59% of Crimean population, who feel threatened by the lawlessness spreading east from the capital. He further stressed that Moscow is not imposing its will but rather supporting the free choice of the local population.” The Referendum which took place in the early 2015, majority population of Kiev and Sevastopol voted in favour of joining the Russian Federation but the international community backed by the US, labelled it as illegal. “Nevertheless, Crimea is now under effective Russian control, and thus should be depicted as such on maps aimed at showing the de facto rather than the de jure political situation” (Lewis 2014).

“The Pakistan government in view of the reset of relations with Moscow has taken a cautious stance on the Ukrainian crisis and thus avoids condemning Russia outright. In fact, it took a neutral stand and several statements released by the Pakistan’s Foreign Office on Ukraine underscored the need for talks and diplomacy as the only option to resolve the matter, besides asking both Kremlin and Kiev to show restraint to achieve a peaceful solution” (Dawn, 4 December 2014). However, the European Union condemns “Russia’s actions in Ukraine as violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” and therefore, it wants Pakistan to condemn Russia’s actions. Ambassador Lars Gunnar Wigemark spoke in the National Assembly’s Foreign Affairs Committee, “Pakistan government should condemn the violations by a very aggressive Russia against Ukraine if it wants to make a real gesture towards EU”. It is to be noted that over the course of time, EU has emerged as an important trading partner for Pakistan. “Both bilateral and multilateral assistance from the EU and its member countries totals €600 million per year. Therefore, it is not easy for Pakistan to ignore EU concerns” (ibid).

### **Geopolitical and Geostrategic logics behind the Syrian Crisis**

The revolt in Syria has grown into a civil war incited by external player’s geostrategic and geopolitical ambitions and it has been observed that the P5 members of the United Nation’s Security Council have differing opinions and conflicting interests on the issue. It is noticed so far that “Russia and China have effectively supported the Assad regime by shielding it from the Council’s criticism and in the case of Russia by supplying arms to the regime, while the Syrian rebels have also received political, financial, logistical support as well as training from the Western actors like the United States, Turkey, the United Kingdom, France and the Arab states” (Asseburg 2013).

“Armed fighting between Syrian rebels and the Democratic Union Party, as well as political differences between Arabs and Kurdish representatives of the Syrian opposition has made a far-reaching effect by increasing the possibility of a separate West Kurdistan, and has thus opened the question of regional borders as established in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire” (ibid). In this context, the government of Turkey considering other regional and domestic implications, “had engaged in talks

with the imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party leader Abdullah Öcalan and thus in April 2013 agreed on a ceasefire as well as comprehensive reforms aimed at improving the status of Kurds in Turkey and thus allowing for upgraded relations with Kurds in Iraq and Syria.” And the reason for brokering the deal is because Arab Spring<sup>51</sup> has a severe bearing on the “regional position of the three non-Arab states: Iran, Israel and Turkey”; especially, Syrian crisis (Asseburg 2013).

“The crisis has deeply strained Turkey’s relations with Iran. In addition, Turkey’s tense relations with Israel have undermined its ability to mediate in the Arab-Israeli conflict and thus to contribute to a stable and prosperous Middle East.” Nevertheless, with the intervention of John Kerry, the US Secretary of State as the mediator in 2013, Israeli arms sales to Turkey had resumed. And it seemed “Israel has been strongly concerned about spill over effects of the violence raging in Syria, the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, tactical weapons getting into local terrorist’s hands and Syria turning into a safe haven for al-Qaeda” (Asseburg 2013). Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the current geopolitical shifting is not only based on Sunni-Shia divide but domestic and historical factors have also influenced this transformation. As of now, we can not say firmly, if the regional coalitions or regional balance of power that is becoming apparent at present will be everlasting. “However, it is clear that sectarian polarisation is a negative development for the future of Syria and for the region, particularly in the Levant<sup>52</sup> and in Iraq. In fact, to a large degree, regional developments in terms of conflict, state borders, alliances and balances of power will depend on how the situation in Syria evolves in the months and years to come” (ibid).

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says, “The root cause of the current refugee crisis in Europe is the Western support for terrorists”. He stressed that if you are worried about them, stop supporting terrorists. He further reiterated that agreement cannot be reached on how to resolve the crisis unless we defeat the terrorism in Syria. Since 2011, Syrian forces had been fighting an aggression backed by the external players. “The resulting

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<sup>51</sup> Arab Spring means waves of revolutions in the form of “demonstrations, protests, riots, and civil wars” that took place in the countries of Arab League and its surroundings.

<sup>52</sup> Usually, the areas of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria

violence has forced over five million Syrians to take refuge in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan and beyond. And more than 7.2 million others have been displaced internally, according to UN figures” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017).

Since, Moscow continued to back Assad’s regime in Syria, the U.S. tells Russia that the leader must resign in order to achieve a political settlement. As stated by John Kerry, US Secretary of State in a phone call to Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia, “Russia’s continued support for President Assad risks exacerbating and extending the conflict and undermining their shared goal of fighting extremism.” He also “reaffirmed the US commitment to fight ISIL with a coalition of more than 60 countries, of which Assad could never be a credible member, and emphasized that US would welcome a constructive Russian role in counter-ISIL efforts.” However, it is acknowledged by the global powers that “there is no military solution to the years-long Syrian crisis and thus, called for a political solution to establish peace in the country, a political transition away from Assad” (Security Council 7588<sup>th</sup> Meeting, SC/12171).

As we know, “the United States and its regional allies- especially Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have been financially and militarily supporting the rebel groups in Syria since the beginning of the crisis, but it seems the United States is concern with the recent Russian military build up.” It was observed that the first Russian military air strikes in Syria in 2015, which targetted ISIS were critically acclaimed by the West. The US was being skeptical of Kremlin’s actions and instead alleged that “the former appeared to be attacking opposition groups fighting Syrian government forces.” However, Russian President Putin denied the US reports and said that “airstrikes were pre-emptive attack against the Islamic militants who have taken over large parts of Syria and Iraq.” “This drastic step was decided by Russia following the failure of Mr Putin to reach any agreement with the US at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York where the threat of ISIS had been high on the agenda” (Cockburn 2015). It is not wrong to say that when it comes to ISIS and al-Qaeda, the positions of both Moscow and Washington converge; but regarding sharing of power in a post-ISIS Syria, they seemed to have differences of opinion.



In recent years, it has been noticed that “in theory, United States wants to contain and defeat the so-called ISIS but has failed to do so. Therefore, Russians have now tried to fill that vacuum but with uncertain long-term results.” In the year 2016, Russia had fired cruise missiles targeting the terrorists in Syria by displaying its military power. Russian officials said, “Four ships in Russia's Caspian fleet fired a total of 26 cruise missiles at the targets. The missiles flew nearly 1,500km over Iran and Iraq and struck Raqqa and Aleppo provinces in Syria's north and Idlib province in the northwest ” (Aljazeera News 2015). In fact, this was for the first time Russia used its naval power in Syria since its first military intervention in September 2015. While, Russian defence sources reported that the missile attacks hit only the ISIS hideouts but as alleged by the West, “some of its strikes have reportedly hit” the rebel groups that had been fighting the Assad regime. As stated by Sergei Shoigu, Russia's defence minister, “the navy hit 11 targets in Syria with missiles fired from ships in the Caspian Sea.” According to RIA Novosti, the state news agency, “the Defence Minister of Russia reported to the President that all of the targets which included areas under ISIL control were destroyed without any civilian casualties” (Aljazeera News 2015).

While, “Western countries, Arab states and Turkey” are also carrying their operations against ISIL but their chief motive in Syria is to oust Bashar-al Assad from power who is backed by the Russians. They share the view that “Russia is using ISIL as a pretext to target the opposition forces.” Ashton Carter, the Pentagon chief said, “The Russian strategy is a fundamental mistake, and the coalition forces operating in the region will not cooperate with Russia. In fact, the US state department report claimed that almost none of Russia's strikes have been aimed at ISIL or fighters tied to al-Qaeda, while most of its targets were against the Syrian opposition” (ibid).

NATO reassured its members to defend them in view of Russia's military offensive in Syria and also in reaction to recent violations of airspace in Turkey since, it is a NATO member. Following the Paris attacks on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015, President François Hollande,

“Pledge to build a global military coalition to defeat the Islamic State. He also held separate meetings with the leaders of the US, Russia, Germany

and Britain, who agrees unreservedly about the necessity of eradicating ISIS. But it is seen although all the major powers of the world want a peace deal to end the Syrian civil war, but no amicable solution has been reached so far” (Guardian Newspaper, 23 November 2015).

However, “the shooting down of a Russian fighter jet by Turkey has complicated the already difficult task of forging a united international front against ISIS in Syria.” This action of Turkey has created an obstacle “for the military campaign against ISIS and the diplomatic process aimed at ending the Syrian conflict” (The Financial News, 25 November 2015). So far, because of conflicting interests of different parties in the Syrian War is acting as a major hindrance to reach any possible political solution and collective international action.

US officials have said that “they are ready to work together with Russia in Syria, if the latter focus its efforts against ISIS.” However, the Pentagon reported that “the Russian operations against rebels in north-west Syria that led to the jet incident with Turkey showed that Moscow has different goals.” Colonel Steve Warren, a spokesman for the US military in Baghdad said, “The Russians have said that they’re here to fight terrorism, but they have routinely now demonstrated their goal is to prop up and prolong the Assad regime.” It seems that “Turko-Russian tensions are likely to complicate the process of finding a political solution, including efforts to establish a common whitelist of rebel groups that would begin negotiations with the Assad regime. In addition, many of the Turkish backing groups with strong Islamist links posed one of the most sensitive political obstacles to overcome, as Russia considered many of these groups as terrorists” (ibid).

Observing these developments, it can be analysed that the geostrategic importance of the conflict lies in the inevitability of the crisis spilling over to the rest of the Middle East, and the possibility that it might lead to civil wars in other countries of the region. Syria has long been a pillar of Russia’s West Asia policy and it is an important ally of Russia in the Middle East where it has a naval base and a lucrative market for weapons. Therefore, Russia who is an important international backer of President Bashar al-Assad’s regime; “has been blocking resolutions critical of him at the United Nations

Security Council and has continued to supply weapons to the Syrian military despite international criticism.”

### **Russia-Pakistan-China Interactions**

While deteriorating Pakistan-US relations have prompted Islamabad to seek for new alliances in the region; for economic and military aid, Russia’s increasing engagement with Islamabad is mainly stimulated by its important strategic location and latter’s potential of becoming an alternative arms market, as Indian diplomatic relations and arms market is getting diversified. More importantly, as International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) prepared to cut down on its troops from Afghanistan post-2014, Russia worries that failure of state and resurgent Taliban would facilitate religious extremists and drug trafficking, which will spread to southern regions of Russia through Central Asia. Thus, its impression about Pakistan as an important actor to achieve peace and stability, made the regional environment suitable towards advancing Russia-Pakistan relations. Undoubtedly, “Pakistan enjoys a great strategic edge, serving as a bridge and corridor to different regions. This makes the former an attractive spot for Russia to materialize its strategic depth.” Therefore, the current advancement between Russia and Pakistan, high-level visits, Pakistan’s possible role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Russia-China-Pakistan cooperation under the changing geo-strategic and geopolitical environment can bring positive impacts to the Central and South Asian region.

It is seen that there is increasing coherence among Russia, Pakistan and China over the changing security situation in Afghanistan. In fact, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu had acknowledged Islamabad’s zeal to fight terrorism in the region and has promised to work with the country. This shows the changing Russia’s attitude towards the Afghan-Pakistan issue. Such a transformation can actually have a large-scale consequences for the South Asian countries; “especially, under the ambit of Russia’s centrality towards the East.” Russia’s ties with China have also increased and reached an extraordinary level against the backdrop of the Ukrainian crisis. And it can be said that Moscow has been intensely trying to strengthen its diplomatic, economic and military relations with both Beijing and Islamabad. “Cooperation rather than competition, even in

Russia's 'traditional spheres of influence', will likely be the hallmark of their ties." Therefore, these ongoing advancements have the possibility to transform the balance of power in the region. "Russia has expressed its keen interest to participate in building energy and transportation corridors from Central Asia to Pakistan through Afghanistan's Wakhan sector. By linking it with the Karakoram highway, China too becomes a part of this corridor." This will not only give "Russia access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean but also give Pakistan entry into the Russian and Central Asian markets" (Rajorshi Roy 2014).

The China-Pakistan link can be the reason for the Russia-Pakistan-China triangle. As we know, China is an old partner of Pakistan and has always backed the latter in matters of international conflicts, which Russia knows very well and therefore, becoming friends with Islamabad can be an excellent way to get closer to China. Also, with the increasing strategic ties between Washington and New Delhi, it kind of unnerves both Moscow and Islamabad occasionally. For Russia, as India diversified its arms procurement to the United States, France, Israel and United Kingdom, it sees no more hindrance in forming a strategic alliance with Pakistan. It is in this context that the shared interests amongst the three countries- Russia, China and Pakistan originated. "For China and Russia, the U.S. is an abhorrent state, which must be dethroned from its hegemonic position for their own security. And Pakistan has enough incentive from both Russia and China to be a willing partner in an Asian security architecture shaped by both the major powers" (Joy Mitra 2015).

Russia is also working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. In the tripartite meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at Moscow, Foreign Secretaries of Russia, China and Pakistan "decided to seek flexible approaches including the lifting of UN sanctions against select Taliban leaders" to promote peaceful dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This decision comes in the wake of recent attempts by Russia to engage directly with the Taliban amid growing worries about the rise of the Islamic State in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, reacting to the discussions of the tripartite meeting, the Afghan government on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec, rejected the call by the three countries and said that the Afghan people alone can decide on removing

Taliban leaders from the UN sanction lists. It is noticed that both India and the Afghanistan government is wary of any peace process driven by Pakistan as they believe Taliban with ties to the Pakistani security establishment is the biggest threat in Afghanistan. However, in the future one could see signs of cooperation among Russia, China and Pakistan, as their ideas and capabilities complete each other. “Russia is an alternate source for Western military technology and energy supplier, China is economically more potent than the other two; with considerable foreign exchange reserves looking to invest and need of energy supplies, while Pakistan despite its structural problems is a growing economy with young population in need of both energy supplies and defence equipment”<sup>53</sup> (Joy Mitra 2015). Furthermore, as Russia is hit by sanctions from the Western Countries after the Crimean accession, and as mentioned earlier; India’s diversification of arms procurement took place, it is now looking for new allies and opportunities in Asia and new arms market in Pakistan (although this might have some sort of contest between Moscow and Beijing in the years to come). “But it is important to note that India is economically too big to be overlooked and Russia has an interest in preserving its relationship with the former. Thus, it is possible that Russia will continue to arm India along with China and Pakistan” (Joy Mitra 2015). This strategy has been pursued by the European countries and the United States to supply arms and machineries to both India and Pakistan. But the issue of Russian arms supply to Pakistan is of more importance because that will indicate that Moscow won’t give any special treatment to its old and time-tested partner India.

Russia, Pakistan and China interactions is not only limited to strategic sphere, it can be seen in the form of economic cooperation. In was in the year 2016, Russia and China supported the idea of building a comprehensive Eurasian partnership. It was a Russian idea and a big plan for Asia and Eurasia, which combines deepening existing integration projects and creating a broad platform for cooperation within the EAEU, the SCO, ASEAN, APEC, and their interaction with individual initiatives, like China’s “One Belt, One Road” project playing the central role.

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<sup>53</sup> URL: <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/russia-china-and-pakistan-an-emerging-new-axis.392722/>

“China’s OBOR initiative which was formally presented on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 is an ambitious Eurasian strategy of an emergent power. It is a combination of two routes: The New Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road. The OBOR initiative is based on existing and planned linkages from various regions of China towards the outside world. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the tributaries of the OBOR vision and it is the most important one” (Irina Ionlea Pop, 2016).

Since, “Pakistan is at the crossroads of east and west and north to south trade corridors, thus, Pakistan can offer Russia the Western corridor from which it can draw benefits from the use of the Gwadar port. Further, Russia could have access to Indian Ocean through the Arabian Sea and the Gwadar port and connecting Russia and Central Asian Region to the port of Gwadar could also benefit Pakistan’s economic growth and development” (Business Recorder, 12 June 2017). It can be observed that with the growing convergence of interests, there is increase potential for “Russia-Pakistan-China alliance” in the coming years and this trilateral alliance can have more prospect in Asia than a similar “Russia-China-India grouping” (Joy Mitra 2015). Forming the Russia-China-Pakistan alliance would not only allow them “to counter the spread of terrorism and radicalism in the region but also to contain the America’s growing influence in the region” (Tikhonova 2016).

## **Conclusion**

There is a nuanced relationship between Russia and Pakistan due to India and US factor and host of regional issues such as impasse over Iran’s Nuclear Program, Iraq and Syrian crisis, conflict over Ukraine etc. The effects of these factors cannot be ignored and has to be dealt carefully while looking at their bilateral ties. Regarding this Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that different stance regarding regional issues at the moment can be quiet natural. As Russia-Pakistan relations were not always smooth and development of positive relations have not been developed from a long time unlike relations with India. Therefore, at some point, positions can be different and it depends on the international situation as well but of course both the countries can be flexible at times. However, formation of close connections “between the top leaders” of Moscow and Islamabad and both the countries

eagerness to open a new episode in their bilateral relations is taking the relationship forward. Also, it can be pointed out that Russia-Pakistan-China trilateral alliance can be a good counter-balance against the United States and India but again at the same time, starting to form blocks can be a dangerous thing for the future. As we know, Russia and China wants a multi-polar world, in contradiction to the United States idea of a unipolar world and both the countries being “permanent members of the Security Council” have divergent views and interests with regard to important international issues. Therefore, in the recent years, because of converging of interests on various regional and international issues we can see there is increased political and economic interaction among the three, through the platform of SCO.

Pakistan has good ties with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, in addition to Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. But Saudi Arabia seems to have a significant position in determining Pakistan’s foreign policy. It has a considerable influence over Pakistan’s military, political establishments and religious elite in a way that they primarily influence the latter’s internal and external matters. “It has been observed that the sectarian view of Saudi Arabia holds a central place in defining its bilateral and strategic relations with the Muslim countries. In fact, compared to Saudi Arabia, the US and China enjoy less privilege in Pakistan, although they also have an influence over the latter’s internal political and military issues” (Muhammad Amir Rana, 2015). It is important to be noted that since most of the rebel groups which are suspected as terrorist groups have been mostly funded by these Arab countries and Russia on the other hand is against these groups. Therefore, Russia-Pakistan relations have been greatly influenced by the geopolitics of the region as whatever is happening in the region has repercussions on their bilateral relationship too. But, as we know, in international politics there are no everlasting allies and foes, because states act per their own national interests. Therefore, as of now, it is difficult to predict what will happen in the next few years.

In the next chapter the thesis will give the historical overview of Russia-Pakistan relationship. Firstly, it will talk about the Soviet-Pakistan relations, soon after the inauguration of the latter. Secondly, it will talk about the opportunities provided for

Russia-Pakistan cooperation after the exit of Soviet forces from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 1989 and the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991. Finally, the chapter talks about the changed Russian impression about Pakistan's role in the region after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and consequently, the decision of Pakistan to give up on Taliban and to join the U.S. led NATO troops as a front-line state to fight against terrorism.



## CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF RUSSIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Due to the differences in history, geography and ideological perspective, Pakistan and the Soviet Union could not establish a healthy relationship. The most noticeable root cause that affected the Soviet-Pakistan relations can be seen from the contrasting ideological foundation that was laid during the pre-independence era of British India. In order to understand it better, the relations between Russia and Pakistan can be divided into five major periods- 1947 to 1965, 1965 to 1971, 1971 to 1991, 1991 to 2001 and 2001-2017. The reason behind this periodization is arbitrary in nature. However, this has been done for easy understanding of the historical evolution of this relationship. Likewise, the first three periods talks about Russia and Pakistan's relationship in the pre-Cold War era and the events which marked their significance for example: first period: inception of Pakistan, Pakistan's entry into Western military alliances, Suez and Hungarian crisis of 1956, the 1958 military coup d'état , the May 1960 incident of U2 American spy plane, Indo-Pakistan armed conflict of 1965; the events which distinguished second period were Tashkent Declaration of January 1966, Bangladesh crisis, 1971 Indo-Pakistan armed conflict; the events which distinguished third period was creation of East-Pakistan in 1971, coming of Zia-ul-Haque to power in July 1977, the Saur Revolution of 1978 in Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and restoration of democratically elected government of Benazir Bhutto in 1988. The fourth period talks about Russia-Pakistan relations aftermath the disintegration of the USSR i.e. after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1988 and the eventual disintegration of the Soviet Union, and finally the fifth period talks about their relations post 9/11 attacks in America.

The Soviet Union has always attributed the Hindu-Muslim problem in India generally to the British policy of imperialism. According to Soviet specialists on India, "The main and decisive reason why the Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated was the policy of British imperialism which was always based on the principle of 'divide and rule'." The Soviet leaders condemned the Muslim league as a reactionary communal organization. According to the Marxist approach, religion could never form part of nationhood

anywhere. In Soviet Union, Muslim League was condemned not only because of its communal character, but also because of its negative role which threatened to weaken the national liberation movement. However, a certain change occurred in the attitude of the Soviet leaders and the Communist Party of India functionaries towards the Muslim League after the Soviet entry into the Second World War in June 1941 in order to strengthen the war-time alliance with Britain and step up the war effort in India. It can be said that in the changed circumstances, the attitude of the Soviet leaders as well as of the Communist Party of India towards the Muslim League softened as the League efforts towards the war was positive (Raghunath Ram 1983).

There were Soviet ideological opposition to the partition of India and to the Muslim League, however this did not hamper the establishment of relation between the countries. The leading Soviet expert on India A.M. Dyakov in his well-known book explained the logic behind “divide and rule” as a core policy of the British and called the Muslim League as a tool for advancing British imperialism since its creation. The writer equally criticizes the Hindu Mahasabha and the Princes for acting as tools of British imperialism. The Soviet Indologist was critical of the Indian National Congress for not making serious attempts to win support from the Muslim masses. According to him, though INC was not a communal organization, its members were mostly Hindus and there was weak representation of Muslims. Therefore, this was widely used by the Muslim communal leaders and Britishers to estrange the common Muslim masses from the party. Also, in his later work, Dyakov called Pakistan an “artificial state” and said that the “sole link” between its two parts was “a common religion”. Based on this observation, some writers consider Pakistan as a state which cannot fit into Marxist ideology (Raghunath Ram 1983).

Pakistan’s bid to assume leadership of Pan-Islamic forces proved a stumbling block for the improvement of relations with the Soviet Union. The latter condemned the convening of the first Islamic Economic Conference in Karachi. Furthermore, the growing pro-West orientation of Pakistan made the Soviet Union suspicious of its activities. There were speculations at the time that a secret agreement between Pakistan and Britain for military bases in Pakistan was taking place and there were also

suspicions that USA was negotiating with Pakistan for similar facilities. This fear was repeatedly voiced by Soviet writers as well as Soviet visitors to Pakistan in the year 1949, as the developments indicated that America and Britain were interested not only in converting Pakistan into a investment market but also for their establishing as a military base (ibid).

### **Soviet Union's attitude to the issue of Partition of India**

Soviet Union was engrossed with the problems in Eastern Europe and the task of internal economic reconstruction had forced them to adopt a policy of restraint with regard to the events in India, after 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Soviet experts on Indian affairs like E. Zhukov and Dyakov had adopted a very cautious approach in their observations on the partition of India. Also, on the important question of Pakistan, the views of Soviet experts were neutral. They stated that “many progressive Indian leaders consider partition of India would not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem and would weaken India” (Raghunath Ram 1983).

The Soviet expert on Indian affairs Dyakov denounced the Mountbatten's plan for transfer of power on the basis of partition of British India into- Pakistan and the Union of India and argued that it is a carefully orchestrated British decision to perpetuate their political and economic control on the sub-continent. While, E. Zhukov, another expert on Indian affairs argued that it was nothing but a deal between British imperialism on the one hand and the Indian bourgeoisie on the other. It can be said that the creation of the state of Pakistan was not viewed as conducive in Moscow. For the Soviet Union, the division of the Indian subcontinent was a result of British strategy of ‘divide and rule’ (Owais 2007). The Soviet reaction to the partition of India was thus negative. It saw the plan as a clear maneuver by the British to perpetuate their vested interests and make India and Pakistan dependent on them. Moreover, the commentators and leaders of the Soviet Union expressed their serious doubts on the survival of Pakistan as an independent state. Since, it was consisted of two separate and disunited parts which were geographically, culturally, racially and linguistically distinct. Since, the country had no large industrial centers and was extremely poor in minerals, although had some agricultural raw materials, they predicted that it will get disintegrated soon after its birth.

Pakistan was chiefly characterized as an agrarian economy and therefore dominated by foreign capital investments, chiefly British monopolies. This enabled the latter to influence the country's economic development in a direction favourable to them by preserving it as an agrarian and raw materials producing country (Raghunath Ram 1983).

Observing the prevailing conditions at the time, Soviet expert Balabushevich remarked that since the partition of India, both the Dominions continue to be actually dependent on Britain economically, politically and militarily. The partition had solved neither the national nor the communal question, the very purpose for which India had been divided. It did not create a homogeneous Muslim state, as millions of Hindus still lived in Pakistan. According to 1951 Census, 14.1% of the people of Pakistan were Hindus and more than 30 million Muslims lived in the Indian Union. Also, Soviet Union criticized Pakistan for being converted into a British bridge-head in the East, a second Trans-Jordan of enormous dimensions. Nevertheless, the Muslim League retained its influence over the masses by their Pan-Islamic and anti-Hindustan sentiments (Raghunath Ram 1983).

To quote the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, "The partition of India enabled British imperialism to weaken the economy of the country, and the inflaming of differences between India and Pakistan has facilitated British dominion in both Dominions." It also described India and Pakistan as "parts of the British Empire, former British colonies, retaining to a differing degree their dependence on Great Britain, and members of the so-called British Commonwealth of Nations."

### **Soviet Union's attitude towards the Kashmir problem**

When Kashmir was invaded in October 1945, the Soviet press fully exposed the imperialist motive behind it. Pravda, the Russian newspaper reported on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1948 that the "Muslim army" which invaded Kashmir was organized by a British General. While some others view Soviet Union as taking a "neutral", "non-committal" or "indifferent" attitude towards the Kashmir issue until Pakistan joined military alliances with the west. But it is not wrong to say that Soviet Union always wanted India

and Pakistan to solve the Kashmir problem without any outside interference unlike the Western powers, who wanted internationalization of the Kashmir issue. It was Mountbatten's adviser; Lord Ismay finalized the plan of bringing the matter into the United Nations. The motive behind this plan was to involve America and Britain in the Kashmir issue, to prolong the dispute between Pakistan and India and to convert Kashmir into a protectorate of America and Britain. This was to be done under the excuse of giving assistance to the United Nations. Finally, the whole purpose of the plan was to convert Kashmir into a colony and a military base by introducing Anglo-American troops (Kaushik 1971).

In December 1952, in the Security Council meeting, the Soviet delegate Valerin Zorin reiterated Moscow's strong opposition to the introduction of foreign troops in Kashmir. During this period, the relations between the USSR and India were not very close, but there was considerable understanding between the two countries, especially with regard to the question of admission of the People's Republic of China and condemning Apartheid policy pursued in South Africa (ibid). Consequently, the Kashmir Constituent Assembly was being convened to consider extension of certain provisions of the Indian Constitution to Kashmir and to make Kashmir a constituent part of the Indian Republic with effect from 26<sup>th</sup> January 1957. Pakistan opposed to this decision and wanted to stop any further integration of Kashmir with the Indian Union constitutionally and otherwise. Therefore, Pakistan arranged to have a resolution moved in the UN Security Council on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1957 with Anglo-American support. This resolution too reiterated the earlier resolution and stated that the status of Jammu and Kashmir should be decided through a plebiscite thus implementing the will of the people after all the Indian and Pakistani forces had been withdrawn from the area. The Soviet delegate, A. Sobolev, supported the Indian position and said that the Kashmir issue should be decided and settled by the people of Kashmir. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1957 an Anglo -American resolution was tabled whereby it was recommended for the "consideration of the use of force" to implement the Council's resolution on Plebiscite was placed which the Soviet delegate promptly vetoed it. The Soviet Union remained firm in its opposition to the idea of stationing a UN force in Kashmir. Indeed, it informed Pakistan that it would veto any draft resolution that might be put forward in the Security Council to that effect. On

the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 1957 the debate on the Kashmir issue took the limelight in the Security Council meetings. The delegates from the Soviet Union supported the Indian argument that any constructed solution to the Kashmir problem should take into consideration the changing political and economic context that had taken place over the past ten years in Kashmir and in Asia generally. In May 1964, when the issue was debated again, the Soviet representative while reaffirming his Government's stand that Kashmir was a part of India; refrained from condemning Pakistan. This posture of Soviet Union in the UN was in marked contrast to its previous practice (Raghunath Ram 1983).

The new mood of the Soviet Union towards Pakistan became clear, when for the first time, at Kosygin's invitation; President Ayub Khan made an official visit to Moscow in April 1965. Although the joint communiqué which was issued at the end of Ayub Khan's visit to Moscow made no direct reference to Kashmir, it was couched in a language that was entirely satisfactory to Pakistan. The new leadership basically wanted to modify their South Asian policy from one of total commitment to India to one of apparent neutrality in regard to Indo-Pakistani disputes. This new stance became further clear when Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited the Soviet Union in the following May 1965. Kosygin was reported to have told the Indian Prime Minister at the Kremlin meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1965 that the Soviet Government looked forward to a peaceful settlement between India and Pakistan regarding the dispute of Rann of Kutch. But more significant aspect in the joint communiqué was the absence of any mention of Soviet support for India on the issues concerning Pakistan: the communiqué mentioned neither Kashmir nor the Rann of Kutch. Basically, throughout 1964 and in the first half of 1965, Moscow repeatedly urged both the disputing parties to find a settlement without any outside influence. In fact, when the Pakistani Army mounted a second camouflaged invasion of Kashmir in August 1965, the Soviet Union maintained silence and the entire military operation went unreported in the Soviet press. When the Kashmir fighting led to an all-out war between India and Pakistan, the Soviet Government took a non-partisan attitude by saying that the war would profit only the outside Powers (Raghunath Ram 1983: 65-66).

Reportedly, Kashmir proved a major hurdle in the way of an agreement. The Indian side wanted a 'no-war pact', while Pakistan insisted on a resolution of the Kashmir dispute before signing a no-war pact. The Soviet Union began to take a neutral stand and non-involvement in political and territorial disputes between the two newly-independent nations, but it lasted only as long as India and Pakistan were both non-aligned and uncommitted to the anti-Communist global military alliance system that was being led by the United States. As soon as Pakistan started aligning itself militarily with the United States, this created a heavy strain on the Soviet effort to stay neutral with regard to Kashmir. Within a year of the US-Pakistani military pact, the Soviet Union announced its support for the Indian stand on Kashmir and for nine years it stood firmly by the Indian claim that the Kashmir issue had been settled finally by the people's will and Kashmir remains an integral part of the India. However, after Khrushchev's fall in 1964-1965, a subtle change occurred in Soviet policy; the Soviet Union appeared to return to its neutrality status of the late forties and early fifties by claiming that Kashmir remains a subject of 'dispute' between the two countries and thereby urged the two countries to resolve it bilaterally. This subtle change came in response to Pakistan's disenchantment with its military affiliations with the United States and its quest for a foreign policy that was independent in nature. However, the Tashkent Declaration signed on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1966 put an end to the Indo- Pakistan war of 1965 with the help of the great powers who had provided the necessary force to agree for a cease fire between the two nations. Although it gave the Kashmir issue the appearance of a dispute between India and Pakistan but the Tashkent peace confirmed that Pakistan could hardly expect to take Kashmir by force (Raghunath Ram 1983: 67-68).

Nevertheless, it can be said that the Kashmir problem is a bilateral matter and should be solved bilaterally, as no one knows the matter better than India and Pakistan themselves. But it seems Pakistan won't give up its position on Kashmir and it will continue involving other Powers. But sometimes Russia has difficulty in maintain a balanced position regarding the Kashmir problem as it had to maintain its relations with both India and Pakistan. Russia is not keen on improving its relations with Pakistan at India's cost because it might affect the time-tested Russia-India relations. The only way to

maintain balance relations with both the countries is helping them solve the problem and continue playing the role of a mediator.

### **Change in the Relations**

However, the best way to understand the evolution of Soviet-Pakistan relations is to arbitrarily divide the history of its relations into five periods: first period 1947-1965, second period 1965-1971, third period 1971-1991, fourth period 1991-2001 and fifth period 2001-2017. The first three period talks about Soviet-Pakistan relations in the pre-Cold War era, the fourth period talks about Russia-Pakistan relations after the disintegration of USSR and the last one, the fifth period talks about Russia-Pakistan relations post 9/11 attack in the United States.

#### **Soviet-Pakistan relations in the initial years of Cold War (1947-1965)**

In the beginning the Soviet Union had manifested its coldness by failing to establish relations diplomatically with Pakistan and thereby failed in showing the diplomatic courtesy of sending felicitations to the Government of Pakistan on the occasion of the formal inauguration of their state. Nevertheless, in 1948 the Soviet Union tried to rectify this mistake, seeing the possibility of a closer co-operation between the United States and the state of Pakistan.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1948, diplomatic relationship between the Soviet Union and Pakistan was established through an agreement concluded in New York by Andrei A. Gromyko (First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Sir Zafrulla Khan (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan). However, the functioning of their Embassies took place only afterwards and the appointment of Ambassadors was deferred till March 1950, nearly three years after Pakistan had achieved its independence. But we can say that Soviet Union and Pakistan had an exchange of cultural, medical and trade groups even before the arrival of the Soviet Ambassador Alexandar Georgievitch Stetsenko in Islamabad and before the establishment of formal state relations. For example, at the end of 1948, a Russian trade delegation arrived in Pakistan, followed by the visit of representatives of Soviet writers to Lahore, then group of Soviet doctors in 1951. In 1952, a Pakistani cultural group visited the USSR. Also, between 1948 and 1952, trade relations with the



Soviet Union increased sharply. However, in the next year there was a marked decline reaching down to 4 percent. On the invitation of the Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association, a five-man delegation of the Soviet writers led by M. Tikhonov visited Pakistan in the year 1949 to participate in the PNA Convention at Lahore. Also, on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1950, inaugurating an exhibition of photographs depicting Maxim Gorky's life organized by the Soviet-Pakistan Cultural Association in Karachi, the Soviet Ambassador, Stetsenko stated, "It is a first step in acquainting the people of this country with the life, culture and creative work of the people of the Soviet Union." In addition, in September 1952, a barter contract for Russian wheat in exchange for jute and cotton was signed in Karachi (Raghunath Ram 1983).

It was in June 1949, Soviet Union had sent an invitation to Liaquat Ali Khan (the first Prime Minister of Pakistan) to visit Moscow, but he failed to take the opportunity to establish some level of cordial relations between the two nations. Instead, Liaquat Ali Khan accepted President Harry S. Truman's invitation to the United States in 1950. Although, the reason for this decision was never satisfactorily explained by either side, a group study of the Pakistani Institute of International Affairs observed that it was because of the ideological differences, since Pakistan follows Islam and Soviet Union follows Marxism which is atheistic, is the problem. Also, the former was threatened to loss its independence which it has attained after a profound struggle. Another Pakistani writer explained that it was the realization of economic dependence upon the United States that prompted Liaquat Ali Khan to abandon his projected visit to the Soviet Union and instead visit the United States. Further, it can be said that the Pakistani leaders were not prepared to take the risk of cultivating warm relations with the Soviet Union because the leaders were suspicious of the intentions of the Soviet Union (Raghunath Ram 1983).

Signs of warming up between Pakistan and Soviet Union which was seen in the early 1949 began to show signs of strain in the early 1950's. This became apparent in the controversy over the failure of Pakistan to send a group of Pakistani writers to the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution in return for a visit paid by a group of Soviet writers to Pakistan. This action of the Pakistani government was denounced by the

Soviet leaders and accused the country of not being able to resist the American pressures. In trade negotiations too, there was change in relations between the two countries (ibid).

Between 1950 and 1952, the Soviet press on several occasions voiced suspicions that Pakistan was getting close to the American camp to win their support on the Kashmir issue. *Izvestia* on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1950 reported that the American Ambassador had given assurance to Pakistan of support on Kashmir in return for their participation in the Korean War. Also, on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1952, *Pravda* quoted from an Italian newspaper named *Avanti* that, if the officials in Pakistan become more open to collaborate with Washington, USA was not only ready to offer Karachi its assistance economically and militarily but also it was also ready to give its support in the Kashmir dispute (Kaushik 1971). Thus, Soviet Union began to make virulent personal attacks on Liaquat Ali Khan and his policies. He was described as the “Anglo-American agent promoting imperialist interest in the Middle East and South- East Asia in return for American arms and equipment (Raghunath Ram 1983). Also, Pakistan’s stand in the Korean War prevented the development of friendly ties with the USSR. In 1950, in London, Liaquat Ali Khan criticized the action of North Korea as a case of aggression and publicly announced its support to the United Nations’ Resolution<sup>54</sup>. He offered a gift of 5,000 tons of wheat to the United Nations for its use in South Korea. This step was described “as Liaquat Ali Khan’s servile zeal” by a Soviet weekly on international affairs (Kaushik 1971).

Initially, soon after the establishment of diplomatic ties, the trade between USSR and Pakistan happened primarily under single contracts. However, real breakthrough came when the first inter governmental trade agreement got signed between the two countries in 1956. Through this agreement, both the countries granted ‘most favored nation’ status to each other. It was only from the late 1950’s that official contacts at a higher level started taking place at a frequent basis. In 1956, Anastas I. Mikoyan, first deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers visited Pakistan and participated in the celebrations of proclaiming Pakistan as a Republic. Some ministers from Pakistan also

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<sup>54</sup> United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1950 demanded North Korea to immediately end its invasion of South Korea, the catalyst for the beginning of the Korean War.

visited USSR including the then Minister of Fuel power and natural resources, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1960.

In 1952, Dyakov in his work published the general Soviet attitude and wrote that Pakistan was exploited by the Anglo-American imperialist to strengthen its influence in South Asia and West Asia. Also, it was quiet apparent in the UN that the officials of Pakistan were more open in supporting American policy unlike its Indian counterpart. It was noticed throughout the Stalin era that the Soviet Union and Pakistan's relation remained far from cordial. The leaders of the Soviet Union strongly disapproved of the partition of the Indian subcontinent and regarded Pakistan as an appendage of British imperialism. It was only towards the end of Stalin's rule; the Soviet Union began to be seriously be concerned about the growing co-operation between the Pakistan and the United States in the context of the the Kashmir dispute and the political situation in the Middle East (Raghunath Ram 1983).

The new Soviet leaders discarded the doctrinaire approach of the Stalinist era, which had hindered a correct appraisal of Asian realities and recognized the pressing need to consolidate its footholds in different parts of Asia with a view to attaining the twin objectives of the country's foreign policy- **firstly**, to assert Soviet interests and influence in Asia and in its immediate sphere of influence and **secondly**, to contain the United States influence in the region. Therefore, a few months after Stalin's death, in July 1953, the Soviet Government made its first offer of contribution to the United Nations through the ' Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance' to underdeveloped countries. This offer was in marked contrast to earlier Soviet practices. Also, soon after, the USSR inaugurated its own "Point Four" programme and started entering into bilateral agreements with South and South-East Asian countries, such as Afghanistan, Burma, India and Indonesia. A characteristic feature of these agreements was the emphasis placed on mutual expansion of trade, largely through barter arrangements. It can be pointed out that Pakistan's coldness towards the Soviet overture was not due to any overt hostility to the Soviet Union as such, but Pakistan wanted an upper hand in comparison to India and for that reason Islamabad found the prospect of friendship with

the United States more tempting than the possibility of good relations with the Soviet Union (Raghunath Ram 1983).

However, on the part of the Soviet Union, it could not remain unconcerned about the steadily growing rapport between Karachi and Washington, especially when there were moves to create a military alliance system in the Middle East, with its main thrust directed against the Communist world. Through media and press, Soviet Union tried to dissuade Pakistan from opting such a dangerous course but the latter remained firm in its decision and even signed a military pact in February 1954 with the United States. With Pakistan's participation in South-East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) which was a US sponsored military alliance, it worsened the possibility of Soviet-Pakistan bilateral relations. Thus, Soviet Union left with no option but to forge close and friendly ties with India- a Power which appeared to be resisting the American power thrust into the subcontinent as much as the Soviet Union itself. And within a short period of time, Soviet Union and India grew closer to each other. The extension of American military assistance to Pakistan and the open Soviet backing for India on the issue of Kashmir had the effect of involving the two rival Super Powers directly into the politics of India and Pakistan and also the internationalization of the Kashmir conflict. Thus, in the wake of the Korean War, the United States forged a chain of military alliances with a view to contain the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and therefore the state of Pakistan became a vital link in that alliance system.

It can be analyzed from the above incidents that during the period 1947-1952, Pakistan's first basic objective was to establish its independence and survival of the state. At the time, security became the prime importance given its beginning and the geographical setting of the country. The second basic objective of Pakistan was to accede the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir. The third basic objective of its foreign policy was to attract foreign capital and technical assistance for the development of the country. Last but not the least; the foreign policy included the objective to win the support of the Middle East countries in its disputes with India, in the name of Muslim brotherhood. By the end of 1952, it was noticed that Pakistan was confronted with a desperate economic situation.

There was an unprecedented rise in prices, increased unemployment, and disillusionment among the people. With the failure in its external relations and the compulsions of the domestic situations, made it imperative for Pakistan to look to the United States- a country with its vast military and economic resources and political influence, was the only country capable of helping Pakistan to overcome its economic, political and military difficulties (Raghunath Ram 1983).

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1953, a Soviet note of protest was delivered to the Government of Pakistan. The note called the attention of the Government of Pakistan to Press reports emerging from a number of countries where United States was also included, and the statements made by certain US officials, to the effect that negotiations were in progress between the government of Pakistan and the United States with a view to concluding an agreement between the two countries to set up American bases on Pakistani territory, i.e. in a region close to the borders of the USSR. However, the immediate official reaction in Pakistan was to declare that Pakistan had no aggressive intention towards any Power and that its alliances were none of Moscow's concern. Further, on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1953, the Government of Pakistan chose to send a formal reply to the Soviet protest note. It affirmed that "the Government of Pakistan's duty is to guard the security of Pakistan and to adopt measures which are viewed as adequate and appropriate. A second note of protest which was handed to the Pakistani Charge d' Affairs in Moscow on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1954, by repeating the charge that Pakistan had granted military bases to the United States and had joined the US in creating a military bloc in the Middle East directing against the Soviet Union and the peace-loving countries of Asia. The protest note also warned that Pakistan's action to potentially harm the relations it had with the Soviet Union and the responsibility for creating a situation will be upon Pakistan. Pakistan maintained silence for five weeks and finally, on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1954, it chose to send a communication to Moscow. In its response, Pakistan rejected the Soviet protest note of 26<sup>th</sup> March 1954 and asserted that the acceptance of US military assistance did not mean Pakistani armed forces being placed under the foreign command (Raghunath Ram 1983).

However, the Soviet Press continued to express its displeasure at the reactionary policies of Pakistan. When the Muslim League suffered a humiliating defeat in the elections of East-Pakistan- only 7 seats out of 237 seats in the Legislature of that Province, Soviet Observers chose to interpret the event as an indication of the strong and clear disapproval of the people of Pakistan to the military collusion between their country and the United States. But soon afterwards the Central Government of Pakistan started creating difficulties for the United Front Government led by Fazlul Haq in East Pakistan. The relations between the two Governments were further strained when the Government of Pakistan dubbed the Communist Party of Pakistan a “danger to public peace” and banned it in East Pakistan on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1954. There were mass arrests of Communists throughout West Pakistan under Section 3 of the Security Act of Pakistan. However, despite strains in their relations, normal contacts continued between the two countries. In January 1954, they held preliminary talks on the question of concluding a trade agreement on the lines “similar to the Soviet agreement with India”. There was also talk of Soviet technical assistance to Pakistan, involving deputation of Soviet technicians to work in Pakistan (Raghunath Ram 1983).

In February 1954, Menshikov, leader of the Soviet delegation, during a meeting in the UNEC (United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) invited twelve countries, including Pakistan, to send delegation to visit the Soviet Union in September/October that year. He stated that the delegation would be free to study the industrial, agricultural, scientific, and social achievements that have taken place in the Soviet Union. He further expressed the willingness of the Soviet Union to trade with the countries of the region and also to supply long term credit. Notwithstanding, the tensions in Soviet-Pakistani relations, several Soviet Organizations endeavoured to promote close relations between the two countries. In January 1954, Soviet representatives participated in a conference of Pakistani scientists. Moreover, a 16- member Soviet cultural goodwill mission visited Pakistan in March and April 1954. But in spite of these developments, the mutual suspicion between them continued to exist. On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1954, Pakistan informed the USSR that it was going to impose restrictions on the movements of Soviet diplomats in Pakistan, similar to those imposed by Moscow on the movements of Pakistani diplomats and on the circulation of Pakistani literature. Accordingly, on 27<sup>th</sup>

July 1954, these restrictions were issued in the form of a guide to the Soviet diplomats in Karachi. Interestingly, this guide was similar to the manual issued to the Pakistani diplomats in Moscow (Raghunath Ram 1983).

Soviet-Pakistan relations received a serious setback on account of the sneaking sympathy that the Government of Pakistan showed to the West on the Suez crisis<sup>55</sup> and the strong opposition it showed to the Soviet policy in Hungary. Throughout the Suez crisis, although Pakistan voted always with the Asian-African group in the United Nations, but the policy pursued by the Government of Pakistan in regard to the Suez crisis was at variance with the feelings of the people of Pakistan, who extended their sympathy to Egypt wholeheartedly and unreservedly and condemned the Anglo-French military action severely. *Izvestia*, the Soviet newspaper denounced Pakistan's position in the Suez crisis and stated that Pakistan's position in the Suez Canal controversy proved that the Baghdad Pact<sup>56</sup> and the SEATO were pointed against the Soviet Union and the independence of the "Eastern countries".

There were also markedly different views and opinions on the Eisenhower Doctrine<sup>57</sup>, which was proclaimed with a view to enabling the United States, through grants of economic and military aid to some countries of the Middle East, to fill the power vacuum that was likely to result from the disappearance of British influence from that region. While Pakistan welcomed the Eisenhower Doctrine for the Middle East as a step towards securing stability in that region, the Soviet Union attacked it as "a serious threat to peace and security in the area." Thus, it has been observed that in marked contrast to its attitude towards the Anglo-French movement in the Middle East, Pakistan strongly opposed the Soviet action in Hungary. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.S. Suhrawardy on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1956, sent an appeal to the Soviet Premier, Bulganin, to desist from

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<sup>55</sup> The Suez Crisis, also known as the Tripartite Aggression, was an invasion of Egypt in late 1956 by Israel and followed by Britain and France. It was aimed in regaining Western control of the Suez Canal and to throw Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president from power. The US, the Soviet Union, and the UN intervened by forcing the three invaders to withdraw.

<sup>56</sup> The Central Treaty Organization was formed in 1955 by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the UK. It was originally known as Baghdad Pact or Middle East Treaty Organization and was dissolved in the year 1979.

<sup>57</sup> 'Eisenhower Doctrine' was a US foreign policy aimed at delivering military and economic aid to the countries in the Middle East who were resisting the communist aggression. It was formulated by the American President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

using force in Hungary and to extend to the Hungarians an opportunity to decide and form their own government without coercion. Pakistan voted constantly and consistently with the United States in the United Nations. It sponsored a resolution which described the Soviet action as “violent repression” of the Hungarian people, and stated that the “foreign intervention” in Hungary was an “intolerable attempt” to deny freedom and independence to the Hungarian people. Pakistan also was in favor of voting the American sponsored resolution in the United Nations General Assembly which condemned the Soviet action of “crushing” Hungarian independence and called on Moscow to withdraw its armed forces from the revolt-torn land. However, refuting Pakistan’s accusations, Tass, the Soviet News Agency, reported that Suhrawardy’s letter to the Soviet Premier gave a picture of Hungary that was completely opposed to facts and reality. Nevertheless, even after the Hungarian episode, Soviet Union continued to keep the door open for a normalization of relations with Pakistan (Raghnath Ram 1983: 81-82).

Soviet efforts to improve relations with Pakistan continued, irrespective of latter’s military alliances with the USA. In February 1956, Soviet Union offered Pakistan technical knowhow for peaceful uses of atomic energy. *Izvestia* on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1956 wrote that the declaration of the state of Pakistan as a republic is an important marker as it signifies its advancement on the road toward national development. Thus, on the occasion of Pakistan’s Republic Day Celebrations in Moscow, Molotov (Foreign Minister) indicated that in Pakistan the government of Soviet Union would be open to constructing a steel plant just like it had done in India.

To overcome the food crisis in Pakistan the Soviet Government declared a gift of 16,500 tons of rice as food aid on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1956. Towards the end of June 1956, the two countries concluded a trade agreement which gave each other “the status of a Most Favored Nation (MFN) regarding import and export and other questions.” This agreement was similar to the 1953 agreement with India. Furthermore, the Soviet Government with the aim of improving its political relations once again send its invitation to the Prime Minister of Pakistan to visit Moscow but he again chose to visit the United States and instead Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was sent to the USSR in 1956, as



the representative of Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. I.A. Benedictov (leader of Soviet parliamentary delegation) visited Pakistan on February 1958 and told his Pakistani counterpart that Soviet Union was in ready to provide technical and economic assistance mainly in the fields of agriculture, land erosion, salination and control of floods and pests. However, the military coup d'état of October 1958 in Pakistan introduced General Ayub Khan to concentrated power which created unfavorable conditions for close USSR-Pakistan relations, but Soviet Union continued its efforts to normalize its relations with Pakistan. Pakistan Times on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1959 quoted the Soviet Ambassador, "Only 10 percent of the problems between the Soviet Union and Pakistan are controversial in nature, and on the remaining 90 percent there is a possibility of developing friendly relations". After Ayub Khan assumed power, the Soviet Union offered help to explore natural resources, particularly oil and in December 1959, both the countries concluded a barter agreement. Also, in the following year, \$519 million was provided by the Soviet Union for the purchase of heavy machinery (Raghunath Ram 1983).

Another important incident that took place was on May 1, 1960 when the American U-2 spy plane was shot down in Russia. The plane, which took off from Turkey, had touched the American airbase at Peshawar before intruding into Soviet airspace. This created tension between the two countries. Consequently, there was strong reaction in Moscow and Premier Khrushchev send an open threat to wipe out Peshawar which brought Soviet-Pakistani relations almost to the breaking point. Therefore, to prevent recurrence of such incidents as the "U-2" incident, inquiry on whether the American U-2 plane took off from Pakistan as per the allegation made by Khrushchev was instructed by President Ayub Khan personally. In addition, Pakistan informed the United States that in future the use of Pakistani airfields even by unarmed American aircraft have to be more firmly controlled by Pakistan and added it would take all the necessary measures to prevent itself in the involvement of such future incidents. He also made a declaration of constructing amicable relations with all its neighboring countries with Soviet Union included.

Despite, tensions over the U-2 incident, Soviet Union and Pakistan continued to conduct negotiations on the possibility of Soviet technical assistance for explorations of oil and other mineral resources (Raghunath Ram 1983: 103-105). In January 1961, for oil exploration the Soviet Union gave to Pakistan a long-term loan of 30 million dollars. A barter deal was followed after the oil agreement in August 1963 and in October 1963 an Air Agreement was made along with agreements for cultural exchange, economic and trade cooperation (Kaushik 1971).

According to experts, there were two major interrelated reasons which prompted the Soviet Union to turn towards Pakistan at this juncture: firstly, the growing détente between US- Soviet Union and secondly, the growing conflict and friction between Communist China and the Soviet Union. Another Indian specialist on Soviet affairs referred to India's anxiety and insecurity over the relationship of Pakistan and Soviet Union and the insensitivity of Soviet Union that was exhibited towards India. However, it can be said that the Soviet Union in actuality was trying to remain amiable with both India and Pakistan and was not trying to incite one against the other (Raghunath Ram 1983).

At this juncture, a significant change took place in the international situation which introduced a new element into Soviet-Pakistan relations. There was considerable strain in US-Pakistan relations with the increased interest of United States President Kennedy in promoting India as the leader of the region of South and South-East Asia by downgrading the strategic importance of Pakistan. In fact, it was observed in the fall of 1962, a crisis in US-Pakistan alliance when the United States, as a part of its policy of containing China assisted India through military help during Chinese aggression on India's northern border. Also, the growing entente between Pakistan and China seriously strained US-Pakistan relations, as the containment of Communist China was at the core of the US policy in Asia.

The Sino-Indian border hostilities in 1962 and the decision of the Western Powers to rush military assistance to India despite Pakistan's strong protests added a new dimension to Pakistan's China policy. It was clear since, China was India's enemy and

therefore Pakistan's potential friend. Towards the end of 1962, Pakistan began to court China with vigor and it felt that its only chance to redress the growing disparity of power within the subcontinent was to forge a Rawalpindi-Peking axis. In the context of its hostility to India, China welcomed the subtle shift that had taken place in Pakistan's foreign policy and on the prevailing tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir; it rapidly improved its relations with Pakistan. Thus, in the process, it weakened Pakistan's ties with the West and Pakistan's role within the Western military alliance system.

The dramatic developments that occurred in the US-Pakistan relations following the Sino-Indian War made the Soviet Union take a new look at its policy towards South Asia. China's growing closeness with Pakistan caused serious concern in Moscow since it did not want a hostile Pakistan supported by the United States to be replaced by China. There were other factors which influenced Soviet policy: firstly, Pakistan no longer projected its old posture of irreconcilable hostility to the Soviet Union and secondly, the Kremlin welcomed the anti-Western sentiment sweeping across Pakistan and the consequent deterioration in US-Pakistan relations. Thus, it saw an opportunity to establish its presence in Islamabad.

Further, the growing détente between Moscow and Washington, especially after the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, also contributed to some extent to a re-orientation in the Soviet policy towards Pakistan. Moreover, with greater Soviet-American rapprochement, the American interest in its overseas military alliances, especially in Asia, began to wane and thus, Pakistan's efforts to normalize its relationship with Soviet Union was not viewed with any serious concern by the United States. Therefore, there was reshaping of Soviet policy towards the South Asian region in general and towards Pakistan in particular. The policy aimed at broadening the policy towards South Asia in such a way as to bring about the establishment of a mutually beneficial relationship with Pakistan along with India. However, Pakistan on the contrary, made it clear at the cost of its relations with China; it would not improve its relations with the Soviet Union. With the growing Peking-Rawalpindi entente and the widening Sino-Soviet rift, it was not easy for Pakistan to reciprocate the Soviet gesture with enthusiasm. Also, Pakistan was

much disturbed by the Soviet moves to strengthen India's military potential. All these controversies had the effect of slowing down the progress of Soviet-Pakistan relations considerably. But the Soviet Union continued to strive towards its set objectives quite resolutely.

With the development of the Soviet-Pakistani détente, a subtle attitudinal change from Soviet Union was seen towards the Kashmir issue. In May 1964 the Soviet representative to the UN, while reaffirming his Government's stand that Kashmir was a part of India, refrained from condemning Pakistan. This was in marked contrast to previous Soviet practice. Thus, it can be said while adhering steadfastly to the policy of maintaining close friendship with India, the new Soviet leaders made efforts in the direction of balancing their country's relations with the other nations of the subcontinent by improving Soviet-Pakistani relations. They also tried to build up normal relations with other members of the CENTO- Iran and Turkey. During this period, the Soviet Union got increasingly involved in the Vietnam War on the side of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam. It also got increasingly involved on the side of the United Arab Republic and the Arab people in the Arab-Israeli confrontation, particularly after the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. Thus, emergence of Soviet Union as a major intervening power in the South-East Asian and West-Asian regions was witnessed. Pakistan too on its part felt it desirable to respond positively to Soviet overtures and began to bring some modifications in its foreign policy by showing its diminishing interest in the SEATO and the CENTO by developing regional arrangements outside those pacts. In July 1964, the Regional Cooperation for Development Organization (RCD) came into existence with Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey as members- this was one such regional organization, which was welcomed by the Soviet Union. Pravda on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1964 stated: "Turkey, Iran and Pakistan have started to emerge from the isolation imposed on them by the USA and Britain and have developed their independence and simultaneously their desire to solve problems on their own" (Raghunath Ram 1983).

The Soviet Government invited President Ayub Khan, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to visit Moscow in September 1964. He accepted the invitation,

and visited Moscow on April 1965. His visit marked the first ever direct contact in the last 18 years between the top leaders of the Soviet Union and the Islamic state of Pakistan. At the end of the visit, the joint communiqué which was issued stressed on non- proliferation of nuclear weapons and creation of nuclear-weapon free zones in various regions, along with other basic international issues. In January 1965, high-level talks with the leaders of Soviet Union on the theme of international relations and on Soviet-Pakistan relations in particular were held when Pakistan's External Affairs Minister, Benazir Bhutto visited Moscow. The Moscow Radio commented on Bhutto's visit: "We are sure that as a result of this visit, the first visit of the Pakistani Foreign Minister to the USSR, the sphere of our cooperation will expand and this visit would be of great importance in strengthening the relations between the two countries." One of the notable landmarks between the two countries took place when the bilateral agreement on the cultural and scientific cooperation was signed in the year 1965. In the midst of the 1960's, Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations were established as to increase the contacts between the scientist and public personalities of the two countries. For instance, the 'Pakistan Society' was represented by people from academic and creative intelligentsia circle of both the countries. By 1965, the Soviet Union had achieved considerable success in its long-cherished aim of establishing an understanding with Pakistan without prejudicing the decade-old cordial relations with India.

In April 1965, President Ayub Khan had visited Moscow which was immediately followed by Lal Bahadur Shastri's visit in May, which indicated the great importance the Soviet Union attached to ties with India and a desire to strengthen them further. Although, the Soviet policy of friendship with both India and Pakistan was put to severe tests during 1965, it emerged successfully. Over the crisis on the Rann of Kutch in April-May 1965, the Soviet Union appealed the conflicting parties to solve it by direct negotiations and also on the issue of Kashmir the Soviet Union always favored a bilateral approach. It was forced to veto the Western proposals in 1957 and 1962 as their decisions favored- internationalization of the question and its solution by the induction of foreign troops. In February 1964, when Pakistan again raised the Kashmir question in the Security Council meeting the Soviet delegation was firm on its argument that both India and Pakistan should be firmly solved by themselves using peaceful means.

### **The post Indo-Pak War Period (1965-1971)**

During the second period the Soviet Union played a crucial role in settling the ongoing armed conflict between Pakistan and India in 1965. The Soviet Union took the role of the mediator initiated in bringing the two warring nations to the negotiating table at Tashkent. British journalists covering the Tashkent meeting were openly skeptical about its success and remarked, “We tried to reconcile them for 250 years, and in vain; but you are hoping to do this in two or three days.” However, the Tashkent Declaration of January 1966 found wide support from the Indian side and the role of the Soviet Union as a mediator was highly appreciated. The nine-clause Tashkent Declaration signed by Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan and witnessed by Kosygin had a twofold objective—firstly, the immediate resumption of normal and friendly relations between the two states, and secondly, to evolve a procedure for the settlement of all disputes between the two countries through peaceful means. The greatest achievements of the Tashkent Declaration are the rejection of principle of war and use of force as the means to settle interstate disputes, acceptance of the principle of peaceful negotiations and indispensability of Indo-Pak friendship. Also, the Tashkent Declaration envisaged joint meetings at ministerial and other levels and joint Indo-Pakistani bodies had been set up to consider problems of common concern.

In the post-Tashkent period, the Soviet Union, as before, had been striving hard to develop a close relationship with India and Pakistan and had tried to utilize every opportunity to bridge their differences. The year 1966 saw a marked increase in Soviet contacts with Pakistan. In January, Soviet-Pakistan barter agreement was signed, which provided Russian vehicles, road building and engineering machinery for the exchange of Pakistani rice, jute, cotton etc. In May 1966, Kirill Mazurov headed a nine-member Soviet parliamentary delegation to Pakistan. In Dacca the Soviet Union signed a contract for the construction of a thermal power station in Gozala, East Pakistan, with a capacity of 110,000 Kilowatts. Towards the end of 1966, the Soviet Union increased its economic aid to Pakistan worth 80 million dollars and was ready to provide a credit of another 600 million to construct 15 broadcasting stations. Moreover, Soviet visitors to Pakistan had repeatedly stressed the theme of the Tashkent Declaration and had always emphasized

that a solution to the question of Kashmir should be solved without any outside intervention.

It was noticed that Pakistani leaders were not very happy and tried persuading the arms supply from the Soviet Union. When President Ayub Khan visited the Soviet Union in 1967, he raised the matter with Kosygin and as an alternative to his request, he pleaded that the Soviet Union should treat Pakistan at par with India in supplying arms. Following his visit, Soviet-Pakistan relations found greater harmony in core international issues, mutual cooperation's were extended, bilateral trade was increased to 7 million dollars, agreement of over 30 developmental projects with technical assistance and funds provided by Soviet union and Pakistan also made a promise to decamp the US military base in its soil. However, in June 1970 when President Yahya Khan visited Moscow, it did not bring any success to Pakistan's search for arms. Instead, the Soviet Union agreed to increase its assistance for a steel plant and promised to implement Pakistan's Fourth Five year plan (1970-1975) by assisting with 200 million dollars. Even the joint communiqué which was signed at the conclusion of the visit stressed only on economic cooperation. As it can be observed, the former never wanted to promote an arms race between India and Pakistan, as it considered harmful for economic development of both the countries. But, Soviet Union agreed to supply arms to India because of the increased threat to Indian security from the military hardware, valued at 2,000 million dollars, supplied by the USA to Pakistan. It has supplied India with only a reasonable quantity of arms to help meet its normal defence requirements, which have acquired a new urgency in the light of Chinese threat (Kaushik 1971).

On V.V. Giri's first state visit to the USSR in September 1970, Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny once again stressed the historic importance of the Tashkent Declaration and held that the document shall not be exhausted and shall always determine the essence of Pakistan-India relations. In fact, unlike the United States which menaced peace in Asia by roping in many Asian countries in military pacts, the Soviet Union tries to strengthen peace in the region through non-military means. Good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan-two of the most powerful countries of the region were viewed by the Soviet Union as the anchor of Asian security. Its policy had always been aimed at

strengthening its friendship with both, while trying to bring them closer to each other. In fact, this is a part of Soviet Union's general policy of befriending all countries, especially its neighbours (Kaushik 1971).

USSR-Pakistan relations were put to severe strain during the Bangladesh crisis. The issues which adversely affected USSR-Pakistan relations during this period were – the agreement of Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty which enabled India to receive 300 million dollars annually; the assistance of Henry Kissinger's secret visit in July 1971 to China; the opposition made by Pakistan against Asian Collective Security System which the Soviet Union had proposed and Soviet Union's role during East-Pakistan crisis in 1971. After Islamabad started war against India by disregarding the friendly advices from the Soviet Union and began to look for support in United States and China, the Kremlin had no choice but to come out in open support of India. Moscow had effectively blocked the adoption of all those resolutions which could have been tantamount to exerting international diplomatic pressure on India. The USSR had also rendered necessary military assistance for ensuring a successful outcome of the freedom struggle in Bangladesh. Moreover, India also on its part in the 1971 War, took full advantage of the political differences between the two wings of Pakistan, following the 1970's elections.

Z. A. Bhutto was quite critical of the Soviet role during the Bangladesh crisis and the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. He stated that whatever might have been the Soviet motives in entering into the Treaty of Friendship with India, that "pact" had "certainly gave India the backing, both military and psychological, to embark upon her armed aggression." He also pointed to the strong diplomatic support Moscow had rendered to India in the Security Council which led to the dismemberment of Pakistan. However, after Bhutto became the President of Pakistan, he seemed anxious to repair the damage done to USSR-Pakistan relations. He did not wish to completely write off Moscow from his scheme of furthering Pakistan's interests. On the other hand, the Soviet Union also did not wish to completely write off Pakistan, especially after having spent so much money and effort in the past. In Moscow's calculations, India's importance was bound to loom large with her victory in Bangladesh and her peaceful nuclear explosion; it was going to become a leading Power in the region and thereby would play a significant role in South



and Southeast Asia. However, Soviet concern for safeguarding its borders and securing its southern periphery from hostile influences and also the necessity of preserving conditions of peace and stability near its frontiers induced Moscow to persistently cultivate its relations with Islamabad. Moreover, the need to contain and guard against Peking's nefarious interests, competition with the USA and China on a world scale and its desire to play a global role also accounted for Moscow's sustained interest in Pakistan (Jain 1974).

Accordingly, when President Bhutto arrived in Moscow as the head of a 58-member delegation on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1972, he was received at the airport by the Russian Premier Kosygin. Kosygin offered to help find a political settlement between India and Pakistan. The Joint Communiqué which was issued at the end of Bhutto's visit stated that the Pakistan will take necessary steps for establishing a peaceful environment in the subcontinent. However, nothing tangible seemed to have come out of the talks. On the contrary, in the Indo-Soviet joint statement of 5 April 1972, Moscow for instance favoured "direct negotiations between the governments of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan" for arriving at a peaceful political settlement of the problems concerned. Thus, Bhutto's bid to seek Soviet support for securing the release of the Pakistani POWs and the vacation of territory occupied by India in West- Pakistan was in vain. While, on other international issues, there were similarity of views between both the countries. It was reflected in their demand with regard to the implementation of the 22 November 1967 resolution of the Security Council on West Asia in their desire "to establish a fair and lasting peace" in that region. Both Soviet Union and Pakistan were together expressive on resolving the Arab- Israeli conflict. The two sides also desired the termination of an arms race, to keep the nuclear weapons under control, demanded a withdrawal of the foreign troops for peace and security from India and China and called for the implementation of inalienable rights of the peoples of Indo-China so an independent decision can be made in accordance to their respective national interest. Both Soviet Union and Pakistan urged for a rational approach in solving the issues and thus agreed that the United Nations is "an important instrument of peace and security" (Jain 1974).

However, the main achievement of Bhutto's visit was in the field of bilateral relations. Soon, restoration of USSR-Pak economic, scientific, technical and other relations was agreed as it was disrupted with the events of 1971. The term of the USSR-Pak agreement on economic and technical co-operation was extended and the two sides agreed to hold talks to introduce appropriate changes therein. This signified that the USSR would resume its assistance to Pakistan in geological prospecting, in power engineering and in building metallurgical works in Karachi. The two sides also agreed to explore avenues of expanding fields such as in economic and technical sector. With regard to trade, both the countries were more than willing to resume its trade transactions and therefore it signed a new trade agreement till 1974 which envisaged a further expansion of trade between the two countries. In order to further strengthen relations, it was agreed that the parties would regularly exchange opinions regarding questions of interest. Thus, the visit made by Bhutto was seemed as "breaking the ice" and injecting of "some warmth in the frozen relationship" (ibid).

Undoubtedly, there were certain elements within Pakistan who speak of China and the United States as dependable friends and seemed to find fault with the Soviet Union for consistently backing India over the years. Some even go to the extent of blaming the Kremlin for the break-up of Pakistan. However, there were also other forces, which positively assessed the Soviet role in the Indian sub-continent during that period.

### **Soviet-Pakistan relations during the military intervention in Afghanistan (1971-1991)**

The 1971 East-Pakistan crisis did not last long and during this period Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave a visit twice to the Soviet Union to give further impetus to Soviet-Pakistan relations: first when he was the president in the year 1972 and then in 1974 when he became the prime minister. He brought changes in the foreign policy of Pakistan by pulling out from South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in the year 1973 and in 1979 it withdrew from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) (Hanif 2013). This resulted in tripling the volume of Soviet-Pakistani trade during the years of 1970 to 1979. The support which was provided by the Soviet Union for the search of oil and gas fields was diversified and cooperation in the economic sphere was considerably

increased in the 1970's. In 1973, with the support of Soviet Union beginnings of a steel mill construction was made in Karachi. Further Soviet specialists also constructed the Guddu Thermal Power Station in the second half of 1970's which started functioning in 1980; it also helped in constructing a broadcasting radio station in Islamabad in 1976. Many of the gas and oil fields today have been discovered by the geologist of Soviet Union.

The transfer of technology to Pakistan by the Soviet Union proved to be significant as it did not come with political attachments. A remarkable advancement in the Pakistan – Soviet Union was witnessed in the year 1973 with improvement in the scientific and economic relations, exchange of students and delegations in each other's country, cultural agreements being established and inaugurating the Karachi steel mills with visits from steel experts from the Soviet Union. In order to push the trade between the countries, a delegation of seven members led by the trade minister of the Soviet Union visited Pakistan in the year 1973. The following year, a barter trade agreement was concluded between the two nations. Furthermore, in the year 1974, a contract worth 2300 million dollars was signed between a soviet firm and Islamabad for purchase of machinery. In the same year, a credit package worth 160 million roubles was signed for the development of Karachi steel mill in December 1974. In the economic sector, a number of steps from 1975 to 1977 were taken to strengthen their relationship. In February 1975, a program was concluded for goods exchange in Pakistan which the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade from Soviet Union attended, it also agreed to hold annual exchange program of scientific expertise. An exchange of goods worth 15 million dollars was signed by trade delegates of the Soviet Union in the May 1977.

On 5<sup>th</sup> July 1977, General Zia-ul Haq overthrew the government of Pakistan with a military coup and with him coming to power, once again Soviet-Pakistan relations entered into hard times with political, economic and cultural ties decreasing. On July 1978, Ghulam Ishaq khan (Finance minister) visited Moscow and the Soviet gave assurance of continued facilities of credit to Pakistan for the Karachi steel mills. Ghulam I. Khan termed the soviet friendship as a “basic principle” for the foreign policy of Pakistan. He extended invitation to Prime Minister Alexy Kosygin to Pakistan which as

a result Russian delegation attended the inauguration of the funded projects such as the Guddu thermal power station and the Karachi steel mills. Thus the political hostility taking place in Afghanistan did not affect the efforts made on building their relationship. Diplomatic relations continued, but during this period, the positive developments could not yield the desired friendly relations between Moscow and Islamabad. It can be said that in the 1980's, due to heated and complex developments in Afghanistan, it left an uncooperative imprint on Pakistan- Soviet relations. Their relations became more favourable only after the accession of Benazir Bhutto's government to power with Zia-ul-Haq's demise in 1988 and the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in the year 1989. Although the political relations gained momentum from 1990 onwards, the economic and trade relations did not improve due to the macroeconomic situation in Russia

Soviet- Pakistan relations took a downward trend when the Saur Revolution<sup>58</sup> took place in Afghanistan and it opened a new phase of relationship after the 1979 military intervention in Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. The opposition of soviet military occupation by Pakistan was seen as a hostile and it led to almost a virtual war like situation with Moscow. Even after the soviet forces were withdrawn, feelings of resentment in the military and between political officials persisted in both the countries. In fact, Islamabad and Moscow's relation once again came under a severe strain as Pakistan gave recognition to Taliban in Afghanistan and it began sympathizing with the Chechen freedom fighters. To this development the Russian government reacted by setting a campaign against the Islamic fundamentalist, as in many of the autonomous regions there were agitation among the Muslim minorities. Russia was highly critical of Pakistan's alleged support to the Taliban and the Chechen freedom fighters (Doss 2004).

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Afghanistan continued to be entangled in the civil war and its effect led to serious ramifications in the Middle East, south Asia and in the central Asia. The relation of Russia and Pakistan was thus heavily shadowed by the

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<sup>58</sup> People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) led the Saur Revolution against the rule of self-proclaimed Afghan President Mohammed Daoud Khan on 27-28 April 1978.

situation in Afghanistan. In the case of Pakistan, it was insecurity which was related to fear, suspicion and concerns about its own security interests. While, Moscow was concerned that if Taliban comes to power by defeating the Northern Alliance, they will help in the growth of Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia and it will destabilize the entire region. It seemed Russia blamed the Chechnya and Dagestan uprising to be the construct of Pakistan and Taliban. And therefore, the Russian Government was providing material and political assistance to the anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan so as to limit the spread of the spillover effects throughout central Asia (Doss 2004).

During this period, Pakistan's support for the Chechen rebels, support for the Taliban and Islamist groups in Central Asia had a negative impact on Soviet-Pakistan relations. In other words, the Islamic Factor had an adverse impact on Soviet relationship with Pakistan. It can be said that the latter's policies towards Afghanistan was in contradiction with Soviet interest in the region. The bitter phase ended with the Soviet troops withdrawing from Afghanistan in the year 1989 but again towards the end of 1990's relationship worsened when Pakistan with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates gave recognition to the Taliban regime in 1996, which was apprehended by the then Soviet Union. It is not wrong to say that both Pakistan and Taliban had manipulated Russia's problems in Chechnya in order to discourage the Russian Government from supporting the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan (Hunter 2015).

“The Chechan-Taliban connections could not have been established without the active assistance of Pakistan or we can say atleast assistance by the influential elements within the Pakistani political and military leadership, including the role of influential Islamist groups such as the Jamaat-e- Islami Pakistan” (ibid). When Moscow questioned Pakistan about Jamaat-e-Islami's alleged role in Chechnya, Pakistan's Ambassador to Moscow Mansur Alam remarked that Jamaat-e- Islami is one of the most influential parties in the country and its priorities and actions are independent from the Government of Pakistan. It is to be noted that official relations between the Taliban and Chechnya rebels increased after the 1996 cease-fire in Chechnya and after the emergence of Taliban as the dominant political force in Afghanistan. Both the entities, Taliban under Mullah Muhammad Omar and Chechen under Aslan Maskhadov's Presidency, though not

internationally recognized, acted as the legitimate and independent government. In fact, during the visit of Chechen envoy Zelimkhan Yanderbiev to Kandahar, the Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar and its Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil recognized the Chechen Republic. It is not wrong to say that the connection between the Taliban, the Chechnya rebels and Pakistan is based on Islamic solidarity (Hunter 2015).

### **Russia-Pakistan relations after the Disintegration of USSR (1991-2001)**

Moscow and Islamabad's relations further disintegrated when the former decided to send its military forces in the late 1970's to Afghanistan to defeat the forces rising against the Soviet Union. The acceptance of the Moscow's decision by Pakistan would mean endangering its own long term interest in the region. Therefore, Pakistan decided to align itself in the western camp against the Soviet Union to help fight the Afghan resistance force Mujahedeen thereby playing a pivotal role in defeating the Soviet Aggression.

According to many political scientists, one of the major contributing reasons for the fall of communism and the eventual demise of the Soviet Union was the defeat in Afghanistan. It can be said that the decade of 1979 to 1989 can be termed as the worst period of relationship between Pakistan and Russia when the former had helped in launching the guerrilla war which was sponsored by the United States. The phase of bitterness decreased in 1991 when the Soviet Union disintegrating. However, Pakistan's support to Taliban in the Afghan civil war and the eventual legitimating of the Taliban government in 1996 led to rise in tension between them.

During the period of cold war, Pakistan and USSR's relation generally remained uneasy however, after the fall of USSR in 1991 the relation found ease and improvement. Russia, the successor state, recovered and consolidated its economic, political and military forces and raised its status as a major world power. It boosted its economy due to the presence of gas and oil reserves and because of reconciled neighbourhood its political stature was became high. It also evolved its policy on foreign matters and it reasserted its status as a veto power in the security council of United Nations. Further,

due to its strategic and economic interest Russia regarded Pakistan with greater regards (Hanif 2013).

A major shift in the global politics was witnessed after the disintegration of the Soviet Union- the bi-polar world was changed to uni- polar, after the end of the cold war United States emerged as the only super power, the years of war and struggle had necessitated in the shifting of national priorities. After the abandonment of communist ideology, the emergence of post soviet states into independent republics and within the old socialist mindset, the introduction to a capitalist market economy shifted the global focus towards geo-economics from geo-political. This changing global environment brought new goals and objectives like promotion of democracy, sharing common principles, promoting peace and human rights, resolving regional conflicts, controlling conventional arms, limiting nuclear proliferation and focusing on market economy and liberalization of trade instead of keeping ideology as a strategic goal (Owais 2007).

Therefore, due to the fall of the Soviet Union, the successor state Russia and Pakistan availed the opportunities provided by the new situation for a fresh start. Consequently, high level bilateral contacts took place between them immediately thereafter. These included- visiting of Alexander Rutskoy (Vice President of Russia) in December 1992 to Paksitan in, the visit of Andrei Kozyrev (Minister of Foreign Affairs) in 1993 and Anatoly Adamishin (the first Deputy Foreign Minister) in May 1994. Pakistan too in exchange to the mentioned visits made by the Russian dignitaries, Akram Zaki (Foreign Secretary) visited Russia in 1992 and in July 1994 Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali (foreign minister) paid a visit to Moscow. Since then, a number of high- level meetings and exchanges took place wherein discussions of collaborations in the fields of peaceful nuclear energy, space technology and defence took place. For some time it seemed that Moscow was placing great attention to Pakistan with the newly changed political scenario (Owais 2007).

Earlier, in November 1992, after years of neglect the first ministerial visit to Russia made by Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali (Minister of State for Economic Affairs) opened up a new road for Russia- Pakistan's relationship. This visit was followed by, Alexander

Rutskoy (Vice President of Russia) visiting Pakistan in December 1992. This showed that in Russia's assessment Pakistan was a critical factor for any political agreements in Afghanistan in particular and to the region in general. The joint communiqué which was issued during the visit of Alexander Rustoky stated that the one of the policy objectives of the Russian government was to progress its relation with the Muslim states based on common principles, goodwill, mutual respect and benefit and not on ideological differences. After the disintegration of the USSR, this visit was the first official contact in the history of Russia and Pakistan and therefore, the joint communiqué made was significant in nature as it welcomed Pakistan's suggestion for a five nation conference on nuclear non-proliferation. Both the countries also agreed to have regular communications between foreign policy establishments and the parliamentarians. Further, in the joint communiqué, Pakistan's position on Kashmir was acknowledged and at the same time expressed the hope for peaceful negotiations abiding by the international agreements. It also discussed for cooperation in the scientific, commercial, economic, political and cultural fields<sup>59</sup> in the draft agreement (Shah 2012).

Therefore, Alexander Rutskoy proclaimed that the new relation with the Muslim countries of South Asia, Central Asia and with Pakistan was to make foundation with the idea of equidistance. Within this context, President Boris Yelstin extended its invitation to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December 1994. However, Bhutto could not visit and was postponed due to domestic problems in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali the foreign minister visited Moscow from 3<sup>rd</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> July in the year 1994 and within his capacity held talks with senior officials in Russis and Andrei Kozyrev his Russian counterpart. The issues discussed involved developments in the state Central Asia and Afghanistan including Bosnia and Tajakistan, the issue of Kashmir etc. During the visit, the ministers signed a protocol on conducting regular consultations and to eliminate the process of visa for the diplomats of each country (Shah 2012).

The conclusion of the above agreements was significant as it showed that the Russia-Pakistan relations have come a long way since the cold war days. Alexander

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<sup>59</sup> Pakistan-Russia Relations: Post Cold War Era by Adnan Ali Shah



Vengerovsky, (Russian Parliamentarian) visited Pakistan on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1995 and disclosed that Russia was willing to supply military hardware (Owasis 2007). However, it did not amount to any development as it was disrupted by Pakistan's action in Afghanistan in the year 1996 whereby Pakistan was supporting the Taliban as a legitimate government. This act brought fear to Russia as it was possible for sparking separatist tendencies in the central Asian states (Hanif 2013). But it is important to note that despite deterioration of economic relations during this period, Russia continued assisting Pakistan in completing the three phases of thermal plant located in Multan. These major thermal plants were put into operation in the middle of 1990's and also ensured the functioning and repairing of Pakistan Steel Mill.

Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the major obstacle in the Russia-Pakistan relationship is due to the situation of civil war Afghanistan and the probable spill over effects in the central Asian region. This have continued to cast a heavy shadow as there is fear, suspicion and concern about the national security interests in the region. With the arrival of Islamic renaissance in Central Asia, Russia feared that it might spread to its southern parts via Central Asia. Pakistan on the other hand, did not look forward to a hostile government in its western border since its eastern border was already insecure because of India. Thus, Russia and Pakistan found themselves in opposite camp since both their stakes lied in the result of the conflict in Afghanistan.

On the issue of terrorism, since Pakistan is perceived as a force for creating the Taliban it was inevitably linked to sponsoring questionable activities. Moscow regularly had expressed its disapproval over the existence of terror camps in Taliban- controlled Afghanistan and in Pakistan. Russia further expressed its displeasure over inept Pakistan's narcotics control authority and its inability to stop smuggling drugs through the central Asian route especially Tajikistan. Nevertheless, in spite of such inhibiting factors, during PM Benazir Bhutto's visit to Moscow, steps were taken to improve bilateral relations. To build confidence and to ensure goodwill from Pakistan, collaboration between the Russian intelligence and the Inter-service Intelligence (ISI) was made to exchange information for countering narcotic trade and terrorism. This communication continued until Nawaz Sharif returned to power in 1997, and both the

countries shared its notes on the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan to find a solution by supporting Russian efforts. It was noticed that Pakistan has always maintained that the birth of Taliban was indigenous which rose out of the civil war in the 1990's which was fought by the Afghan mujahedeen factions. Pakistan, in fact have always advocated for creating a political dialogue between the factions under the watchful eyes of the United Nations. During the visit of Gohar Ayub Khan to Moscow in July 1997, agreement was made to take serious efforts to intensify their bilateral trade and Pakistan also tried to resolve the factors that affected the launch of Badr II (a meteorological satellite of Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) by a Russian rocket.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the United States in December 1998, but failed to lift the ban on the sale of military hardware from the Clinton administration. But in the case of Russian Federation, at the cost of its relations with India, it did not want to supply military equipment to Pakistan. At the very same time it did not want to make it a reason for bringing hurdles in its relation with Pakistan. Thus, Russia allowed Belarus to sell tanks and aircrafts and Ukraine to sell tanks.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his second tenure visited Moscow in April 1999, the first visit by a Pakistani premier in 25 years and it was termed as a "new chapter in relations between the two countries oriented into the 21st Century" by the President Boris Yeltsin. Nawaz Sharif acknowledged Russia as a "global power" in the mediation of global disputes. Both the countries agreed that a move towards a multi polar world is necessary where it will be free of hard confrontations and which is stressed more towards equality, democratic values and justice. Thus, the visit proved to be rewarding as quite a few trade and industry related agreements were also signed (Hanif 2013). This visit also gave the opportunity to close gaps between their security perceptions and interest in south and central Asia. This visit paved way for the regular exchange of representation from both the countries. During Nawaz Sharif's visit in 1999 three important steps were taken in the area of economic and trade cooperation. Both Russia and Pakistan granted each other the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status. They signed an agreement where both parties will allow a non discriminatory treatment in trade and

economic matters of customs, taxes and transfer of payments. A total of three outcomes resulted with the visit of Prime minister of Pakistan- first; trade cooperation agreement in the private sector was signed between the FCCI (Federation of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry) of the two countries, second; they signed a barter trade agreement and third; a decision was made to create a joint ministerial commission to examine the ventures that was agreed together and to conduct annual policy meetings.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy visited Pakistan on September 1999 and concluded that Pakistan had the capabilities to play an important part in curbing international issues of terrorism, trafficking of narcotics and religious fundamentalism. On September 2000 when Sergei Yastrzhembsky (Security Chief) visited Pakistan, the Afghanistan issue was a top agenda (Shah 2012). However, one of the factors which act as a hindrance to the Russia-Pakistan relations is the sale of Russian arms to India. Pakistan has its reservations as the sale of military equipments to India tilts the military balance towards India. On 19th April 2001, Alexander Losyukov (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) visited Pakistan and agreed to promote peace, prosperity and economic cooperation in the region. Genreal Mehmood (ISI chief) visited Moscow in 2001 and it concluded with signing an agreement for the sale of sixteen MI-17 military cargo helicopters which was a major development before the 9/11 attack. However, Pakistan later failed in getting a conducive response regarding increase in the sale of military hardware. The Kremlin leaders were not ignorant of the fact that India was considered more important in South Asia than Pakistan. The defence purchase of Russian arms in India accounted for 60 to 70 percent and India's counter diplomatic move was successful in containing the defence deals with Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif requested for the support of Russia in finding solutions to the issues in South Asia such as the dispute in Kashmir and also in normalizing India and Pakistan's relation. Both sides supported the principles of stability and security in the world, peaceful crises management and also took a resolve to create a multi-polar world which puts the International law along with the UN Charter as a top priority (Shah 2012).

There has been a healthy exchange of delegations between the two countries since that time. Many important issues of bilateral concern have been discussed along with a focus

on possible areas of cooperation. The aforementioned exchanges also included proposals on possible mutual cooperation in the areas of technological know-how, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, defence and outer space.

The interest shown by Russia to improve relations with Pakistan proves that there was a complete departure from the earlier policy of the Soviet Union. In the earlier foreign policy, least interest was shown to the South Asian region and in it advocated for a 'Look West' policy with an emphasis of creating a strategic partnership as equals remained challenging. Russia was provoked to rethink its foreign priorities due to emerging factors of- the eastward expansion of NATO, an increase in the anti-Russian sentiments in the newly independent states and additionally the problem of 'near abroad' policy of Russia in the Commonwealth of independent States (CIS).

The Soviet's act of invading Afghanistan was quite unpopular in Pakistan and it had set a major process of destabilisation in the region. Additionally the officials of Pakistan feared the soviet's historical ambitions of expanding to the waters of Arabian Sea. This situation was exploited by Muhammad Zia-ul Haq as he took advantage in promoting his own brand of Islam by welcoming militant fighters to Pakistan from every country and continued their stay in Pakistan even the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. Many of them were granted Pakistani citizenship. Therefore, the policies started by Zia-ul Haq resulted in spiralling of sectarian issues (violence in Karachi) and the persecution of minorities (targeting of the Hazara Shia minority). This negative development in Pakistan had an impact on its economy, investors were discouraged and Pakistan by then had acquired a bad name all over the world (Kasuri 2015). Further, with the United States' rapid departure from the region following the Geneva Accords in 1988, coupled with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the sanctions imposed against the nuclear programme in early 1990's left Pakistan to deal with thousand of Afghan refugees and Muslim militants who were trained by the ISI and the CIA. This cold attitude from the US made matters worse between Pakistan and the United States. It can be said that the decade of 1990 was stained with strained relationship between the countries.

Ever since the inception of Pakistan in 1947 it was faced with the dual problem of development and sovereignty internally and externally. The country was faced with yet another challenge of threat from the policies pursued by the US and the change in the world scenario post cold war. This global evolvement made Pakistan rethink its foreign policy towards a constructive and pragmatic approach. One of which was to engage with Russia more constructively,

The first decade after the end of the cold war the development of relations between Russia and Pakistan remained sluggish as Russia itself was going through a period of new political adjustment and a transition of economy. Therefore, despite both the countries effort in establishing positive relationship factors of irritants such as drug trafficking, threat of destabilization, the situation in Afghanistan Russia supplying arms to India and the latter's influence in Moscow's foreign policy towards Islamabad continued to have negative impact on their interaction.

#### **Russia-Pakistan relations after 9/11 attacks on the United States (2001-2017)**

Post 9/11 attacks, Pakistan decided to join the “war on terror” and abandon the Taliban forces. These changes led to Russia viewing Pakistan in a new way. President Pervez Musharraf's visit to Moscow in 2003 gave a major impetus to improve their relations. One of the reasons for opening up relationship with Pakistan by Moscow was also because of the Indo-US civil nuclear deal that was taking shape. As India was diversifying its sellers for procurement of arms, it eventually reduced Russia's share in the arms market. In order to look for other market for selling arms it looked towards Pakistan. Russia's perception of Pakistan as a strategic player brought common interest and favour for its relations. Apart from strategic reasons, it also had many trade and economic objectives.

A major working group called “Consultative Group on Strategic Stability” was established in 2002 and Russia and Pakistan also signed an agreement to cooperate in tackling regional stability threats. Aziz Ahmed Khan (Additional Secretary of Foreign Affairs) visited Moscow for a consultation regarding trade relations and, political-economic matters in January 2002. The ‘Pakistan- Russian Business forum’ and

'Pakistan- Russia business forum' was created in early 2002 targeting a turnover of one billion dollars' worth of trade and investments in the coming years. In May 2002, the six member Russian Parliamentary delegation which visited Pakistan expressed its intention to invest in equipments of construction, agricultural products and in heavy machinery. During this phase Pakistan's trade with Russia only amounted to 0.5 percent meaning economic and trade relations between both the countries was falling short compared to their actual potential (Khan and Amin 2014).

During this period, the visit of Pervez Musharaff on the invitation of President Putin in February 2003 was important as it laid a firm foundation for developing their relationship. It helped in building confidence and mutual trust between the two countries. Other major events which led to enhancing their bilateral relations took place during the visit of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs in the year 2003 and 2006. A three member Russian delegation visited Pakistan in December 2003. They paid a visit to the heavy mechanical complex at Texila, machine tool Factories in Karachi, and spinning machine companies in Lahore. This delegation was willing to provide expertise in textile sectors of Pakistan.

Further, in the year 2003, Russia started to expand its work at the Karachi Steel Mills (established by Russia's assistance in 1970's). In the following year Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali visited Moscow, followed by Igor Ivanov (Russian Foreign Minister) to Pakistan in July 2004. A delegation of Russian Duma also visited Pakistan in the same year which helped in improving relations further. In June 2005, with the help of Pakistan, Russia was given the observer states in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). In reciprocation, Russia gave support to Pakistan's entry into the SCO (Owais 2007).

On trade relations, Pakistan was willing to extent its support for Russia to be a part of WTO with the condition that it agrees to sign a Free Trade Agreement. During the visit of Aleksei Miller (Gazprom chairman) in October 2005 he held meetings separately with President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad. A Memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed with Gazprom for cooperation in the

field of oil and gas sector. Under the MoU it included cooperation in the development and research of gas fields, gas storage systems, oil and gas production and exploration, exploring offshore areas and assisting Pakistan in converting diesel vehicles to CNG. Gazprom agreed to provide the facilities for training in the oil and gas sector in Pakistan. Besides developing the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and interest in purchasing Pakistan's Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) was expressed by the chairman of Gazprom (Durrani 2006).

Aleksandr Bornov heading the Russian consortium of oil and gas companies visited Pakistan in April 2006 and expressed its interest in exploration and upgradation of oil fields, cross border pipeline, LNG and gas exploration. Other private companies which concluded MoU's with Pakistan's private companies for local contract bidding. For instance, Viktor Rashnikov (Board of Director of Magnitogorsk, Iron and Steel works in Russia) invested 2 billion dollars for the upgrading and modernizing the steel mills of Pakistan. If these commitments are materialized it can be said that the economic interests will certainly help in improving political relations between Russia and Pakistan.

High level meetings of officials have been taking place since 2006 between the two countries. In June and September 2006, President Musharraf and President Putin met on the sidelines of the SCO meeting and both expressed of their relationship and agreed on the need to boost their economic, commercial and trade relations. President Musharraf said, "It is in both Pakistan and Russia's interests to broaden their ties, but this needs to be done bilaterally and not with an Indo-centric approach. I think that while bilateral relations are good and we have political and diplomatic understanding between our countries, we have to translate it into economic and trade relations." Two areas of prospective engagement were identified by President Musharraf- first, textiles and second, oil and gas sector. The foreign minister of Russia paid a visit to Pakistan in November 2006 and held talks with Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri on issues of global politics and to cooperate in the fields of railways, communication, and energy and information technology. During the press conference Khurshid Kasuri said, "We consider Russia as an engine for increased economic growth and a factor of peace and stability in the

SCO.” Unfortunately the various co-operations made with Russia remained largely immaterialized and additionally bilateral trade has also been realised to its full potential (Kasuri 2015). Therefore, Pakistan made conscious efforts to upgrade its relations with Russia which resulted in the visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to Pakistan in April 2007 (the first visit of a Russian Prime Minister in 38 years). An in-depth discussion on the steps to increase economic cooperation was made. It concluded with an investment treaty and an agreement to expand trade and economic ties and additionally to avoid double taxation. Cooperation to fight against smuggling of drugs, narcotics, trafficking of humans and psychotropic substances were signed. Three MoU’s were jointly signed for- supplying sleepers and signalling systems, upgrading Mughal Pura bridge workshop, constructing metro railways in major cities, laying of railway tracks etc. “In November 2007, Pakistan’s Petroleum Minister visited Moscow and signed a MOU on joint exploration of oil. Further, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Kayani’s visit to Moscow in 2009 and subsequent meetings of former Prime Minister Gilani with the Russian leaders on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Dushanbe in 2010 had paved the way for Presidential visit in the coming years.”

In the past few years, Russia and Pakistan have been conducting regular inter-parliamentary meetings and bilateral joint working groups on counterterrorism and on strategic stability have been established by both the countries. To further strengthen bilateral ties, talks on free trade agreement and currency swap to boost trade were held in 2011. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also publicly supported Pakistan’s desire to attain full membership of SCO and he also stated that Pakistan is a crucial partner in South Asian and in the Muslim world. Offers of help to expand Karachi steel plant, development of the Thar coal project and assistance in the Guddu and Muzaffargarh power plants were also made unfortunately, the entire process was thwarted as a result of the Pakistan’s Supreme Court decision in the Steel Mills case, causing disappointments for the Russians. However, the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov continued to show interest in the Steel Mills.

The sudden increase of Russia’s interest in Pakistan was in the context of India diversifying its foreign relations especially with the US wherein it had signed agreement



on strategic partnership. Another factor that drew Pakistan and Russia closer was the “three-way strategic partnership – between India and Afghanistan and between the US and Afghanistan – under which US appears to favour India over Pakistan in Afghan affairs” (Hanif 2013).

President Asif Ali Zardari visited Russia in September 2011 (first visit of a Pakistani head of state in 37 years). Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the field of investment, agriculture, energy and air services during the visit. Following the first ever visit of a Pakistani Chief of the Air Staff (Air Marshal Tahir Rafiq Butt) to Russia on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 Russia and Pakistan entered into a new phase in defence cooperation. Russia agreed to invest up to 500 million dollars for modernising, rehabilitating and expansion of Pakistan steel mills. In order to chart out the technical and financial terms of the project, a team of Pakistani delegation visited Moscow which led to the signing of a MoU in 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012.

In the energy sector Genco<sup>60</sup> entered into agreement with the Russian Company Technopromexport, to convert the Muzaffargarh Thermal Power Plant from furnace oil to coal. Both countries also committed to setting up a new power plant with 500 MW to 600 MW capacities. They made an agreement where 15 percent of the funds will be supported by Genco and 85 percent will be through taking a loan. Moreover, in 2011 the US- Pakistan relations were not in good terms. It started with CIA officers killing two Pakistani officers in the streets of Lahore and then US launching a covert raid in Pakistan to kill Osama bin Laden and finally forcing Pakistan base NATO to be shut down of the supply route to Afghanistan. However after 8 months, the US issued an apology to Pakistan and reopening of supply route was executed. This event led Pakistan to diversify its global relations beyond the United States.

In the US-Pakistan impasse, Moscow saw an opportunity to exploit the situation and on the Pakistani side, their power elite were also looking forward to engage with Russia. Therefore, a conference of Pakistani envoys conducted on January 2012 discussed about

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<sup>60</sup> Genco, a FedEx Company, is a third-party logistics provider to technology, retail, consumer and industrial goods, healthcare, and government and defence customers.

expanding bilateral ties and “to reduce reliance on the U.S.” In March 2012, the foreign minister of Pakistan met his Russian counterpart to have an interchange of words regarding, trade of energy, and sales of aircrafts, Afghanistan’s future and the investment of capital in the Pakistan steel mills. Stephen Blank, a Russian expert in Strategic Studies Institute stated, “Pakistan and Russia has covertly developed geopolitical and strategic relations behind the scenes of the world politics for the last two years, since Russia has concluded that in the wake of withdrawal of NATO led ISAF and US forces by 2014, Pakistan will be a crucial player in Afghanistan and hence has speeded up advancement of relations with this country” (Blank 2012).

In October 2012, President Vladimir Putin was scheduled to make a monumental visit to Pakistan for a quadrilateral summit of the countries, but it had to be suddenly postponed. Immediately after the cancellation, three official visits of each other’s country took place- first; a Russian delegation signed three important MOU’s regarding the modernization and expansion of steel mill plant in Pakistan. Second, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani visited Russia in October 2012 and held meetings with top officials of the Russian army to develop the defense ties. This visit opened various prospect of cooperation to communicate extensively on their bilateral relations and their exchange each other’s perspective on the regional politics. General Kayani during his stay also visited the sensitive Russian defense installations and troop’s engagements. Finally, to dispel misunderstandings on the cancellation of Putin’s visit, Sergey Lavrov (Foreign minister of Russia) visited Pakistan in the first week of October 2012 and a statement was made where it was declared that Russia attaches great importance to consulting with Pakistan (Hanif 2013).

In the prevailing geo-strategic environment, the exchange of mutual visits by top officials and the strong statements which were made by the foreign minister of Russia proved the importance of Pakistan to Russia. Political analyst are of the opinion that Russia realizes that any solutions to the issue of Afghanistan, Pakistan has to be involved. Some of the scholars in India is also of the view that the Russia- Pakistan relationship will progress as both countries share an important mutual strategic interest in Afghanistan (Hanif 2013). It is not wrong to say that Pakistan has a considerable

influence in the Muslim world and therefore can play a vital part in the war against international terrorism. Both countries seemed to be unanimously cooperating constructively within the umbrella of the United Nations and other international organizations and in the recent years bilateral cooperation within the SCO is also gaining momentum. It was noticed that Russia and Pakistan recognized the change in the global strategic and political environment and they had manifested their ambitions by embarking on a harmonious and a constructive relationship. Both the countries had shown interest in having strong political, strategic and economic ties and therefore were interested in exploring enhanced bilateral commitments through projects in different areas such as power, railways, energy, telecommunication, production of steel and Information technology. In the area of oil exploration, projects on transportation, satellite technology and space development, Russia offered collaboration to Pakistan.

The first strategic dialogue between Russia and Pakistan was held in Moscow from the 28<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> August 2013. Jalil Jilani (Foreign Secretary of Pakistan) led his country's delegation and Vladimir Gennadievich Titov (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) lead Russia's delegation. Other participants in the meeting included Alamgir Babur (Ambassador to Russian Federation) and Igor Morgulov (Russian Deputy Foreign Minister). The themes that were discussed were wide ranging in nature. Issues such as defense cooperation, international security issues, disarmament, drug trafficking etc were discussed. This strategic dialogue demonstrated the dynamics of Russia and Pakistan that was in evolution. Another example which talks about the evolving changes is when the self imposed arms embargo on Pakistan was lifted and when the military agreement was signed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 "in order to deepen their defense ties during the first visit of a Russian Defence Minister in 45 years." This was a momentous agreement on military cooperation where an exchange of information pertaining to politics and military issues, alliance against terrorism and commencing on new businesses were agreed upon. The defense deal made in August 2015 indicates the passing bitterness and a new opportunity for Pakistan to procure equipment for defense from Russia. Overall the partnership has moved beyond military collaboration to economic sectors.

Russia and Pakistan signed an inter-governmental agreement on constructing the North-South gas pipeline on 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2015. This agreement was signed by Alexander Novak (Energy Minister of Russia) and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi (Petroleum and Natural Resources minister). This initiative is prompted towards solving the energy deficit regions in central and northern Pakistan which is hampering the economic growth of Pakistan

There were also joint military exercises Druzhba-2016 (Friendship-2016) held between Moscow and Islamabad from 24<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October, which President Putin held just few weeks after the Uri attacks<sup>61</sup> on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In this 130 Pakistani Special Forces and 70 Russian forces held a joint military exercise in Cherat which is located in the northwestern province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The Russian military contingent consisted of the 34<sup>th</sup> mountain motorized rifle brigade of the Southern Military District. Colonel Sergey Dmitriev, commander of the 34<sup>th</sup> brigade, was present among other Russian officers at the drills. The main arms included in the drills included Russian AK-74 assault rifles, Vintorez and SVD sniper rifles, Pecheneg and Kalashnikov PKM machine guns, under-barrel grenade launcher GP-25 Kostyor, PSS silent pistols, Pakistani M4 assault rifles, Glock pistols, and Remington sniper rifles. During the last stage of the exercises, JF-17 aircraft and Mi-17 and AH-1 Cobra helicopters of the Pakistan Air Forces appeared above the Cherat training range (Topychkanov 2016). Although Russia was asked to call off the military exercise post Uri attack, which Pakistan was blamed for, the Russians did not accept the India's request. In fact, Moscow announced it would hold additional drills with Islamabad in 2017.

Soon after the joint military exercises, Russia was given access to the warm waters of Gwadar port, built with the help of China which was close to Iran and opposite of Oman. However, due to the insurgents from Afghanistan and Baluchistan province, the Gwadar port is yet to become functional. The Gwadar port's capacity is being boosted by network of roads which is being built by China in such a way that the port will

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<sup>61</sup> It was an attack on the Indian army base by militants on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 near the town of Uri, Jammu and Kashmir.

eventually connect China's border in northern Pakistan. The Chinese navy has already been given rights to landing but it has not made it clear whether the Russian warships will be able to dock on the port (Rashid 2016). So far, Russia and Pakistan have held three major joint military drills since 2014: two naval drills known as Arabian Monsoon 2014 and Arabian Monsoon 2015, they were supervised by the superiors of federal drug control service of Russia. The focus of the previous two were on combatting crime groups and blocking drug traffic. And the third one is the Druzhba 2016 drills. In comparison with the naval exercises, "Druzhba-2016", were real military exercises with combat troops, having the task of eliminating illegal armed groups and other combat and training tasks in mountainous areas (Topychkanov 2016).

On 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, Russia and Pakistan held their first foreign office consultations on regional issues in Islamabad. Ahmad Hussain Dayo led Pakistan's delegation while the Russian delegation was led by Alexander V. Sternik (third CIS department head at the ministry of foreign affairs of Russia) (Roy Chaudhary 2016). A decision for the next round of consultations was agreed to be held in Moscow, 2017. Moreover, Russia, is working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. In the tripartite meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at Moscow, Foreign Secretaries of Russia, China and Pakistan agreed for employing "flexible approaches" like the imposed UN sanctions against select Taliban leaders to be lifted of UN in order to promote peaceful dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This decision comes in the wake of recent attempts by Russia to engage directly with the Taliban amid growing worries about the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, reacting to the discussions of the tripartite meeting, the Afghan government on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec, rejected the call by the three countries and said that the Afghan people alone can decide on removing Taliban leaders from the sanctions list in the United Nations. Thus, observing these recent developments it can be said that in the post-Cold War period, both the countries have brought about some changes in their earlier policies and started new initiatives to towards developing more friendly relations with each other (Sani 2017).

The aforementioned initiatives from both the sides to foster relations have been supported by another development, that is, a closer strategic partnership between Russia and China. These two big powers are showing an attempt to move closer because they share a particular perspective on making a world security architecture which will be able to deal with inter-state as well as intra-state disputes and other crises situations through the mechanisms of all the possible forms of dialogue (bilateral, internal, multilateral) under the aegis of the UN. And this security architecture would obviously be based upon the old principles of respect for the sovereignty and integrity of the states. Their agreement also extends to the use of force, in that they will allow it if it the only option available and upon the condition that it will have to be monitored by the United Nations. One more reason which pushes Pakistan closer to Russia is the fact of India sharing a strategic partnership with the US and Afghanistan and India aims to have a military influence in the Afghan region in an attempt to encircle Pakistan.

Because of the fact that Russia sees Pakistan as partner in promoting peace in the region, Russia will not want to favour India while it pursues its anti Pakistan policies in Afghanistan. For Pakistan the partnership with Russia is not only in its strategic interest but also economic interest. Pakistan is actively pursuing Russia's financial help in the form of foreign direct investments and also some cooperation in the field of technology and energy. Russia is also responding well to Pakistan's advance because it wants the trade volume to increase. The rising economic relations between the two countries are following the theory of commercial liberalism whereby the interdependence between two countries along with thriving trade and investments are considered to be the forces of peace (Hanif, 2013). After the terrorist attacks in the US on 9/11, the world rallied in US's favour. The UN Security Council and the General assembly passed a unanimous resolution condemning the attacks, sympathizing with United States and calling for punishing the perpetrators. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) also called for a joint defence invoking the provision of the treaty. Countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, other central and countries of the Middle East offered logistical support and facilities. But after attacking Afghanistan, when the US moved to Iraq, it started losing support and sympathy. The invasion led by America in Afghanistan led to the suffering

of Pashtuns. This situation created sympathy for the Afghanis and the Pashtuns in Pakistan and therefore it withdrew itself from supporting the US. The support of 9/11 by Pakistan severed its economy due to the violence and instability of the impact. Pakistan's social fabric was impacted negatively and its population, radicalised. Due to the drone strikes by the US, huge damage was incurred in the tribal areas and this was supposedly targeted on the safe havens of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants. This resulted in a widespread condemnation of the US drone policy and eventually strained the US- Pakistan relations. In spite, of this the US continued to accuse Pakistan of not abandoning the policy to support the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan however, tried to create a more substantial relationship with the United States during 2002 to 2007. But due to trust deficit that was generated following the US strike on the latter; Pakistan had a negative perception towards the US. The US- India Civil nuclear agreement made matters worse as it disappointed Pakistan and the United States feel out of favour (Kasuri 2015).

Therefore, Pakistan acknowledged Russia as a global power as it had an increasing influence on the international platform especially seen in the role played during the Syrian crisis and during Iran's nuclear programme and its initiative in the Afghanistan crisis. To further develop the relations both the countries have to look past their history of estrangement and move towards engagement under new circumstances. However, this may not be possible unless efforts are made consciously to grow deeper understanding by deconstructing misperceptions, doing away with mutual suspicion and developing respect for each other's interest which is legitimate in character.

It is important to add there is a unanimous recognition by all parties that Pakistan has the capacity to either sabotage or find a final solution to the whole process. This has imposed a greater responsibility on Pakistan to do everything at their disposal to bring about conditions of peace and stability in Afghanistan. While, Pakistan needs to learn the correct lessons from its involvement in Afghanistan in 1979, following the Soviet invasion and thus must stress on the point that it should maintain good relations with all Afghan ethnic groups.

There are various reports that Al-Qaeda have almost been wiped out from Afghanistan and from the neighbouring regions in Pakistan. During President Obama's visit to the Bagram Air Base, he announced on 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2014, that the troops will be withdrawn by the year 2016 and thus, a Bilateral Security Agreement was signed, as expected by the new government in Afghanistan on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. There was a release of Bowe Bergdahl, the last American Prisoner of War in May 2014, as a result of tedious negotiations between the US and the Taliban, in exchange for the release of five Taliban prisoners that had been held at Guantanamo Bay, indicates that the interaction between the Taliban, Pakistan and the US did not end. Therefore, Pakistan can play a positive role by using whatever influence it has with the Afghan Taliban to bring them to the negotiating table with the new Afghan government, Russia and the United States. This effort should be made in order to prevent another civil war following American exit, as this will bound to draw in many external actors and thus can be a lethal civil war since all sides are now better armed and prepared than in the past (Kasuri 2015).

Therefore, with the increase in mutual visits and communication, it appears that post cold war and post 9/11 led to a shift in the perception of Russia towards Pakistan in the context of the country playing a positive role in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. The continuous improvement in the bilateral relations has been due to factors such as Russia's post cold war realignment, questions on stability in Afghanistan, post withdrawal; and the growing strategic ties of India with the United States. Nevertheless, a gap of understanding still remains between the two countries regarding on the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and on terrorism. Russia sees the terrorist groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan to be directly or indirectly involved in the transnational networks of terrorism and extremism. This brings out the fear of a destabilization in the Russian territories of Daghesten, Chechnya and parts of central Asia. While Pakistan acknowledges the problem, it is of the opinion that the extremism will not have a spill over from its territory. On the nuclear issue, Pakistan sees itself as a responsible state however, the Russian leadership is apprehensive of the nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorist. Below the opportunities and challenges being faced by both Russia and Pakistan in advancing this relationship is briefly discussed:



**Russia's Opportunity in Pakistan:** Both the countries see it advantageous to cooperate in the fields of military, security, economic areas etc. In fact there is a bright prospect for collaboration in the field of trade, energy, developing infrastructure, metal industry and agriculture sectors. Russia is willing to invest in construction of steel mills, gas pipelines, improving heavily mechanical complexes, expansion of power plants in Muzaffargarh and Guddu, developing Thar coal project, transmitting of electricity, partially funding of the Central Asia- South Asia (CASA) and constructing TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India) gas pipeline. Russia therefore views Pakistan as a profitable market for exporting its engineering goods and Pakistan on the other hand sees Russia as a country whose resources can be helpful to the urgent needs of the different sectors. During the SCO summit the Russian Premier reiterated support for the suggested energy and trade projects by Pakistan however, in the viewpoint of the Indian diplomats, Russia is looking for a more serious and enhanced relationship from Pakistan to secure CAR's from religious extremism. In the field of military, Russia has assisted Pakistan in procuring equipments to fight terrorism and radicalism. In the context of the west's reluctance to sell arms to Pakistan, Russia has become a top priority option to receive its military supplies (Hanif 2013).

**Incentives for Pakistan to have relations with Russia:** Russia is still a power to reckon with in the world order even if it not a superpower that it once used to be. It is also as a veto power being the permanent member of the UN Security Council and it continues to be a powerful member of the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO). Due to the above factors Pakistan obviously wants stronger relations with Russia especially after US has been getting closer to India which is manifest in the larger role given to India in post 2014 Afghanistan. Owing to the above factors along with its own geo political interests, Pakistan fancies establishing stronger ties with all the major players in the region which includes Russia. Also one of constant worry that Pakistan has is the instability in its bordering areas with Afghanistan due to the ongoing military operations. In order to bring the threat of further instability down, Pakistan is trying hard to bring about a political settlement in Afghanistan before the withdrawal of ISAF. Other regional players are also after the same political settlement due to which it is

important that Pakistan and Russia join their efforts and coordinate with each other. Pakistan is already having good relations with China as evident in the various military, strategic and economic pacts between the two and in any case Pakistan's efforts to maintain good relations with all the major world powers makes sense considering that in the current era geo economics often dictates politics due to which certain disputes can always be ignored in order to gain some benefit. It is always a plus point to have good relations with EU, Muslim countries, US, Russia, China and all the neighbours including Central Asian countries. Having friendly relations with Russia, Pakistan has a lot to gain. Establishing a link between Russia and CARs to Gwadar Port and creating the new Silk Road as proposed by the US will be highly beneficial in economic terms for Pakistan. On the other hand, ties with Russia can help in fostering improved relations with India as well (Hanif 2013).

#### **Possible Constraints to the Evolving Relationship:**

First of all, the current scenario in the regional politics happens to favour stronger Pakistan-Russia ties. China having developed close relations with Russia in recent years will not mind old friend Pakistan growing its ties with Russia.

However, it is to be noted that although opportunities for advancing this relationship are many, there are obstacles as well. India, the US and some other Muslim countries will not like this mushrooming friendship and may put some obstacles in order to prevent it from happening. Kashmir issue is an ever ready obstacle in between India- Pakistan relations and other than that both the countries do not like each other's friendship with other superpowers of the world. While on one hand India's ties with the US have improved but on the other hand US ties with Pakistan have deteriorated. Also, the ties of Russia with India have been good over a long period of time. Especially, after Russia supported India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council the bonhomie has been great. Also, both countries have enhanced their partnership to "special and privileged Strategic Partnership". In fact, President Putin had made a statement when he came to India in 2010 to the effect that "India is our candidate number one in terms of enlarging the geographical representation of the Security Council". Putin also to make

up for the threat emanating from the Indo-US Nuclear deal and maybe he wanted to sustain and continue the “strategic partnership” that had been achieved earlier. Nevertheless, India’s orientation towards both Russia and the US is going to change in the coming years. More specifically India’s dependence on Russian defence supplies is going to reduce and it is going to get closer with the US. Ruslan Pukhov, the Director of Centre for Analyses of Strategies and Technologies of Russia has been quoted to have said in an interview with a Russian daily, “Delhi’s attempts to diversify its supplies of new weapons increasingly from western countries are making Russia flinch” (Hanif, 2013). However, according to Dr. Sergey N. Kamenev, Dr. Tatiana Shaumyan, Prof. Vyacheslav Ya. Belokrenitsky, Petr Topychkanov and Alina Filimonova, Russia won’t develop its ties with Pakistan at the cost of its toes with India and if there is a choice between both India and Pakistan than Russia will always prefer India because India is way more important for Russia than Russia’s relations with Pakistan.

However, when it comes to the US, it would always want Pakistan to take her side in the regional conflicts even if it has to go against Russia. To top it all, the support that Russia has given to Pakistan on the issue of SCO membership is being seen by the US as a possibility of Pakistan falling out of US’s influence. Thirdly, China and Pakistan have shown advance strategic cooperation in many economic projects and China has constantly shown its support to Pakistan in the wake of pressure from the US with regard to the war on terror. Moreover, both the countries have successfully resolved their border dispute which is a milestone considering the protracted nature of such disputes. Even in the context of the complicated Syrian conflict, both China and Pakistan have shown remarkable coordination with each other. Similar warm coordination could be seen during the standoff of Iran’s nuclear program. Therefore, China will in all likelihood, welcome the prospect of close ties between Russia and Pakistan. The only spoilsport could be a possible Russia-China clash based on some economic interest in Pakistan.

However, there can be an interesting twist in the fairytale on one issue. When we examine the Syrian conflict, we see that the Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia and UAE and the US and the EU want a regime change, while on the other side, Russia, China and Iran are backing the Assad Regime. China and Russia want a negotiated settlement in Syria and they have also vetoed as many as three UNSC resolutions pressing for sanctions against the Syrian regime. Pakistan has very good relations with UAE and other Gulf countries and thus can get into a dilemma. Also, on the issue of Iran's nuclear program, the Gulf countries, U.S. and EU are on one side, supporting sanctions on Iran, whereas Russia and China have opposed any such sanctions on Iran. These geo-political tussles might likely to obstruct Russia-Pakistan relations as Saudi Arabia has a considerable influence among the Pakistani political establishments. But Pakistan being Arab's strategic ally, it has no option but to try and persuade them about its necessity to develop closer ties with Russia.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan's cold war legacy continues to cast a shadow over Russia-Pakistan relations. The alliances that Pakistan made during the cold war and the role that it played in Soviet Union's defeat in Afghanistan which eventually led to its break up affects its relationship with Russia to this day. Though after 1991 both the countries have made efforts to establish better relationship considering the new strategic imperatives and have shown a willingness to forgo past contentious issues. But it was specifically, after 9/11; with Pakistan taking a stand on the war on terror and the changing geo-political scenario in the 21st century, an environment of mutual trust has developed between Russia and Pakistan and thereby speeded up high level bilateral contacts. This period of mutual trust has coincided with both countries realizing convergence of their strategic and economic interests. Especially, after the announcement of withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan by 2014, both countries took initiative to coordinate their policies to prevent the outbreak of another Afghan Civil War, following the US drawdown. Hence, since 2010 onwards we can see a close coordination between Russia and Pakistan in the resolution of the Afghan problem and other regional issues. Both the countries were attracted by the twin benefits with respect to economy and strategic expediency after the

withdrawal. However it should be added that Pakistan's ongoing tussle with India can have an adverse impact on its relationship with Russia. In geopolitics, strategic considerations play a major role and decisive shifts can take place which in turn, shapes the future relations. This seems to have happened in the case of Pakistan and Russia who were considered as traditional cold war rivals. Russia had lifted the arms embargo that it imposed on Pakistan in 2014 and also signed a landmark cooperation agreement with the former. It can be said that these mutual overtures between the countries are in conformity with the larger shift in international relations.

The next chapter will talk about the political and economic dimensions of Russia-Pakistan relations such as the diplomatic visits and high level talks, defense ties etc. It will examine the policy objectives of both Russia and Pakistan and prospects of greater bilateral coordination through combined economic projects in the areas such as oil exploration, steel production, railways, power, energy, agriculture, etc.

## CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Russia-Pakistan relations have often been under-rated, despite strong potentials, mainly due to misperceived notions and mind-sets. There have been many opportunities to improve their relations but were lost due to different approaches to regional and global security perceptions. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union and Pakistan did not have any history of bilateral disputes or differences; however, they were not able to establish a cordial and cooperative relationship in the past. Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, has great economic power, high scientific technology, resources and geopolitical influence. While, “Pakistan on the other hand, with its important strategic location because of its proximity to Afghanistan and Central Asia, nuclear power status and growing anti-American sentiments has created great potential for renewed Russian interest in Pakistan” (Owais 2007).

Historically, Russia and Pakistan have had a tumultuous relationship, but nevertheless there has been some improvement in their relations over the last decade with top political and diplomatic meetings being held between the two countries. While, Moscow is reiterating its role in its immediate sphere of influence and beyond, Islamabad has been seeking new opportunities by reducing its dependence particularly on the United States and the West. Therefore, this Chapter is an attempt to highlight the political and economic relations that have been taking place between both the countries (The Diplomat, February 2017).

### **Political Relations between Russia and Pakistan**

The Soviet Union in the beginning had manifested its coldness by failing to show the diplomatic courtesy of sending felicitations to the Government of Pakistan on the occasion of the formal inauguration of their state. Nevertheless, in 1948 the Soviet Union tried to rectify this mistake, seeing the possibility of a closer co-operation between Pakistan and the United States.

“The diplomatic relations between former Soviet Union and Pakistan was established on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1948. The agreement was signed in New York by Sir Zafrulla Khan, the Foreign

Minister of Pakistan and Andrei A. Gromyko the first Deputy Foreign Minister of USSR.” As we know, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan had received an invitation from the Soviet Union to visit their country in June 1949; but the Prime Minister instead of visiting the Soviet Union, chose to visit the United States. This decision of visit to the United States was because of various reasons.

Therefore, it was observed that though diplomatic relations started in the year 1948; but the actual functioning of their Embassies took place only afterwards and the appointment of Ambassadors was deferred till March 1950, nearly three years after Pakistan had achieved its independence. It can be said that at the start of their diplomatic relations, the initial few years saw trade between the two countries were carried under single contracts. However, there seemed to be a breakthrough when both the countries signed the first intergovernmental trade agreement in 1956, which granted both the countries the status as Most Favored Nation. This agreement was similar to the 1953 agreement with India. It was only from the late 1950’s that high level contacts started developing between the two countries. In 1956, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Anastas I. Mikoyan visited Pakistan and took part in the events arranged on the occasion of proclaiming the country a Republic. Furthermore, to improve political relations, the Soviet Government once again invited the then Prime Minister of Pakistan to visit Moscow, but again he chose to visit the United States and instead Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was sent to the USSR in 1956, as the representative of Prime Minister Suhrawardy.

In February 1958, I.A. Benedictov, as the leader of Soviet parliamentary delegation, visited Pakistan and told his Pakistani counterpart that Soviet Union was willing to provide economic and technical assistance to Pakistan, mainly in agriculture, control of floods and salination, pests and land erosion. However, the military coup of October 1958 brought General Ayub Khan to power which created unfavorable conditions for closer USSR-Pakistan ties, but Soviet Union continued its efforts to normalize its relations with Pakistan.

The Soviet Government invited President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Ayub Khan to visit Moscow in September 1964. He accepted the invitation, and thus, in April 1965, President Ayub Khan visited Moscow. His visit to the Soviet Union was the first direct personal contact in 18 years between the top leaders of Pakistan and the Soviet Union. The joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit stressed the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in any form and the creation of atom-free zones in various regions, along with other basic international issues. Pakistan's External Affairs Minister, Bhutto also visited Moscow in January 1965 and held high-level talks with the Soviet leaders on international relations in general and on Soviet-Pakistan relations in particular.

The year 1966 saw a marked increase in Soviet contacts with Pakistan. It seemed Pakistan's President Mohammed Ayub Khan again visited Soviet Union for the second time in the year 1967. As a result, Soviet-Pakistan relations did improve and "the hallmarks of the visit included: expression of harmony over major international issues, extension of mutual cooperation, confirmation of decamping US military bases on Pakistan's soil, increased volume of bilateral trade to \$7 million, and implementation of over 30 developmental projects in Pakistan, funded and provided technical assistance by the Soviet Union"<sup>62</sup> (Shah 2012). However, June 1970's visit of Pakistan's President Yahya Khan's to Moscow did not bring any success to Pakistan's search for arms.

The relations between USSR and Pakistan were severely strained during the crisis in East-Pakistan. Z.A. Bhutto criticized Soviet Union during the Bangladesh crisis and the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. However after Bhutto came to power and became the President of Pakistan he seemed anxious to repair the damage done to USSR-Pakistan relations. Accordingly, when President Bhutto arrived in Moscow as the head of a 58-member delegation on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1972, he was received at the airport by the Russian Premier Kosygin. The Joint Communiqué which was issued at the end of Bhutto's visit stated that the Pakistani President was prepared to take steps towards establishing peaceful conditions in the sub-continent. However, the main achievement of Bhutto's visit was in the field of bilateral relations. It was agreed that USSR-Pak economic, scientific, technical and other relations, which had been disrupted as a result of the

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<sup>62</sup> Pakistan-Russia Relations: Post Cold War Era by Adnan Ali Shah



events in 1971, should be restored. Thus, Bhutto's visit to Moscow was seemed as "breaking the ice" and injecting of "some warmth in the frozen relationship".

The 1971 East-Pakistan crisis did not last long and during this period Z.A. Bhutto visited the USSR twice to give further impetus to Soviet-Pakistan relations: first as the President in 1972 and then as the Prime Minister in 1974. As a result of the steps taken by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the volume of Soviet-Pakistani trade almost tripled during 1970-1979. Soviet Union's assistance in geological prospecting of oil and gas fields was diversified and cooperation in the economic sphere was considerably increased in the 1970's.

However, Soviet-Pakistan relations took a downward trend following the "Saur Revolution in Afghanistan and entered a new phase after the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979". On 5<sup>th</sup> July 1977, military dictator General Zia-ul-Haque overthrew democratically elected government in Pakistan and with Zia-ul-Haque coming to power, once again Soviet-Pakistan relations entered into hard times. Political, economic and cultural ties decreased. Thus, in the 1980's, due to heated and complex developments in Afghanistan, it left a negative impression on the state of Soviet-Pakistan cooperation. Relations started improving between the two countries after the demise of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haque and with Benazir Bhutto's democratic government coming to power in Pakistan in 1988 and the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989. These above factors contributed to favourable conditions for the improving relations between the two countries. Although, in the 1990's political relations gained momentum, trade and economic interrelations between both the countries considerably levelled down due to weakening of macroeconomic situation and transition of market society in Russia. In fact, there was deteriorating period of their relations between 1979 to 1989 when Pakistan supported and helped the United States government in launching the guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan.

It can be said that during the Cold War period, relations between the former Soviet Union and Pakistan remained generally uneasy with the exception of some diplomatic initiatives for improvement. However, in the post-Cold War period, i.e. after the formal

end of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the world has changed rapidly and Russia and Pakistan have availed the opportunities provided by the new situation for a fresh beginning in Moscow-Islamabad relations. As a result, high level bilateral contacts took place between both the countries immediately thereafter. “These include the visits to Pakistan by Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy in December 1992, Foreign Minister Kozyrev in April 1993, and First Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin in May 1994. In exchange, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Akram Zaki visited Moscow in October 1992 and Foreign Minister Sardar Aseff Ahmed Ali visited Moscow in July 1994”. A broad range of bilateral issues were discussed during these visits, including collaboration in the fields of defence, outer space technology and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. “A protocol was signed in July 1994 by Sardar Assef Ali and his Russian counterpart, Andrei Kozyrev, on holding regular consultations between foreign ministers of the two countries, and an agreement on the abolition of visa restrictions for holders of diplomatic passports. It seemed for some time that in the changed geopolitical global scenario, Moscow tended to accord greater attention to Pakistan” (Owais 2007).

In the year 1990, “Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan sent a fare well message to Moscow in an attempt to set up the economic coordination between the two countries and in 1991; she headed a high-level economic delegation to Central Asia and Russia, after the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Ahmed 2000). In November 1992, Sardar Aseff Ali as Pakistan’s Minister of State for Economic Affairs visited Moscow followed by his tour of the Central Asian States. “This first ministerial visit to the Russian Federation, after years of neglect by past governments, was a major initiative and contributed significantly to the opening up of a new chapter in Russia-Pakistan’s relations. In reciprocation of the earlier Pakistan’s gesture, the then Russian Vice President, Alexander Rutskoy, visited Pakistan in December 1992”. In fact, this visit was the first official contact in the history of Russia and Pakistan after the disintegration of the USSR, and therefore, this joint communiqué was significant in many ways. It seemed that Russia’s new appraisals at the time considered Pakistan as a crucial factor to any political settlement in Afghanistan in particular and to the region in general. “The joint communiqué issued at the time of

Rutskoy's visit said that it was the policy of the Russian government 'to develop relations with Muslim states on new principles, devoid of ideological obstacles and based on mutual respect, goodwill and mutual benefit'<sup>63</sup> (Shah 2012).

The joint communiqué reiterated Russia's support for the Pakistani proposal of a nuclear-free zone in South Asia. It also welcomed the Pakistani proposal for a five-nation conference on nuclear non-proliferation in the region. Moreover, the mention of Kashmir in the joint communiqué was put in a manner advantageous to Pakistan by acknowledging its position on Kashmir and expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved peacefully through negotiations between Pakistan and India on the basis of international agreements. "The two sides also discussed a draft agreement for cooperation in the political, economic, commercial, scientific, technical and cultural fields. It expressed the hope that there existed good prospects for initiating mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of economy and trade". It further agreed to hold regular contacts between the parliamentarians, and between their respective foreign policy and defence establishments. "As a pointer to growing warmth in relations between Russia and Pakistan, an international conference was held in Moscow in April 1992 on relations between Pakistan and the Commonwealth of Independent States" (ibid).

Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoy further proclaimed "the objective of new and positive relations with the Muslim countries of South and Central Asia, and relations with Pakistan to be established with the idea of 'equi-distance' between New Delhi and Islamabad" (Shah 2012). It was against this background that the Russian President, Boris Yelstin, extended an invitation to Pakistan's Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, to visit Russia in December 1994, which was postponed due to Pakistan's domestic problem.

In 1994, Sardar Aseff Ali in his capacity as Pakistan's Foreign Minister again visited Moscow from 3-5 July. During his visit, he held talks with his Russian counterpart,

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Andrei Kozyrev, and met other senior functionaries of the Russian government. “The two sides discussed a number of international and bilateral issues – the situation in South Asia, the Kashmir problem, Afghanistan and Central Asia including developments in Tajikistan, and Bosnia”. During the visit, the two foreign ministers signed a “protocol on holding regular consultations between the foreign ministers of the two countries, and an agreement on the abolition of visas for holders of diplomatic passports”. The signing of these two agreements signified the fact that Russia-Pakistan relations had come a long way from the animosity of the Cold War era. On September 24, 1995, a Russian parliamentary delegation visited Pakistan. The leader of this delegation, Alexander Vengerovsky, disclosed that Russia was ready to supply military hardware to Pakistan (Owais 2007).

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Moscow in April 1999; this visit was termed by the Russian President as “a new chapter in relations between the two countries oriented into the 21st Century.” Prime Minister’s visit, the first by a Pakistani premier in 25 years, “greatly helped in breaking the ice and opening a new chapter of bilateral relations”. This was continued by visits by the representatives of both countries on a regular basis. In September 1999 special envoy of Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Pakistan and after discussions with the Pakistani leadership, he stated that “Pakistan was capable of playing a stabilizing role in the region by helping in addressing the issues of international terrorism, narcotics trafficking and religious extremism”.

President Musharaff’s special envoy ISI Chief, General Mehmood visited Russia in 2001 and signed an agreement for the sale of MI-17 military cargo helicopters to Pakistan. This visit was regarded as a major development in the bilateral relations between both the countries before the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The visit has led to Russia and Pakistan engaging in proactive diplomacy and also to improve bilateral relations. There have been an increasing number of high level interactions which has taken place between both the countries. However, the latter failed to convince the Russian government regarding the increase in the sale of arms because Russians could no longer disregard the fact that India is more important partner in South Asia compared to Pakistan. “India accounted for 60-70 % of the defence purchases of the former Soviet

Union and also, its counter diplomatic moves had succeeded in limiting the defence deals with Pakistan” (Shah 2012). “Nevertheless, Russia and Pakistan, during Nawaz Sharif’s visit held similar views on many international issues, in particular, their support to the non-proliferation regime and the settlement of conflicts by political means.” Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in fact, requested for Russia’s support in order to resolve major problems of South Asia, for example: the issue of Kashmir, and showed its inclination to normalize relations between India and Pakistan. “Both sides also spoke out in favour of asserting the principles of stability and security in the world, and expressed their commitment to the creation of a multi-polar world, based on the respect for the UN Charter and international law” (Shah 2012).

Since then, a number of high level exchanges have taken place between the two countries. During these visits various issues concerning the two countries have been discussed and several issues have been highlighted such as proposals for the collaboration in the defence sector, outer space technology and also peaceful application of nuclear energy.

The desire on the Russian side to upgrade its relations with Pakistan is a proof of a radical departure from the earlier Soviet-day policy of treating the latter as an adversary. But, despite the fact that both the countries showed interest in establishing a productive and positive relationship, there existed few irritants which had their negative impact upon the establishment of cordial relations such as: “the situation in Afghanistan, international terrorism, threat of destabilisation in Central Asia, drug trafficking, Russian supply of arms to India and the latter’s influence in Moscow’s foreign policy towards Pakistan”.

The relations between Pakistan and the former Soviet Union were hostile during the Cold War period; mainly because of Pakistan’s association with the US led anti-Soviet military alliance called SEATO and CENTO. Though, Pakistan disassociated with these US military alliances by 1974, but in the 1980’s it supported and helped launch the US sponsored guerrilla resistance against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan until USSR withdrew its forces in 1989. “Therefore, the worst period of their relationship lasted a

decade from 1979 to 1989 and this bitter phase ended with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 but again in the later part of 1990s, another source of tension arose on account of Pakistan's support to the Taliban in the Afghan civil war and its ultimate recognition of their government, which Soviet Union considered harmful for the entire region" (Hanif 2013). However, with the changing geo-political scenario both the countries have clearly indicated their interest to develop a constructive and harmonious relationship.

After the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Russia as a successor state, has consolidated its politico-economic and military status as a major world power. Therefore, in the post-Cold War regional scenario, Russia is interested in improving its relations with the South and Central Asian countries in general and Pakistan in particular. Likewise, in the light of changing regional environment and with a view to advancing its strategic and economic interests, Pakistan also considers Russia as an important country. Thus, it is observed that in the recent years, Russia and Pakistan's desire to develop closer bilateral relations has been further intensified due to their converging interests and necessity of making joint efforts to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan after the drawdown of ISAF and NATO forces post-2016.

In fact, in the first decade after the end of the Cold War although bilateral visits remained a regular feature, progress on advancement of mutual relations remained sluggish, probably because of mutual distrust and suspicion. "However, after the terrorist attacks in the US on 9/11, and Pakistan's decision of abandoning the Taliban and joining the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan as a front line state altered the whole scenario and this changed Russian perceptions about Pakistan's role in the region". In May 2002, the six member Russian Parliamentary delegation which visited Pakistan expressed its intention to invest in Pakistan particularly in the field of heavy machinery, construction equipment and agricultural products<sup>64</sup>. It was also noticed that, "trade between the two countries had been fluctuating during this period: \$63 million in 1998-1999, \$93.34 million in 1999-2000, \$69.64 million dollar in 2000-2001, \$83.45 million in 2001-2002, \$60.47 million in 2002-2003 and \$154.53 million in 2003-2004. During

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<sup>64</sup> URL: [http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue\\_62/07-PAK\\_RUSSIA\\_RELATIONS.html](http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_62/07-PAK_RUSSIA_RELATIONS.html)

this period, Pakistan's trade with Russia is a meagre 0.5 % of its global trade, meaning economic and trade relations between both the countries was falling short compared to their actual potential. Russia exported fertilizer manufactures, paper and paper products, iron and steel, crude rubber, machinery and its parts totalling \$134 million". It was observed that the balance of trade had been much in favour of Russia, thus, making imperative upon Russia to allow special concessions to Pakistani exports to Russia and grant Pakistan Most Favoured Nation status in trade and investment (Khan and Amin 2014).

“Russia and Pakistan had established a major working group in 2002 called the Consultative Group on Strategic Stability and signed an agreement to cooperate in handling threats to regional stability. In January 2002, Aziz Ahmed Khan, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also seemed to have visited Moscow for consultations on trade, economic and political matters. The same year, a Russian business delegation visited Pakistan as a consequence of which the Pakistan-Russia Business Forum and Pakistan-Russia Business Council were created targeting a turnover of one billion dollar worth of trade and investments in the coming years. Further, in May 2002, the six member Russian Parliamentary delegation which visited Pakistan expressed its intention to invest in Pakistan particularly in the field of heavy machinery, construction equipment and agricultural products” (Hanif 2013).

One of the most important developments in the bilateral relations was when Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf visited Russia in February 2003 at the invitation of President Putin. This was considered a landmark event along with President Musharaff's earlier meetings with Putin in Almaty and Kuala Lumpur as it helped greatly in developing mutual trust and confidence between the two countries. “The Presidents of the two countries exchanged their views on a range of important bilateral, regional and international issues and reaffirmed their commitment to promote bilateral cooperation as well as regional and global peace. To remove the existing impediments to the development of cooperation between both the countries, it was agreed to work towards the prompt settlement of the issues of Pakistani debt restructuring, settlement of financial obligations, promotion of inter-bank relations, establishment of Most Favoured-

Nation Status in trade and investments<sup>65</sup>.” The next year in July, “Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov visited Pakistan. Also, a delegation of Russian Duma visited Pakistan the same year. It seemed that Russia and Pakistan see prospects of collaboration in the field of fuel, energy, metallurgy, telecommunications and several infrastructure development projects”<sup>66</sup>. As a result of improved relations, Russia gained an observer status at the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) with the support of Pakistan in June 2005 and “Russia also supported Pakistan’s entry to the SCO as an Observer state in 2005, which is now transferred to full membership in the year 2017. It was also noticed that in 2005, both the countries’ Presidents met on the sidelines of UN General Assembly session and heads of governments met in Moscow during the SCO heads of government meeting” (Owais 2007).

On the Trade side, it was noticed that Pakistan had provided total backing to Russia for WTO membership; on the condition that Russia agrees to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with them. “Pakistan is seeking market access for leather, surgical instruments, sporting goods, and textiles. Russia has also agreed to return \$108 million to Pakistani exporters who had exported articles to the USSR before its disintegration.” Gradually, trade between both Russia and Pakistan showed signs of growth, but the balance of trade was still in favor of Russia. “In 2004–2005, the bilateral trade volume reached \$320 million, from \$134.24 in 2003–2004 and \$100 million in 2002. Around 90 percent of Pakistan’s exports to Russia were textile items. According to experts on textile business, Pakistan can increase its export to Russia up to \$500 million, if Pakistan can trade directly with Russia” (Afzal 2006).

In the energy sector, there seems to be good progress and collaboration between Russia-Pakistan. “In October 2005 during Gazprom chairman, Aleksei Miller’s visit, he held separate meetings with President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad and as a result, the Government of Pakistan signed a MoU with Gazprom for cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Cooperation under the MoU includes research and development of gas fields, development and operation of underground gas storage

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<sup>65</sup> URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/3657>

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*



systems, oil and gas exploration and production, development and research to explore Pakistan's untapped potential; especially in offshore areas, besides assisting Pakistan in conversion of diesel vehicles to CNG" (Durrani 2006). In addition, Gazprom would provide training facilities to Pakistan's oil and gas sector personnel in Russia. "The chairman of Gazprom also expressed interest in purchasing Pakistan's Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), besides developing the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project" (ibid).

The Russian group of oil and gas companies five-member delegation, headed by Aleksandr Bornov, visited Pakistan in April 2006 and expressed keen interest in the cross-border pipeline, LNG, oil, and gas exploration and upgrading of oilfields. "The two sides discussed prospects of investment in Pakistan's oil and gas sector. Bornov was interested in mobilizing a reasonable number of drilling and exploratory rigs, logging equipment, unitary pipeline construction machinery, and high-caliber professionals to Pakistan shortly". There are other oil and gas companies of the Russian Federation that have signed MoUs with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's "private sector oil and gas companies for local contract bidding". Similarly, "the chairman of the Board of Directors of Magnitogorsk, Iron and Steel Works of Russia, Viktor Rashnikov, had committed to invest \$2 billion over a period of five years for the upgrading and modernization of Pakistan Steel Mills. If these commitments from the Russian side are materialized, it is expected that during next two to four years, Russian investment of four to six billion dollars will flow into Pakistan economy" (Rahman 2011). It can be said that interest in improving economic relations would definitely assist in improvement of political relations between Moscow and Islamabad<sup>67</sup>.

The high level meetings continued in 2006. Apart from high level meetings of officials, the two Presidents, President Musharraf and President Putin also met on the sidelines of the SCO meeting in June 2006 and both heads of government met on the sidelines of the next SCO summit in September 2006. "In November 2006, the Russian Foreign Minister visited Pakistan and held talks with his counterpart, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri on major global issues and cooperation in many fields including energy, communications,

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<sup>67</sup> URL: [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16\\_1\\_ses/11\\_rahman.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16_1_ses/11_rahman.pdf)

railways and information technology”. During their press conference Khurshid Kasuri said, “We consider Russia as an engine for increased economic growth and a factor of peace and stability in the SCO.” It was in this meeting the Russian Government also showed its enthusiasm to participate in the construction of “Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline.”

However, the objective of Pakistan’s government to promote its relations with Russia and to have cooperation in different areas seems to remain unrealized. “Opportunities for cooperation between the two countries exist in such sectors as oil and gas, expansion in Steel Mill capacity, satellite technology and even in the defence sector, but these have not been concretized and to add that the bilateral trade has also not realized to its full potential “(Kasuri 2015). Therefore, Pakistan made conscious efforts to upgrade its relations with Russia and this has resulted in the visit of Russian Prime Minister, Mikhail Fradkov to Pakistan in April 2007, the first visit of a Russian Prime Minister in 38 years. He held in-depth discussions with President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and the stressed upon increasing economic cooperation between the two countries. “In November 2007 Pakistan’s Petroleum Minister visited Moscow and signed a MoU on joint exploration of oil”. Further, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, General Kayani’s visit to Moscow in 2009 and subsequent meetings of former Prime Minister Gilani with the Russian leaders on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Dushanbe in 2010 had paved the way for presidential visits in the coming years but unfortunately, till now it is not realized. But it is seen that in recent years, Russia and Pakistan have been maintaining regular inter-Parliamentary ties. There have been bilateral Joint Working Groups on Counterterrorism and other new challenges to International Security and on Strategic Stability established by both the countries and thus functioning dynamically.

In the last years there has been seen a discreet rapprochement between Russia and Pakistan. Pakistan has been sidelined in world politics after its deteriorating relations with United States. This has led Pakistan to seek out for new allies especially with the US led NATO troops accelerating its withdrawal from Afghanistan. Moscow views Pakistan as an important player in Afghanistan and after the withdrawal of the US troops it becomes all the more crucial for Russia to seek some ‘modus vivendi’ with Islamabad.

However, this real rapprochement is built upon a long-standing foundation of fear, mutual suspicion and concern about national security interests in the region. Russian officials have long been concerned over the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal. Thus, Russia wants Pakistan to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). But, in spite of this prevailing Russian suspicion, geopolitical and geo-economic factors have encouraged Moscow to seek a rapprochement with Islamabad. "The deteriorating Afghan situation, the realization that it must deal with Pakistan on its own merits – apart from the Indo-Pakistani connection – to help secure Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the opportunities provided by the deteriorating US-Pakistan alliance are too important for Moscow to ignore. Thus, Russia has now determined to deal with Pakistan independently and acknowledge that relations will be on a bilateral presidential level as they are with India" (Blank 2012).

The energy and economic objectives have attracted both the countries towards developing the geopolitical outcomes. Gazprom has regularly hinted at its interest in investing in or helping to build the proposed but troubled Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline. Since that pipeline has been a potential showcase for US policy, "Russian participation would not only enhance Moscow's ties and influence with all the players, it would also undermine US credibility and policy in Central Asia. Beyond the TAPI pipeline, Moscow clearly also has interests in expanding its energy profile throughout South Asia" (Blank 2012).

As expected, the new rapprochement is also founded on trade. "Russian exports to Pakistan rose from \$93 million in 2002 to \$620 million in 2008, and both sides felt that there is a room for further growth. In the following year, both countries established the 'Russian-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission' on Trade and Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation to cooperate in education, science and technology". Nevertheless, the most striking aspect of this rapprochement is that, it now also encompasses security cooperation (ibid).

Further, in the year 2011, both countries held talks and have expressed the willingness to speed up work on the proposed free trade agreement and currency swap arrangement to boost bilateral trade and to strengthen their economic relations.

“In 2011, Russia’s Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin publicly supported Pakistan’s desire to attain full membership of SCO. He further stated that in South Asia and in the Muslim world, Pakistan is a very important partner for Russia” (Hanif 2013).

In November 2011, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his Pakistani counterpart, “Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani met on the sidelines of the 10<sup>th</sup> Heads of Government meeting of the SCO. The two leaders discussed several important issues including “fight against terrorism and extremism besides calling for the need to adopt a regional approach in dealing with common challenges”. The two leaders also discussed ways “to strengthen relations by increasing cooperation in energy, trade, infrastructure development, agriculture, business cooperation and people to people contacts. Putin said relations between Pakistan and Russia have reached a level, where both the countries were in a position to enhance trade”. Supporting Putin’s view, Prime Minister Gilani said Russia was an important country and a source of stability in the region and because of its geographical proximity and strength of economy; it has contributed significantly for the socio-economic uplift of the region.

“The Russian Premier Vladimir Putin announced financing of \$500 million for the CASA-1000, a project that envisions building a 1,000-megawatt transmission line from hydropower generators in Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are seeking more reliable and cheaper sources of electricity” (Express Tribune, 9 November 2011). “He also offered Russia’s assistance for the enhancement of the production capacity of the Pakistan Steel Mills by increasing its production from the current one million tonnes to three million tonnes. He further emphasized in materialization of projects including: TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project and the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Trade and Transmission Project (CASA 1000)”<sup>68</sup> (ibid). According to United Press International,

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<sup>68</sup> URL: <http://wtocenter.vn/news/pakistan-russia-go-fta-currency-swap-agreement>

“CASA-1000 at about 1000 miles could be the biggest regional power supply project in Eurasia. It added that nearly 90 per cent of its estimated \$2 billion cost is to be funded by international finance organization for example World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, and the remaining 10 per cent to be invested by the private investors”.

President Putin also offered to facilitate in the “expansion of Karachi Steel Mill and in the energy sector technical assistance for the Guddu and Muzaffargarh power plants as well as the development of Thar Coal Project to meet Pakistan’s growing energy requirements”. Unfortunately, the entire process was thwarted as a result of Pakistan’s Supreme Court decision in the Steel Mill’s case, causing disappointments for the Russians. However, the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov continued to show interest in the Steel Mills. Russia further backed Pakistan’s position on “war on terror” and gave its assent to follow its anti-terror policy to ensure peace at the regional level. Both the Prime Ministers of Russia and Pakistan conceded that collective effort at the regional level is necessary to eradicate terrorism from the region and also agreed “to redirect all energies towards economic interaction among the SCO members”. The Prime Minister of Russia also said that the three countries i.e. Russia, China and Pakistan can put concerted effort to bring “peace, prosperity and stability back to the region.”

“In the year 2011, both the sides took the initiative to work on the framework and the proposed Free Trade Agreement and currency swap arrangement to boost bilateral trade and to further strengthen their economic ties” (Express Tribune, 9 November 2011). In September 2011 President Asif Ali Zardari visited Russia; the visit was the first in 37 years by a Pakistani head of state. This visit was aimed at assuring the Russian leaders that Pakistan was ready to forget the bitter past between the two countries and was ready to build a new relationship for the benefit of the people and the region. This visit also marked the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in sectors like energy, investment, air services and agriculture.

Russia and Pakistan entered a new phase in defence cooperation; following the first ever visit of a Pakistani Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Tahir Rafiq Butt to Russia on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012. He visited various Air force Russian defence installations and agreed to invest up to \$500 million for expansion, rehabilitation and modernization of Pakistan Steel Mills. To settle the financial and technical terms of the project, a Pakistani delegation visited Moscow and this led to the signing of Memorandum of Understanding by the two countries on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. “It envisioned modernization, reconstruction and expansion of production capacity of the Pakistan Steel Mills by up to 1.5 million metric tons”. In the energy sector, “Genco<sup>69</sup> entered into a framework cooperation agreement with the Russian Company Technopromex port, to convert the Muzaffargarh Thermal Power Plant from furnace oil to coal. Both the countries also agreed to consider setting up of a new power plant with a capacity of 500 MW to 600 MW. They agreed that 15% of funds will be provided by Genco and 85% through a loan against a sovereign guarantee of Pakistan”.

The year 2011, saw deterioration in the US-Pakistan relations. Several instances led to the worsening of the relations. Two Pakistanis were killed by CIA security officer on a Lahore street. This was again followed with the US led special operations, where United States launched a covert raid to kill Osama bin Laden. Also in the same year in 2011, US attacked a Pakistani base which led to the deaths of two dozen Pakistani soldiers. This compelled Islamabad to take a stronger action and shut down the Pakistan-based NATO supply route into Afghanistan. However, after eight months when U.S. issued an apology, the supply route was reopened. Relations between Islamabad and Washington have since then steadily improved. But the events of 2011 made it imperative for Pakistan to move beyond the United States and to diversify its relations with other global powers.

In the US-Pakistan impasse, Moscow saw an opportunity to exploit the situation and on the Pakistani side, their power elite were also keen on engaging Russia. Therefore, In January 2012, a colloquium of Pakistani envoys recommended broadening ties with

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<sup>69</sup> Genco is a third-party logistics provider to “technology, retail, consumer goods, industrial goods, healthcare, government and defence customers.”

Moscow 'to reduce reliance on the U.S'. In March 2012, "Pakistan's Foreign Minister also visited the Russian Federation and met the Russian Foreign Minister. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, a staunch realist, had a dialogue on the future of Afghanistan, aircraft sales, energy trade and a capital investment in the Pakistan Steel Mills" (Blank 2012).

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, was scheduled to make a landmark visit to Pakistan in October 2012 but it was suddenly postponed. However, three important mutual visits of Pakistani and Russian officials which took place immediately after the cancellation of the Russian President's visit, helped in easing any misperceptions in this regard. "Firstly, a high-powered Russian delegation visited Pakistan and signed three important MoUs on expansion and modernization of Pakistan Steel Mills, cooperation in Railways development and in the energy production". Secondly, Pakistan Chief of Army Staff, "General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, visited Russia in the first week of October 2012 and held meetings with the top Russian Army officials and the ruling politicians on ways to develop defense ties between the two countries". Finally, to dispel the misunderstandings about cancellation of Putin's visit, "the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, visited Pakistan in the first week of October 2012 and held meetings with Pakistan's Foreign Minister. During his visit he made some significant statements and also stated that Russia attached great importance to consultations with Pakistan" (Hanif 2013).

The mutual visits of official from both the countries and the statements from the Russian Foreign Minister clearly indicated the importance of Pakistan in the Russian Foreign Policy and towards the regional geo-political scenario. Scholars believe that Russia considers Pakistan to be very vital in its approach towards any resolution towards the Afghanistan issue. Some of the Indian scholars are of the view that the relations between Russia and Pakistan will progress considering Pakistan's importance in resolving issues with Afghanistan. Furthermore, President Putin's visit to India in 2012 did not indicate any pressure from the Indian government that would persuade him to relegate the development of Russia-Pakistan relations (Hanif 2013).

With further analysis, it can be said that Russia-Pakistan relations will continue to move forward in the coming years and both the countries are visualizing a lot of strategic and

economic gains. In the wake of many regional geo-political and geo-strategic changes which have been taking place and its own issues of internal instability and deteriorating economic condition, Pakistan considers Russia as a key player who can play a major role in these areas. In addition, this new bonhomie can help in bringing early peace in Afghanistan and in resolving Pakistan-India dispute. While, for Russia, it wants to become part of the new alignment for West Asia which is alliance among Russia, China, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. It seemed that Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani also decided to have a special relationship with Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In fact, it is in Pakistan's interest that it has to take some major initiatives to speedily improve relations with Russia. Therefore, it is observed that in the recent years, both the countries have shown interest in having strong political, strategic and economic ties. Both have been "exploring the prospects of enhanced bilateral cooperation through joint economic projects in the areas such as energy, power, railways, steel production, telecommunications and IT". Russia, has offered Pakistan its cooperation in the area of space, satellite technology, oil exploration, transportation projects and in the aviation field. It is not wrong to say that as the U.S. presence in Afghanistan dwindles, Pakistan's role in the region as a negotiator with the Taliban becomes even more vital.

Russia and Pakistan held their "first-ever strategic dialogue in Moscow on 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> August 2013 which was led by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Jalil Jilani from the Pakistani side and the Russian delegation was led by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Gennadievich Titov. Pakistan's Ambassador to Russian Federation Alamgir Babur and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov also participated in the dialogue" (Rajeev Sharma, 2013). "The topics that were discussed ranged from economic, political, and defense cooperation to regional and international security issues. Other issues discussed during this meeting pertained to disarmament, counter terrorism, drug trafficking, global security, enhancing cooperation in various fields and expanding bilateral trade" (ibid). This strategic dialogue between them can be seen as a manifestation of growing Russia-Pakistan interactions. Further, Russian Head of Federal Service partially lifted the ban on Pakistani Fruit Imports. According to a Press Release in January 2014, "members of Fito-Agro Centre of Russia visited Pakistan and talked to



the concerned officials on the increase of agricultural imports from Pakistan by lifting the ban over all agricultural products barring potatoes on 24<sup>th</sup> February. Thus, Russia permitted import of citrus fruit from Pakistan with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014 which will lead to \$20 million instant financial benefit to the Pakistani exporters and which has a possibility of further increase in due course of time” (Rajeev Sharma, 2013).

With these developments gradually the factors that previously hampered Moscow-Islamabad relations have also been weakening such as: Firstly, “Pakistan has largely cleansed its tribal areas of foreign militants, including those from the Caucasus and Central Asia”. Secondly, “over the course of a decade, Islamabad has made great strides in improving its nuclear safety and export control systems”. An important demonstration of the evolving Russia-Pakistan dynamics is the lifting of its arms embargo on Pakistan and “signing of a military cooperation agreement on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to deepen their defence ties during the first visit of a Russian Defence Minister in 45 years”. This agreement spoke about “exchanging information on politico-military issues, strengthening collaboration in the defence and counter-terrorism sectors, sharing similar views on developments in Afghanistan and doing business with each other” (Mitra 2015). It also included the “sale of Mi-35 combat helicopters and surprisingly, Moscow and Islamabad were also in the initial phases of talks on the sale of Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets. The export of the Su-35 will prove a real test of the extent to which Russia is willing to depart from its historic alliance with India<sup>70</sup>. Pakistan on the other side is also exploring the purchase of a range of other Russian defense hardware, including the Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft” (Rafiq 2015).

This cooperation is not only limited to military cooperation, as both Russia and Pakistan are intent on enhancing economic ties. Both the Governments on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015 have signed the North-South Gas pipeline deal “that would transmit natural gas from the city of Karachi to Lahore”. Russia also urged to join “Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the CASA-1000 energy project, providing Afghanistan and Pakistan with electricity. Both the countries are also seeking to increase their bilateral trade and Pakistan seems to have

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<sup>70</sup> URL:[defenceforumindia.com/forum/threads/pakistan-russias-new-best-friend.71468/](http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/threads/pakistan-russias-new-best-friend.71468/)

expressed its interest in establishing a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union” (ibid).

Russia and Pakistan are keen to forge their relations as both the countries share a common vision in building a world security architecture which is based on the principles of respect for sovereignty and the integrity of the states. Both the countries are willing to resolve crisis situations whether interstate and interstate disputes primarily through internal, bilateral and multilateral dialogue under the auspices of UN dialogue. Both the countries also agree that if ‘force’ is the only viable option left then it has to be decided and monitored by the United States as is evident through their blocking of UNSC resolutions seeking UN approval for use of force in support of the Syrian opposition (Hanif 2013). Another development that inclines Pakistan towards Russia is “India’s strategic partnership with the US and Afghanistan, an attempt to establish India’s military influence in Afghanistan and a strategy that indeed have the aim of encircling Pakistan”. Another dimension besides its strategic interests in the region that Pakistan seeks in this new phase of its relationship with Russia is in the economic realm. “Pakistan seeks Russian economic assistance in the form of foreign direct investment and technological cooperation particularly in the energy field and the latter seems inclined to responding to these needs in addition to increasing the trade volume. Observing these developments, it can be said that Russia-Pakistan relations in the economic sphere is taking place in the true spirit of theory of commercial liberalism according to which trade, investment and interdependence are forces for peace” (Hanif 2013).

In addition, with the changing global politics, “Pakistan recognizes Russia’s role and influence in maintaining international peace and security and being a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it considers Russia as an important player in the end-game in Afghanistan”. Pakistan started giving great importance to its relations with Russia and would like to further develop this relationship in all areas of mutual interest. But for these to materialize, Russia and Pakistan need to overcome their history of estrangement and move towards engagement under new circumstances. However, “this may not be possible unless conscious efforts are made by both the countries to develop a

deeper understanding of each other, correcting misperceptions, removing mutual suspicions, and developing respect for each other's legitimate interests in the region".

It is important to add that there is recognition by all sides that Pakistan has the ability to help ensure a final settlement or to disrupt the whole process. This has imposed a greater responsibility on Pakistan to do everything at their disposal to bring about conditions of peace and stability in Afghanistan. While, Pakistan needs to learn the correct lessons from its involvement in Afghanistan since 1979, following the Soviet invasion and thus must stress on the point that it should maintain good relations with all Afghan ethnic groups.

There are various reports that Al-Qaeda have almost been wiped out from Afghanistan and from the neighbouring regions in Pakistan. During President Obama's visit to the Bagram Air Base, he announced on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2014, that there will be a total withdrawal of troops by 2016 and thus, a Bilateral Security Agreement was signed, as expected by the new government in Afghanistan on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. There was a release of Bowe Bergdahl, the last American Prisoner of War in May 2014, as a result of tedious negotiations between the US and the Taliban, in exchange for the release of five Taliban prisoners that had been held at Guantanamo Bay. This indicates that the interaction between the Taliban, Pakistan and the US did not end. Therefore, Pakistan can play a positive role by using whatever influence it has with the Afghan Taliban to bring them to the negotiating table with the new Afghan government, Russia and the United States. This effort should be made in order to prevent another civil war following American exit, as this will bound to draw in many external actors and thus can be a lethal civil war since all sides are now better armed and prepared than in the past (Kasuri 2015).

There has been an increase in the mutual visits and contacts between the two countries, this is seen as a progress and therefore, after the end of Cold War and especially; after the 9/11 attacks in US there seems to be a shift in the Russian perception of Pakistan's future positive role in Afghanistan and the region. The bilateral relations between Russia and Pakistan has greatly improved over the past few years due to several factors, such as post-Cold War geopolitical realignment by Russia, Russia is also concerned about

Afghanistan's stability post US withdrawal of its troops, Pakistan's shift after its strained relations with the US and also India's growing geo-strategic and military ties with United States . All the above factors have contributed in Russia's tilt towards its association with Pakistan thus considers Pakistan as one of the key player. All of these factors strengthen the hope that Pakistan-Russia relations will continue to move forward in the coming years (Hanif 2013). Nevertheless, a perceptual gap between Russia and Pakistan still exists on the issues of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. "Russia considers that the Afghanistan and Pakistan based terrorist groups are involved, directly or indirectly in the transnational networks of religious extremism and terrorism, which are involved in destabilizing the Russian territories of Chechnya, Daghestan, and parts of Central Asia. Pakistan, while acknowledging the existence of the problem does not see extremism spilling from its territory and refers to the indigenous nature of the problem." The other issue is Pakistan's nuclear proliferation and the ways to control it, is a problem between both Moscow and Islamabad. For Pakistan its stand is clear as being a responsible state as Russia itself; Russian leadership on the other hand remains apprehensive as it considers nuclear materials, a potential danger and that could be acquired by the terrorists (Rahman 2011).

"Russia being a veto power at the UN, its significant international influence at the world stage is evident from its role in the Syrian crisis and Iran's nuclear programme". It is seen that in the past few years the relations between Russia and the United States have deteriorated sharply. Their policies with respect to various issues at the world stage are not in consonance. "This tense state of Russia-US relations places Pakistan, with its geo-strategic importance, in a position of interest for both Moscow and Washington". Therefore, this budding cooperation between Russia and Pakistan could be a part of a greater shift in international relations. Moreover, with the most NATO troops that have left Afghanistan, officials in Pakistan fear that the United States' regional interest is tilting towards India, Pakistan's eastern neighbour and arch-rival. To quote, Senior Pakistani military leader, "Of course we are concerned, the balance of power is being tipped toward India, and that is not good, and it's been done with the help of the

Western World. That is why we are looking at various markets, because conventional (military) parity is the only recipe for peace and stability” (Craig 2015).

It can be said that Pakistan’s efforts to reorient its ties with Moscow came as relations between the United States and Islamabad got deteriorated and in the case of Russia its worsening relations with the West after the Ukrainian crisis, which in turn prompted it to look for new trading partners in Asia. Russia’s concerns regarding India’s proximity with the US were magnified when President Obama met as the guest of honor in New Delhi with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015, on the occasion of Republic Day celebration. “President Obama and Prime Minister Modi vowed to strengthen cooperation on defense and energy matters, and they announced a deal that they said should smooth the way for American companies to invest in Indian civilian nuclear plants” (Craig 2015).

Tasnim Aslam, spokesperson for Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Pakistan doesn’t want to “put all of its eggs in one basket.” “It’s a multi-polar world, and it’s in our interest to engage all the poles and forge relationships,” She also led a high-level Pakistani delegation to Moscow to discuss future ties. The opinion of Haji Muhammad Adeel, a lawmaker who chairs the Pakistani Senate’s foreign relations committee can be added here. According to him, “Pakistan’s historical mistake after its inception was to establish close ties with the United States but to ignore the Russians.” He further said that “we went to war with Russia in Afghanistan, and that brought us gifts of terrorism, extremism and drugs. Now Pakistan is trying to forge friendly ties with Russia to correct the mistakes of past” (ibid)

However, Yury Barmin, a Russian foreign policy expert based in the United Arab Emirates, said “he doubts Russia would risk its relationship with India by selling arms to Pakistan. He said he suspects Putin, who visited New Delhi in 2014 December, is using Pakistan as leverage over the Indian government so it doesn’t get too close to the United States.” He added “It’s the way Russian diplomacy works.” But on the contrary, Rifaat Hussain, an Islamabad-based defense expert, said that “the West should not underestimate the potential for a realignment of strategic ties in Asia.” He further added,

“There is now a visible strain in Moscow’s relationship with the United States, and Moscow has moved much closer to China, which he thinks facilitates Pakistan’s relationship with Russia” (Craig 2015).

Pakistan's former Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri has told TASS, Russian news Agency, in an exclusive interview, “I had predicted even before, that our relationship with Russia would improve as Washington was getting closer to India, which was a natural consequence”. He added that “Pakistan understands the need to improve ties with Russia, which will become an important player after the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and therefore, it is in our common interest to keep Afghanistan peaceful and stable” (TASS, 26 October 2015). He was also of the opinion that both Russia and China encouraged Pakistan to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization but it seems without Russia’s cooperation, Pakistan would only remain as an observer state (ibid). According to Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov, “The accession of nuclear powers, India and Pakistan to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will not only change the political map, but may also influence the balance of power on the world arena” (Russia and India Report, 10 July 2015).

The Vice President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Muhammad Waseem Vohra said, “New investments of Russian companies in energy, coal mining and metal industries of Pakistan, may reach \$5 billion in the coming five years”. He added that “Russia could also invest funds in creating petrochemical enterprises in Pakistan but the real prospect of this rapprochement is linked to the implementation of the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and Russia may join the project, for which the legal basis is ready”. He further stressed that “there are no restrictions on the number of countries that will use Gwadar Port, adding that the participation will allow Russian companies to carry out the transit of cargos to the Persian Gulf via the port. Also, Russian companies that seek to supply their goods to Middle East, Pakistan and India will benefit from this” (Pakistan Defence, 19 June 2015).

From 14th to 18th November 2015 the delegation of the RISS<sup>71</sup> headed by its Director Leonid Reshetnikov visited Islamabad on the invitation of the National Defense University (NDU) of Pakistan. The delegation included head of sector of Asia at the Center for Asia and the Middle East B. Volkhonsky, Assistant Director for International Relations A. Dudar, and Research Fellow of the Center for Asia and the Middle East R. Enikeev. The Director held meetings with Commander of the General Staff Pakistan Army, Lieutenant-General Zubayr Mahmood Hayat and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lieutenant-General Rashad Mahmood. During the talks both the sides spoke in favor of the expansion of spheres of Russian-Pakistani political and economic cooperation.

The members of the delegation also met the President of the National Defense University, Lieutenant-General Anwar Ali Hyder and CEO of the Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA)-NDU, Major General Noel Israel Kohara. They discussed practical steps on development of bilateral cooperation between RISS and NDU. RISS experts also made presentations on the problems of the geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Asia, and prospects of development of Russian-Pakistani bilateral relations. In their reports members of the delegation gave an assessment of the present state of international relations, considering the main vectors of Russian foreign policy in the context of the Syrian crisis, and thus analyzed the possibility of cooperation between Russia and Pakistan keeping in mind the changing geopolitical shifts and changing economic center to the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, during this visit RISS and the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) signed the cooperation agreement and at the end of the meeting both RISS Director and Senior Commander of the Pakistan Army Major General Ziauddin Najam discussed the prospects of formation of a bilateral working group for regular consultations at expert level on problems of security in the Asian region<sup>72</sup> (Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015).

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<sup>71</sup> The Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (**RISS**) is a major scientific-research and analytical Centre established by the President of the Russian Federation.

<sup>72</sup> "RISS Director Meets the Senior Military Leadership of Pakistan", *Russian Institute for Strategic Studies*, 19 November 2015, URL: <https://en.riss.ru/news/19317/>

Therefore, it is seen that in the post-Cold War period, “both Russia and Pakistan have started reviewing their old policies and initiated various foreign policy initiatives to develop closer friendly relations”. This booming relationship can be noticed by the recent events: **Firstly**, The joint military exercises Druzhba-2016 (Friendship-2016) held between Moscow and Islamabad from 24<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October, which President Putin held just few weeks after the Uri attacks on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In fact, Moscow announced it would hold additional drills with Islamabad in 2017. **Secondly**, soon after the joint military exercises, “Russia was given access to warm waters of Gwadar port, its new Chinese-built port on the Gulf, which is close to Iran and opposite Oman. So far, “Pakistan has not made it clear if it would allow Russian warships to dock there, but the Chinese navy has already been granted landing rights at the port” (Rashid 2016). The **third indication** came when at the recent BRICS Summit in Goa in October last year; Russia refused to support India in its claims that Pakistan allegedly sponsors terrorism. The **fourth indication** comes from a concern compounded after Russia and Pakistan held their first ever foreign office consultations on regional issues in Islamabad on December 14, 2016. The Pakistani delegation was led by Ahmad Hussain Dayo, Director General (West Asia), while the Russian delegation was led by Alexander V Sternik, third CIS department head at the Russian ministry of foreign affairs (Roy Chaudhary 2016). It was also decided that the next round of consultations will be convened in Moscow in 2017. Moreover, Russia, is working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. In the tripartite meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at Moscow, Foreign Secretaries of Russia, China and Pakistan decided to seek “flexible approaches” including the lifting of UN sanctions against select Taliban leaders to promote peaceful dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This decision comes in the wake of recent attempts by Russia to engage directly with the Taliban amid growing worries about the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, reacting to the discussions of the tripartite meeting, the Afghan government on 29th Dec, rejected the call by the three countries and said that the Afghan people alone can decide on removing Taliban leaders from the UN sanction lists. According to the Afghan authorities, they had been fighting Daesh, who are all ex-members of the Pakistani Taliban and now roaming in disguise. They claimed that the



biggest threats are the Taliban, Haqqani Network and al-Qaeda and that's the core issue. It is noticed that both India and the Afghanistan government is wary of any peace process driven by Pakistan as they believe Taliban with ties to the Pakistani security establishment is the biggest threat in Afghanistan. From these, we can assume that as India tries hard to isolate Pakistan politically for its role in actively fomenting terrorism in the region and beyond, Russia is even more getting closer with the latter, and therefore the levels of concern are rising in the Indian government and among the strategic community of India.

So far, Russia has hosted three Conferences on Afghanistan in the last few months. The second meeting on 15 February 2017 was expanded to six countries – “Russia itself, Iran, China, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan”. But it was observed that the United States, a key player which “still maintains 9,800 troops to support the Afghan government's counter-insurgency efforts against the Taliban, was missing from the meeting” (Meher 2017). Russia once again on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2017 offered to host talks between Afghan government and Taliban at the 11-nation regional talks which was held in Moscow. However, the Government of Afghanistan was of the opinion that “best venue” for direct peace talks shall be on Afghan soil and pointing towards Moscow indicated that separate outreach to the Taliban will not be helpful in the success of the regional process. Unlike, the previous two meetings, in the third one, the talks have expanded with the addition of five Central Asian nations, but the missing stakeholders continued to be the US and the Western countries that have troops stationed in Afghanistan (The Wire, 2017).

Russian President Vladimir Putin during his recent meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has termed, “Pakistan as an important partner for his country in South Asia”. “Putin met him on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Astana on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017”. During the meeting, the two leaders seemed to have discussed current international issues and bilateral relations; including trade and economic cooperation (Pakistan Today, 2017). President Putin stated that “Russia-Pakistan relations have been constructive and mutually beneficial and was of the opinion that their relations are developing in many areas and trade has increased, even if only by

a few percentage points. He expressed his optimism by saying that they are able to do much more than what they are doing now.” While, according to Pakistan’s Prime Minister Sharif, “In Ufa (July 2015 SCO Summit), we did agree on improving Pakistan-Russia bilateral trade, there is improvement but not the level that we agreed upon. It has been always my endeavor to build and strengthen our relationship and I am continuing to strive for that.<sup>73</sup>”

### **Economic Relations between Russia and Pakistan**

After the end of Cold War, Russia’s trade with China, India and Iran is \$15 billion, \$3 billion and \$5 billion respectively, but when it comes to Russia’s trade with Pakistan, “it is meagre 0.5 % of its global trade, meaning economic and trade relations” between both the countries was falling short compared to their actual potential. It was noticed that the trade volume was fluctuating and had gradually increased from “50 million dollars in 1998, 100 million dollars in 2002, 78 million dollars in 2003, 270 million dollars in 2004 to 520 million dollars in 2006” (Owais 2007). However, it is heavily tilted in favour of Russia with 459 million dollars exports to Pakistan. During this period, the main items exported from Russia to Pakistan were chemical products, fertilizers, timber, paper and metal, while Pakistan's main export items to Russia were garments and fabrics, leather and leather products, and food items. Russia's overall exports amount to 317.6 billion dollars (2006) and its imports amount to 171.5 billion dollars (2006), while Pakistan's overall exports stood at 16.5 billion dollars during 2005-2006 and imports at 29 billion dollars during the same period. The comparison of trade volume shows that both the countries were not contributing even one per cent to their overall trade (Owais 2007). It can be said that “the balance of trade had been much in favour of Russia, thus, making imperative upon Russia to allow special concessions to Pakistani exports and grant Pakistan Most Favoured Nation status in trade and investment” (Khan and Amin 2014).

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<sup>73</sup> URL: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/sco-summit-2017-pakistan-an-important-partner-in-south-asia-says-vladimir-putin-3538955.html>

On the Trade side, it was noticed that Pakistan had provided total backing to Russia for WTO membership; on the condition that Russia agrees to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with them. “Pakistan is seeking market access for leather, surgical instruments, sporting goods, and textiles. Russia has also agreed to return \$108 million to Pakistani exporters who had exported articles to the USSR before its disintegration.” Gradually, trade between both Russia and Pakistan showed signs of growth, but the balance of trade was still in favor of Russia. “Around 90 percent of Pakistan’s exports to Russia were textile items. According to experts on textile business, Pakistan can increase its export to Russia up to \$500 million, if Pakistan can trade directly with Russia” (Afzal 2006). In the energy sector, there seems to be good progress and collaboration between Russia-Pakistan. “In October 2005 during Gazprom chairman, Aleksei Miller’s visit, he held separate meetings with President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Islamabad and as a result, the government of Pakistan signed a MoU with Gazprom for cooperation in the oil and gas sector” (Durrani 2006).

There are other oil and gas companies of the Russian Federation that have signed MoUs with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan’s “private sector oil and gas companies for local contract bidding”. Similarly, “the chairman of the Board of Directors of Magnitogorsk, Iron and Steel Works of Russia, Viktor Rashnikov, had committed to invest \$2 billion over a period of five years for the upgrading and modernization of Pakistan Steel Mills. If these commitments from the Russian side are materialized, it is expected that during next two to four years, Russian investment of four to six billion dollars will flow into Pakistan economy” (Rahman 2011). It can be said that interest in improving economic relations would definitely assist in improvement of political relations between Moscow and Islamabad.<sup>74</sup>

Eventually, “with Russia lifting its self-imposed arms embargo on Pakistan in November 2014 and the signing of the landmark defence agreement between the two countries”, there seemed to be quick progress in their relations. Regarding this, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said “Russia and Pakistan, former cold war rivals, were entering into a new phase of strong relationship.” He made this statement “while meeting a

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<sup>74</sup> [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16\\_1\\_ses/11\\_rahman.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16_1_ses/11_rahman.pdf)

Russian delegation led by Victor P Ivanov, Co-Chairman of the Russian-Pakistani Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Trade and Scientific Cooperation. And added that Pakistan's economy is growing fast and the country is becoming an attractive destination for foreign investors, especially in the field of energy.” He also emphasized that “Pakistan has taken a firm stance on terrorism and extremism to ensure a peaceful, stable and investor friendly environment and therefore terrorist’s hideouts and infrastructure has been destroyed through effective offensive operations. The Prime Minister further stressed that Pakistan attaches high value to its partnership with Russia in all areas including bilateral trade, economy, scientific and technical cooperation” (Sajjad Hussian, 2015).

In fact, Victor Ivanov made a statement that “Pakistan is a strong country with rich history and there exists a huge potential for mutual trade between Russia and Pakistan, while, adding that there is the need for establishing direct flight between Moscow and Islamabad to benefit the traders and investors of both the countries” (ibid).

For Russia, it considers Pakistan “as the potential to connect the massive economies of the Eurasian Union, Iran, SAARC, and China, thereby inaugurating the closest thing to an integrated Pan-Eurasian economic zone. The former recognizes Pakistan’s prime geopolitical potential and has thus maneuvered to rapidly increase its relations with the country” (Korybko 2015). It is not wrong to say that, Russia’s overall ambition at present is to increase Pakistan’s geo-political importance in the region and support its peaceful unification into the multipolar Eurasian scheme being designed by the “Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership” (Korybko 2015).

“The Russian-led trade organization comprises of Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. But the unincorporated nature of Uzbekistan and the security problems in Afghanistan pose a major impediment to have direct trade with South Asia. Thus, two alternatives have been developed to deal with these geopolitical obstacles and reach that regional market. They are: North-South Corridor between Russia-Iran-India via the Caspian and Arabian Seas and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Additionally, by bringing the Eurasian Union into contact with SAARC-member Pakistan (a growing economy), it can provide a direct trade opening with the rest of the South Asian bloc” (ibid).

It can be said that “Pakistan is uniquely poised to zip together a variety of economic blocs, taking advantage of both its geopolitical position and China’s grand investment scheme in terms of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (ibid). It seems as the geopolitical sequence of events started changing, things are working in favour of Pakistan. “China has entered into a new era of geo-economic relationship with Pakistan and plan to boost two-way trade from current \$12 billion to \$20 billion.” The former has taken its chances by investing such a hefty amount, as the Government of Pakistan claimed to have achieved daring victory against all kinds of terrorists’ manifestations. Moreover, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are comparatively better than before, with the change of government in 2014, however, some differences are still there (Raja 2015).

“Internally, Pakistan’s economic indicators and GDP are improving; foreign exchange reserves are rising, inflation is down; railway has gone in profit for the first time and the problems of terrorism and energy crisis are being tackled earnestly. Therefore, gradually, the negative international perception of Pakistan seems to be changing and it is now being looked at with respect” (ibid).

The proposed “Silk Road Economic Belt” will not only “connect and develop China and Pakistan” but also other countries of the region and thereby promote peace, as per Commercial Liberalism theory.<sup>75</sup> “As Russia feels betrayed by the UN-approved intervention in Libya and with the imposition of sanctions on Russia by the United States followed by the EU after the Crimean accession, the former had not much option but to incline towards China. And for China also it is having its own problems with the US, as it is facing challenge from the latter in the South China Sea and feels threatened by the numerous US naval bases in the region” (Qadir 2015). While, in the case of Iran, it has agreed to join CPEC because “it is also another victim of US-UN imposed sanctions and was economically isolated.” For Pakistan, “it is aware of the significance of the geopolitical repositioning in the region and the opportunities and liberty of action that it might have in the future. It is because of these factors, Pakistan has been seeking

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<sup>75</sup> The theory of Commercial Liberalism believes in promoting free trade and economic interdependence as it eventually leads to peace.

to broaden its diplomatic base, reduce its dependence on the US, and improve relations with its neighbours” (ibid).

Consequently, after “Russia lifted its self-imposed arms embargo on Pakistan” in November 2014, “the latter has not only signed a deal with Russia for combat helicopters, it is also importing engines for its fighter jets, which it is building jointly with China. The Russian state-owned Rostec Corporation has also undertaken to build an 1100-kilometre gas pipeline to Pakistan” (Qadir 2015).

Pakistan attached a lot of importance to the CPEC, which is a subset of Beijing's most ambitious economic initiative ‘One Belt One Road’ (Agency 2017). This project seems to have great potential for Pakistan as it can become a major economic corridor by linking South Asia to China, West Asia and Central Asia. Thus, “the catalyst for connecting the potential economic blocs together via Pakistan’s geostrategic location is CPEC, China’s grand vision of establishing a trans-Pakistani trade corridor to cultivate a center of economic gravity that seals everything together. The core of this strategy rests in expanding the Karakoram Highway between both the countries and constructing parallel roads, railways, industrial, and pipeline networks from the southern port of Gwadar all the way up to the Chinese border” (Kasuri 2015).

Interestingly, one of the major goals of the present century is to give form to the vision of “Eurasian integration, in the sense of building a super continental-wide economic space” (ibid). And this is one of the reason, “why Moscow took the step in reaching to Islamabad and soliciting a strategic partnership considering the pivotal importance of Pakistan and therefore eager to build a foundation of political trust so as to better assist in managing India-Pakistan conflicts.” However, the United States can be a hurdle as it might try to offset the process by creating obstacles “for Pakistan’s catalytic role in bringing Eurasia together. If the threats from US can properly be defended against, perhaps with unified trilateral assistance from Russia, China and Iran, then Pakistan can prevail in becoming Eurasia’s economic zipper” and connecting these economies together in a multipolar future (Korybko 2015). While, it can be pointed out that the antagonism between both India and Pakistan has not been lowered, “but they seem to be

willing to give multilateral Eurasian institutionalism a chance, as evidenced by their admission to the SCO” (ibid).

It appears that both Russia and Pakistan are committed “to deepening relations with each other and their mutual interactions are far from a temporary convergence of business interests. Nevertheless, it can be argued that both sides understand the larger significance of what they’re doing, which is to facilitate their shared vision of an integrated and multipolar Eurasia” (Korybko 2015). However, Russia’s recent U-turns with regard to Pakistan occurred in the end of 2016. According to sources in Pakistan, in November 2016 during the visit to Islamabad of Alexander Bortnikov, Director of Federal Security Services, Russia clearly indicated its interest to have access to the Gwadar port and to be a part of CPEC. There were in fact, reports of Russia “not only declared strong support for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor but also announced Russia's intention to link the Eurasian Economic Union project with the China funded CPEC<sup>76</sup>.” But later, the Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed any of its intention regarding CPEC. In this context, it can be assumed that since, “CPEC passes through the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir”, which is a major irritant factor in the whole project, therefore Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that though Russia would certainly like to benefit from the project but if India takes a hard stance, then Russia may back out because it will put its relation with India in the preferred place. And since for Russia, relation with India is more important than its relations with Pakistan, therefore, Russia would like to avoid any confrontation when it comes to Kashmir.

Russia has consistently been making non-transparent and unpredictable moves towards Pakistan. Under the third president of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012), Russia’s policy towards Islamabad was more transparent: The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept declared Pakistan as one of the key regional powers. However, Putin's return to the Kremlin as President in May 2012 led to changes in Russia' policy “towards South Asia in general and Paksitan in particular.” The first manifestation of this was a short

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<sup>76</sup> URL: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/sco-summit-2017-pakistan-an-important-partner-in-south-asia-says-vladimir-putin-3538955.html>

notice cancellation of President Putin's visit to Islamabad to attend the quadrilateral meeting in the year 2012 "with the leaders of Tajikistan and Afghanistan along with Pakistan". And the second indication was "cancellation of President Putin's visit to Islamabad" to inaugurate the North-South Gas pipeline on the basis of 'lack of substance' for the trip (Topychkanov 2017). Thus, Moscow's foreign policy seems to become less clear and predictable. It seems Russia wants to keep Pakistan engaged for political, economic and strategic regions but not sure of taking the relationship to the highest level. Moreover, the Russian official statements don't reveal any comprehensive strategy for South Asia

Additionally, it can be pointed out that CPEC and the 'zipper' plan can have some possible primary hurdles such as "secessionist tendencies of Baluchistan, militant Islamic radicalism in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Colour Revolution against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif or any of his successors. These obstacles could get in the way and ruin the entire Eurasian enterprise" (Tikhonova 2016). It can also throw a heavy blow to this integration process "by either through Pakistan's domestic destabilization or India's refusal to be a member of it" (ibid). "One of the major strategic risks to Pan-Eurasian integration inherent to Russia and Pakistan's budding relationship is that Moscow is pushing New Delhi closer to Washington." As stated earlier, since CPEC passes through Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, it may face some opposition from the Indian side. However, Moscow can become a mediator "between New Delhi and Islamabad and keep regional relations stable enough so as to start the envisioned multilateral economic partnership." In this regard, while delivering a speech on Russia-Pakistan relationship at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), Russian Ambassador Alexey Dedov said, "Moscow was also focusing on creating a positive atmosphere in South Asia with reference to India and Pakistan ties and believes that the SCO could provide the platform for fostering confidence and cooperation between Delhi and Islamabad" (Korybko 2015).

Below, the Chapter focuses on the various agreements and deals that has been signed and progressed that has been made so far by both the countries in trade, defence, energy and automobile sectors.



## **Defence Cooperation**

Russia lifted its self-imposed arms embargo on Pakistan and has signed a military cooperation agreement on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 “to deepen their defence ties during the first visit of a Russian Defence Minister in 45 years.” The agreement spoke about “exchanging information on politico-military issues, strengthening collaboration in the defense and counter-terrorism sectors, sharing similar views on developments in Afghanistan and doing business with each other.” Further, Russia and Pakistan on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015 “signed a landmark defence deal that includes the sale of four Mi-35 ‘Hind E’ attack helicopters to Pakistan. Both the countries were negotiating the deal since 2014 and finally it was signed by top defence officials from Russia and Pakistan in Rawalpindi” (Mateen Haider, 2015). This deal therefore, indicated considerable enhancement in their bilateral relations.

Towards the end of 2014, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Islamabad which was directed at discussing military cooperation with the Pakistani leadership. And in June 2015, “Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif had also visited Russia, after which a draft contract for the delivery of four Mi-35 'Hind E' combat helicopters was sent to Pakistan from Russia. He had spent about 15 hours at an arms expo near Moscow and inspected not only the weapon systems on display but also saw their live demonstrations.” Regarding this military developments, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation said, “Both sides have been negotiating the delivery of helicopters to fight terrorism and that Pakistan currently has a number of Mi-17 helicopters delivered by the United States to assist in the fight against militancy.” The Mi-35 helicopter is an extremely updated version of the “Mi-24 (Hind) combat helicopter that has new onboard equipment and avionics. It also has a more powerful engine and a different tail rotor” (Mateen Haider, 2015).

The 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014, “defence cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening military-to-military relations and it had followed by another technical cooperation agreement to pave the way for sale of defence equipment to Pakistan. It can be said that both the countries recently been working on enhancing defence cooperation and are believed to have already progressed a lot.” This exchange of visits by top military

officials in recent years in fact, is a sign of progress in the field of their bilateral defence cooperation.

In the beginning of 2015, “Pakistan closed a deal with Russia to import Klimov RD-93 engines for the JF-17 aircraft that it jointly manufactures with China. Earlier, Pakistan used to import them from Russia via China, but with direct imports it will lower the cost of production and will help in Pakistan’s export prospects.” In addition, on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015, Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation made a crucial announcement regarding the ongoing discourse between both the countries for an unspecified number of Su-35 fighter jets to be given to Pakistan, after agreeing to supply Mi-35 combat helicopters. There are also talks underway “on the delivery of 20 more Russian multirole Mi-35M attack helicopters.” Sergei Ryabkov, the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation said, “Pakistan is Russia's closest partner and the ties between the two countries are evolving beyond the military sphere to include other sectors such as energy. At the same time, he also suggested that this will not have a negative impact on the relations between Moscow and New Delhi” (Stobdan 2015). Regarding Sukhoi SU-35 fighter jets, Prof Alina Filimonova is of the opinion that Russians are seriously taking the matter as in one of the recent meetings; the topic was brought up as the main subject when the question of Pakistan was raised. In fact, according to her, this was taken as the most important matter this year and she is of the opinion that this deal can happen in the future because Russia seems interested and gives its attention.

Therefore, it can be assumed that “the export of Su-35 to Pakistan will prove a real test of the extent to which Russia is willing to depart from its historic alliance with India.” There are media reports saying that Russia refused to sell advanced Su-35 fighter jets to Pakistan, declining latter’s request; however, both the sides concluded some important military deals (Tikhonova 2016). It seemed “Pakistan is also exploring the purchase of a range of other Russian defense hardware, including the Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft.” It can be assumed that Pakistan's pursuit of Su-35 was induced by Pakistan’s Air Force’s need for a twin-engine fighter “that can fly for a longer range than the JF-17 and penetrate more deeply into the enemy's territory.” “The twin-engine Su-35 is a

fourth generation multi-role combat aircraft which incorporates technology from fifth generation jets.” It is also more agile as compared to previous models. So far, it has been observed that no decisions have been taken, and no terms of the deal have been disclosed. However, discussions between the two countries show “Russia's willingness to sell advanced hardware to Pakistan, despite Moscow's longstanding ties with India” (ibid).

There was a delegation “led by Fomin Alexander Vasilievich, Director of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation of the Russian Federation (FSMTC)” visited Pakistan on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016 for a meeting with “Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif.” The Russian delegation arrived to discuss the sale of military hardware and the focus of the meeting was on enhanced defence cooperation. It was speculated that Russia was in negotiations with Pakistan over the sale of other equipments as well. Furthermore, on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016, “the Russian Army’s Commander-in-Chief Oleg Salyukov had announced that Russian ground forces will hold the first ever military exercises with Pakistan during 2016” (Hashmi 2016). Accordingly, the joint military exercises Druzhba-2016 (Friendship-2016) held between Moscow and Islamabad from 24<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October, which President Putin held just few weeks after the Uri attacks in India on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In this military exercise, “70 Russian and 130 Pakistani Special Forces held their joint military exercises in Cherat”, located in the northwestern province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

“The Russian military contingent consisted of the 34<sup>th</sup> mountain motorized rifle brigade of the Southern Military District. Colonel Sergey Dmitriev, commander of the 34<sup>th</sup> brigade, was present among other Russian officers at the drills. The main arms included in the drills included Russian AK-74 assault rifles, Vintorez and SVD sniper rifles, Pecheneg and Kalashnikov PKM machine guns, under-barrel grenade launcher GP-25 Kostyor, PSS silent pistols, Pakistani M4 assault rifles, Glock pistols, and Remington sniper rifles. During the last stage of the exercises, JF-17 aircraft and Mi-17 and AH-1 Cobra helicopters of the Pakistan Air Forces appeared above the Cherat training range” (Topychkanov 2016).

Although “India had asked Russia to call off the exercise following the Uri attack, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan, but the Russians declined.” In fact, Moscow announced it would hold additional drills with Islamabad in 2017.

So far, Russia and Pakistan have held three major joint military drills since 2014: two naval drills known as Arabian Monsoon 2014 and Arabian Monsoon 2015, which were supervised by superiors of the Federal Drug Control Service of Russia. The focus of the previous two were on combatting crime groups and blocking drug traffic. And the third one is the recently concluded Druzhba 2016 drills. However, in comparison with the naval exercises, “Druzhba-2016”, were real military exercises with combat troops, having the task of eliminating illegal armed groups and other combat and training tasks in mountainous areas (Topychkanov 2016).

### **North-South Gas Pipeline**

“Russia is the world’s second largest natural gas producer and is looking for new markets after it was hit by sanctions from the European Union in the wake of Crimean annexation, which caused deterioration of its relations with Europe, its major hydrocarbon export market” (Khaleeq Kiani, 2015).

Meanwhile, it was noticed, since last couple of years, there is an increased engagement between Moscow and Islamabad; as a result, finally on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015, “the governments of Russia and Pakistan signed an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of the North-South gas pipeline. The document was signed by Russia’s Energy Minister Alexander Novak and Pakistan’s Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.” Novak said as quoted in the Ministry’s statement, “the construction of the ‘North-South’ gas pipeline is bringing trade-economic cooperation between Russia and Pakistan to a new level.” According to Abbasi, “the new pipeline will be a major step in solving the problem of energy resource deficit in Pakistan’s central and northern regions, which is hampering Pakistan’s economic growth” (Sputnik, 16 October 2015). It can be assumed that this agreement is prepared to build favorable circumstances “for the construction of 1100 km long North-South gas pipeline from the city of Karachi to the city of Lahore in Pakistan with Russia’s participation.” The

Russian Government said, “The agreement is effective in a period of 25 years with possible automatic extension every five years. The project provides for a maximum use of Russian technologies, materials, equipment and products and engagement of Russian research, design and building organizations.” While, the Government of Pakistan, “undertakes to grant the rights to use land plots necessary for the project implementation and carry out research route laying works” (Tass, 6 August 2015). It was agreed that the project will be supervised and conducted by the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation and Pakistan’s Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources and it was decided that the duration of construction will be 42 months.

“The project will be implemented in three stages. On the first stage, by the second quarter of 2018, the gas pipeline will be built. On the second stage, by the second quarter of 2019, part of compressor stations will be completed. On the third stage, by the second quarter of 2020, all compressor stations will be commissioned bringing the pipeline to its full capacity, which is 12.4 billion cubic meters a year”(Tass, 20 November 2015).

The pipeline project will open new avenues for Russian companies and will be carried out in conformity with Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT)<sup>77</sup> model. “The built pipeline will be owned and operated by the project company for 25 years. During this period, payments for gas deliveries will help the company return the investments and make profit and after that the pipeline will be handed over to the government of Pakistan” (ibid). Presently, RT-Global Resources is administering surveys and engineering tasks alongside the pipeline trail. According to Andrei Korobov, general director of RT-Global Resources, “the project’s implementation will imply maximum involvement of Russian producers and contractors and added that Rostec considers attracting the United Engine Corporation as a supplier of equipment for compressor stations of the future pipeline. While, the government of Pakistan will issue a sovereign guarantee for project financing and its state gas supplying company Inter-State Gas Systems (ISGS) will act as a partner customer in the project and will pay gas transportation services”(Tass, 16 October 2015). The estimated cost of the project will

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<sup>77</sup> BOOT is a type of project which is often used to “develop a large public infrastructure project with private funding.”

reach \$2 billion- \$2.5 billion and it will be carried out by RT-Global Resources Company, which is a unit of Russian State Corporation, Rostec. Also, Gazprom Russia's largest energy company seems to be keen in supplying Liquefied Natural Gas to Pakistan.

“Sidestepping the normal bidding requirements, the agreement was signed as a government-to-government deal. And in return, Moscow agreed to provide a loan of \$2 billion, for the award of the contract to the state-run Russian firm RT Global” (Khaleeq Kiani, 2015). In fact, the “1,100 kilometers-long pipeline” is the most distinct character of the growing relationship between Moscow and Islamabad. “It will be able to carry 2 billion cubic feet of gas per day. This is equivalent to about a half of Pakistan's current gas production from its domestic fields and according to the agreement; Pakistan will provide 15 per cent equity and the Russian company 85 per cent” (ibid).

### **Russian investors interested in Pakistan's automobile sector**

Towards, late 2015, “a delegation of Russian businessmen, led by Ildar Mingaleev, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Tatarstan visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), expressing their interest in investing in Pakistan's energy and automobile sectors. During his visit, Mingaleev stated that Russia has established free economic zones with tangible tax benefits to foreign investors and therefore, suggested Pakistani investors should set up textile units in Russia to capture the enormous regional market”<sup>78</sup> (Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry). The delegation had negotiations with “Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) and Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) to explore the possibility of joint ventures in the oil and gas exploration field” (ibid).

Regarding this, ICCI Vice President Sheikh Abdul Waheed said, “Cooperation with Russia is the key to achieving Pakistan's goal of better trade with Central Asia.” He added, “Pakistan wants to strengthen trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation with Russia for mutual benefits.” According to him, “Pakistani products

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<sup>78</sup> URL: <http://www.icci.com.pk/highlights/detailHighl/743>

including textiles, surgical instruments, leather products, fruits and vegetables and others have great potential in Russia,” He also emphasized on the frequent exchange of trade delegations that could enhance their economic relations.

The investors of Russia seem to be also enthusiastic in investing and get into joint ventures to produce “heavy-duty trucks, passenger cars, other specialised vehicles, shipbuilding, manufacturing of gas turbines and compressors in Islamabad.” Ildar Mingaleev further mentioned, “Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) was planning to take a business delegation to Russia, and the ICCI members should become part of this delegation to explore business opportunities in Russia.”

ICCI Vice President Sheikh Abdul Waheed, FPCCI Vice President Mian Akram Farid and others emphasized that “Pakistan and Russia should sign Free Trade Agreement to improve trade relations.”

### **Pakistan-Russia Inter Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical cooperation**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015, Chairman of the FPCCI Regional Standing Committee on Horticulture Exports, Ahmad Jawad said that “since major imports in Russia comprise beef products, dairy products, citrus, tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco, fish, apples, pears and others, Pakistan has all the chances to tap available opportunities and achieve maximum space through effective marketing strategy. In addition, he remarked as the trade between the two countries currently stood around \$500 million, this has to be increased.” He further added that as estimated, in the year 2015, Pakistan’s export to Russia has only increased by 4 percent, which is chiefly consisted of agricultural products. With regard to bolstering trade between Moscow and Islamabad, Dr Alexander G.Khozin, Charge d' Affaires of the Embassy of Russian Federation in Pakistan, was of the opinion that “under the existent scenario Preferential Trade Agreement and availability of banking channels were prerequisite to boost bilateral trade between Russia and Pakistan. Adding that, there is potential for growth in the sector of Kinnow (mandarin), potato and other horticulture products in the wake of sanction put by the EU on Russia, on the import of food items from EU countries.”

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015, “Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Alexey Yurivich Dedov, during his visit to Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) had invited Pakistani businessmen to explore huge untapped Russian market, where their merchandise could get a good place for having good quality” (Dawn, 20 Decemebr 2015). He made an important point by saying that, “both countries should take sector-specific measures to enhance mutual trade that did not reflect its potential” and also conveyed his optimism that businessmen of both the countries “could enter into joint ventures to benefit each other.” He further stressed that other than oil and gas sector, they should try to explore the possibility of mining of marble and granite which could also attract Russian businessmen to invest in Pakistan (ibid).

So far, it is noticed that undoubtedly, the exchange of high level visits between Russia and Pakistan is an important factor to strengthen their bilateral ties. Therefore, both the countries had reviewed their “bilateral relations and discussed the possibilities of enhancing cooperation in finance, trade and investment, science and technology, industry, energy, oil and gas exploration, food and agriculture, textile, drug and narcotics control and other areas of mutual cooperation.” And it seemed both had agreed on the proposal “to have direct air link between Moscow and Islamabad, which aims to enhance business to business and people to people contacts between both the countries” (Imran Ali Kundi, 2016).

As we have noticed, in the recent years there is increased engagement between Russia and Pakistan “through series of meaningful dialogues from defence cooperation to gas supply and from investment conference to business forum and there have been serious efforts being carried out for further strengthening of bilateral relations through rigorous commercial diplomacy and energy cooperation.” As a result of these constant engagements between both the countries, the first event of “Pakistan-Russia Investment Forum” was organized, on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015. This Forum seems to have established a strong relationship between the two countries at its initial stage. Consequently, “4<sup>th</sup> Pakistan-Russia Inter Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical cooperation was also held from 18-20 November, 2015 and both sides termed the business forum and the IGC meetings very fruitful and productive for



strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries” (Shazia Mehmood Khan 2015).

During the 4th meeting of IGC, Russia and Pakistan on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 signed “Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) on finalization of the long standing Draft Agreement on settlement of mutual financial claims and obligations, MoU on Science and Technical cooperation and the Protocol (Joint Statement) at the conclusion of the IGC Session.” From Pakistani side, the delegation was led by Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister of Finance; while from the Russian side, Viktor P. Ivanov, Director of Federal Drug Control Service of Russia “led a 60-member Russian delegation, comprising private sector investors.” This event was mainly organized by the Board of Investment (BoI) and the “Russian Business Council for Cooperation with Pakistan (BCCP).” The major goal of the meeting was to increase trade volume and investment cooperation between both the countries, while making Russian investors familiarize “with the local trade and investment opportunities existing in different sectors of Pakistan’s economy” (Shazia Mehmood Khan 2015).

“The prominent businessmen from Russia belonging to different sectors of economy attended the Pakistan-Russia Investment Forum to enhance bilateral collaborations and secure the existing trade ties. Business to business meeting was also organized in the sidelines of the event in which Russian investors explored the opportunities for joint ventures and investments. In fact, investors from other sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, pharmaceutical and infrastructure development had also attended the event. The local investors and representatives of different trade bodies, Chambers of Commerce and Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry also participated in the event to find scope for enhancing bilateral trade and investment” (Jabri 2015).

It is to be noted, that “bilateral trade between Russia and Pakistan at present is approximately \$500 million which could be increased by enhancing agricultural products as there seems to be vast scope for Pakistani agricultural exports including mangos, kinnow, potato and other horticulture products” (Jabri 2015). Seeing, immense potential in the energy sector, Russian energy corporations have already shown their keenness to enter in the energy market of Pakistan and they are particularly interested in

the talks over “the project of conversion of the Muzaffargarh power house to the coal-fired station.” Both the countries are also involved in the discussions “to proceed from framework cooperation agreements to business contracts” (Dawn, 19 November 2015).

According to reports by Chairman Board of Investment Mifthah Ismail, around 130 potential investors and traders from Pakistan and 80 Russian investors participated in the forum. During the meeting, Viktor Ivanov emphasized that the establishment of air links and creation of banking channels between the two countries would multiply the bilateral trade. Ishaq Dar also emphasized that North-South Gas Pipeline would further improve business-to-business linkages between the two countries. He said that the Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) would consider for additional promotions of bilateral trade and find ways and means to exploit the trade potential. While addressing the forum, Ishaq Dar informed that Pakistan is also looking for strategic corporation with Pakistan Steel Mills and offered that the Russian investors could take benefit from the opportunity. Speaking in the Forum from the Russian side, the Russian Minister for Industry stressed the need for enhancing potential trade and organizing trade exhibition as well. Therefore, with this opening of hundreds of investments opportunities in Pakistan, Finance minister Dar, had ensured Russian investors of “complete Pakistan government support” and said that the government is now concentrating on growth trail and job opportunities, for long-term supportable economic development for both the countries in coming years. Dar also stated in the meeting, “The government wants to start construction work on the North-South gas pipeline immediately so that the first phase can be completed by December 2017”.

During the IGC meeting, Russia and Pakistan also shared convergence of interests on the issue of Afghanistan and agreed on the need to have close cooperation to fight terrorism and drug trafficking in the region. Economic Affairs Division Secretary Tariq Bajwa said that “both countries have decided to share information to obstruct

financing of terrorism and combat money laundering. He also added that Russia has offered to supply Pakistan Sukhoi Super Jet prototypes and Jet airliner Irkut MC21.”

It can be said that “Pakistan-Russia Investment Forum which took place on the sidelines of the IGC meeting had set a new direction for private sectors of both the countries and the IGC emerged as the best driving tool to strengthen their trade ties. IGC also seems to have settled over 20 years of old trade disputes involving claims of the private businesses of the two countries” (Mehmood Ul-Hassan Khan, 2015). The 4<sup>th</sup> Pakistan-Russia Inter Governmental Commission meeting resulted into:

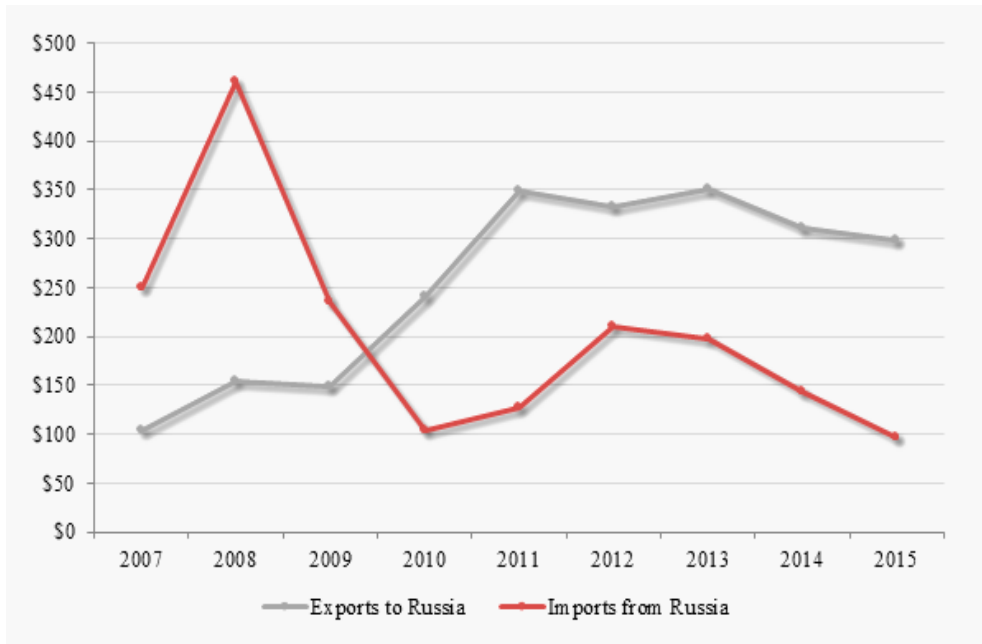
**Expedite the process of North-South Gas Pipeline:** “The Working Group on Energy, comprising the Ministry of Water and Power and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources had signed a Protocol (Joint Statement), engaging the Russian Counterparts in the energy sector. Russia and Pakistan had also decided in the 4<sup>th</sup> Pakistan-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission meeting to set up five working groups on industry focusing on Pakistan Steel Mills.” There will be “(a) Finance and Banking, (b) Industry -with sub group on Pakistan Steel Mills), (c) Food and Agriculture, (d) Transport and Logistics and (e) Education including professional training.” Ivanov said in a Press Conference that “political will to improve relations is now being translated into economic cooperation and building projects. He further added that the primary task for both countries is to implement the North South Gas Pipeline project by ensuring supplies from Russia.” While, Ishaq Dar appreciating “Russia’s largest investment in Pakistan”, remarked that Pakistan wished to finish the first phase of the “\$2-billion North South Gas pipeline project by December 2017.”

**Deepening partnership for satiating Pakistan’s energy demand:** During the IGC meeting Pakistan asked for Russian collaboration in “power generation, textile, construction, LNG, oil and gas and petrochemical sectors. Dar offered to set up a Special Economic Zone exclusively for Russian investors and both sides also agreed to begin talks for Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), since the current volume of bilateral trade is not upto expectation.” Russia on the other hand, revealed its interest to join CASA-1000 power project and “its wish to supply power through CASA

transmission line during winter season, when energy supplies from CASA partners will not be feasible.” Further, “to enhance cooperation in the power sector, it has been decided that a joint coordination committee will be set up to follow progress on the projects that have been selected for Russian investment.” To add, the Additional Secretary of Water and Power said, “Russia may finance seven mega energy sector projects, which includes: the 1,200MW Guddu power project, 600MW Jamshoro power plant, exploration of Thar coal blocks 8, 9 and 10, setting up Hubco power transmission line and Thar-Lahore power transmission line and also to provide machinery for Dasu and Tarbela hydro power projects.”

**Trade Potential between Russia and Pakistan:** Both the countries seemed to have concluded two accords “on dispute settlement over \$117 million Russian deposits and cooperation in science and technology, besides setting new timelines to reach agreements on over a dozen projects and areas.”

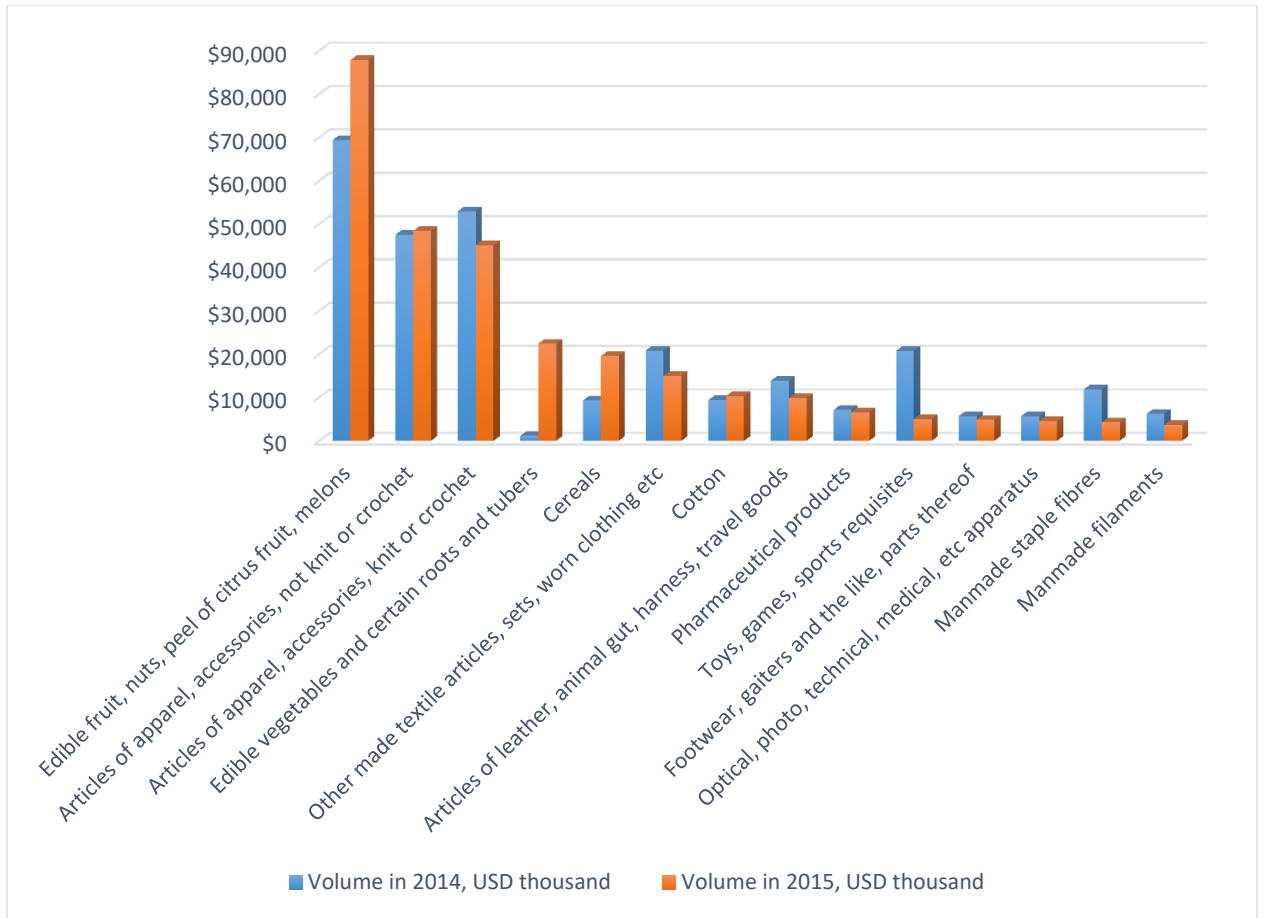
Nevertheless, according to Dr. Sergey Kamenev, economic relations between Russia and Pakistan are not good as volume of trade is less than \$500 million. But he is of the opinion that at present, the first economic objective is to complete the North-South Gas Pipeline, as there seems to be no progress so far. Further, he is of the opinion that Russia supports CPEC, since it will benefit the region but has no intention of joining the project. According to Russian Exports National Information Portal, “Bilateral trade volume between Russia and Pakistan decreased in 2015 by 13 per cent and reached \$395 million as compared to \$453 million in 2014. Pakistani exports to Russia decreased to \$298 million i.e. 4% while imports decreased to \$96 million i.e. 33%, refer to Figure 1”.



**Figure 1: 2007-2015, Russia-Pakistan bilateral trade turnover in USD. Source: ITC Trade Map.**

**Pakistani exports to Russia**

The decrease in export trade volume of majority of the products from Pakistan to Russia in 2014-15 is shown below (refer figure 2). The decline in the export trade was highest in the segment of toys, games, sports requisites (76% dip in export from 2014 to 2015). Refer to Appendix 1 – Table 1 for details.

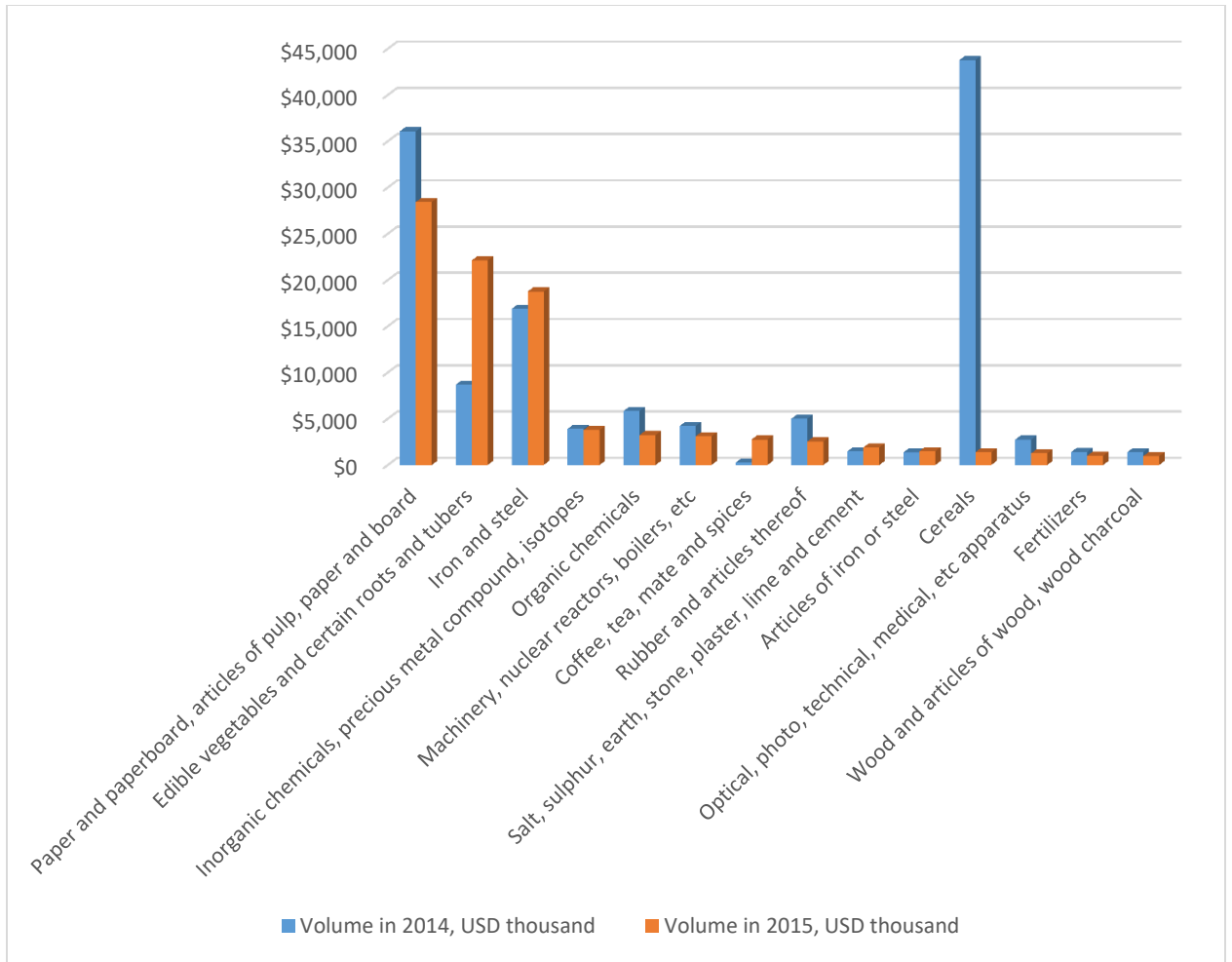


**Figure 2: 2014-2015 break up of Export Trade volume by products from Pakistan to Russia**

The highest volume of trade of the products exported from Pakistan to Russia in 2015 includes Edible fruit, nuts, peel of citrus fruit, melons.

**Russian exports to Pakistan**

The decrease in export trade volume of majority of the products from Russia to Pakistan in 2014-15 is shown below (refer figure 3). The exports of cereals (-97%) showed a significant fall. Refer to Appendix 2 – Table 2 for details.



**Figure 3: 2014-2015 break up of Export Trade volume by products from Russia to Pakistan.**

The highest volume of trade of the products exported from Russia to Pakistan in 2015 includes “articles of pulp, paper and board” (29%).

Nevertheless, “in 2015 the imports of few Pakistani made products in Russia experienced a significant rise” such as: edible vegetables, certain roots, tubers rose by 1843%, and the imports of cereals also rose by 110%. While, Russian exports to Pakistan also showed a significant rise in 2015, for example products like coffee, tea, mate and spices (+988%).

## **Conclusion**

Observing these developments in international politics, it can be said that Russia has kept Pakistan engaged for political and strategic reasons. Russia now is of the sense that “Pakistan’s geo-strategic location” will assist the country in validating its position in Central Asia and South Asia which in turn will contain the US influence in the region. A new US study says that Pakistan’s options for buying weapons from overseas are limited by its economic limitations- and India’s growing leverage in the arms market (Simha 2016). According to a report by the Washington DC-based Stimson Centre, Pakistan may not have the resources to make significant purchases from Russia. The report, by Shane Mason, titled ‘Military Budgets in India and Pakistan: Trajectories, Priorities, and Risks’ shows that Pakistan’s bloated military is not only unsustainable, but it may not be able to mobilise funds for big-ticket purchases in the future (Simha 2016). In fact, if we go by the data, it shows that the trade relation between them is not so good.

While, “economic and trade relations between Moscow and Islamabad have remained severely affected for about five decades due to cold war tensions.” The recent military engagement between Russia and Pakistan into the full-scale cooperation seems to create false perceptions. It gives the appearance of a close and solid relation between both the countries. But, it actually camouflages poor economic interdependence and lack of strategy for bilateral cooperation. It is not wrong to say that these opportunities may bring short-term gains with no long-term strategic outcomes for both Russia and Pakistan. Furthermore, third countries could also create obstacles for Russia and Pakistan on their way closer to each other. For instance, the United States may try to dissuade Pakistan from strengthening its ties with Russia while, India may oppose Moscow’s military cooperation with Islamabad. Therefore, instead of boosting bilateral military cooperation, Russia and Pakistan should focus on less visible, but more important fields of partnership, to start with formulating the roadmap for bilateral relations, and facilitating trade between them. The military part of cooperation is also possible too but it needs to be less provocative and visible.

There are reports that “India’s decision to enter into strategic relations with the United States had prompted Russia to rethink its defence relationship with Pakistan.” In this



regard, Dr. Tatiana Shaumyan from the Institute of Oriental Studies believes that Russia-Pakistan bilateral relations are not taking place due to India's strategic ties with America. She is of the opinion that Pakistan is a big Muslim country and since Russia also has a significant Muslim population, therefore, the latter should consider this fact. Moreover, she is of the opinion that Russia-Pakistan military cooperation has no problem for Indian security. In fact, according to Prof. Belokrenitsky, the Deputy Director of Institute of Oriental Studies, Russia-Pakistan improving relations can lead to betterment of ties between New Delhi and Islamabad. And with regard to sale of advance military weapons to Pakistan, he is of the opinion that since Pakistan is funded by Saudi Arabia, the United States, France and Britain, so there is no great scope for getting Russian armaments and therefore quiet limited prospects. However, Petr Topychkanov from Carnegie Moscow Center believes that Russia should understand that all the military weapons supplied to Pakistan can be used against India. According to him, in Russia there are reasonable concerns as India gets closer with the United States, but that is not the sole reason to develop Russia-Pakistan relations. To add, the views of Dr. Sergey Kamenev, Director of the Center of Pakistan Studies, he believes that to some extent Russia is bothered about India-US relationship, but it seems India is more bothered about Russia-Pakistan relations.

In the next chapter, firstly, it will talk about the menace of international terrorism threatening the world. Secondly, it will talk about the connections between narcotics trade and terrorism and the illegal trafficking of drugs to Russia from Pakistan via Central Asia. Thirdly, the chapter will discuss Russia and Pakistan's effort to combat terrorism and the role of SCO in combatting terrorism and drug-trafficking. Finally, the chapter talks about the developments in Afghanistan, impact on the regional security after the drawdown of ISAF troops and the growing engagement between both the countries, as Russia sees Pakistan's strategic importance in maintaining peace, security and stability following the scheduled withdrawal of US led NATO troops.

## CHAPTER 5: TERRORISM AND DRUG-TRAFFICKING IN AFPAK REGION

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, and even though it has been used since time in memorial, the term is relatively hard to define. It is considered as a threat that demands an international response. Post the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States; there has been a remarkable worldwide focus on terrorism and its countermeasures. There are many definitions of ‘Terrorism’ which varies from politicians to journalists to security experts. Some definitions emphasize on the mode of operation of the terrorist group while others focus on the intent behind the terrorist activities and traits of terrorism. Often definitions of Terrorism are polarised, some people define it as a crime while others define it as a holy duty, some people define it as a strategy or tactic and some people describe it as a legitimate counter to oppression.

To start with, let’s see the commonality between the terms terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization. Can these terminologies be used interchangeably, or is our current perception about violent extremism (VE) biased? Due to lack of a standard definition, commonly accepted by all, these terminologies are loosely interpreted in much the same way. “It is often defined as individuals who justify the use of violence in pursuit of ideological goals, typically does this once they have moved through a process of radicalisation that leads to the adoption of VE as an ideology; where terrorism is solely the act of violence carried out in pursuit of these goals” (Striegher 2015). However, it relies upon whose viewpoint is being expressed. Terrorism has become more and more prevalent worldwide among those who are on the lookout for extreme goals, and hence it is so important to adopt pre-emptive measures. However, in spite of its popularity, terrorism can be an ambiguous concept. Even inside the U.S. Government, bureaus in charge of different departments in the current war against terrorism and extremism use different interpretations.

Terrorism is defined by the United States Department of Defense as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce

or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.” While the FBI definition is, “Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” As per the U.S. Department of State, terrorism is, “premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience”<sup>79</sup>.

The British Government defined terrorism in 1974 as “the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public, or any section of the public, in fear.” According to the United Nations, “An anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets.” The above definition of terrorism provided by the United Nations is the most widely accepted academic definition.

Terrorism is a wide concept, and it is prudent to precisely define it as “any act or means of putting any individual or the entire human race at an alarm by the fear of danger to its very existence by any violent or terrorizing act.” Terrorism may be categorised as (i) External Terrorism and (ii) Internal Terrorism. External terrorism comprises of all types of cross-border terrorism, and internal terrorism includes any sort of disturbance or anti-social movement by the people against its own state. There are also three views of terrorism which include the terrorist, the victim, and the general population.

Nevertheless, in recent years the conventional security theory has come under serious criticism for its inefficiency to focus on the new challenges. After the end of the Cold War, there is a larger need from the researchers and policy makers for a wider idea of security that looks beyond the military-political dimension to a multi-dimensional issue. There are emerging threats and unusual challenges to national and international security such as increasing regional strife, the outbreak of ethnic conflicts, economic

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<sup>79</sup> <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/terrorism.pdf>

interconnectedness which has enforced the need to reconsider the security concept. Therefore, under such circumstances, the state has started to consider drug production, and trafficking as a significant security threat with social, political, and economic ramifications at local, national, and transnational levels.

At the local and country level, drug revenue can lead to an upsurge in corruption. This can also cripple the political balance of the government in power, especially in the underprivileged countries of the South as political and social anarchy adds to a thriving narcotics industry. “However, drugs may not be responsible for the commencement of the conflict, but there is a positive correlation with conflict duration, as it could lengthen the life cycle of conflicts”<sup>80</sup> (Corti and Swain 2009). At the transnational level too, drug related crime has important consequences. “Funds generated by illicit drug economy can be used to fuel ethnic conflicts, terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. It also poses a threat to the security of human health. The production and transit countries have experienced high growth of HIV-AIDS and Hepatitis-C” (ibid).

Therefore, in the eyes of traditional security analysts, the production and drug trafficking pose serious challenges to state security interests.

Traditionally, trade of narcotics and terrorism has been considered as two separate threats within security discussions. However, in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially post the 9/11 attacks there has been a continual focus on the correlation between organised crime and terrorist activities, amongst the researchers and the policy makers. Similar sentiments are expressed by the international community as well, which considers trafficking of narcotics and terrorism as interdependent. Revenues earned from drug trade can be used to invest on arms and ammunitions for terrorist activities. “According to the US Department of State, fourteen out of thirty-six foreign terrorist organizations are involved in drug trafficking” (Sanderson 2004).

It is observed that in the period post 9/11 attack, the West has pursued a constant war on terrorism that has cut down the logistic and material support to the terrorists. This, in turn, has broken the financial backbone of many Terrorist organizations. Consequently,

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<sup>80</sup> URL: <http://www.review.upeace.org/pdf.cfm?articulo=86&ejemplar=17>

Drug trafficking has emerged as an alternate and efficient source of income. This shift has caused severe anxiety to the researchers and policy analysts of the West. “As a result, there is an increasing agreement for greater coordination between the war on drug and war on terror” (Bjornehed 2004). Also, during this period, Afghanistan became the center of focus resulting in a regime change brought in with the help of the international force led by the US. “Though, America’s engagement in Iraq shifted its focus for a while, but with the deteriorating security situation and massive opium production, had forced the US and Europe to seriously re-engage in Afghanistan”<sup>81</sup> (Corti and Swain 2009).

“According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), Afghanistan is the world’s main producer of illicit opium, with 193,000 hectares of land under poppy cultivation and an estimated opium production of 8,200 tons in 2007” (International Narcotics Control Board 2007). The rise in drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan are now affecting the neighbouring countries as well (Corti and Swain 2009). As a result, there is an increasing apprehension about the continued and extensive cultivation of poppy and its trafficking through Central Asian nations to Russia and Europe.

The main concern at present is the potential links between the drug trade and terrorism. The terrorist activities led by the Taliban receive funds from the profitable opium trade to procure arms and sustain their operations against the government of Afghanistan, and the US led ISAF troops. Therefore, in response, the US has given equal priority to the counter-narcotics and counterinsurgency policies. “It was argued by the US State Department’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) that in the recent years’ poppy fields have flourished in the most active Taliban occupied provinces” (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2008). Therefore, the Taliban, drug traders and the cultivators of poppy are treated in the same way. Comprehending the correlation between narcotics chain and Taliban forces is important. Though, law enforcement is used as a strategy to address the issue, however, to expect a quick

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<sup>81</sup> URL: <http://www.review.uepace.org/pdf.cfm?articulo=86&ejemplar=17>

solution to this problem is illusory as “drug production in Afghanistan has deep and complex roots” (ibid).

“The Ministry of Counter Narcotics announced the publication of the Afghanistan Drug Report (ADR) 2015. The report outlines substantial reductions in opium cultivation and production alongside incremental increases in total seizures in Afghanistan. The report was completed with technical support from UNODC. The main findings of the report are given below: Opium cultivation decreased by 19% from an estimate of 209,000 hectares in 2014 to 183,000 hectares in 2015. This is the first time that the area under opium cultivation has decreased since 2009. There is 29% increment in eradication while total opium production decreased by 48%. There is also an estimate that between 1.9 million to 2.4 million adult drug users, which is equivalent to 12.6% of the adult population. In addition, there was an increase in total drugs seized from 119,960 Kg in 2013-14 to 128,079 Kg in 2014-15. However, it is worth noting that this increase was mostly due to 81% increase in hashish seizures while seizures of heroin, morphine, and opium decreased by only 32%, 25%, and 14% respectively”<sup>82</sup> (Cordesman 2016)

## **History of Drug Production in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in Central Asia and South Asia, bordered by Iran to the west, Pakistan to the east and south and Central Asian countries to the north. Discovery of opium in Afghanistan dates back to 3400 B.C. where people cultivated opium poppy in the lower Mesopotamia. Although opium was initially popular in Laos and Burma, later Afghanistan became famous as the Golden Crescent. The Golden Crescent represent the principal area in Asia where illicit opium is produced and it lies at the intersection of Central, Southern, and Western Asia. “In 2000, it was estimated that 75 percent of the world’s opium supply was from Afghanistan” (Salar Moradi and Heydar Moradi 2013). Opium has long been grown in this part, and records of opium poppy plantation in Kyrgyzstan can be traced back to the 19th century. During the colonial period, opium was used for medicinal purpose and until 1974; Krygs continued to cultivate opium poppy legally. “Approximately, 98 state and collective farms in

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<sup>82</sup> URL: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/160211\\_afghanistan\\_failed\\_state\\_Wars.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/160211_afghanistan_failed_state_Wars.pdf)

Kyrgyzstan used to produce 80% of the total illicit opium in the Soviet Union and 16% of the world supply, as these countries have the right kind of terrain and climate for cultivating poppy”<sup>83</sup> (Salar Moradi and Heydar Moradi 2013).

The history of opium cultivation and its business have been playing a major part in the geopolitics of the region and in the politics of Afghanistan. Since 1970’s, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran have been the primary producer of opium. Afghanistan has monopolized the global market of Opium for over a decade. “In 2009, the total quantity of opium produced in that country was 6900 metric tons, accounting for 90% of the global supply. Afghan heroin feeds a global market worth some 55 billion dollars annually and most of the profits of the trade are made outside the country” (Salar Moradi and Heydar Moradi 2013).

In the frontier region of Pathanistan, the local chiefs governed the traditional Pashtun tribes. There was a lack of formal state control which allowed all kinds of illegal activities. As a result, the areas on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border saw an abundance of poppy fields bearing premium quality opium. “Pathanistan remained as the main source of opium supply to the world for a long time. It was also said that during 1980’s, Pakistan had a 70% share in this lucrative business” (Corti and Swain 2009).

During the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, narco-economies prospered in the South-West Asia, and this mainly included heroin production. A strong smuggling network was developed as a result of the undercover operations of the Pakistani “Inter Service Intelligence” (ISI) and the American “Central Intelligence Agency”(CIA). The primary goal of this coalition was to overpower the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In order to overthrow the Communist regime, the US intelligence overlooked the trafficking of the drug in the region and instead supplied arms, ammunitions, and logistical support to the Mujahideen. However, after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, conditions deteriorated leading to bloody civil war, and eventually by 1996, the Taliban’s emerged victorious in the fight amongst different factions of the Mujahideen (Chandra 2006).

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<sup>83</sup> URL: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/160211\\_afghanistan\\_failed\\_state\\_Wars.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/160211_afghanistan_failed_state_Wars.pdf)

The rising anarchy in the post-Soviet Afghanistan allowed various Warlords and Drug lords to prosper and as a result, there was a remarkable increase in opium production in the 1990's. The refugees who had returned to their land also started cultivating the only money-making crop: the opium poppy. In fact, by last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, while the country was severely affected by the civil war, Afghanistan surpassed Burma and emerged not only as the largest narcotics producer but also in making morphine and heroin. When Taliban came to power with the support from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the drug network was further intensified. By 1996, they controlled 80% of the country and defeated several tribal Warlords who were ruling in various parts of the country. Once the Taliban came into power, they reinstated the dry routes of the country and facilitated highly lucrative smuggling among Iran, Pakistan, and Central Asia. Even though ideologically, the Taliban opposed drug production and its consumption, but due to Afghanistan's fragile economy, they needed the money and recognised the importance of this crop. While the consumption of drug was strictly prohibited, narcotics production and trade was initiated due to necessity. However, it was argued that the poppy cultivation cultivated by the loyal Pashtun tribes was being tolerated and the cultivation of the Tajik or Hazar tribes was being opposed. "Therefore, on one side there was opposition to the Taliban regime called as Northern Alliance created by different ethnicities living in Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries like Iran, Turkey, India, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. And on the other side, the Taliban was backed and supported by countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, who had recognised them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan" (Mansfield 2001).

In 1999, Mullah Mohammed Omar backed by political and economic motives introduced a religious mandate and demanded the cut back of opium production by one-third, and subsequently an absolute ban the following year. This resulted in: Firstly, it demonstrated Taliban's eagerness to appease the concerns of the West over opium, and secondly, "it inflated the opium prices in the global market, from US\$ 40-60 TO US\$ 400-600 per kilogram" (Rubin and Sherman 2008). Therefore, it can be said that the eradication effort turned out to be a significant economic incentive for the Taliban's, as they had a huge amount of stockpiled opium. "However, it was an open question



whether their decree on banning opium production during 1999-2000 was genuine and a fundamental policy shift or merely an opportunistic political/economic action”. (Corti and Swain 2009)

In the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, there was the United States led armed intervention which resulted in the fall of the Taliban administration. The Americans perceive that the primary security concern in Afghanistan is the production of Opium as it is the principal source of income of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda to procure arms and ammunitions. However, this theory can be challenged as it has been proved that the Taliban were not the only factions currently involved in drug trafficking. It is also observed that after the Taliban regime was overthrown, various Mujahedeen factions re-organised themselves and immediately occupied the power vacuum. “Since the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, drug trafficking had a marginal relationship with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, as the profits of the drug trade seem to be more associated with the people who are in power” (Risen 2008). The 9/11 Commission could find little proof to ratify the above allegations. As per the World Bank and UNODC reports, during the period 1996-2006, the Taliban government earned more income by levying taxes on smuggled items from Dubai to Pakistan than from the narcotics industry. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the Taliban’s had alternate sources of revenue and they were not solely reliant on the narcotics business. Nevertheless, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime still argue that “fighting drug trafficking equals fighting terrorism”. Thus, UNODC and other specialized international agencies on drug issues support the US strategy of linking the opium economy with insurgency (Corti and Swain 2009).

### **Nexus between Drug trafficking and Terrorism**

Since the US invasion of Afghanistan after the attacks on 9/11, the opium poppy business has played a critical undermining role by corrupting the Afghan administration and police and providing an income source for the Taliban. It is broadly alleged that there is widespread corruption at the various levels of the Afghan government, the “Afghan National Police” (ANP), and various local administrations. In a 2008 British survey, it was stated that “many Afghans in the country’s south believe that state actors

earn more profit from the drug trade than the insurgents” (Mansfield 2008). In Afghanistan, corruption is also a big concern. Corruption proportionately adds to perpetual insecurity as good as the insurgency. “Although there is wide variation across the war theatre, drug profits flow within the Taliban and other extremist organizations operating along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and these funds appear to play a key role in funding the operational costs of these insurgent groups” (Peters 2009).

The major challenge to disrupt these drug profits will be disrupting the money flow by penetrating and collapsing powerful drug smuggling networks that support the insurgency financially. Mostly, the immediate families and tribes run these drug networks, and hence it is challenging to penetrate. They appear to do business with the corrupt government officials and the rebels solely to make a profit. Another important challenge facing the Western forces is to regain the trust of the Afghan people who are hostile towards the Western forces and at the same time whose lives have been intensely impacted by the constant fighting and the narcotic business (Peters 2009).

Although academic studies, media reports, and the US government representative’s comments, suggests that opium is a source of revenue for Taliban, however, no concrete proofs on the links between Taliban government and drug dealers were made available to the policymakers and the general public.

The NATO forces, aid organizations and civilian officials working in the south and southwest have failed to analyze the correlation between Taliban source of income and drug trade and thereby they are functioning in a relative vacuum. For that reason, understanding how the opium trade is profiting the Taliban could help make strategies to suppress the insurgents.

After the US Invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, poppy cultivation was banned by the Taliban for fifteen months. However, in the subsequent years, the overall opium output of Afghanistan eclipsed the previous records. “The cultivation of poppy became increasingly concentrated in southern and southwestern provinces where there was poor security, frequent insurgent activity, and low level of governance. Thus, by 2008, about 98 percent of Afghanistan’s poppy crop was grown in six southern and southwestern

provinces, namely Farah, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul” (Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008).

Needless to say, many internal and external factors led to the vanishing of the poppy crop in different parts of Afghanistan. Finally, the growing of poppy crops was concentrated only in the south. For example, Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was affected for two reasons – 1) food prices were inflating globally and 2) exports of wheat from Pakistan was banned. As a result, the farmers found it more viable to grow licit crops including wheat in certain parts of the country which were more secure and had reliable road transport and connectivity. Moreover, with the rising insecurity in the south and southwest and limited or no accessibility to markets for legal crops no because of incessant fighting and poor transportation, poppy became more and more popular as “a low-risk crop in a high-risk environment” (Mansfield and Pain 2008).

As revenue generated from poppy expanded greatly in lawless parts of the south since 2001, Taliban actors found new ways to expand and diversify the means of making a profit from the drug business. However, this does not suggest that the Taliban administration has set aside its goal to ouster the Western forces from Afghanistan or put into action their stricter form of the sharia law. Nevertheless, it can be opined that today in many Afghan villages, the rebel actors act more like mafias than Mujahideen. And only 5% of insurgent commanders now fight for ideological reasons according to recent NATO military intelligence (Peters 2009).

Therefore, NATO commanders and donor nations have endeavored to put together an inclusive strategy towards southern Afghanistan, where a more comprehensive approach could prove more efficacious. It is required to build peace building strategies to disrupt the criminal activities of the insurgents and reduce their capability to fund themselves. They must also at the same time prohibit and eliminate corrupt officials from not conforming to the law and assist local communities to steadily establish legal and tenable activities as a substitute to opium farming.

In 2010, Opium production declined by almost half in Afghanistan because of a disease that spread and damaged poppy plants. As per UNODC estimation, opium production

dropped to 3,600 mt, the lowest production since 2003. Nevertheless, the irony of the matter is that the amount of land used for growing poppy remained the same at the time (Oleksyn 2010).

The US led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 made the Taliban and al-Qaeda disperse but could not eliminate either of them fully. One of the reason is United States relied more on the local intermediary and had a “light-military footprint approach”. As a result, many senior Taliban leaders and al-Qaeda could escape to Pakistan. According to journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai, “There was no coordinated effort—they just escaped to places where they knew they’d find safe haven”. All through 2002, there were approximately 4,500 troops with the “International Security Assistance Force” in Afghanistan, all of them stationed in the capital city of Kabul. While on the other hand in the south and southeast limited numbers of coalition forces were deployed focusing on high-value targets and not Taliban fighters. It can be said that Washington’s priority for hegemony took precedence over other challenges. Furthermore, the coalition engaged the anti-Taliban Afghan assailants, many with questionable records on narcotics, drugs, and breach of human rights to defend the countryside, justifying that they were needed to hunt the terrorists (Peters 2009).

As per the UNODC, the year prior to US invasion, around 8,000 hectares were harvested by the Afghan farmers, outside the Taliban controlled areas. But, in 2002, the overall poppy cultivation rose to 74,000 hectares, returning Afghanistan to its position as the world’s leading opium producer (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2002).

With limited foreign troops stationed outside Kandahar city, a precarious security vacuum was created in the Pashto South. The Taliban discreetly started to reorganise, and the leaders began connecting to one another. “The Taliban started recruiting fresh recruits from Pakistani madrassas, locate weapons stashes, and raise funds” (Elizabeth Rubin 2006). Drug dealers who had a close association with the Taliban took the initiative to invest and helped to rebuild it by investing small amounts of funds. While many other commanders to raise money sold off the opium stores that they had concealed before the US invasion. In consequence, the neo-Taliban assembled their

resources systematically and began with low-intensity aggression, and when Washington shifted its focus to Iraq war, the Taliban started to relaunch themselves in 2003 (ibid). Lakhdar Brahimi, UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan (1997-1999), said in an interview to BBC military documentary, “The most important player in Afghanistan, the Americans were absent-minded from day one, was looking somewhere else”.

As per the U.S. and Afghan officials, the resurgent Taliban was a slackly formed grouped alliance. Each region more or less raised its funds. However, it has been noted that the central Taliban leadership popularly known as the “Quetta Shura”<sup>84</sup> controls the drug money as it filters through the insurgent hierarchy in the south and southwest by maintaining authority over-dispersed and sometimes loosely affiliated Taliban commanders. Also, it has been observed that since 2001, the Taliban commanders have diversified their activities within the opium trade” (Peters 2009).

Researchers argue that Taliban insurgents tax farmers in their control zones and the Taliban leadership were stringent in handing over each leader’s control zone. In 2008 British report it was stated that Taliban leaders collected the total 10-percent tax from farmer’s income in few districts, while in other districts, leaders and local Mullahs apportion the ushr<sup>85</sup> (Mansfield 2008). In regions where the Taliban administration is predominant, the village-level Taliban sub-commander also provides written receipts for the quantity of opium collected. While, in areas where their rule is not dominant, “there are reports of fighting among Taliban commanders, criminal gangs and corrupt officials. In addition to taxing poppy farmers, Taliban insurgents also collect a 10-percent tax from local shopkeepers and other small business owners, working with local communities much like mafias” (ibid).

Researchers also assert that insurgents extort money from the small businesses, farmers, truckers, etc. across the eastern and southeastern regions of Afghanistan and its borders as well. For example, “the New York Times reported in July 2008 that Taliban in the

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<sup>84</sup> The Quetta Shura is a militant organization formed by the Afghan Taliban leaders’ post 2001 in Pakistan in a city called Quetta in the Balochistan province. The Shura was established at a time after the US attacks toppled Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 2001.

<sup>85</sup> Islamic taxes levy on agricultural produce

FATA region had earned tens of thousands of dollars taxing a marble quarry and taxing every truck carrying white stone out of it” (Shah and Perlez 2008). Further, there have been reports that the “Taliban in Pakistan’s Swat Valley taking over emerald mines and selling gemstones in the black market to support their activities” (Shah and Perlez 2009).

In the rural areas where there is not much value of hard cash, financial dealings are mostly done in barter deals. Income generated from ushr, and commodities collected in barter deals, satisfy most of the operational needs of the village and district-level Taliban for example food, fuel, transport, weapons, explosives and salaries of fighters. Each village-level sub-leader pays a portion the total amount to his military leader at the district level, and the military leader then pays to the Taliban governor. Also, a share of these reserves are regularly passed on as raw or partially processed opium and filters through the Taliban chain of command to the provincial commander and then to the Taliban’s central financial committee (Peters 2009).

Another source of earning for the Taliban is providing armed protection for trading opium. Whether it is Taliban or not, they get payments for providing security for opium crops and extending armed protection to opium shipments as they depart the farm area. The protection racket has been expanding since 2001. Michael Braun, the former DEA chief of operations, said that “there are strong indications that al-Qaeda is “heavily involved” in the trafficking of opium”. However, these transformations in battlefield tactics are a strong indication that the traffickers have significant decision-making power over their strategic actions and there exists a close relationship between the Taliban leaders and the drug traffickers. As per the Western officials and residents on the border, some of the traffickers pay millions of dollars annually directly to the top Taliban leadership. These funds tend to give the insurgents the real influence in the decision-making process of the Quetta Shura. There is also a similarity of battlefield tactics of the insurgent groups across the globe from attempting to make strategic gains to guarding drug shipments. Furthermore, these rebels collect duties from drug factories positioned near the Iran-Pakistan borders. Some commanders even started running drug refineries on their own, and the number of operational labs has expanded during their time in power (ibid).

Therefore, it can be said that opium was a major contributing factor in the Afghan war, and at present, the drug business has come into the limelight. Narcotics have corrupted the Afghan government. It has also begun to transform the underlying driver of the insurgency from 'ideology based' to 'profit making'. Since, from the lower district level commander to the top leadership, all are involved at various levels in the drug trade value chain it is increasingly becoming a challenge to understand this process for the international community and to identify opportunities to hinder the insurgency.

Nevertheless, the key challenges facing the international community is that the insurgency is now better financially supported than ever, and less dependent on other sources of financial aid. "As the Taliban in the south and other extremist groups such as al-Qaeda have become more closely tied along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, levels of violence have increased. Additionally, insurgents have diversified into other criminal activities, including extortion, and human trafficking" (Peters 2009). Therefore, as the criminal networks become more and more complex, it will become difficult for the US-led joint forces in Afghanistan to fight the insurgency. "There are also indications that anti-state actors and corrupt state actors work together in the southern part of Afghanistan for monetary gains which make the matter more complicated and there seems to be a limited number of reliable partners for the NATO forces and the international community in the south" (ibid). Furthermore, Afghanistan has already been plagued with problems that have spilled over into the neighbouring areas as well. Corruption and drug trafficking have led to the growing insecurity in Pakistan, Central Asia, and Iran. If appropriate measures are not taken, then there is an imminent risk that the profit made from drug trafficking may be channelised towards terrorist activities outside the region (Peters 2009).

### **Implications of the rising drug economy in Afghanistan at Regional and International level**

The growing drug trade in Afghanistan has resulted in many grave consequences at the local and international level. Firstly, there is increasing destabilization in the economically and politically volatile neighbouring countries by encouraging crime,

violence, and corruption. Secondly, there is “growing insecurity in the form of drug addiction and with the spread of HIV and AIDS in the region” (Chouvy 2006).

The European drug market is mostly supplied by South-West Asia, especially Afghanistan. The opium from Afghanistan reaches the markets in Europe via two main passages. First is the usual “Balkan Route” via Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey which was very popular during 1990’s. About one-third of the Afghan-produced heroin was being supplied to Europe via this route, and while Mexican and Columbian heroin are supplied to the Northern American market. The second main passage is the “Silk Road” which connects Afghanistan to Russia via Central Asia, and from where it can also reach Europe. Although the majority of the drug exports to Europe are through the conventional “Balkan Route”, in recent years, the “Silk Road” is becoming more important. The reason behind increasing use of the “Silk Road” is its poor monitoring in the borders of Central Asia and the Caucasus. The Central Asian States are the newly independent states still facing problems with the nation-building process, “weak democratic institutions, slow economic growth and rising inflation. Moreover, the spread of the illicit drug trade is leading to serious negative implications as well, for example: increasing organised crime, growing political and social instability, corruption and finally, institutional decay by undermining the democratic process and causing serious law and order problems” (Corti and Swain 2009). Some scholars assert that the drug business has brought about armed conflict and ethnic rivalries in the region.

As per the “US Department of State”, Tajikistan is the most attractive transit passage for the illicit trade. “Every year 80-120 tons of Afghan heroin is smuggled via this country” (International Narcotics Strategy Report 2008). The reasons are: Firstly, the civil war in the early 1990’s had severely affected its social and economic conditions leading to widespread corruption, political and economic instability, which in turn has resulted in higher unemployment rates. “Tajikistan is the poorest of all the former Soviet Republics, and geographically, it shares more than 1000 km of porous border with Afghanistan. The INCSR said that due to poor border control, significant quantities of drugs are smuggled across the Pyanj River, which forms a large part of the Afghan-Tajik border” (Corti and Swain 2009). “The US Department of State has also identified Kazakhstan



and Uzbekistan as major transit countries for the opium trade from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe. This is because of its geographical location and lack of adequate border control” (International Narcotics Strategy Report 2008).

In response to this increasing drug trafficking networks in the region, the neighboring countries have created a security belt around Afghanistan. As a result, CARICC which stands for “Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Centre” was established in 2002. “Though CARICC represents an operative, but it is largely an ineffective base for communication, analysis, and exchange of information on the transnational crime. Till date, it has achieved very limited success in coordinating the counter-narcotics policies among the member countries- Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan” (Rubin and Sherman 2008).

### **Trafficking of Drug in Russia via Central Asia**

Central Asia, the soul of the “Silk Road,” is a mesh of commercial routes joining Asia with Europe. About 2,500 years ago, these routes were used for the trading of spices, luxurious fabrics, precious stones, etc. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the five “Central Asian Republics”, these historical commercial routes have been restarted. But the problem lies with the flow of illegal goods especially narcotics along with the legal goods (Danieli 2014).

“The geography and history of the region make Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attractive areas for drug traffic. These states are situated between the world’s largest illicit opium producers and the most lucrative markets in Western Europe. These countries are in close proximity to the countries of the Golden Crescent i.e. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran and, via China, have access to the countries of the Golden Triangle i.e. Burma, Laos, and Thailand. According to a United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) report of 1997, Afghanistan and Burma were the world’s largest producers of illicit opiates and together accounted for 80 percent of the territory and 90 percent of the quantity of illicit opium production” (Olcott and Udalova 2000).

Central Asia is positioned between Russia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan is considered to be the world’s largest Opium producer and Russia since 1991 is allegedly the most significant market for opium intake as drugs from Central Asian countries flows to

Russia. The trafficking of heroin and opium began soon after the breakdown of the USSR. At first, majorly opium was trafficked, but since late 1990's heroin steadily passed through into the Central Asian markets. Nevertheless, the drug trade in Central Asia has started to attract substantial international attention only after the US attacks on 9/11. The security concern of the International Community is that instability in Central Asia would spread to the northern territories of Afghanistan. "In the fight against international supply of illicit drugs, the US has spent billions of dollars and many times has resorted to military might in many parts of the world, but still defeating these forces looks illusory" (Danieli 2014).

The breakup of the Soviet Union had many implications which made the region a hotbed for drug trafficking. The newly formed independent republics, post the Soviet Union disintegration, inherited a well-established transportation system which connected them to Russia and the West. The breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in more open borders and unrestricted foreign travel. As cross-border communication increased, it brought the drug smugglers and the interested parties across the border in the region closer. This cross-border cooperation was a major enabler for the proliferation of narcotics in the Soviet Union during the Afghan war. Post independence the region's connectivity to the rest of the world further increased exponentially. In 1996, a new railway line that connects Turkmenistan to Iran was established, and in 1998, a new road connecting eastern Tajikistan with China was built. The region also increased its flight connectivity to the outside world. Furthermore, the new borders which were created "remained virtually transparent until new national customs services were created in 1993–1994. This was one of the reasons that international drug traffickers took a strong interest in the region". (Olcott and Udalova,2000)

The "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" which used to carry out drug operations in Central Asia between 1990- 2001, "left their bases in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan and moved to Afghanistan "(Nash 2007). "Since then activities of militant Islamic groups in Central Asia have reduced "(Kazani 2013). However, post the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, the narco-terror approach became the priority of Western counter-narcotics policies and for that purpose intervention in Central Asia became

necessary. “One of the major military assistance programs of the United States government in Central Asia is “Counter Narco-Terror” (CNT) and its main objective is to promote regional stability in the region” (Danieli 2014). Presently, the “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” (IMU) is the largest Islamist political group in Central Asia and it is based in Afghanistan. The IMU pose a grave concern to Russia. “It is believed that with Pakistan’s help, Russia will be able to control the IMU related terrorist activities in Central Asia. During defence expo in Karachi known as IDEAS 2014, the Russian Defence Minister appreciated the skill and expertise of Pakistan’s armed forces in fighting the war against terrorism as well as its defence production” (Abbas 2016).

Central Asia since the early 1990’s has transformed into a key drug trading routes connecting Europe and Asia. There are various determinants that led to the present situation: Firstly, at the international level, due to developments in the global drug markets, for instance, increased poppy cultivation and production in Afghanistan and the formation of a large heroin and opium consumption demand in Russia led to more favorable drug trading routes via Central Asia. Secondly, at the local level because of different reasons such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rise of strong criminal syndicates in the newly independent states of USSR. Since the last three decades, Afghanistan has been world’s largest producer of opium. “Even the area under poppy cultivation has been extended from a yearly average of 32,200 hectares during 1986-1990 to 60,800 hectares in the interval period of 1994-1998 and 137,600 hectares during 2008-2012” (Danieli 2014). It can be said that there is almost five times increase in production of opium now compared to the late 1980’s. The drug trafficking from Afghanistan through Northern Route is primarily for the Russian Federation, a huge drug market which has rapidly come up in the twenty years. Reports also suggest an increasing significance of these northern routes for trafficking Afghan opiates into China. “Over the years, there is an increase in a number of registered drug users in Russia from about 70,000 in 1997 to 357,700 in 2009. According to the UNODC 2010 World Drug Report, there were about 1.5 million estimated heroin users in Russia, almost equal to the aggregate of all other European countries, which is about 1.6 million” (Kramer 2011). Thirdly, the legacy of the Soviet Union regional organizations

is another crucial factor behind criminal organization's strong hold in the region. "Before the Soviet breakup, the USSR was a 'State of Nations' where internal borders had not much administrative significance and thus people never perceived it as barriers" (Sunny and Martin 2001). But after the disintegration, the newly independent Republics had to reinforce "real" borders which are almost impossible to monitor effectively. "Therefore, after 1991, criminal syndicates took advantage of the weak state border control" (Danieli 2014). Finally, because of the Soviet breakup, the initiation of the drug-trafficking operations was overshadowed by widespread corruption, resource grabbing, and resource accumulation. Drug trading networks were built based on connections that were formed during the final phase of the Soviet Union. "Almost all administrative cadres, law enforcement personnel, senior officers of army and security agencies and emerging entrepreneur class started accumulating wealth through violence and illegal means". After the collapse of the Soviet institutions, the vacuum in the administrative and security units was "filled by former state agents together with people from the underworld. This gave rise to a collusion of power, crime, and business which shaped the state-formation in many post-Soviet regimes". Therefore, it can be said that because of a combination of political, economic and geographic factors, drug trafficking consolidated its position in Central Asia. "The region shares strong cultural, economic and social links with both Russia and Afghanistan and further because of its porous borders, pre-existing territorial integration and the strong state-crime-business nexus in the post-Soviet period favored the establishments of drug routes and drug mafias in the newly independent states" (Danieli 2014)

The pattern of cross-border ethnic relations is an influential enabler of the drug business. "The ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks both have kin across the Afghan border, and these relationships have helped make the civil wars in one country the business of those living across the border. Also, the sales of drugs not only provide an economic means but a way to advance their political causes" (Olcott and Udalova 2000).

It can be said that as the drug trafficking becomes established in the region, the Islamic opposition has also become consolidated. In the early 1990s, shipments coming from the Soviet Union to Europe were not subjugated to severe examination at their European

destinations, while only shipments coming from southwest Asia were put to thorough checking. As all the countries in this region are part of the “Commonwealth of Independent States” (CIS) group was an extra advantage. “Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan” are members of the CIS “Customs Union”, and “Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan” are members of the “Central Asian Economic Community”. Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the “World Trade Organization”. “These organizations make drug trafficking easier, for example, maintaining a visa-free travel regime for the citizens of the CIS countries, as well as by facilitating free trade between the countries” (Olcott and Udalova 2000).

Economic necessity makes it imperative for the police and border guards to accept bribes and common people to take the risks linked with transportation or production of narcotics. Moreover, the drugs trade leads to organised crime and these unlawful groups especially opposition forces that have a negligible chance of accessing political power found a potential partner in each other. “It is observed that the Central Asian states not only lack the funds and technical expertise to wage a successful war against drugs but also lack the will power to do so. Therefore, International assistance could help address the funding and technical problems associated with combating Central Asia’s drug problem and which in turn will bring stability to the region” (Olcott and Udalova 2000).

### **Rising Drug Trend in Russia and its Impact**

The disintegration of USSR combined with the unrestricted cross-border trade and travel, led to increasing in drug consumption and trafficking. Russia not only acts as the trafficking route for many Central Asian drug producers but also encouraged the South American and Caribbean producers to use this route for the trafficking of various illegal drugs. “There is also a massive increase in the spread of hepatitis, drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB), HIV, and AIDS (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2013). Although by end of the decade its drug problem became stable, the problem, however, has again started to become increasingly serious since 2014” (Galeotti 2012).

It is a well-known fact that “Russia is a transit as well as consumer country for Afghan heroin and approximately third of Afghan heroin travels along the Northern Route- a

collection of numerous routes, braided together into and through Russia” (Galeotti 2012). As a result of this, there is more domestic consumption and strengthening inter-regional trafficking networks. According to Viktor P. Ivanov, head of Federal Anti-Narcotics Service (FSKN) of the Russian Federation, “Afghan drug traffic is like a tsunami constantly breaking over Russia and we are sinking in it” (ibid). On 25 October 2013, Russia and Pakistan “pledged to make joint efforts to control narco-trafficking and production of drugs, particularly in Asia. The two sides agreed to enhance their cooperation against drugs when Viktor P. Ivanov, called on President Mamnoon Hussain at the Presidency” (Abbas 2016).

Nevertheless, “Russia’s underworld narcotics industry has been facilitated by its integration into the global financial systems and its trade networks have outpaced its control mechanism’s ability to prevent smuggling and the flow of drug profits. Although efforts are being made to improve the transparency of Russian law enforcement agencies, the elite status of the anti-narcotics agents in both the FSKN and other police agencies has allowed them to remain largely untouched by reforms” (ibid). In spite of Russia’s political and economic problems, it remains an essentially strong and functional state and therefore, the current drug problem has not essentially impacted the Kremlin’s capacity to administer. However, there are several serious threats to Russia in the present and future. Firstly, it’s increasing mortality rate. Although the official figures are estimated around 30,000-40,000 drug-related deaths, in 2013 these increased to 100,000. Nevertheless, the “underlying trend continues to rise steadily with an alarming increase in HIV infections largely contracted through needle-sharing, and the spread of krokodil<sup>86</sup> usage by an estimated 100,000 addicts” (Shaun Walker, 2011). Secondly, the profits from drug trafficking are destabilizing the world. Although in official documents there are FSKN’s successes filled with impressive figures, however, in reality, there is no appreciable impact on the drug supply. “This is leading to increasing violence and the

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<sup>86</sup>Desomorphine, known by the street name Krokodil, is an opioid derivative of codeine. Like heroin and other opioids, it has a sedative and analgesic effect, is highly addictive, and potentially harmful. Krokodil is also called “Russian Magic”, referring to its short duration of opioid intoxication (euphoria).

potential for more serious inter-gang conflicts” (Galeotti 2012). Russia’s underworld works in a complex way. There are small specialised local groups which are associated with bigger networks at local, national or even international level. Often these local gangs are involved in various local crimes. Thirdly, the profits made from drug trading adds to the ongoing corruption of courts, law enforcement agencies and local authorities in the major transit cities and regions. Also, within the security organisation, there are elements that are directly involved in the smuggling of heroin from Afghanistan to Russia. Nevertheless, this problem seems to have declined since the 1990s. Fourthly, Russia’s financial system and the profits from narcotics are heavily and to greater extent interpenetrated. Even with the closure of Master Bank in 2013, people still believe that such laundries continue persistently within Russia and international financial control communities. Last but not the least; due to increasing corruption, Russia’s porous borders are difficult to control. Consequently, there are illegal crossings, illegal migrants and terrorist couriers in and out of Russia (ibid). Ivanov has rightly put it, “Russia has a state border mechanism, but its efficiency in stopping drugs from flowing into the country is extremely low—that is, we have the border but it does not work as a mechanism to suppress contraband” (Federal Drug Control Service 2013).

### **Russian Position on Terrorism and Drug Trafficking Emanating from Pakistan**

After the Cold War and post-9/11 attacks on the United States, it was noticed that there was an increase in mutual visits and interactions and it seems that there is a shift in the Russian perception of Pakistan’s active role in Afghanistan and the surrounding region in future. In general context, the continuous improvement in the bilateral relations between Moscow and Islamabad is because of numerous determinants which include Russia’s geopolitical realignment post the Cold War, its concerns about post-withdrawal stability of Afghanistan for which Moscow recognizes Pakistan as a major player, Pakistan’s regional inclination in consequence of its stressed relations with the United States, and India’s thriving strategic and military association with the US. These factors led to increased engagement between both the countries. Nevertheless, there does exist a difference of opinion between the Moscow and Islamabad on issues related to terrorism

and nuclear non-proliferation. Russia believes that terrorist groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan are directly or indirectly involved in the “transnational networks of religious extremism and terrorism and are responsible for destabilizing the Russian territories of Chechnya, Daghestan, and parts of Central Asia. Pakistan, while acknowledging the existence of the problem does not see extremism spilling from its territory and refers to the indigenous nature of the problem” (Rahman 2011). The other issue is Pakistan’s nuclear proliferation and the ways to control it is a problem between the Moscow and Islamabad. While the position is Pakistan is evident as being a responsible state as Russia itself, Russian leadership, on the other hand, remains fearful that the terrorist could get access to the nuclear weapons or nuclear materials.

It can be said that Russia is aware of the security threats coming from Pakistan and these concerns have led officials from Moscow and Islamabad to regularly participate in joint working groups on international terrorism and strategic stability since 2002. Similar issues have also been discussed at summits of the Dushanbe Four, a grouping that includes the Afghan, Pakistani, Russian, and Tajik Presidents. These summits have taken place in Dushanbe in 2009 and 2011, Sochi in 2010 and again in 2010 at higher levels in New York and Trieste in 2009 (without Tajikistan). These four Presidents adopted a joint declaration after the “Dushanbe Four Summit” in Sochi on 18 August 2010. The declaration emphasized the importance of mutual effort for upholding stability in the region and advised that collaboration on such issues as terrorism and drug trafficking was to be carried out through international and regional structures. “They also called for a more active use of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, a permanent body of the SCO designed to enhance collaboration in fighting terrorism, separatism, and extremism” (Moskalenko and Topychkanov 2014). In fact, in the recent years, with regard to Russia’s increase overtures to Pakistan on the issue of combating terrorism, special envoy of Russia to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov said, “We understand all concerns of India about Pakistan. But we cannot combat terrorism efficiently and productively and eliminate it without the cooperation of the latter. We need their cooperation and they should realise their importance and responsibility” (Meher 2017). Russia now is of the view that so far by not engaging



Pakistan they have gained nothing, so it is high time they include Pakistan in the discussions regarding regional security.

Pakistan shares a long coastal stretch and pervious borders with Iran and Afghanistan, which makes it vulnerable to drug trafficking. It shares a 2,430 km long border with its neighbour Afghanistan which is world's largest illicit drug producer. "Pakistan is also known to have three official crossing points- Torkham in Nangarhar, Ghulam Khan in Khost and Spin Boldak in Kandahar and it seems the topography of the bordering areas includes numerous north-south mountain ranges, which create natural smuggling routes across the border. Besides this, there are many places which are unmanned and not monitored effectively, for example, natural passes, mountain trails, and desert roads" (Shukla 2010). "During the 1990s, Khyber Pass emerged as an important highway in international drugs trade due to its proximity to the poppy growing areas of Afghanistan's eastern provinces" (Arnold 2005). However, the law enforcement officials are of the opinion that "though, there are various routes for Afghan heroin to reach to the world, most of them are still trafficked through the traditional routes rather than north via the Central Asian Republics and Russia" (Macdonald 2007).

According to UNODC report, published in 2008, there is no detailed and clear information on drug trafficking routes. However, drug traffickers rely on three key routes through the region to get access to Western Europe and other countries 1) "The southern route via Pakistan", 2) "The western route via Iran", and 3) "The northern route through the Central Asian States". The World Drug Report of 2010 has declared that "Pakistan is geographically vulnerable to opium trafficking and approximately 40 per cent of Afghanistan's heroin/morphine transits through and consumed in Pakistan." The report also stated that "it has become a regular feature where Afghanistan's finished heroin, unrefined heroin, and semi-refined morphine are smuggled into Pakistan using different methods of transportation such as- camels and pack animals." Another UNODC report has asserted that "international airports were important channels for drug trafficking as over 37 percent of Pakistan's total heroin seizures in 2006 took place at airports. Apart from concealing narcotics in their luggage, traffickers are also resorting to send drugs in letters and parcels to minimize the risks of getting captured, as

the quantities involved tend to be much smaller and it can be said that inside Pakistan there are several routes which make traffickers work easily in transporting the drugs to various destinations of the world” (Shukla 2010).

Drug traffickers have used Karachi and the neighbouring coastal areas, one of the oldest routes, for shipping narcotics to America, Africa, and European markets. Usually, the vessels carrying drugs use two routes- the “Karachi port for Yemen and southern Europe via the Red Sea”, and the other route which they follow sometimes is the “African route which goes via Somalia and Ethiopia to Kenya and beyond”. In recent years, Makran coast is becoming popular, because of its stretched and vulnerable coastline. Small boats are used to load the drug consignments and carry it to the high seas from the coastal areas and then finally transferred to the ship. Even Balochistan's long and rough routes are one of the most favourite routes for the traffickers. “Because of its difficult terrain, carrying drugs through this route has a low risk of being obstructed by the law enforcement agencies of Pakistan. Another major route is through Quetta or Hyderabad to Lahore, from where it is smuggled directly to the West and sometimes indirectly through various Indian states such as Punjab, Rajasthan (especially Jaisalmer and Balmer districts), Delhi, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. There are also reports that Samjhauta Express<sup>87</sup> carries illicit drugs” (Shukla 2010).

Pakistan is an important destination and primary transit country for the opiates produced in Afghanistan. In 2006 Pakistan accounted for 72% of global morphine seizure as it is both a producer and a consumer country (ibid). Over the years it has been noted that Pakistan's heroin seizure decreased substantially between 1996 and 2006, but opium seizure almost doubled. Pakistan is one of the countries which are responsible for the bulk of morphine<sup>88</sup> seizure of the world while Iran seizes the largest amount. It is reported that “vast majority of morphine continues to be seized in Balochistan province, especially in its Chagai district, which is close to Helmand province of Afghanistan. It is also important to note that trafficking of opiates into the country and through the country increased dramatically during the period 2001-2006, with a corresponding increase in

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<sup>87</sup> Rail connection between India and Pakistan also called friendship express.

<sup>88</sup> Morphine is a short step prior to the making of heroin. Acetic anhydride is required for final conversion into heroin.

opium production in Afghanistan from 185 metric tons in 2001 to 6,100 metric tons in 2006” (Shukla 2010).

### **Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence (ISI)-Taliban nexus in the post-Soviet Afghan**

There is no denying that the production of illicit drugs in Afghanistan directly affects drug trafficking in Pakistan and vice versa because of its close proximity and the very geographical location of Pakistan. Further, the nexus between Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and fighting forces inside Afghanistan, especially the Taliban is the major factor that helps in carrying forward this illegal business. During the Soviet invasion, drug money was introduced to fight the communist regime, and “three major mujahideen leaders, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Pir Sayad Ahmed Gaylani, and Ismat Muslim, systematically exploited the drug cultivation for funding their operations” (Felbab-Brown 2006). The driving forces behind poppy cultivation in Afghanistan were the “warlords, their commanders, and combatants” who needed revenue to continue their struggle against the Communists (Kreutzmann 2007). In 1989, as the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, the CIA and its allies also reduced their support from Afghanistan. Because of the fighting among different factions of Mujahedeen it “led to a civil war situation in the country and these forces found themselves in a complex dilemma. On the one hand drug money had formed a substantial part of the Afghan economy and on the other hand opium cultivation and consumption was haram, prohibited in Koran, which meant that they could not endorse the drug economy without jeopardising the very Islamic credentials that legitimised their fight against the communist regime of Najibullah” (Felbab-Brown 2010). ISI very diplomatically played an increasing role in backing up the Taliban by not only helping in hiring from Pakistan but also provided the monetary, arms and ammunitions and military support and by 1996, the government of Pakistan also gave recognition to the Taliban regime by becoming its chief supporter. It can be assumed that there were two obvious reasons for this support. Firstly, “Pakistan state gaining strategic depth against India, and secondly, opening up of trade routes to Central Asia” (Goodson 2000). The Taliban then facilitated the opium cultivation in a larger acreage fields than ever. Poppy growing farmers found “a golden opportunity to earn a hectic sum of money with their fields. Thus, Taliban had

done more than expanding the areas of opium production that includes a significant expansion of trade and transport routes” (Rashid 2000). They also desired to extend and control the narco-economy by “providing official government license, setting up model farms, training the farmers in efficient poppy growing techniques, and distributing fertilizers to the farmers. Furthermore, to facilitate trafficking, they significantly lowered many transaction costs for the traffickers and by sponsoring poppy cultivation, the Taliban regime systematically exploited the illicit narcotics economy and derived large political benefits as well” (Felbab-Brown 2010). It can be said that Taliban’s active support has “aided and abetted opium cultivation on a scale unmatched to anything Afghanistan has produced in the past” (Schmidt 2010). To increase their income substantially the Taliban has begun collecting Zakat<sup>89</sup> from all traders engaged in the illicit drug trade. But since 2000 onwards, surprisingly, “Taliban regime introduced an effective ban on poppy cultivation and almost eliminated its cultivation in Afghanistan. However, the ban did not cover the trade of illegal drugs and no actions were taken at the time against opium inventories or their holders” (Byrd 2010). Aftermath 9/11, when there is US crackdown on the Taliban regime, “there were high hopes for a change in drug production and trafficking scenario but contrary to the expectation, between 2001 to 2006, drug trafficking into and through Pakistan increased dramatically, corresponding roughly to the increase in opium production in Afghanistan from 185 metric tons in 2001 to 6,100 metric tons in 2006” (Shukla 2010).

It was argued by the BBC military documentary that by the start of 2007, violence had spread across much of Afghanistan with a sevenfold increase in suicide bombings and many were being planned and executed from Pakistan. The reason for this is by using the Taliban, Pakistan wanted to gain influence inside the country. The CIA concluded that America’s closest ally in the region could no longer be trusted and argued that Pakistan’s Intelligence Service (ISI) was playing a double game. In fact, the Afghans also insisted that Pakistan’s Intelligence Service was protecting the Taliban leader.

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<sup>89</sup> In Islam, Zakat is a kind of voluntary alms-giving and religious tax.

Amrullah Saleh, Head of Afghan Intelligence (2004-2010) was of the opinion that Mullah Omar was in Pakistan's safe house. He added that when he asked the Pakistani government about his whereabouts, they got panicked, not once or twice but time and again.

However, during his interview with the BBC military documentary, the then Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf, denied the reports of Mullah Omar hiding in Pakistan and said "he never came to Pakistan that is the normal belief and he will be mad if he is in Pakistan. He further said that it was only the belief of the West and the United States that Mullah Omar is in Pakistan and not anywhere else".

### **Russia and Pakistan's Efforts in Combating Terrorism and Drug Trafficking**

Soviet-Pakistan relations took a downward trend post the Saur Revolution<sup>90</sup> in Afghanistan. In December 1979, the soviet-Pakistan entered a new phase post the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the Afghan struggle against the Soviet occupation, this was perceived as an antagonistic behaviour and it almost led to a war-like situation with Moscow. "Even after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989, a considerable degree of resentment persisted in the political and military circles of both the countries." In fact, relations between Moscow and Islamabad came under severe strain once again, as Pakistan gave recognition to Taliban in Afghanistan and it began sympathizing with the Chechen freedom fighters. To this, "Russia responded by launching a campaign against Islamic fundamentalism, as it started facing unrest among the Muslim minorities in many of its autonomous republics. Russia criticized Pakistan severely for her alleged support for the Taliban and the Chechen freedom fighters" (Doss 2004).

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Afghanistan continued to remain entangled in a civil war and "its spillover effects led to serious repercussions in Central Asia, South Asia, and in the Middle East. Thus, the situation in Afghanistan continued to be a roadblock in the relations between Russia and Pakistan. In the case of Pakistan, it was

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<sup>90</sup> The Saur Revolution was a revolution led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) against the rule of self-proclaimed Afghan President Mohammed Daoud Khan on 27-28 April 1978.

insecurity which was related to fear, suspicion and concerns about its own security interests. While, Moscow was concerned that if Taliban comes to power by defeating the Northern Alliance, they will support the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia, and thus, will destabilize the entire region. It seemed “Russia blamed Pakistan and Taliban for being allegedly behind the uprising in Chechnya and Dagestan. And therefore, to contain the spillover effect from further spreading throughout Central Asia and in their own country, the Russian Government had been extending material and political support to the anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan” (Doss 2004).

During this period, Pakistan’s support for the Chechen rebels, support for the Taliban and Islamist groups in Central Asia had a negative impact on Soviet-Pakistan relations. In other words, the Islamic Factor had an adverse impact on the Soviet relationship with Pakistan. It can be said that the latter’s policies towards Afghanistan were in contradiction with a Soviet interest in the region. The bitter phase ended with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in the year 1989 but again towards the end of 1990’s relationship worsened when Pakistan along with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia gave recognition to the Taliban regime in 1996, which was apprehended by the then Soviet Union. It is not wrong to say that both Pakistan and Taliban had manipulated Russia’s problems in Chechnya in order to discourage the Russian Government from supporting the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan (Hunter 2015).

“The Chechen-Taliban connections could not have been established without the active assistance of Pakistan or we can say at least assistance by the influential elements within the Pakistani political and military leadership, including the role of influential Islamist groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan” (ibid). When Moscow questioned Pakistan about Jamaat-e-Islami’s alleged role in Chechnya, Pakistan’s Ambassador to Moscow Mansur Alam remarked that Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the most influential parties in the country and its priorities and actions are independent of the Government of Pakistan. It is to be noted that official relations between the Taliban and Chechnya rebels increased after the 1996 cease-fire in Chechnya and after the emergence of Taliban as the dominant political force in Afghanistan. Both the entities, Taliban under Mullah

Muhammad Omar and Chechen under Aslan Maskhadov's Presidency, though not internationally recognized, acted as the legitimate and independent government. In fact, during the visit of Chechen envoy Zelimkhan Yanderbiev to Kandahar, the Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar and its Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil recognized the Chechen Republic. It is not wrong to say that the connection between the Taliban, the Chechnya rebels and Pakistan is based on Islamic solidarity (Hunter 2015).

However, the politics of Cold war ended with the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the starting of the post-Cold war period and especially, post 9/11; things started working out in favour of advancing Russia-Pakistan relations as there is a convergence of interests in the region. Accordingly, in September 2000, during the visit of Sergei Yastrzhembsky, "the Security Chief of the Russian government to Pakistan", the situation in Afghanistan was a high priority agenda item. In fact, the Security Chief termed his trip "as having inspired a 'cautious optimism', dependent on political declarations being followed by 'concrete deeds'. He urged for more interaction between both the countries on matters of regional issues, especially Afghanistan, as it has been noticed that Russia had gained nothing from not engaging Pakistan on the problem of Afghanistan"<sup>91</sup>. It seemed after the discussions, "the then Pakistan's Interior Minister, retired Lt. Gen. Moinuddin Haider, agreed to conclude an extradition treaty with Russia and to work in close cooperation with the latter in the fight against terrorism, narcotics trafficking and illegal immigration" (Shah 2012).

A major development with regard to combating terrorism and drug trafficking happened during the visit of the "President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf to the Russian Federation from 4–6 February 2003 on the invitation of Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation." During this meeting, Russia and Pakistan condemned terrorism in all its kinds and manifestations. They agreed that "a comprehensive approach was needed to combat terrorism and this should include firm measures against ethnic and religious extremism, trafficking of illegal drugs and nuclear materials and transnational organized crime"<sup>92</sup> and such measures should also be directed

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<sup>91</sup> Pakistan-Russia Relations: Post -Cold War Era by Adnan Ali Shah

<sup>92</sup> URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/3657>

against those states, organisations, and individuals who indulge in terrorism or support terrorism in any form.” As a result, on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003, “the Memoranda on Cooperation between the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan and between the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Foreign Service Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan were signed to strengthen the legal framework for interagency cooperation<sup>93</sup>”. Both Russia and Pakistan have voiced their apprehensions on the increased drug production in Afghanistan and the illegal drug trafficking to the nearby countries and Region. Hence, both the countries have decided to formulate and implement preventive measures as well as provision funds for crop substitution sponsored by the UN and the UNDCP. It seemed, “Pakistan welcomed Russia's voluntary contribution of \$0.5 million to the UNDCP and expressed its readiness to expand bilateral and multilateral interaction in this area.”

There were also “quadrilateral efforts by the Presidents of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan at their first quadrilateral meeting in Dushanbe on 30th July 2009 to discuss global problems such as international terrorism, extremism, drug-related crime, and the effects of the global crisis on their respective countries. In fact, the format of the Dushanbe Four allowed all major regional problems to be discussed from developing economic cooperation to countering drug trafficking and terrorism” (The Hindu, 2009). At the end of the meeting, the joint statement stated that they have “expressed enthusiasm to cooperate in fighting against all threats and challenges with regard to terrorism and all its manifestations: separatism, extremism, and organised crime”. For Russia, Central Asia is a traditional sphere of interests therefore, it has always been sensitive to the rising instability in the region because of the Afghan conflict and it is also concern about drug trafficking and Islamic radicalism stemming from Afghanistan as it poses security challenges. As for Pakistan, since it shares a border with Afghanistan, the war spoils spreading to their own country and also because “Islamabad has long expressed its readiness for closer cooperation with Moscow on resolving regional issues, particularly Afghanistan” (Reuters 2009).

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<sup>93</sup> ibid



It was on 18 August 2010, Emomali Rahmon President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dmitry Medvedev President of the Russian Federation, Asif Ali Zardari President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Hamid Karzai President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan met for their second quadrilateral meeting in Sochi.

This quadrilateral meeting expressed concern over the persistent terrorist threat as well as illegal drugs production and trafficking in the region and therefore, the following points had been discussed and stressed with regard to terrorism and drug trafficking: **Firstly**, “stressed the importance of regional cooperation to bring stability in the region through existing international and regional bodies like SCO to deal with the issues of anti-terrorism and counternarcotics and to enhance the potential of the SCO Regional Anti-terrorist Structure.” **Secondly**, “consider as their priority to combat drug threat in an integrated manner and thus eradicate the entire chain of illegal drugs production and trafficking. Also, to promote alternative livelihood and agriculture development as well as countering the supply of precursors and taking steps to reduce drugs consumption and instruct heads of anti-drug agencies of their countries to convene as soon as possible a meeting for a substantive examination of relevant issues.” **Thirdly**, “underline the importance of the anti-drug preventive operation Channel conducted under the aegis of the CSTO, advocate increasing the number of states participating in the operation as observers.” **Fourthly**, “express readiness to continue active participation in implementing the provisions of the Plan of Action of the SCO Member States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on combating terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, adopted at the Special Conference on Afghanistan held under the aegis of the SCO in Moscow on 27 March 2009.” **Fifthly**, “confirm their intention to actively participate in the activities on combating money laundering and financing of terrorism, especially to eliminate financial channels, connected with illicit trafficking of drug substances and their precursors.” **Last but not the least**; “declare their determination to actively counteract illicit trafficking of weapons, munitions, explosives and other types of trans boundary organized crime” (Official Internet Resources of the Russian President, 18 Aug 2010).

President Emomali Rahmon, during the quadrilateral meeting in Sochi, said, “We are here for creating a collective front to fight against terrorism and removal of factors that enable terrorism to emerge.” Overall, it can be said that the quadrilateral meeting in Sochi centered on issues related to regional security, fight against international terrorism and higher effectiveness of countering drug traffic from Afghanistan.

On 22nd September 2010, The Foreign Ministers of “Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan” again met in New York on the sidelines of the “65th United Nations General Assembly Session”. This meeting was a follow-up to the “Quadrilateral Summit” held in Sochi on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010. During this follow-up, they “reviewed implementation of the Sochi declaration with regards to trans-regional economic projects, counter-narcotics efforts and fight against terrorism” (Embassy of Pakistan, 23 September 2010)

It was on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011, for the third time, the quadrilateral meeting of “the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev and the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon” took place at Dushanbe. In this meeting, they emphasized the need for productive implementation of the concurrence reached at their meetings in Dushanbe on 30 July 2009 and in the city of Sochi on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010. With regard to problems emanating from terrorism and drug trafficking and the challenges faced by the region, the following points had been stressed in this quadrilateral meeting:

**“Firstly**, attached particular significance to the development and strengthening of trade, economic and security relations in matters of combating terrorism, extremism, illegal trafficking of drugs and transnational organized crime among the four countries and support activities at national, regional and international levels to promote sustainable socio-economic development and security in the region. **Secondly**, emphasized mutual and fruitful cooperation among themselves and with other regional and international organizations in their fight against production, smuggling and consumption of drugs and also to prevent the transit and delivery of precursors to the territory of Afghanistan. **Thirdly**, reiterated their overall readiness to further strengthen effective cooperation among the respective agencies to eliminate terrorism, extremism and trans-border organized crime through

international and regional institutions like SCO and the CSTO, and also to harness the potential of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure” (Official Internet Resources of the Russian President, 2 Sept 2011).

Russia supports close coordination with Pakistan in its efforts to settle the conflict in Afghanistan, especially after the expected reduction of ISAF troop’s post-2016. Both the countries share the same approach and believe that Afghanistan shall decide the momentum and course of the settlement including the “national reconciliation” process. In fact, both Russia and Pakistan desires a peaceable, thriving and democratic Afghanistan devoid of terrorism and crimes related to drug trafficking. Igor Morgulov, “Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation”, while Commemorating the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russia-Pakistan bilateral relations said that since, Pakistan among other states, suffered the most from terrorism, therefore, Russia will continue supporting Pakistan in its effort to counter terrorism in the future. He further said that Moscow’s priority is to improve cooperation with Pakistan in fighting illegal drug trafficking. “Since 2006, it has been actively taking part in the Russia-NATO Council's programme on training personnel of concerned agencies of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asian states and during this period dozens of Pakistani personnel had received training in Russia. Anti-narcotics cooperation has also been developing bilaterally on the basis of the Agreement signed between the Federal Service of the Russian Federation for Narcotics Control and the Ministry of Narcotics Control of Pakistan in 2010 (Igor Morgulov 2013).

As requested by the Government of Pakistan, the Russian Defense Minister General Sergei Shoigu, during his visit to Pakistan in the year 2014, has accepted its request to cooperate in combating terrorism and has offered advance counter-terrorism training to military and law enforcement agencies at its premier institutions. Thus, during this visit on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014, a ‘military cooperation’ agreement was signed between Moscow and Islamabad, which was described as a milestone military cooperation pact aimed at bringing peace and stability to the region. This was the first time a Russian Defence Minister visited Islamabad in the last 45 years and the agreement talks about: “exchanging information on politico-military issues, strengthening collaboration in the defence and counter-terrorism sectors, sharing similar views on

developments in Afghanistan and doing business with each other” (Rajorshi Roy 2014). In fact, Alexey Dedov, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan said that after lifting the ban on Pakistan, “Russia had agreed to supply Mi-35 Hind attack helicopters to Pakistan to assist the country with terrorism and security related issues” (The Express Tribune 2014). This step was taken at a very crucial turning point when the US-led coalition forces were supposed to draw down from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. As reported by a Pakistan based e-paper, Russia is ready to give military assistance for Pakistan’s ongoing fight against terrorism in the tribal areas and for dismantling their networks. The former is also ready to extend cooperation in counter-production and narcotics trafficking, which is a major source of income for terrorist organizations (Dawn 2014).

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2016 said that “Pakistan is one of the key countries in the fight against terrorism and Russia attaches great importance to cooperation with Pakistan” (The Express Tribune, 2016). This was observed during the joint military exercises “Druzhba-2016” that held between Moscow and Islamabad from 24<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Seventy Russian and one hundred and thirty Pakistani Special Forces took part in this exercise held in Cherat, located in the northwestern province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. This was the first time Russia and Pakistan had a joint counter-terrorism drill in the mountainous terrain. So far, Russia and Pakistan have held three major joint military drills since 2014: two naval drills known as Arabian Monsoon 2014 and Arabian Monsoon 2015, which was supervised by superiors of the “Federal Drug Control Service” of Russia. The focus of the previous two was on combatting crime groups and blocking drug traffic. And the third one is the recently concluded Druzhba 2016 drills. However, in comparison with the naval exercises, “Druzhba-2016”, were real military exercises with combat troops, having the task of eliminating illegal armed groups and other combat and training tasks in mountainous areas. Moscow also announced it would hold additional drills with Islamabad in the year 2017. According to Russia’s Ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin, it will help Pakistan to fight “terrorism and drug traffic coming from Afghanistan” (Topychkanov 2016).

As we have observed, not only quadrilateral meetings among Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan took place so far, there was also the inaugural top-level military leader meeting on “Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) in Counter-Terrorism” by “Afghanistan-China-Pakistan-Tajikistan” Armed Forces which was held in Urumqi, capital of China's “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, and as a result, the Joint Statement was issued, where the four parties acknowledged that terrorism and extremism present serious threats to territorial balance. They also recognized the continuous efforts of the armed forces of the four countries to neutralize any terrorist or extremist threats. They also echoed their eagerness and readiness to join hands to defeat the terrorist forces to maintain stability in the region. The aim of QCCM is to provide collective support to the countries in the areas of “counter-terrorism, situation evaluation, clue verification, intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism capacity building, counter-terrorism joint training exercise and personnel training.” It was agreed by these four parties that “all decisions under the "quadrilateral mechanism" should be made on the principle of consultation-based consensus and thus shall abide by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other recognized principles and rules of international law, especially the principles of preserving international peace and security, maintaining independence and equality, mutual respect to sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression and mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs” (China Military Online, 2016).

The second joint working group meeting for “Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) in Counter Terrorism” by “Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan” was held in the capital of China, Beijing from 8<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016. “All the parties at the meeting unanimously agreed that terrorism posed serious threats to the region and therefore, the parties reiterated that it is necessary to conscientiously implement the important consensus reached by the heads of state of the four countries on strengthening anti-terrorism cooperation, deepening pragmatic cooperation under the QCCM and continue enhancing anti-terrorism capability and exchange information to jointly maintain the regional peace and stability. It seems, through consultation, the four parties have reached consensus on the text of the QCCM Agreement which is scheduled to be signed by high-level military leaders of the four

countries at the 2nd QCCM High-Level Military Leaders Meeting in 2017” (Heart of Asia, 2016).

Pakistan always believed that there should be a direct dialogue between Moscow and the Taliban and that Pakistan can only act as a facilitator. Re-instating stability in the region is of utmost interest to Russia and the Central Asian countries. The situation in Afghanistan is primarily responsible for the growing instability in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. As claimed by the Russian and Central Asian leadership, “Religious extremism is being encouraged and supported by external actors, particularly the Afghan Taliban and some extremist religious groups in Pakistan.” In fact, they have blamed the alleged training camps in Afghanistan for the Chechens, Tajiks, and Uzbeks dissidents. Therefore, Pakistan stresses that Russia could alleviate its concerns only through dialogue with the Taliban. However, in the case of Taliban, “Russia’s moral, material and political support for the Northern Alliance makes them distrustful of the latter and their reaction is expressed through their support to Chechen freedom fighters.” Regarding the drug trafficking in Afghanistan, the Northern alliance is as much a part of the drug nexus as the Taliban authorities. The Northern Alliance is responsible for the poppy cultivation in the regions under their control and trading of drugs to the rest of the world via Central Asia. As reported by UNDP, “Taliban have recently made efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation from the area under their direct control and in fact, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Supreme leader of Taliban, banned poppy cultivation through an edict issued on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2000. According to the UNDP report of February 2001, Taliban have eliminated the opium cultivation completely from some areas under their direct control” (Shah 2012).

Russia now is of the view that so far by not engaging Pakistan they have gained nothing, so it is high time they include Pakistan in the discussions regarding regional security. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Russia and Pakistan held their first ever foreign office consultations on regional issues in Islamabad. “The Pakistani delegation was led by Ahmad Hussain Dayo, Director General (West Asia), while the Russian delegation was led by Alexander V Sternik, third CIS department head at the Russian ministry of foreign affairs” (Roy Chaudhary 2016). It was also decided that the sequel of

the discussions will be organized in Moscow in 2017. Moreover, Russia is working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. In the tripartite meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at Moscow, Foreign Secretaries of Russia, China, and Pakistan decided to seek “flexible approaches” including the lifting of UN sanctions against select Taliban leaders to promote peaceful dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This decision comes in the wake of recent attempts by Russia to engage directly with the Taliban amid growing worries about the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, reacting to the discussions of the tripartite meeting, the Afghan government on 29th December 2016, rejected the call by the three countries and said that the Afghan people alone can decide on removing Taliban leaders from the UN sanction lists (Sajjanhar 2017).

Russia’s primary objective in Afghanistan now is to prevent the rise of the Islamic State (IS). The growing influence of IS may have an adverse effect on the security of the region. As a result, Russia hosted three Conferences on Afghanistan in the last few months. The second meeting on 15 February 2017 was extended to six countries- “Russia itself, Iran, China, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan”. Although, the United States, a key player which still has 9,800 troops stationed in Afghanistan in support of the government’s anti-insurgency efforts to keep the Taliban at bay, was not part of the meeting. “This major shift in Russia’s Afghanistan policy came immediately after it expressed concerns about the possibility of Afghanistan ; turning into a safe haven for the Islamic State militants fleeing from Iraq and Syria. On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, at the ‘Heart of Asia’ conference held in Amritsar, Russia’s special envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov described the Islamic State as being more dangerous than the Taliban” (Meher 2017).

However, the Russian initiative led to apprehensions in Kabul and New Delhi that it was trying hard to bring in Taliban into the mainstream so as to combat its perceived threat of ISIS. The former Afghan Senior National Representative to the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Ahmad Murid Partaw argued that “the presence of the Islamic State in Afghanistan has been overemphasized by Russia, China and Iran as a pretext not only to intervene in the country's affairs but also to counter the

growing influence of the US in the region.” It seems there are also suspicions among the Afghan officials and political leaders that Russia is providing military assistance to the Taliban, but Russian officials have dismissed these claims and allegations and said that “we have never ever provided any kind of assistance to Taliban. Instead, Russia is assisting the Afghan government and has provided some light weapons on a grant basis to its forces and is running programs to train Afghan police and military personnel in Russian institutions.” Whatsoever, “Taliban on its part, has begun to respond favourably to Moscow’s outreach and it seems Russia and the Taliban share common concerns about both the Islamic State and the continued US presence in Afghanistan. But according to Afghan sources, there is very less possibility that the Taliban would give up its terrorist activities and therefore, the government of Afghanistan believes that Russia will not be able to bring about reconciliation between Kabul and the Taliban” (ibid).

Also, with regard to Russia’s increase engagement with Pakistan, Zamir Kabulov said, “We understand all concerns of India about Pakistan. But we cannot combat terrorism efficiently and productively and eliminate it without the cooperation of the latter. We need their cooperation and they should realise their importance and responsibility.” It is clear from these developments that Moscow’s overtures to Pakistan and Taliban have essentially altered the peace building efforts in Afghanistan. However, it is quite visible that India and Afghanistan on the other hand, believes that Pakistan sponsors Taliban and both of them are a threat to the peace building process in Afghanistan. In fact, Afghan analysts and lawmakers believe Pakistan has never been honest in fighting terrorism and “engaging the Taliban for the sake of fighting the Islamic State is likely to further alienate Afghanistan’s National Unity Government as well as other stake holders in the Afghan peace process, which would eventually aggravate the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan” (Meher 2017).

Russia once again offered to host dialogues between the Afghan government and Taliban at the “11-nation regional talks” held in Moscow on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2017, but Government of Afghanistan was of the opinion that “best venue” for direct peace talks



shall be on Afghan soil and pointing towards Moscow indicated that separate outreach to the Taliban will not be helpful to the success of the regional process. According to M. Ashraf Haidari, Afghan Foreign Ministry's Director General for Policy and Strategy, "Afghan Government seek peace through direct talks with the authoritative leadership of the Taliban" (The Wire, 2017). Unlike, the previous two meetings, in the third one, the talks have expanded with the addition of five Central Asian nations, but the missing stakeholders continued to be the US and the Western countries that have troops stationed in Afghanistan. According to Russian Foreign Ministry sources, the Afghan position still seemed to be in contrast with the Russian Foreign Ministry' statement at the end of the talks but "Parties welcomed Russia's offer to provide a platform for intra-Afghan talks". In fact, the Afghan diplomat indirectly accused Pakistan of having a dual policy towards the issue of terrorism. M. Ashraf Haidari said that Kabul rejects "duplicity" in defining terrorism. As it is widely known, Afghanistan has repeatedly accused Pakistan of providing 'safe havens' to terrorists by giving sanctuary to Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Nevertheless, at the meeting, India and Afghanistan had together pushed for all parties to reiterate their commitment to 'red lines' for engagement with the Taliban which includes giving up violence, abiding by Afghan constitution and cutting ties with al Qaeda (The Wire, 2017).

The United States had been invited to attend the 11-nation regional talks but the US state department acting spokesperson Mark Toner seemed to describe the talks as a Russian vanity project. According to Toner, "it seemed to be a unilateral Russian attempt to assert influence in the region that we felt wasn't constructive at this time". While India and Pakistan both stated that Washington's participation was a key ingredient to ensure success. India conveyed to Russia that although the regional initiative was a good start but international contribution could not be ignored. Apparently, China also shares the same concern, with Beijing especially worried about a vacuum in Afghanistan if foreign troops were pulled out completely. In fact, both, Afghanistan and India believe that most of the ISIS groups in Afghanistan are mainly Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan militants and many of them still maintain their links with the Pakistan establishment. Observing these contradictions, it is not wrong to say that Moscow's determination to play the role of a broker in Afghanistan, does not enjoy equal levels of confidence from the Afghan

Government and Taliban and it seems that this is the stumbling block in finding an acceptable solution to end the civil war (The Wire, 2017).

## **Role of “Shanghai Cooperation Organization” in Fighting Terrorism and Drug Trafficking**

The “Shanghai Cooperation Organization” (SCO) was formed in June 2001 by “Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan” and over the years has come out as a significant organisation in the region, making mutual efforts to control terrorism and help establish security and stability in the region.

“In its 2002 meeting which was held in Beijing, Foreign ministers of the six SCO members participated and issued a joint statement after reaching a consensus on important issues such as current regional security and cooperation and the development of the Organization. The joint statement said that the SCO members will continue their maximum efforts to get rid of the threat emanating from terrorism in the territories of the member-states and call on the international community to give them support. The statement further says that terrorism does not limit itself to any specific ethnic groups or religions or any nationality. Therefore, the anti-terrorism campaign should be carried out worldwide and should not have prejudices. The members also agreed that all actions in this regard should conform to the purpose and principles of the UN Charter and international laws” (Xinhua News Agency, 2002).

SCO established its “Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure” (RATS) in 2004. “It had its headquarters at Tashkent to coordinate the activities of the member-states and to deal with the three evils- terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. It seeks to handle areas like extradition and information exchange about terrorists and disrupting their funding sources and it also coordinates exercises conducted by the security forces of member-states” (Raj Kumar Sharma 2015).

In 2004, the “Astana Declaration” of the SCO acknowledged that the fight against terrorism, separatism and religious extremism need immediate attention and it up the priority list of the SCO. The SCO will also focus on curbing illegal smuggling of the drug in the region. The SCO signed an agreement to hold joint counter-terror actions in the member-states regions at the 2006 “Shanghai Conference”, attended by all the four

observers, including representatives from the “Commonwealth of Independent States” (CIS), “Association of South-East Asian Nations” (ASEAN) and Afghanistan joined as a guest. The SCO further signed the Counter-Terrorism Convention by the member-states at its 2009 Yekaterinburg summit and this established the legal framework to facilitate interactions on counter-terrorism within the SCO. “It was in the 2011 Astana conference, it commemorated the 10th anniversary of the SCO and thus, a counter-narcotics strategy 2011-2016 and its Action Plan were approved for the member-states to tackle drug trafficking in the region. Further, at the Dushanbe Summit in the year 2014, the SCO members agreed to continue their cooperation against terrorism, separatism, extremism, illegal drug-trafficking, psychotropic substances and their precursors, trans-boundary organised crime and in the field of ensuring international information security” (Raj Kumar Sharma, 2015).

As we know, Afghanistan is the largest producer of poppy in the world that has consumers in Central Asia that serve as the transit to other markets in China, Europe, and Russia. And since the Central Asian region is the Achille’s heel of Russia, any disturbances in this region poses a security threat for Russia and the other SCO states, making stability in Afghanistan a top priority for the SCO states. The same view was echoed in the “2013 Cholpon Ata summit”, where the SCO leaders asserted that development of Afghanistan’s situation has direct implications on the peace and stability in Central Asia. Moreover, “the Russian President had called for creating a ‘belt of counter-narcotics security’ around Afghanistan and hunting down the financial roots of the drug trade in the region. In the year 2009, a special conference focusing on Afghanistan was held in Moscow under the aegis of the SCO and as a result, the SCO and Afghanistan signed a plan of action to combat terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, and organised crime” (Raj Kumar Sharma 2015). The Moscow conference on Afghanistan was held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and was attended by its eight member-states, “Turkmenistan, Turkey, Iran, the United Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”. The concern of the meeting was terrorism, drug trading, and related organized crime. As for terrorism, “the major

direction will be on strengthening frontier defense, checking suspected terrorists, conducting joint operations against terrorism, establishing effective mechanisms to prevent terrorist activities, setting up an expert consultation mechanism based on SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, tracing and cutting off channels of funding terrorist organizations, involving Afghanistan in a phased manner in the SCO's counter-terrorism framework and obtaining intelligence about threatening terrorist organizations through coordination and collaboration" (Vermeulen 2009).

The joint statement that was issued by the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" Member States and the "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan" on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 stated that the international community to fight against terrorism should improve its international legal framework, especially, early implementation of an inclusive convention on global terrorism as well as an explanation of local anti-terrorism legal instruments.

"The joint statement condemns all acts of terrorism irrespective of their motivation, and call upon member-states to prohibit by law their heinous acts and to fight against terrorist ideology by involving the civil society. They also agreed to establish a regional anti-drug center and a specialised training center for the training of officers of the relevant SCO authorities. The SCO reaffirmed its intention to continue participating in the activities of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, to stop the financial flows related to illicit drug-trafficking and their precursors. The member-states further intend to invest more efforts in combating terrorist threat using the capacity of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure to a greater extent and through the practice of joint SCO counter-terrorism exercises, for which even the Observer States and other concerned countries can also participate. Finally, in the spirit of this Statement and the Plan of Action of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on combating terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, SCO members express their commitment to enhance cooperation with all the regional and international organizations on matters of common interest" (Vermeulen 2009).

In an interview, Anatoly Safonov, the special representative of the then President of Russia President Dmitri Medvedev, stated that "the Shanghai Cooperation Organization serves as an effective mechanism to combat terrorism and has played a "positive and

important" role in cracking down on terrorism. He also said that they have created an anti-terrorist database, which enables them to share information about terrorist organizations, individual terrorists, as well as their action plans" (UzReport, 2009).

At the 2012 SCO summit, the member-states agreed that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and it was made an observer state the same year and similar views were reiterated in its 2013 and 2014 summits as well (Raj Kumar Sharma 2015). We can say that the SCO provides Afghanistan with a medium to communicate with its neighbours. The SCO also offers regional financial and commercial opportunities to the people of Afghanistan. As the US-NATO forces withdraw itself from the country, the SCO will have an important role to play in rebuilding the country. Nevertheless, how effective the SCO will be in future only time can tell. As of now, the only evident direct action demonstrated by the SCO concerning Afghanistan was to give "observer status" to Afghanistan in the year 2012. There is a lack of coordination and mutual understanding among the different SCO members engaged in Afghanistan. In spite of the SCO states' economic and security ties with Afghanistan, their role in Afghanistan is still limited. One of the reasons is the SCO states lack "financial and political mechanisms" to handle nontraditional terrorist threats. This same view of the SCO states' inability to play an influential role in Afghanistan due to financial handicap is shared by Russian experts Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko. In 2017, the SCO extended a full membership to Pakistan. This would help the SCO members to engage and persuade Pakistan to influence Taliban to bring about peace and stability in the country.

As time passed, Pakistan is no longer the same country as it was in the 1970s and 1980s. Its relations with the U.S. have deteriorated, and today it is closer to Russia and China than the United States. Russia is aware of the fact that Pakistan is located in the center of global terrorist networks which pose a threat to Central Asia and the whole of Eurasia, including Russia. But, at the same time, it cannot ignore the fact that Pakistan is also a victim of global terrorism striving hard to eradicate militant groups from its own territory. Therefore, to combat terrorism, sales of Mi-35 Russian combat helicopters or joint military drills between Russia and Pakistan are taking place. In fact, in the fight

against the menace of; global terrorism, all responsible nations should join hands, leaving their bilateral differences and Pakistan is an important regional player; it should neither be neglected nor alienated (Volkhonsky 2017). The “Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, Zhang Deguang extolled Pakistan's key role in the coalition against terrorism and said, “It has earned a good place among the comity of the nations for its contribution to peace and development”.

Since 2005, Pakistan has been an observer state of SCO, and it became a full member only after signing “Memorandum of Obligations” (MoOs) in SCO’s “Heads of State Summit” at Tashkent. Pakistan has always been a regular participant and contributor in the SCO meetings. In 2010, it became the first SCO observer to apply for full membership. With the addition of Pakistan, the SCO states can take up joint projects to counter severe radicalism. Pakistan, having completed the joint operation Zarb-e-Azb<sup>94</sup>, can contribute to the SCO by sharing its experience. Zarb-e-Azb was highly extolled by the international community and Pakistan’s expertise in combating terrorism as a frontline state can be an asset to the “Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure” (RATS) and the “Regional Counter Terrorism Structure” (RCTS). “Economically, Pakistan will be the best medium between SCO countries and the South Asian region, providing the shortest possible trade routes between Central Asia and Iran on the one hand, and the Russian, Chinese and Indian markets on the other; and it will also benefit trade by tying the region together with new energy corridors. In fact, for Pakistan, the expansion of SCO would provide great opportunities, keeping in view its geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic features and engagements” (Saima Ali 2016).

## **Reduction of American Troops from Afghanistan and its impact on the Region**

When Hamid Karzai came to power for the second term in office as the President of Afghanistan in August 2009, he repeatedly questioned and suspected the coalition forces motive of staying in the country. Sir Sherard Cowper-Cole, UK Ambassador to Afghanistan in an interview to BBC military documentary said that President Karzai

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<sup>94</sup> Operation Zarb-e-Azb was a joint military offensive conducted on 15 June 2014 in North Waziristan along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border by the Pakistan Armed Forces against various terrorist groups.

said to him several times that he suspected British army was involved in the drug trade in Hemland, otherwise they could have ended it. In fact, he was sure that if they really wanted to they could defeat the Taliban in Hemland. But Britain is choosing to keep the fighting going in order to give them an excuse to be in Afghanistan.

To reverse the resurgent Taliban's momentum, there needs to be a military surge and thus the US President send another 30,000 troops to war and this led to a total number of 1,42,000 troops in Afghanistan by 2010. The purpose of the surge in 2010 is to clear ground held by the Taliban. The Americans want to hand over the whole of Afghanistan to Afghan Security Forces by 2015 and this sounded too ambitious for the British Foreign Secretary and his special envoy.

There is widespread corruption and illicit drug business is endemic in Afghanistan. Therefore, as long as the government of Afghanistan lacks legitimacy with an overwhelming majority, its military forces may not be able to hold the Taliban. Earlier the US government said the US troops will only be withdrawn from combat by 2015 if the Afghans are capable of taking over but Britain refused to do so. However, when Britain got its new leader, unlike the US President, the British Prime Minister announced that Britain will withdraw the combat forces by 2015 whether or not Afghan forces can prevent Al Qaeda from returning to Afghanistan.

While American Special Forces were seeking out and killing many individual Taliban commanders, they were of the opinion that only through this relentless pressure, they could persuade the Taliban to negotiate seriously. But Taliban responded by saying that the only outcome will be more attacks directed at the coalition forces. Osama-Bin-Laden, the leader of the Islamic Jihad against the foreign invaders was tracked down in Pakistan and killed by the American Special Forces. However, Bruce Riedel, CIA Officer 1977-2006 said in an interview to BBC military documentary that the objective of 9/11 attacks on the US by Osama-Bin-Laden was to engage the United States into invading Afghanistan so that they can destroy the American army in Afghanistan, shattered the will of the American people and make the Americans realize to get out of the Islamic world. Bin Laden did provoke the longest war in America's history, financial

cost was unsustainable and the human sufferings are untold and though the coalition forces argue that they have dismantled Al Qaeda's base in Afghanistan, but it's been assembled across the border in Pakistan. Karl Eikenberry the then US Ambassador to Afghanistan said in an interview that we have not succeeded yet in harboring the state of Afghanistan to ensure that Al Qaeda cannot return to Afghanistan. He added that when the coalition forces came to Afghanistan in 2001, they thought they could get in and out quickly, but even after so many years they are still struggling to build the Afghan government which can stand on its own feet.

Finally, it was decided in the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago that more than 130,000 troops would leave Afghanistan by end of December 2014. But, recently due to the fact that terrorist threats are growing, NATO and American decisions have opted to gradually reduce the troops before eventually withdrawing it. President Barack Obama, who initially advocated for ending the war in Afghanistan, suggested that he might have to rethink on the number of troops deployed in Afghanistan before the end of his reign as President of the US. It took months of deliberation within the US administration, for Obama to finally decide that he would leave 5,500 US troops in Afghanistan, before he moves out of the role of the President of the US in January 2017. This decision of the President reverses his previous plan which was announced in 2014, as a consequence of the proceedings in Iraq where the Islamic State took over many regions in Iraq, post withdrawal of the US troops in 2011. The Pentagon and Congress suggested that it will be a risk and a repeat in Afghanistan.

There are various factors due to which the political structure of Afghanistan is destabilized such as "ethnic conflicts, poor governance, no proper connections of the central government with the people, partial political dispensation at the local level". In short, the interests of common Afghani people are ignored by the Government of Afghanistan and thus, their wish for peacetime and stability lies with both Taliban and regional power broker.

The main concern of the international community after the withdrawal is Afghanistan's ethnic clashes among its tribal groups which are capable of dismantling the political



settlement and led to a civil war situation again. Stability cannot be ensured in Afghanistan until citizens feel protected at the local level. There is always a possibility and the moment the international forces are withdrawn it may result in security and political stalemate. It was observed that after the exit of foreign forces, “the major stakeholders in Afghanistan will be Kabul regime, Taliban and Northern Alliance supported by Afghanistan’s neighbours and the regional stakeholders will be Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. Already, the level of control of present Afghan Government over the country is moderate and after the drawdown, it is likely to be minimal” (Khalil, Perveen, Ali and Shah 2015). Negotiations with Taliban is possible, however, some basic consensus among power contenders is required and the US needs to play the role of a genuine power broker.

Post-2014, once the international forces are withdrawn, Afghanistan will certainly face a severe economic turbulence. Although, Afghanistan has vast mineral resources; however, their extraction depends on a secure and stable environment. Additionally, the plans of a potential New Silk Road to utilize Afghanistan’s location are depended on overcoming the rivalries that continue to plague the region. Thus, there is need of stability and security in the region and Afghanistan in particular (Brown 2012). The Afghan military forces are evidently making advancement, but they are still dependent on NATO’s backing for “critical assets and capacities”. It can be suggested that the best possible option for Afghanistan’s economic development is “international investments in their mines, infrastructure expansion, human capital, and local community development, and resources not usurped by the privileged few” (Khalil, et al. 2015).

The Afghans intensely resent the abuse of power, corruption among the elites, exemption from a penalty, and lack of justice that have become a norm over the past decades. Nevertheless, there has been an improvement in the security situation in some parts of the country. Afghan military forces show growing competences in spite of being challenged by many deep problems. A new generation of Afghan reformers is emerging whose ideas include “decentralizing power from Kabul to districts and provinces, reform the current distortive electoral system, foster the formation of political parties, and reduce electoral fraud.” They also call for “ending the current culture of impunity and

bringing warlords, power brokers and criminals, including those in the Afghan government, to justice. Obviously, if the reformers ever are in a position to implement their aspirations, they will constitute a threat to power brokers and businessmen who benefit enormously from the current system” (Brown 2012).

At this point, “the chances for progress are moderate at best. But given the international community’s stakes in Afghanistan, it is imperative that the United States and the international community do their best with whatever influence they have left not just to build up Afghan security forces, but also to promote better governance in the country” (ibid).

The Afghanistan government is totally dependent on the US. The central government has hardly any control over rural Afghanistan. Many parts of Afghanistan are not under the effective control of the Kabul government and this control is further expected to decline once the drawdown of International forces will take place and when the Afghan Taliban will turn more forceful. It is widely believed that the US had established Karzai’s regime as a puppet government in the name of democracy. It is also believed in the region that “the underlying political objective of America is to impede Russia, China and Pakistan entry to Afghanistan in order to have control over the natural resources of Afghanistan and Central Asian countries which comprised of oil and gas” (ibid). Therefore, it has been observed that President Putin and members of the Russian government have repeatedly expressed their alarm about the future terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan, and criticized the failure of the allied forces to halt the ISIL, Taliban, and the drug trafficking. Moscow is concerned about the inability of the Afghan army to defend the country, thereby exposing Russia and Central Asia to terrorist incursions. It is also perceived that with the withdrawal of International forces it will decrease the associated spending on the military; for example, the “Northern Distribution Network” (NDN) through which supplies are sent to the coalition forces and which significantly benefits the Central Asian businesses and governments. However, subsequent to the withdrawal of the majority of NATO troops from Afghanistan post-2016, approximately 10,000 American servicemen are supposed to be stationed in Afghanistan. “Those troops will need supplies of food, fuel and other

products and these will be delivered to Afghanistan via tried and tested routes through Russia and Pakistan and hence the coordination of actions between Moscow and Islamabad is important from this angle. Russia already controls the Northern Distribution Network in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan that borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan has also allowed the use of the Southern route to the US supplies from Karachi to Chaman and Torkham, thus the improving relations between Russia and Pakistan could have a positive influence on the situation both in Afghanistan and Central Asia in general” (Abbas 2016).

Therefore, all these developments make it imperative for a significant modification in Russia’s threat assessment and its policy towards Asia, especially Afghanistan. “Putin called for a new, clear strategy in Central Asia and Afghanistan. He also urged the utilization of the full arsenal of preventive measures and the potential for enhanced protection of the Russian state borders, tightened migration policy, accelerated equipping of the CSTO’s rapid reaction force with modern equipment, and advocated a stronger campaign to suppress drug trafficking “(Kim, Blank and Ordabek 2015).

Russia sees the situation in Afghanistan not only as a threat but also as an opportunity to secure its interests because the former is concerned about the Western military presence in the region, and consider it as an intrusion. “The possibility of a worsening security situation in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the complete or partial withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) post-2014 seems to have presented Russia with an opportunity to entrench its military dominance in Central Asia as well” (Mashrab 2014). “Russia has been forming the CSTO, a security bloc made up of post-Soviet Republics, as a means of bolstering security in Central Asia as a bulwark against Islamist extremists in Afghanistan, who may set their targets on Central Asia” (Kucera 2013).

Russia’s decision to transfer weapons to Central Asian countries signals a marked shift from the Kremlin’s previous military strategy. Previously, the Russian government preferred to keep Central Asian countries militarily weak by deliberately withholding weapons supplies to perpetuate their dependence on them. However, the Russian decision-makers evidently now fear that a security vacuum emerging after the

withdrawal could destabilize Central Asia and have a negative impact on Russia itself. Therefore, “Russia has first secured the extension of its military bases in Central Asia in 2014 and now is offering large amounts of military hardware to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the two Central Asian countries that host Russian military bases and are members of the CSTO” (Kucera 2013). It has sought to improve ties with Uzbekistan too. The Russian policy-makers have also highlighted drug trafficking in Russia as one of the main problems stemming from Central Asia. Another threat highlighted by Moscow is the possible spillover of violence from Afghanistan to Central Asia and then to Russia (Lang 2014). President Putin has recently expressed his belief that illegal immigration from Central Asia is a potential source of extremism and polls have been released allegedly showing that one-fifth of Tajik immigrants to Russia are susceptible to Islamic extremism. Moscow was always apprehensive about the future of Afghanistan and clearly, sees potential future threats emanating from the country which is jeopardizing the current Russian security. With regard to US decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, reported to foreign defense that “in the light of the political decision adopted by the U.S. leadership to withdraw the contingent of American troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, it is predicted with a high degree of probability a significant deterioration in the situation in that country with the transfer of real control of particular regions to terrorist groupings. In the context of the severe deterioration in Iraq and Syria as well as the increasing activities of the terrorist groupings like ISIL, the possible removal of Afghanistan from the focus of attention by Western and other interested countries is capable of putting the security of the Central Asian region in jeopardy” (Kim, Blank and Ordabek 2015).

Russia perceives Central Asia as a fragile region vulnerable to all kinds of threats and therefore an area that Russia must take the responsibility to stabilize if needed by itself or with the help of the local governments. Russia’s Presidential Representative in Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, has recently claimed that about 100 ISIS fighters have been deployed from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan to prepare an attack on Central Asia (Kucera 2013). Russia believes that if it fails to protect these countries, it will prove its inability to play the part of a great power.

In the recent past, Moscow has accelerated its investment profile in Afghanistan. This obviously aims to bring some stability to the Afghan regime by demonstrating its support and to consolidate its presence and preparing for a post-American geopolitical influence. Furthermore, Moscow has increasingly come to believe that the United States is actively inciting color revolutions across Asia and still might be collaborating with terrorist organizations against Russia's efforts to integrate and subordinate Central Asia economically and strategically. Therefore, Russia has drafted an agreement for future supplies of weapons to Afghanistan (Kim, Blank and Ordabek 2015).

But it can be observed that the engagement with Afghanistan is much more than military. In Afghanistan, the Russians have been rebuilding old Soviet factories and relaunching uncompleted Soviet-era public infrastructure projects. Thus, it is seen that Moscow has been deepening its engagement with Afghanistan both directly and through other regional players. In addition, it is observed that the Russians not only expanding their military presence in Central Asia but also seeking to cooperate in Afghanistan with the other major players being active there including the U.S, NATO, and European Union members. Finally, Russia has also started cultivating its ties with other key Asian players other than India, for example China and Pakistan (Weitz 2014).

The Russian President Vladimir Putin, at the December 2014 summit of the CSTO openly warned the Russian and other armies that they must prepare to take "preventive actions" in the light of a forthcoming threat to Central Asia from Afghanistan. He said that "the CSTO should continue focusing its attention on enhancing its close cooperation with Afghanistan, especially in view of the greater risk to regional security posed by the withdrawal of International Forces." The President in his speech added that the Militant groups of the Islamic State are attempting to include certain Afghan provinces in the so-called Islamic Caliphate (Kim, Blank and Ordabek 2015).

In a recent meeting, "Russian Defense Minister" Sergei Shoigu, said in Beijing that, "Russia and China confront not only U.S. threats in the Asia-Pacific but also U.S.-orchestrated "color revolutions" and Islamic terrorism." As per him, the issue of accelerating this cooperation has never been as relevant as it is today. He further added

this cooperation is significant to ensure peace throughout the Eurasian continent and beyond. Nevertheless, “this overture to China apparently marks a fundamental reversal of past Russian policy to keep the Chinese military out of Central Asia and retain the option of military intervention an exclusive Russian right.” It can be said that this dependence on the Chinese government may be because of mounting Western and economic pressure.

However, the withdrawal of the international forces will have an unpleasant effect on Afghanistan and the region. There are few possible challenges that the Afghan government has to confront. They are; security crisis, economic crisis, and the administration problem. Firstly, the Afghan regime may totally collapse; secondly, the Islamic fundamentalist groupings may take over Afghanistan; thirdly, the probability of a prolonged civil war again; last but not the least, the nongovernmental actors may become active and become part of terrorist activities (Dorrnsoro 2012).

## **Conclusion**

To tackle the narcotics problems in Afghanistan, there is need of shared responsibility among the countries of the region. “It is estimated that nearly two thirds of the opium are converted into morphine or heroin in the country. This conversion requires more than 500 metric tons of precursor chemicals, which are smuggled into the country each year by Organized Criminal Groups.” Therefore, it is necessary that the Government of Afghanistan and the “international community” come together and put their efforts to build strong border control mechanisms in order to prevent illegal trafficking of narcotics and their precursors. It is also necessary that all the regional countries stem out corruption from their respective countries as it incites money laundering and eventually weakens the government.

As suggested by C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, there should be “bottom-up strategy” which focus on creating conditions for “security and public confidence at the village level”, as for the rural population of Afghanistan, their main threat is “crime and economic instability” and not just the problem of insurgency. Below there are few suggestions to deal with the problem of drug trafficking in the Af-Pak region:

Firstly, the drug labs should be destroyed and opium convoys carrying drugs shall be targeted. Also the Chemists who work in the drug labs shall be arrested.

Secondly, there shall be discretion of power available for the anti-narcotics agents on their military mission, so that they can collect necessary information and prevent smugglers from trafficking.

Thirdly, target to eliminate the main drug traffickers who have connections with Taliban and Al- Qaeda.

Fourthly, Af-Pak is a border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan and mostly through which illegal trafficking takes place and from there it spreads to rest of the region. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, there shall be strong monitoring in the border areas, regular check of vehicles, tighten security check-posts and also keep a track if the security personnel are involved in corruption by letting the vehicles pass without checking.

Fifthly, “There shall be combine intensive diplomacy, a reshaped military, intelligence strategy; police, judicial, and economic reform; and targeted development programs.” (Peters 2009).

Last but not the least; ISAF shall work with the concerned Kabul Government to formulate a mechanism for interrogating suspected Afghan officials and police officials who benefits from the opium trade.

But the main obstacle in dealing with the problem is that the people who are connected with the opium trade reside outside the country; therefore, there shall be pressure from the international community on the nations who host them to hand them over to the Government of Afghanistan. It can be said that since “criminal and terrorist groups flourish where there is an absence of good governance and security; therefore, ultimate goal should not be to end the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but the creation of a prosperous and stable Afghanistan, and then only there are chances that these insurgent groups will become irrelevant” (ibid).

However, with the change of administration in the United States in 2017, it is uncertain how the newly elected President Donald Trump will carry forward its relations with Russia, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. But Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have improved to a certain extent under the current President, Ashraf Ghani, who came to power in September 2014. When it comes to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, Prof. Alina Filimonova is of the opinion that Russia should differentiate between Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral relations on one side and perception of their relations at the global level in general. Although Afghanistan considers Pakistan as an obstacle to solve the terrorism problem but internationally, Pakistan is perceived as a country more responsible and more reasonable than Afghanistan in comparison. Of course, Pakistan is a more preferable partner. Therefore, strategically any country which wants to deal with Afghanistan has to deal with Pakistan as well. Any country who wants to wage a military preparation in Afghanistan, Pakistan support can be crucial because of its proximity and its military bases. So, no matter how good or bad Afghanistan-Pakistan relation unfolds, there is a strategic aspect of this relationship and therefore, presence of Pakistan is needed to bring stability in the country. Thus, it can be said that Russia-Pakistan relations is not only developing bilaterally, but more importantly how other countries influence this relation.

However, the problem with Pakistan is its dual approach towards terrorism, at the international level it talks about eliminating terrorism but at the domestic level the country itself is the breeding ground for terrorist activities. Regarding this view, some scholars are of the opinion that Pakistan has different approach to deal with different terrorist organizations. For Pakistan some terrorist groups are not so dangerous especially the groups that operate in Kashmir. But it is a card to play when it comes to international relations so that Pakistan can act against those terrorist groups which are considered dangerous at the international level. However, this won't change their attitude to the terrorist groups at the local level which are not considered so dangerous. Therefore, Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that Pakistan can live up to Russian expectations as the former will prohibit those groups that are considered dangerous at the broad level. Nevertheless, in her opinion, the terrorism problem at the ground level will still persist as dealing with all these groups at the same



time can be unrealistic. Further, she is of the opinion that Pakistan is always present in all the Conferences and public events which are organised to fight terrorism. Pakistan is present there not as terrorist state but rather as a state to solve the terrorism problem. So the international perception of Pakistan as a problem solver is still there. May be this is not the correct perception but it is an important thing to be noted.

Finally, in the next chapter which is the concluding chapter of the theses, the entire Russia-Pakistan relationship in detail will be evaluated. It will also evaluate the “opportunities and the relevance of this association in the context of post-cold war developments.” Basically, the main findings of the entire work will constitute this chapter. It will restate the research problem and will summarize the implications of the study.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The Cold War alliance of Pakistan with the United States played a decisive role in the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This legacy continued to cast a shadow over Russia-Pakistan relations. It has been observed that since 1991 after the break-up, both realizing their previous mistakes, have started a process of building closer ties based on new strategic realities. Nonetheless, the post Sep-11 events, with Pakistan adopting the policy of “war on terror” and the changing geopolitical scenario in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there develop a mutual trust between Russia and Pakistan and thereby speeded up high-level bilateral contacts, as both sides saw common regional strategic and economic interests. This confluence further became definite after the announcement of the withdrawal of foreign troops by 2014, as both could coordinate their policies to prevent the outbreak of another Afghan Civil War, following the US drawdown. Hence, since 2010 onwards we can see very rapid advancement in Russia-Pakistan relations, comprehending the strategic need to work together for finding a solution to the Afghan issue and other regional issues. Not only strategic interests but also scope for bilateral economic cooperation after the withdrawal seemed to have appealed both the states.

Now, this growing proximity has raised questions, such as why is Russia losing interest in India, its long-time ally? Why suddenly has Russia warmed up to Pakistan? Well, the answer may be in the global relations. To sum up: **Firstly**, the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11 and forced imposition on Pakistan by the USA to withdraw its support for the Taliban. This changed the whole sequence of events and changed Russia’s viewpoint on Pakistan’s role in the region. **Secondly**, Pakistan’s geo-strategic location and the instability of Afghanistan is an important factor which has compelled the two sides to overcome their staggered past. Moreover, Russia is apprehensive of the fact that state failure and a power vacuum in the country will lead to the rise of religious extremism that will spread to southern regions of Russia through Central Asia and therefore, it believes that Pakistan can be an important player in bringing peace and stability to

Afghanistan. **Thirdly**, India's proximity with the US, the signing of Indo-US nuclear deal and shifting of its arms procurement to the US, and other Western countries led to increased engagement between Russia and Pakistan. **Fourthly**, the sanction on Russia by the Western countries, because of the Crimean accession in 2014, brings Russia closer to Asian countries. In Asia, considering the enormous opportunities and flourishing markets, some scholars look at Pakistan as a huge market for armaments. Further, Russia's relation with China has also been improving in the recent years and it significantly improved when the West started putting heavy sanctions on Moscow. As a matter of fact, China is an established associate of Pakistan and has always backed the latter in international conflicts, which Russia knows very well and therefore, becoming friends with Islamabad can be an excellent way to get closer to China (Tikhonova 2016).

It can be pointed out that possible Russia-Pakistan-China trilateral alliance can be a good counter-balance against the United States and India but again starting to form blocks can be a dangerous thing for the future. Regarding this, Dr Sergei N. Kamenev, Director of the Center for Pakistan Studies is of the opinion that Russia believes in a multi-polar world and therefore believes in having a relationship with both China and Pakistan along with India. He believes to some extent that Russia is bothered about India-United States growing strategic relationship, but it seems India is more bothered about Russia-Pakistan relations. Although according to him, Russia does not trust Pakistan full 100%, but since last three years, Russia has developed a trust in Pakistan. He further believes that Moscow should take into consideration that Pakistan is a nuclear power. In fact, since both India and Pakistan is a nuclear power so Russia should take a balanced approach while dealing with both the countries and treat Pakistan at par with India. However, according to Dr. Tatiana Shaumyan, Prof. Vyacheslav Ya Belokrenitsky, Petr Topychkanov and Alina Filimonova, Moscow won't develop its ties with Islamabad at the cost of India and if there is a choice between both India and Pakistan than Russia will always prefer India because India is way more important for Russia than Russia's relations with Pakistan.

It can be said that there is a nuanced relationship between Russia and Pakistan due to India and the US factor and a host of regional issues such as impasse over Iran's Nuclear

Program, Iraq and the Syrian crisis, conflict over Ukraine, etc. The effects of these factors cannot be ignored and has to be dealt carefully while looking at their bilateral ties. Regarding this Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that different stance regarding regional issues at the moment can be quite natural. As Russia-Pakistan relations were not always smooth and development of positive relations have not been developed from a long time unlike relations with India. Therefore, at some point, positions can be different and it depends on the international situation as well, but of course both the countries can be flexible at times. However, formation of close connections between the top leaders of Moscow and Islamabad and the two sides' eagerness to open a new episode in their relationship is taking the relationship forward.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, Russia-Pakistan bilateral relation has been greatly influenced by the geopolitics of the region as whatever is happening in the region has repercussions on their bilateral relationship. Pakistan has good ties with Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. As Saudi Arabia has a strong influence on the determinants of foreign policies of Pakistan, therefore, latter's strategic and bilateral relationships are significantly influenced by the Saudi Arabia's sectarian view. Therefore, it is important to be noted that since most of the rebel groups which are suspected as terrorist groups have been mostly funded by these Arab countries and Russia, on the other hand, is against these groups. So at times there are differences, and as I have mentioned earlier, this bilateral relationship was never smooth unlike relations with India, and it is still developing. Therefore, there is a place for flexibility, and we should give time to both Russia and Pakistan to realize their actual potential.

Observing these developments, it can be said that Russia has kept Pakistan engaged for political and strategic reasons. Now, Russia has the impression that the geostrategic location of Pakistan will assist Russia in reasserting its influence in Central Asia and South Asia which in turn will contain the US influence in the region. In geopolitics, strategic considerations play a major role, and decisive shifts take place which defines the future in the long run. This is quite evident in the economic and trade relations

between the two Cold War rivals, Moscow and Islamabad, which have stayed majorly affected for about fifty years due to the tensions brought about by the Cold War.

In the defence sector, it can be pointed out that the recent military engagement between Russia and Pakistan seems to create false perceptions of a full-scale cooperation. It gives the appearance of a close and solid relation between both the countries. But, it actually camouflages poor economic interdependence and lack of strategy for bilateral cooperation. If we go by the data, the trade relationship between the countries is not so good. It is not wrong to say that these opportunities may bring short-term gains with no long-term strategic outcomes for both the countries. Therefore, instead of boosting bilateral military cooperation, Russia and Pakistan should focus on less visible, but more important fields of partnership, to start with formulating the roadmap for bilateral relations and facilitate trade between them. The military part of cooperation is also possible too, but it needs to be less provocative and visible.

There are reports that decision of India to get into strategic relations with the United States had motivated Russia to reconsider its military cooperation with Pakistan. In this regard, Dr. Tatiana Shaumyan from the Institute of Oriental Studies believes that Russia-Pakistan bilateral relations are not taking place due to the Indo-US strategic relations. She opines that Pakistan is a big Muslim country and since Russia also has a significant Muslim population, therefore, the latter should consider this fact. Moreover, she is of the opinion that Russia-Pakistan military cooperation has no problem for Indian security. In fact, according to Prof. Vyacheslav Ya Belokrenitsky, the Deputy Director of Institute of Oriental Studies, improving relations between Russia and Pakistan can, in turn, improve relations between India and Pakistan. And with regard to the sale of advanced military weapons to Pakistan, he is of the opinion that since Pakistan is funded by Saudi Arabia, the United States, France and Britain, so there is no great scope for getting Russian armaments and therefore prospects are quite limited. However, Petr Topychkanov from Carnegie Moscow Center believes that Russia should understand that all the military weapons supplied to Pakistan can be used against India. According to him, in Russia, there are reasonable concerns as India gets closer to the United States, but that is not the sole reason to develop Russia-Pakistan relations. To add, the views of Dr. Sergey

Kamenev, he believes that to some extent Russia is bothered about India-US strategic relationship, but it seems India is more bothered about Russia-Pakistan relations.

Nevertheless, it is seen that in the post-Cold War period, both Russia and Pakistan have started reviewing their old policies and initiated various foreign policy initiatives to develop closer friendly relations. This booming relationship can be noticed by the recent events: **Firstly**, Russia lifted its self-enforced embargo on arms sale to Pakistan in June 2014 and thereby endorsed a bilateral military agreement with Pakistan in November 2014. **Secondly**, another demonstration of the evolving relationship between the Russia and Pakistan is the signing of North-South Gas Pipeline (NSGP) between Karachi and Lahore worth \$2 billion on 16th October 2015. **Thirdly**, by the joint military exercises Druzhba-2016 (Friendship-2016) held between Moscow and Islamabad from 24<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October, which President Putin held just a week after the Uri attacks in India on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In fact, Moscow announced it would hold additional drills with Islamabad in 2017. **Fourthly**, soon after the joint military exercises, Russia was given access to warm waters of Gwadar port. However, it is not clear, so far, whether Russian warships would be allowed to dock there, but Pakistan has already granted Chinese navy the landing permissions at the port (Rashid 2016). The **fifth indication** came when at the recent BRICS Summit in Goa in October last year; Russia refused to support India in its claims that Pakistan allegedly sponsors terrorism. The **sixth indication** comes from a concern compounded after Russia and Pakistan, for the first time, organised their foreign office consultations on regional affairs in Islamabad on December 14, 2016. Ahmad Hussain Dayo, Director General (West Asia), led the Pakistani delegation while Alexander V Sternik, third CIS department head (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation), led the Russian delegation (Roy Chaudhary 2016). It was also decided to hold the next round of consultations in Moscow in 2017. Moreover, Russia is working on a regional partnership on Afghanistan that includes Pakistan and China. In the tripartite meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at Moscow, Foreign Secretaries of Russia, China and Pakistan agreed to take “flexible approach.” This approach included the revoking of UN sanctions on select leaders of the Taliban, to promote peaceful dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This decision comes in the wake of recent attempts by Russia to engage directly with the

Taliban amid growing worries about the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, reacting to the discussions of the tripartite meeting, the Afghan government on 29th December 2016, rejected the call by the three countries and said that the Afghan people alone could decide on removing Taliban leaders from the UN sanction lists.

So far, Russia has hosted three Conferences on Afghanistan in the last few months. The second meeting on 15 February 2017 was expanded to six countries including Afghanistan, Iran, India, China, Pakistan and Russia itself (Meher 2017). And the third meeting was on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2017, where once again Russia offered to host talks between Afghan government and Taliban at the 11-nation regional talks which was held in Moscow. Unlike the previous two meetings, this time the talks have expanded with the addition of five Central Asian nations, but the missing stakeholders continued to be the US and the Western countries that have troops stationed in Afghanistan (The Wire, 2017).

It is noticed that Russia's primary objective in Afghanistan now is to prevent the rise of the Islamic State (IS). The growing influence of IS may have an adverse effect on the security of the region. Afghanistan has already been plagued with problems that have spilt over into the neighbouring areas as well. Corruption and drug trafficking have led to the growing insecurity in Pakistan, Central Asia and Iran. If appropriate measures are not taken, then there is an imminent risk that the profit made from drug trafficking may be channelised towards terrorist activities outside the region (Peters 2009). Therefore, the situation in Afghanistan ensures long-term engagement between Russia and Pakistan, especially in matters of terrorism, organised crime and drug-related crime. Russia's Foreign policy on Pakistan should encourage intensive dialogues between the civil, economic and military institutions of the two countries on issues concerning bilateral and multilateral relations. Dignitaries of both the countries can exchange regular visits to facilitate these conversations. Establishing a continuous informal and semi-formal dialogue between Russian and Pakistani representatives would increase transparency and confidence in the burgeoning relationship. Also, Russia should support Pakistan's efforts to respond to security threats on its territory politically,

economically, and militarily. This support can include joint military exercise, military training and sharing of information as long as Moscow is careful to take into account India's concerns and respect the delicate balance of power in the region (Moskalenko and Topychkanov 2014).

We can say that Afghanistan and the region as a whole, at present need the help of both Russia and Pakistan for stability and development. Any instability in Afghanistan will have an immediate impact on Russia's area of vital interest which comprises of the post-Soviet states. One of the direct consequences of disorder in Afghanistan may include drug trafficking and radical fundamentalism in Russia as well. It can be said that Central Asia presents a common area of interest for Moscow and Islamabad, where instability and Islamic insurrection are concerns for both. However, it is to be mentioned that relations between the two should not be dependent on the discontentment from their corresponding allies, for example, India and the United States.

With the change of administration in the United States in 2017, it is uncertain how the newly elected President Donald Trump will carry forward its relations with Russia, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. But Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have improved to a certain extent under the current President, Ashraf Ghani, who came to power in September 2014. When it comes to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that Russia should differentiate between Afghanistan-Pakistan relations on one side and perception of their relations at the global level in general. Although Afghanistan considers Pakistan as an obstacle to solving the terrorism problem but internationally Pakistan is perceived as a country more responsible and more reasonable than Afghanistan in comparison. Of course, Pakistan is a preferable partner. Therefore, in her opinion, strategically any country who wants to deal with Afghanistan has to deal with Pakistan as well. Any country who wants to wage a military preparation in Afghanistan, Pakistan support can be crucial because of its proximity and its military bases. So, no matter how good or bad Afghanistan-Pakistan relation unfolds, there is a strategic aspect of this relationship, and therefore, the presence of Pakistan is needed to bring stability in the country. Thus, it



can be said that Russia-Pakistan relations are not only developing bilaterally but more importantly how other countries influence this relation.

It is not wrong to say that the recent developments represent a strategic shift in Russia's position which Russia must pursue in the changing geopolitical and geostrategic situation. However, the problem with Pakistan is its dual nature towards terrorism, at the international level it talks about eliminating terrorism but on the contrary; the country itself is the breeding ground for terrorist activities. Regarding this, some scholars are of the opinion that Pakistan has a different approach to deal with different terrorist organizations. For Pakistan, some terrorist groups are not so dangerous especially the groups that operate in Kashmir. But it is a card to play when it comes to international relations so that Pakistan can act against those terrorist groups which are considered dangerous at the international level. However, this won't change their attitude to the terrorist groups at the local level which are not considered so dangerous. Therefore, Prof. Alina Filimonova from Moscow State University is of the opinion that Pakistan can live up to Russian expectations as the former will prohibit those groups that are considered dangerous at the broad level. Nevertheless, in her opinion, the terrorism problem at the ground level will persist as dealing with all these groups at the same time can be unrealistic. Further, she is of the opinion that Pakistan is always present in all the Conferences and public events which are organised to fight terrorism. Pakistan is present there not as a terrorist state but rather as a state to solve the terrorism problem. So the international perception of Pakistan as a problem solver is still there. Maybe this is not the correct perception but it is an important thing to be noted.

Thus, observing the developments both at the regional and global level, the present geopolitical and regional situation seems to be quite encouraging for the promotion of Russia-Pakistan relations. But there can be some hurdles in maintaining the process. Countries including the US, India, and some Muslim countries might feel uncomfortable over this growing relationship between Moscow and Islamabad. Therefore, it is highly likely that these countries may hinder the progress through hurdles that one might like to explore.

**The key findings of the research are as follows:**

- We can assume that Moscow's foreign policy seems to be less clear and not very predictable. However, it has kept Islamabad engaged because of political, economic and strategic obligations, specifically to control terrorism, narco-trafficking and to bring stability in the region (Syed 2016). Russia now feels that Pakistan's geo-strategic position will help the country in validating its position in South Asia and Central Asia which in turn will roll back the US influence in the region. Therefore, the recent developments represent a strategic shift in Russia's position which Russia must pursue in the changing geopolitical and geostrategic situation.
- Russia recognizes Pakistan's strategic significance with respect to the final settlement of Afghanistan, as instability in Afghanistan can have a negative impact on the security of Central Asian Republics (CARs). In addition, Pakistan can be helpful in dealing with drug trafficking emanating from Afghanistan to Russia through CARs.
- With the changing geopolitical and geo-strategic scenario in the region, Pakistan felt the strategic need to diversify its foreign policy options and strengthen its relations with all the important regional players, including Russia. Further, it is of the view that a political settlement in Afghanistan before the completion of US troops withdrawal, will also help in attaining domestic stability in its own country.
- Following the retraction of most of the NATO troops from Afghanistan, few thousand soldiers will be stationed in the country. The provisions of food, fuel supply and other products will be carried to these American servicemen through Russia and Pakistan. Keeping this into consideration there is a need for coordination between the two countries. Russia already has charge of the Northern Distribution Network in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan that abuts Afghanistan. Pakistan too has permitted the reopening of the Southern route for the US supplies from Karachi to Chaman and Torkham. Therefore, improvement in their bilateral relations could have a positive influence on the region.

- The major threat that both Russia and Pakistan faces at present is extremism and drug trafficking. So, both the countries can together initiate a mechanism to fight these menaces and assist each other in intelligence sharing and joint operations.
- One of the important findings of this research is that India's decision to embark on a strategic relationship with the United States had not prompted Moscow to come closer with Islamabad. Though, Russia is concerned about the growing India-US ties but, this is not the sole reason. There are so many other factors like Stability of Afghanistan, Pakistan's strategic location, stalemate with the West over the Crimean accession, Pakistan's nuclear power status and last but not the least, Pakistan as one of the countries with huge Muslim population.
- Russia is the biggest oil and gas producers, and it is an opportunity for Pakistan to welcome Russian investment in its energy sector which in turn will help in meeting its energy needs.
- Russia is a part of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) vision of China and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor also known as CPEC is one of the subdivisions of the OBOR initiative. Since Pakistan is at the crossroads of east and west thus, Pakistan can provide the Western corridor to Russia from which it can draw advantages from the usage of the Gwadar port. Further, Russia could have a means of entry to the Indian Ocean through the Arabian Sea and the Gwadar port. Bringing Russia and CARs to the ports of Gwadar could also benefit Pakistan's economic growth and development. However, CPEC is a major irritant factor for India, as it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan area of POK and if Russia becomes a part of it, there can be misunderstandings between Russia and India, so as of now, there are no clear reports.
- Pakistan can be a provider of textile and agricultural products to Russia. Aftermath, the Western sanctions, the country has been banned from importing agricultural products from Europe. Therefore, Pakistan can fill this vacuum and can trade agricultural goods to Russia and cater to the food import requirement of Russia to the scale of \$16 billion.

**Along with the above findings, there are few limitations to Russia-Pakistan relationship:**

**Firstly**, both Moscow and Islamabad have to work on their mutual apprehensions of the cold-war era and have to overcome the historical bitterness to improve their bilateral relations. They need to overcome their history of estrangement and move towards engagement under new circumstances. However, this may not be achievable unless conscious endeavours are made by both the countries to establish a profound understanding of each other, amending misunderstanding, discarding mutual distrust, and establishing respect for each other's rightful stake in the region. **Secondly**, third parties could also create obstacles for Russia and Pakistan on their way closer to each other. For instance, the United States may try to dissuade Pakistan from strengthening its ties with Russia while India may oppose Moscow's military cooperation with Islamabad. **Thirdly**, the economic potential between both the countries has not been realized to its full potential because of its economic limitations. **Fourthly**, Russia and Pakistan have a perceptual difference with regard to Afghanistan's peace negotiations with Taliban. Earlier, Moscow was not approving any clout of Taliban in Afghanistan, whereas, Islamabad finds it imperative to have national reconciliation among all the ethnic groups including Taliban for the long-term stability of Afghanistan. **Fifthly**, there is a nuanced relationship between the two countries due to India and the US factor and because of a host of regional issues such as impasse over Iran's Nuclear Program, Iraq and the Syrian crisis, conflict in Ukraine, etc. The effects of these factors cannot be ignored and has to deal carefully while looking at their bilateral ties. **Last but not the least**; both the countries have perceptual difference regarding the issue of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Hence, the two countries need to conquer these loopholes and dissimilarities through mutual discussions.

However, it is observed that after the end of Cold War, both Russia and Pakistan have initiated reviewing their old policies and instituted various foreign policy initiatives to establish closer amicable relations. Despite the constraints mentioned above, Russia-Pakistan relations are likely to become better in future, in view of the changing geopolitical and geostrategic circumstances. Dr Rashid Ahmad Khan (2012) in his

article titled, “The Pakistan-Russia Relationship: Geopolitical Shift in South and Central Asia,” is of the opinion that formation of close connections “between the top leaders” of Moscow and Islamabad and the eagerness of the two sides to open a new episode in their relationship is not only in the benefit of the two countries, it will also benefit the region. However, as we know, in international politics there are no permanent allies or opponents because states act per their national interests. Therefore, as of now, we cannot say what will happen in the next few years. Only the future unfolding of events between Moscow and Islamabad can confirm the turn this burgeoning relationship takes.

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## Appendix 1: Table 1

**Table 1: Key products exported from Pakistan to Russia in 2015. Source: ITC Trade Map.**

Product HS Code	Product Type	Volume in 2014, USD thousand	Volume in 2015, USD thousand	Change in 2015, %	Share in total product imports, %	Tariff applied by Russia to Pakistani products
8	Edible fruit, nuts, peel of citrus fruit, melons	\$69,385	\$87,837	27%	2.20	3.5
62	Articles of apparel, accessories, not knit or crochet	\$47,500	\$48,394	2%	1.80	8.2
61	Articles of apparel, accessories, knit or crochet	\$52,965	\$45,132	-15%	1.90	6.3
7	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	\$1,153	\$22,403	1843%	1.20	8.6
10	Cereals	\$9,334	\$19,562	110%	5.90	3
63	Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing etc	\$20,811	\$14,959	-28%	2.20	9.8
52	Cotton	\$9,384	\$10,356	10%	2.50	5.7
42	Articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel goods	\$13,855	\$9,851	-29%	1.50	13.9
30	Pharmaceutical products	\$7,128	\$6,616	-7%	0.10	4
95	Toys, games, sports requisites	\$20,763	\$5,050	-76%	0.30	8.8
64	Footwear,	\$5,696	\$4,883	-14%	0.20	5.3

	gaiters and the like, parts thereof					
90	Optical, photo, technical, medical, etc apparatus	\$5,734	\$4,565	-20%	0.10	2.5
55	Manmade staple fibres	\$11,882	\$4,250	-64%	0.90	6.2
54	Manmade filaments	\$6,221	\$3,685	-41%	0.90	6.6



## Appendix 2: Table 2

**Table 2: Key products exported from Russia to Pakistan in 2015. Source: ITC Trade Map.**

Product HS Code	Product Type	Volume in 2014, USD thousand	Volume in 2015, USD thousand	Change in 2015, %	Share in total product imports, %
48	Paper and paperboard, articles of pulp, paper and board	\$36,075	\$28,424	-21%	7.1
7	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	\$8,677	\$22,116	155%	8.3
72	Iron and steel	\$16,881	\$18,753	11%	0.7
28	Inorganic chemicals, precious metal compound, isotopes	\$3,908	\$3,790	-3%	0.5
29	Organic chemicals	\$5,841	\$3,240	-45%	0.3
84	Machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers, etc	\$4,211	\$3,103	-26%	0.1
9	Coffee, tea, mate and spices	\$253	\$2,753	988%	0.1
40	Rubber and articles thereof	\$5,008	\$2,554	-49%	3.4
25	Salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cement	\$1,480	\$1,901	28%	2.3
73	Articles of iron or steel	\$1,356	\$1,494	10%	2.3
10	Cereals	\$43,773	\$1,374	-97%	2
90	Optical, photo, technical, medical, etc apparatus	\$2,754	\$1,270	-54%	0

31	Fertilizers	\$1,407	\$1,005	-29%	0.2
44	Wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal	\$1,380	\$951	-31%	0.8