

ENHANCEMENT OF RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN SOUTH ASIA DURING PUTIN'S ERA

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Abstract

Eversince collapse of Soviet Union in the year 1991, the Russians are in search of their lost glory and new role in the world politics. Three types of opinion groups have emerged amongst Russian elites, advocating various ideas regarding their country's renewed role in the prevailing international arena. Fundamentalist Nationalists – believing in the legacy of strong nationalism – advocate to pursue old Marxism-Leninism trail; Liberal Westernists suggest initiation of a renewed relationship of peace and cooperation with the world in general and the west in particular; Pragmatic Nationalist, however, recommend a balance course of action, aimed at following the liberal approach, while preserving their national pride. Since 1991, Russia has chalked out various Foreign Policy, Security and Military doctrines/ concepts which are considered as Russia's will to participate in the global politics as a key player. In the Russian quest for resurgence, the leadership of Vladimir Putin has played an important role. He has not only taken Russia out of the state of distress but given his nation a new hope and a new identity. His approval of Foreign Policy Concept – 2010 is a step in the same direction. Apart from extending his cooperation toward the West, Putin has also enhanced his interest in South Asia merely to safeguard Russia's long term interests and counter US influence in the region. In Putin era Pak-Russia relations have also improved to great extent. Both the nations looking for a bright future ahead are committed in writing a new chapter of their bilateral relationship.

Introduction

“I cannot forecast to you the actions of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a

mystery inside an enigma. But there may be a key, and that key is Russian national interest”

Winston Churchill

Eversince the Soviet flag lowered from Kremlin, the Russians are in search of their identity and new role in the world politics. The academia and policy making machinery of the country have been indicating various inclinations, suggesting future place of Russia in the comity of nations. Amongst others, three main policy orientations developed in the political elites, who argue as to how best Russia can define its role in the changing international politics and ensure revival of its lost glory.¹ Fundamentalist Nationalists are of the strongest view that nothing less than their legacy of nationalism should form the basis of their image in the world. Liberal Westernists, on the contrary, believe that the new role of Russia in world politics lies in leaving behind the old bequest of anti-West approach in its policies and advocate initiating a renewed relationship of peace and cooperation with the world in general and the West in particular. Pragmatic Nationalists, however, campaign for the most balanced approach, which aims at promoting peace and cooperation, while safeguarding the fundamental principles of their nationalism.

There are clearly a range of interests, forces and actors at work in determination of foreign policy options for Russia, to predict outcome of their struggles is, however, extremely difficult, due to relatively low level of institutionalism in Russian political system.² Basing upon the above trends, the Russian policy makers – mostly the Pragmatic Nationalists – have chalked out certain foreign policy doctrines and concepts since 1993. These include Foreign Policy Concept – originally presented in April 1993 and revised in January 2000, Military Doctrine – first articulated in November 1993 and later revisited in April 2000, and National Security Blueprint – conceived in December 1997 and further deliberated in 2000. The concepts provide a road-map by which one can chalk out

evolution of Russian thinking about the world and Russia's future place in it. They are, however, still miles away from their real strategic goal of resurgence in international arena.

All the leaders emerged after collapse of Soviet Union have remained committed to chase Russia's transformed identity and role in international arena. In the post-Soviet Russia, the parallel processes of formulating national identity and developing national security have generated a domestic discussion on two central questions: "What is Russia? And what does Russia do? Both the questions entail a comparison of what Russia had been in the past.³ The critical analysis of all fundamental documents in the Russian history indicate that Russian leaderships in the post-Cold War era has transverse a long distance in the correct direction – though they are still mile away from where they used to be!

Amongst all, the role of Vladimir Putin is quite significant and pronounced one in reshaping Russian foreign policy and reviving the country's image in the world. Soon after assuming his office in 2000, President Putin re-examined the existing Russian domestic and foreign policies and upgraded the existing sets of documents, which included;

- National Security Concept-2000,
- Foreign Policy Concept-2000,
- National Security Concept-2000.

The up-gradation of these vital national policy documents later proved to be the strategic signalling to international comity about the new Russian foreign policy directions. These can be summarized as diversification pluralism and multi polarity.⁴ This whole phenomena leads to a new academic research and this paper is an effort in same direction. The aim of the research paper is to explore Russia's new role in the prevailing international system in accordance with the foreign policy goals set by its leadership especially Vladimir Putin since 2000. The study is focused to answer some fundamental questions concerning every student of international relations. These include: *one, will Russia be able to regain its lost glory*

under the leadership of Vladimir Putin? Two, what are the foreign policy goals set by Russia in its new Foreign Policy Concept and whether are these achievable? Three, what will be the new kind of relationship between Russia and South Asia with special emphasis to Pakistan? And, finally, what are the areas of cooperation between Pakistan and Russia?

This article is based on Waltz's Structural Realist Theory, (1979) according to which, like other realists, he relies heavily on knowledge of or assumption about the interests and intentions of states.⁵ He further emphasizes that states are 'unitary actors with a single motive – the wish to survive.'⁶ Elaborating Mearsheimer argument – states aim to maximize their relative power position over other states', Waltz claims states seek wealth, advantage and flourishing, peaceful coexistence and prosperity. They want to protect their sovereignty, autonomy and independence.

Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy Concept

Basing on various trends and groups prevailing in Russian society, a number of doctrines and concepts relating to Russia's foreign policy have been articulated since 1993. The Foreign Policy Concept was first presented in April 1993, and its improved version was again presented in June 2000. Likewise Military Doctrine encompassing various facets of military concepts was first prepared in November 1993 and later deliberated in April 2000. On the similar lines, the National Security Blueprint was initiated in December 1997 and 2000 respectively. All these doctrines and concepts defined Russia's new role in the changing global relations and aimed at regaining its status in the post-Cold War era.

Cardinal Points of Foreign Policy Concept – 2000

Vladimir Putin assumed the office of President of Russia on 7 May 2000 and focused all his energies on the foreign policy of the country. He accorded approval of Foreign Policy Concept on 28 June 2000 which aimed at the following:

- To ensure reliable security of the country.
- To preserve and strengthen its sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- To achieve firm and prestigious position in the world community.
- To influence general world processes with the aim of forming a stable, just and democratic world order.
- To create favourable external conditions for steady development of Russia
- To form a good neighbour belt along the perimeters of Russia.
- To uphold the rights and interests of Russian citizens abroad.
- To promote positive perception of the Russian Federation in the world.⁷

The Clause-II of the concepts deliberates upon the place of Russia in the *Modern World Politics* by virtue of its resources and potentials. It emphasizes on the need for Russians exerting influence on formation of new world order based upon *multi-polar system*. In such a system Russian federation, having real potentials, is pursuing its independent and constructive foreign policy.

The concept further emphasizes upon Russia's interests in a stable international system based on principles of justice, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation where United Nations must remain centre of regulating relations among states.

As regards to strengthening the international security, Russian Foreign Policy calls for further reduction in the role of power factor in international relations. Russia is even prepared for reduction in its nuclear potentials on the basis of bilateral agreement with the US.

Furthermore, Russian Federation regards international peace keeping under United Nations, as an effective instrument in resolving armed conflicts and considers use of force as unlawful. Russian Federation also considers its

important foreign policy task in combating international terrorism, drug trafficking and growth of organized crimes.

The main priority in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in international economic relations is to promote development of national economy which in conditions of globalization is unthinkable without Russia.

The foreign policy concept also discusses the Russian Federation priority of maintaining good relations with regional countries, Europe and the US.

Analysis in Comparison with the Old Version of 1993

As per the Russian Foreign Policy concept, the priority of their foreign policy is on three pillars: the Protection of the interests of individuals, the Society and the State. Its main emphasis is on defining the significant role of Russia in international politics by virtue of its potentials and resources. It is also pertinent to mention that by making the concept public, Russian Federation has proclaimed its importance in the world affairs. The concept also pronounces that Russia is not for maintaining status quo of accepting the hegemony of the US rather it believes in a multi-polar system of international politics. It also believes in the supremacy of the UN in resolving disputes and conflicts, considering use of force as violation of UN charter. Moreover, Russian influence is not limited to its neighbours rather extends deep to the West, the US and rest of the world. In short Russia considers itself quite capable of resuming its lost status in the international arena.

In comparison with Foreign Policy Concept of 1993, the current Foreign Policy Concept – 2000, is much more proactive and envisages a greater Russian role in the world affairs. In 1993, the Federation of Russia due to fragmentation of Soviet Union was not only fragile but also befuddled on loss of its status. The Foreign Policy Concept of 1993 was just an effort to make their presence visible in the globe. They were, however, not capable of regaining as to what they have lost. In

2000, the situation was quite different. The major difference was the leadership of Putin who gave new direction to its people and hope of a bright future through his visionary leadership. There is still a big question mark on Russian capability – despite its strong will, to challenge the uni-polar hegemony of the US in the prevailing world order.

Conceptual Appraisal of Russian Foreign Policy

Historic Trends: Although after the collapse of Soviet Union, its flag at Kremlin was replaced with tri-colour Russian flag, but its leadership still claims to be the legal and legitimate successor of Soviet Union. It is for the same very reason that they take inspiration from their historic legacy in formulation of their foreign policy. Two trends can be prominently traced in the foreign policy of ancient Russia i.e. ideology and expansion. “..... there are the cold warriors who detect in Soviet foreign policy a combination of ideological expansionism and traditional Russian imperialism in a relentless quest for world domination.”⁸ Both of these elements can easily be identified in the foreign policy of former USSR and present Russia. Let’s analyze their ideology first. The careful analysis of former USSR from 1922 to 1991 reveals that the basic character of Soviet foreign policy (Marxism-Leninism) was based upon Vladimir Lenin's “Decree on Peace” of 1917. It encompasses both proletarian internationalism and peaceful coexistence where the former refers to the common cause of the working classes of all the countries in their struggle to overthrow bourgeoisie governments and establishment of communist regimes, and the later relates to the establishment of peaceful relations with capitalist states. It is, however, pertinent to note that the element of proletarian internationalism diminished gradually and virtually faded away from their foreign policy but the component Marxism-Lenin ideology always remained a dominating factor in their foreign policy. Even in 1986, when the general foreign policy goals were formulized, the emphasis remained on ensuring favourable conducive external environment to building communism in Soviet Union. As regards to the Soviet expansion trends, it is obvious from the

traces of Soviet history that it carries a natural instinct for geographical expansion. The basic difference between China and Russia – if compared for being communist states – is that the former is defensive in nature and possess a history of confinement to periphery (construction of great wall of China speaks of that), whereas the later has an account of progressive expansion of its boundaries. The outward growth of Soviet borders can be well judged from the Map-1 below. Beginning in 1533 the Soviet border stretched to Pacific Ocean in 1689. In 1858, Russia took advantage of the defeated Chinese in the Second Opium War and forcing the Treaty of Aigun upon China, Russia annexed some 300,000 to 400,000 square miles of Chinese land to the Russian Empire.⁹ By the end of 19th century the Soviet imprints were found touching the Afghan borders. It was, in fact, Soviet quest for warm water which compelled her to commit the strategic blunder of invading Afghanistan.



Map-1: History of Expansion of Russian Empire

Post Cold War Policy Parameters: The careful study of the Russian thinking mechanism in the post-Cold war era identifies three major trend groups in their society defining various courses of action in Russian foreign policy. These trend groups can be segregated as Liberal Westernists, Pragmatic Nationalists and Fundamental Nationalists. Liberal Westernists while presenting idealist view of international

relations believe in close relations with the West and advocate free economic liberation and free market economy. Westernists see no external military threat to Russia and favour disarmament efforts.¹⁰ Fundamental Nationalists, however, pose totally opposite vision. They believe in the legacy of their lost national pride and Marxism-Leninism ideology, and strongly disregard Russia's integration in the world economy. They propose means to create a greater Russia, envisioning a rebirth of Soviet Union.¹¹ Pragmatic Nationalists, however, follow a balance approach and suggest bridging gap between the East and the West while securing Russia's interests and identity. Basing on above trends a number of doctrines and concepts relating Russia's foreign policy have been articulated since 1993. The Foreign Policy Concept was first presented in April 1993, and its improved version was again presented in January 1993. Likewise Military Doctrine encompassing various facets of military concepts was first prepared in November 1993 and later deliberated in April 2000. On the similar lines, the National Security Blueprint was initiated in December 97 and 2000 respectively. All these doctrines and concepts define Russia's new role in the changing global relations with the aim to regaining its status in the post-Cold War era.

Russian Strategic Objectives and its Place in the World Politics

The evaluation of Russians' thinking process and available studies conducted after the disintegration of the Soviet Union revolve around three significant aspects related to Russia's foreign policy goals. These include their national identity, economy and security. The enduring goals pursued by Russia throughout in its foreign policy have placed primary emphasis on ensuring national security, promoting the economic well-being of the country and enhancing national prestige.¹² Ever since Vladimir Putin assumed power, Russia set three Foreign Policy Strategic Objectives : (1) to strengthen and control the Russian state and politics; (2) to create economic growth and structure the Russian economy; and (3) to establish Russia as a power and player in international affair.¹³ The close study of

these objectives reveals that they are not only closely interlinked but also have significant effect on each other.

Russia's Foreign Policy towards South Asia

In the historic perspective, Russia's policy toward South Asia revolved around three factors: (1) its quest for reaching warm water port; (2) the China factor; and (3) countering US interests in the region. Russia being a land-locked country had an ages-old quest for warm water ports which had been the major cause of its numerous military conflicts with Turkey, and The Crimean War over control of the Black sea and the Bosphorus-Dardanelles passage into the Mediterranean Sea, and the Russian-Japanese conflict in 1903. It was its historic pursuit and the "centuries old quest for warm water" that forced former USSR to invade Afghanistan.¹⁴ There are no warm water ports in Afghanistan, but they were in control of the Khyber Pass (an ancient trade route to China) on the East, and one step closer to Iran and Turkey on the West and Pakistan on the South, all with warm water ports. It would be rather misjudgement on part of any researcher to believe that Russia's hunt for warm water has died down with its withdrawal from Afghanistan. Today's Russia needs it even badly for linking its world largest gas reserves to international market.

In pursuit of its long-term objectives in the region, Russian foreign policy both before and after the fall of Soviet Union, has been India centric. The depth of Soviet-Indian strategic partnership can be judged from Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 and Soviet support to India in Indo-Pak War-1971. The changing dynamics of today's geopolitical scenario have, however, brought Pakistan and Russia closer to each other. This partnership will be more meaningful in post-2014 scenario when the U.S. led NATO forces will leave Afghanistan. Acceptance of this reality has provided another opportunity to the leadership of both countries to rewrite the chapter of Pak-Russia bilateral ties.

Reappraisal of Pak-Russia Relations

The Legacy: Pak-Russia relations, viewing from a realist perspective, have not been built upon strong pillars of understanding each other's interests and concerns which are most essential for establishing enduring bilateral ties. The history of Pak-Russia Relation is a tale of misperceptions and lost opportunities. Pak-Russia relations have often been under-rated, despite strong potentials, mainly due to misperceived notion and mindset.¹⁵ The roots of misunderstandings and misperceptions can be traced back in 1947 when Pakistan at the time of its inception decided to join the U.S. block ignoring the next-door superpower, the USSR. One can make a number of arguments in favour or against the decision of then-Pakistani elite but analyzing it from hindsight one can draw a conclusion that the decision was not based upon rationality. Under Max Weber model of rationality, Pakistan's decision making authorities at the time of its creation did not carry out correct "cost-benefit" analysis and, hence, their decision of preferring the U.S. over USSR cannot be termed as a rational choice.

Ever since, there has been no warmth in relations between both the nations. One will not be incorrect in saying that Pakistan had no independent policy towards Russia – at least till end of the cold war. Pakistan has always seen USSR through the prism of the U.S. or its relations with India. Critically analyzing strategic interests of both the states, one can make out that there is no bilateral issue between them rather certain commonality of interests related to regional and world political paradigm.

The history also provided certain opportunities to both the nations to revisit their bilateral relations and take a fresh start but apart from a few high level visits and undertaking few projects of bilateral/regional level, both failed to seize the moments. Apart from initial miscalculation in 1947, there came at least two significant moments when Pakistan could have achieved political and economical milestone not only in terms of its bilateral relations with the Soviet Union but with

rest of the world community as well. First, after the 1965 war, Pakistan during Tashkent Conference failed to avail the chance of resolving the Kashmir issue. At Tashkent, situation was somewhat in Pakistan's favour, as India was at a weaker wicket, China was in full support of Pakistan, the U.S. was also interested in resolving the Kashmir issue, and the Soviet Union while chairing the conference would have delighted in taking the credit of resolving the long pending Kashmir issue. This would have also laid the foundation for renewed Pak-USSR relations. Unfortunately, Pakistani leadership did not play its cards well. Later, in 1974, Prime Minister Zulifqar Ali Bhutto visited Moscow and as a result USSR established Steel Mill in Pakistan worth billion dollars. That was the second occasion when Pakistan, could have mustered immense economic gains but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan totally changed the scenario and Pakistan as the U.S. frontline ally, fought a long proxy war with Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Even after the Cold War there was no breakthrough in Pak-Russia relations due to Pakistan's support to Taliban regime in Afghanistan. However, since the 9/11 episode the ice has started melting down but there is still no enough cordiality in their ties.

The Question of Perception

In international relations the question of perception about each other's behaviour is equally important. According to Boulding (1969), friendliness/hostility and strength/weakness constitute the building blocks of image of the other.¹⁶ The history of Pak-Russia relations is an interesting case study of political psychology. The most tragic part of Pak-Russia relations is the lack of rationality. Pakistan, as a matter of fact, had no independent policy about Soviet Union till the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, both the nations have evaluated each other behaviour through the prism of other states' interests/concerns. Besides others, one major reason of Pakistan's joining the American camp in 1947 was its security concerns. Since India had already forged good bilateral ties with former Soviet Union, Pakistan in order to maintain balance of power moved closer to western security system.

Due to the strong Indian factor in our foreign policy decision making, Pakistan always considered Russia as friend of India and the enemy of Pakistan. The rationality factor was again found missing when Pakistan joined western security system – Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and became frontline state against war on communism. This shows that the decision making elite of Pakistan has never been “objective” in their views towards Russia, rather always took the “subjective” vision of the Soviet face i.e. internalizing communist Russia as an “Evil Empire” as portrayed by the west. Hence, Pakistan always viewed the former Soviet Union, and even now the Russian Federation, through the Western prism, especially American world-view.¹⁷

The prevailing international and regional environment and Pakistan’s own political dynamics have, however, brought both nations at a converging point of their mutual relations. It is, hence, imperative to identify the existing areas of interests and cooperation as well as the possible hurdles which both the nations have to overcome in achieving their common objectives.

Challenges in Pak-Russia Relations

The most positive point in the mutual politics of both the state is that they have no direct bilateral issue. There are, however, certain external factors which have been affecting adversely both the nations. These challenges, their implications and possible measures/course of actions to offset these upshots are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

The US Factor in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy

The U.S. role in the foreign policy of Pakistan is significantly pronounced. The joining of the U.S. camp at the time of independence and subsequently signing the West’s security system (SEATO and CENTO), have never allowed Pakistan’s elite to formulate an independent policy towards Russia. It is also a fact that Pakistan has always viewed Russia

through the U.S. lens and been used as a proxy in fighting the U.S. interests in the region. Pakistan's role in Afghan war (1979-1989) is the most appropriate example of the same. Not only this, Pakistan's territory has also been used to meet the U.S. interests – quite some of them were detrimental to Russia's security concerns. In 1959, Pakistan signed an accord with the U.S. to counter communist intimidation on its western border.¹⁸ In 1962, the Soviets captured a U.S. spy plane on its territory. The pilot revealed that the plane had taken off from the Badaber Airbase, Peshawar in Pakistan. It is related that the furious Soviet leader, Khrushchev, circled Peshawar red on map. The Pak-Soviet relations had deteriorated to its worst.¹⁹

Pakistan, in fact, following the Western especially the US pleas, always considered the communist USSR as an “Evil Empire” whereas on the other hand, communist China has been historically best friend of Pakistan. The most significant argument for the same is that Pakistan always viewed China through its own prism and been quite successful in maintaining a balance in its relations with China and rest of the world. By following the same policy, Pakistan can also lay the foundation for its relations with Russia.

The Indian Factor

As discussed above, India is a pre-dominant factor in Russia's foreign policy towards South Asia, especially Pakistan. In this context the role of Pakistan leadership has also been quite non-visionary. As India was able to enjoy cordial relations with both the superpowers, Pakistan's political leadership failed to do so. However, this Indian-centralism in Pak-Russia relations has a positive aspect too. It can be argued that Pakistan had no bad intentions towards the former Soviet Union (present Russia).²⁰ Moreover, in the post cold war and 9/11 scenario, there has been significant change in the thinking process of leaders on both the sides. Pakistan due to its geostrategic location and its role in international arena is a significant country and cannot be ignored by great

powers. Hence, the Indian factor in the foreign policy of Russia towards Pakistan is no more conspicuous.

Afghanistan and Post-2014 Scenario

The period of Afghan War (1979-1989) was the worst in the history of both nations which ultimately ended on dismemberment of the great superpower. Even after the war, there was no much warmth in their relations due to Taliban factor in Pakistan foreign policy. However, in the post-9/11 epoch, Pak-Russian relations have shown some improvement. As the U.S. led NATO forces are planned to leave Afghanistan in 2014, the role of both Pakistan and Russia will be even meaningful in Afghan security in particular and the whole region in general.

Encouraging Developments

After of the Cold War and in the recent past there have been some positive indicators of melting ice in Pak-Russian bilateral ties. The careful analysis of these events helps us in concluding that both the states are serious in reshaping their foreign policy objectives towards each other. Some glimpses of these upbeats are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Bilateral Visits

In April, 1999, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Moscow, the first by a Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow since the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's visit in 1976. Later in February 2003, President Pervez Musharraf's visited Russia, again the first by a Pakistani President in 33 years. Both these visits helped in breaking the ice.

Similarly, in April 2007, Russian Premier Mikhail Fredkov reciprocated and became the first Soviet leader visiting Islamabad in almost four decades. Later, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on exploring prospects in collaborating in oil sector was also signed during the visit of Pakistan Petroleum Minister to Russia in November, 2007.

Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization

In 2005, Pakistan succeeded in getting an Observer's status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) because Russia had opted not to veto Islamabad's presence. Pakistan also reciprocated the gesture by helping Russia to attain an Observer's status at the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Putin-Gillani Meeting – 2010

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin conveyed his warm feelings to his Pakistani counterpart Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani when the two met on November 25, 2010 on the sidelines of SCO summit in Dushanbe.

Later on November 8, 2011, the Prime Ministers of both the nations again met at the SCO summit in St Petersburg. Prime Minister Putin was quoted as saying, "Pakistan today is not only an important trade and economic partner of Russia, but also the most important Russian partner in South Asia and in the Islamic world."²¹ The paper further commented, "This Russian shift in South Asia policy where India had always been Moscow's main partner is reflection of apprehensions over New Delhi-Washington relationship turning into a military-political alliance to block Russia and China's interests in the region."²²

Army Chiefs Visits

The Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, visited Russia thrice in the past four years i.e. 2009, 2012 and 2013. Reciprocating the gesture, the Russia Army chief visited twice in last two years: Colonel General Alexander Postnikov, Commander-in-Chief Russian Ground Forces in May 2011;²³ and Russian Army Chief Vladimir Chirkin in August 2013.²⁴ The visits focused on enhancing ties between the armies of the two countries, and matters pertaining to regional security and common interests so as to lay the foundation for a bilateral strategic relationship between both the countries.

Quadripartite Summit August-2010

A four nation summit of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan was held at Sochi in August 2010.²⁵ Sochi summit was considered as a turning point in rewriting the history of relations between two nations. The summit also gave the green signal for an inaugural meeting of the Russian-Pakistani Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic and Scientific-Technological Cooperation in Islamabad.

Arms Sales and Supply

The only Russian hiatus or reservation in its relation with Pakistan is related to the sale of weapons. But that too remains an academic argument as its defence technologies have always trickled to Pakistan forces through a third country. In 1990, Ukraine supplied its main battle tank (T-80) to Pakistan which is built on Russian technology. In 2009, Russia also lifted its objections pertaining to supply of Chinese JF-17 fighter planes (powered by Russian RD-93 engines) to Pakistan. Previously, Russia had sold over forty MI-17 transport helicopters to Pakistan. Pakistan is also likely to purchase MI-35 attack helicopters to fight terrorism.

The above developments show that both Islamabad and Moscow have come miles forward during the last decade or so to embrace each other and shun differences.

Important Findings

The case-study of Pak-Russia relations leads us to some vital conclusions essential for formulating our long term foreign policy objectives. Some of the conclusions from Pakistan's perspective include the following:-

Firstly, ever since the collapse of former Soviet Union, the leadership of Russia considering itself the legitimate successor of the great superpower is committed in defining its role and effecting resurgence of its power in international politics.

Secondly, amongst various trend-groups Pragmatic Nationalists' views are considered most favoured which illustrate adopting a balanced approach of enhancing Russian interests while keeping their ideological identity and national interests intact.

Thirdly, since 1993, different concepts / doctrines spelling out Russian foreign policy objectives, military strategies and national security blueprints, have been formulated. Evaluation of these concepts and doctrines reveals that Russia, though yet not fully capable, does have a definite will of its resurgence in the international arena.

Fourthly, the history of Pak-Russia relations indicates that both the nations have not built their relations upon strong pillars of a realist perception.

Fifthly, both the countries perceived each other's behaviour from the prism of external forces and not the internal political dynamics and bilateral ties. Until the end of the Cold War in 1991, Pakistan had no independent policy towards Russia.

Sixthly, evaluating from hindsight, the decision of Pakistani elite of joining the US camp in 1947 does not meet the criteria of rationality and proved historically incorrect keeping in view Pakistan's long term national interests. Pakistan rather should have followed a balanced approach in maintaining its relations with the USSR, US and rest of the world.

Seventhly, Pakistan and Russia despite having no bilateral issues possess numerous potentials of collaborations. They, however, could not en-cash a number of opportunities of rewriting their history of relations.

Eighthly, although the Russia foreign policy in South Asia has been Indian centric, but the recent international developments especially the post-9/11 scenario has projected Pakistan as a key regional and international player.

Ninthly, the recent high level visits and summits between the two countries and the policy statements indicate that there is an apparent shift in Russia's South Asia policy towards Pakistan where India had always been Moscow's main partner.

Lastly, Pakistan and Russia – having convergence on their bilateral, regional and international interests, do possess potentials to collaborate in various fields. Working together in the fields of energy, trade and security, Pakistan and Russia can ensure regional and global peace, harmony and social wellbeing.

Options and Recommendations

There is one fundamental factor in the policy making of both Russia and Pakistan that their relations remained below par affability due to number of external forces. Both the nations have convergence of interests in various areas and can contribute significantly in the development, wellbeing and security of their countries as well the region.

The neo-liberalism theory presented by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye propagates that in international politics there are multiple channels which connect states. Similarly, the scholars like Rosecrance and Mitrany, the leading neo-liberalists, also believe in cooperation among states arguing that mutual benefits arising out of cooperation are possible because states are not always preoccupied with relative gains. They further deliberate that international relations is not a zero sum game as many states feel secure enough to maximize their own gains regardless of what accrues to others.²⁶

Applying these arguments in the case study of Pak-Russia bilateral relation, it can be concluded that both the states can collaborate in various sectors and play significant role in international politics. Some of the relevant fields of convergence of their interests are as recommended in the succeeding paragraphs.

Energy

There could be no two opinions that we require energy both for economic growth and industrialization. Abundant and inexpensive energy serves as bloodline of the modern civilization and is considered as the most important demand of today. In order to meet its domestic requirement Pakistan imports a huge quantity of oil mostly from Gulf countries. Pakistan's gas reserves are also depleting at a faster pace – making its energy situation even worse. Fortunately, Pakistan is blessed with two energy corridors which link Russia, Centre Asian Republics (CARs) and Iran with international market. All these states/republics are rich in hydrocarbon resources and considered as world future focus of attention. Russia is holding world largest gas reserves whereas Iran is second in the row. Pakistan in order to meet its energy demand and to provide an access to these reserves to world market has initiated two pipeline projects in the region; Iran-Pakistan-India (now only Iran-Pakistan called IP) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline Projects. Both the projects being technically feasible and economically viable have been subjected to great powers political interests. IP being most viable both technically and financially has bleak chances of materialization in near future due to Iranian nuclear standoff. TAPI on the other hand enjoys backing of the U.S. and Russia both. Russia on the other hand has also shown interest in financing the project.²⁷ The materialization of this mega project shall not only help Pakistan in meeting its energy shortfall but shall also provide access to Russia and CARs to the west. Moreover, Pakistan has also sought Russia's assistance in coal mining and generation of coal power plants. Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf during his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov on October 3, 2012, said that Pakistan seeks to increase economic relations and benefit from the expertise of Russian Federation, especially in the energy sector where Russia has experience in coal mining and generation of coal power plants.²⁸

Pakistan and Russia have great potentials in energy sector and they can boost economies of the both the countries by cooperation in this particular area.

Trade

The second area in which the future of both the countries lies is their cooperation in trade. Pakistan and Russia despite having legacy of cool relations have discreetly been engaged in enhancing their bilateral ties in several fields including trade. It is also a fact that the bilateral volume of trade between Russia and Pakistan has surged from a paltry \$92 million in 2003 to over \$700 million in 2011.²⁹ It is expected that the cooperation in trade sector shall further improve in the years to come which would help in further promoting ties between both the countries.

Security

Academically it is believed that Russian sale of arms to Pakistan is inviolable. Whereas, there is already presence of both Russian equipment and technology in Pakistan defence forces in the shape of MI-17 helicopters and T-80 series of Ukrainian battle tanks. They are now looking for a diversified and expanded relationship in this regard. The recent visits of both the army chiefs to each other countries are being rated very high in writing new chapter in question of defence cooperation.

The role of both the nations would be even more varied in post-2014 scenario when the U.S. and NATO troops would leave Afghanistan. It is recommended that Russia and Pakistan should establish greater ties especially in the field of counterterrorism.

Pro-activism

Over the past ten years Pakistan and Russia have covered a long distance in trying to come closer to each other. It is recommended this pro-active approach in their bilateral

bondage should be further exploited and regular high level visits be facilitated. There has been a delay in President Putin's visit to Pakistan which has raised concerns in various quarters. It is recommended that all prior homework should be completed evaluating all possible policy alternatives before any such visit. Postponement of visit of such stature is by no means in the national interest.

SCO

Pakistan and Russia can even build stronger ties utilizing the platform of SCO. In 2005, Pakistan was granted observer status in SCO and in return Pakistan then reciprocated the gesture by helping the Russians get an Observer's status at OIC.³⁰

It is suggested that these forums should be exploited in building strong pillars of their association.

Conclusion

Pakistan and Russia are not only two important countries of the region but also have great role in international politics. At the time of creation of Pakistan, the decision making mechanism of the country failed to carry out correct cost-benefit analysis and took an irrational decision of ignoring the former Soviet Union. There was, however, requirement of maintaining equally good relations with both the superpowers as India did so very successfully.

Pakistan made just not an initial incorrect decision but also followed a flawed course of action in formulating its foreign policy. The basis of bilateral relationship is always on the principles of trusts and corrects perception. This element too remained missing in Pak-Russia relations. The history of relations between them can truly be termed as a saga of misunderstandings and misperceptions as both the nations perceived each other through a third nation's perspective.

Amongst all odds what both the states have experienced over the past half century, Pakistan and Russia have now realized each other's importance. The developments of the last ten years suggest that both of them have covered a distance of hundred miles in rewriting the history of their relations. Viewing various aspects of global and internal dynamics one can conclude that if both the countries work together in the fields of energy, trade and security, they can ensure peace, stability and prosperity of their nations as well as the world.

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Notes

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