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PAKISTAN-SOVIET UNION RELATIONS (1961-1966): OIL DIPLOMACY, ALLIANCE REASSESSMENT, AND THE TASHKENT MOMENT

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Abstract

This study presents a multidimensional analysis of Pak-Soviet ties, including the oil-exploration discussions from 1960-61 until the Tashkent Declaration issued in January 1966. It was a selective, transactional adjustment, and not an ideological transformation or a fundamental change of strategic thinking, separating the initial economic liberalisation from the more and more thorough political reconciliation that took place in the second half of 1964 and 1965. The mood of Islamabad and Moscow shifted due to Pakistan's increasing unhappiness with the trustworthiness of its western military allies, the Sino-Indian crisis in 1962, western military assistance for India, and the rising Sino-Soviet divide. Institutional doorway of economic and technical cooperation. Pakistan intended to decrease the political implications of dependency on a single sponsor, improve its negotiation power and extend its overseas contacts. Meanwhile, the USSR's objective was to prevent the impact of Chinese troops in Pakistan, to retain its strong relationship with India, and to boost its position as a South Asian diplomat. The Tashkent process and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 were the largest diplomatic manifestations of this alignment. However, the declaration did not address the Kashmir problem or fix the imbalance in Soviet ties with India and Pakistan; rather, it addressed a crisis that needed to be rectified. According to the existing diplomatic documentation, the United Nations Treaty Series, and scholarly publications up to 2024, the study indicates that strategic diversity may enhance Pakistan's adaptability in diplomacy without necessitating a unified regional security framework.

Keywords: *Pakistan–Soviet relations; Cold War; Ayub Khan; Sino-India War 1962; Indo-Pak War 1956; Tashkent Declaration; strategic autonomy; South Asia*

Introduction

Pakistan's rapport with the Soviet Union during the 1960s is often seen as a transition from hostility to amicability. While this notion illustrates the apparent trajectory of diplomatic evolution, it overlooks a crucial historical distinction: the expansion of economic and technical contact between 1960 and 1961 did not signify a substantial political rapprochement. Samina Ahmed and Vijay Sen Budhraj assert that initial efforts established the foundation for reconciliation, although a notable political advancement is not anticipated until late 1964 or early 1965 (Ahmed, 1988, p. 106; Budhraj, 1970, p. 355). Pakistan began the 1950s as an active member of Western-backed security alliances, which Moscow saw as part of a containment plan extending to the southern frontier of the Soviet Union. The 1961 accord on Soviet assistance in oil and gas exploration transcended a mere technical agreement; it signified that constrained economic collaboration could persist amid considerable political and geopolitical tensions.

The subsequent reconciliation was neither linear nor symmetrical. Pakistan continued to express concern over Soviet support for India and Afghanistan due to security issues, while

Moscow asserted that New Delhi was its principal ally in South Asia. Nevertheless, the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the West's choice to extend military support to India, the escalating Sino-Soviet discord, and Pakistan's discontent with the constraints of its alliance with Washington all fostered a more conducive atmosphere for diplomatic innovation. Islamabad aimed to expand its international alternatives while preserving its ties with the West; Moscow endeavoured to avert Pakistan from becoming permanently aligned with a China-centric strategy while still enjoying the political and economic advantages of its association with India (Ahmed, 1988, p. 106; Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 27-30; Sahni, 2024, pp. 55-58).

The historical context provides several further explanations for this development. Vaidyanath (1965), Chaudhri (1966, pp. 492-500), Kapur (1966, pp. 150-157), and Rajan (1966, pp. 25-28) provide contrasting evaluations of Soviet actions before and after Tashkent. Gupta (1966, pp. 45-48) and Ray (1966, pp. 49-63) analyse the impact of Indian and Pakistani perceptions of each other on their foreign-policy choices. Research on Pakistan's alignment with the West and its reliance on military support elucidates the limitations encountered by Ayub Khan (Ayub Khan, 1964, pp. 195-209; Venkataramani & Arya, 1966, pp. 120-125; Malik, 1994, pp. 102-103). Subsequent investigations have concentrated on the economic aspects of Pakistan's interaction with the Soviet Union (Ayoob, 1969; Noman, 1975), the political timing of their rapprochement (Ahmed, 1988, p. 106; Budhraj, 1970, p. 355), and the evolving strategic landscape influenced by the Sino-Indian conflict and the Sino-Soviet schism (Chervin, 2024; Mastny, 2010, pp. 57-63; McGarr, 2013). A recent investigation has highlighted the domestic political constraints affecting crisis management between India and Pakistan, with the enduring strategic rationale of Soviet policy toward India (Clary, 2022; Hilger, 2021; Sahni, 2024, pp. 55-58).

This article links these elements by seeing economic diplomacy, alliance assessment, and great-power mediation as interconnected but conceptually distinct facets of reconciliation. The primary assertion is that the Pakistan-Soviet engagement was a constrained endeavour in strategic independence, enhancing Islamabad's diplomatic and economic options but without establishing a common strategic outlook or altering the inherent disparity in Soviet relations with India and Pakistan. The interval between the exploratory engagements of 1960-1961 and the Tashkent Declaration of January 1966 is seen as a sequence of contingent modifications rather than an inevitable trajectory toward cooperation. The study differentiates between the Soviet Union's capacity to handle a regional crisis and its willingness to endorse Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue.

Research Questions

The key questions guiding the discourse as follows:

1. How did the economic and technical alliance established in 1960-1961 provide the institutional and diplomatic foundation for improved relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union?
2. How did the Sino-Indian War (1962), the developing Sino-Soviet alliance, and the Indo-Pakistan War (1956) affect the strategic calculations of Islamabad and Moscow?
3. To what extent did the Tashkent Declaration establish a durable alliance between Pakistan and the Soviet Union, and what political and strategic limitations did the accord reveal?

Historical Context: The Origins of Mistrust, 1947-1960

Initial rapport between Pakistan and the Soviet Union was built within a regional context that was defined by Pakistan's apprehensions of security threats, its unresolved disputes with India and the necessity for external support in foreign policy. Pakistan's ties with Moscow did

not turn into a lasting strategic partnership. The young emerging Pakistani state shifted its focus from the Soviet Union and turned towards the U.S. and the West. Meanwhile, Pakistan's geopolitical location and growing Western connections were seen as a component of the Cold War rivalry by the Soviet authorities (Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 25-27; Malik, 1994, pp. 102-103).

This Western security path was consolidated with Pakistan's inclusion under the umbrella of the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the United States in 1954 and that of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Baghdad Pact in 1955. These commitments were not just words, but the outline by which Pakistan was attempting to seek military assistance and external recognition, and to seek strategic engagement with the Soviet Union (Malik, 1994, pp. 102-103; McGarr, 2013; Venkataramani & Arya, 1966). Then, Indian analysts saw Pakistan's orientation towards the West as an important part of the bilateral relations, and there was a wider debate about Indian policy towards Pakistan (Gupta, 1966, pp. 47-48; Ray, 1966, pp. 60-63). The accords strengthened the West's strategic dominance in a part of the world where the Soviets had a border. When the Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin arrived in India and Afghanistan in 1955, they were noticed by Pakistanis for bringing up the issue of Kashmir and Pashtunistan in public statements, which seemed to favor Indian and Afghan claims to Pakistan. The basic strategic hostility remained despite the visit to Pakistan by Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan, who came there in 1956, without achieving any notable diplomatic breakthrough (Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 25-27; Malik, 1994, pp. 131-133).

These hostilities were exacerbated by the U-2 incident in May 1960. The downed American reconnaissance plane had been flying over Pakistani territory, bringing direct condemnation and the threat of retribution from the Soviet Union upon Pakistan. The episode seemed to support Moscow's assessment that Pakistan was actively involved in Western espionage and security initiatives. Deterioration was not endemic, however. In January 1961, a memorandum from the US stated that the Soviets had previously made an offer for an exploration team to be brought into Pakistan in 1958, but that the discussions were underway then regarding the offer; this mirrored Islamabad's interest in signing an agreement with the USSR while staying aligned with the West. It also stated that the team of Soviet oil explorers could give Moscow a significant propaganda coup. Meanwhile, Ayub continued to give Washington assurances on the issue of collective security (U.S. Department of State, 1961a, pp. 1-3; Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 27-29; U.S. Department of State, 1961b, pp. 64-65).

This is a new development in this new equation, which has been growing stronger between Pakistan and China. The Sino-Pakistan border accord of 1963 resulted in a strategically vital corridor for Islamabad, providing another channel of diplomatic assistance for Pakistan and reducing its reliance on Western powers. With the advent of modern Indian academia, it was realised that China became an important player in Indo-Pak relations. Meanwhile, later research has shown that the boundary agreement was the result of a long diplomatic negotiation process and not due to a sudden strategic alignment (Chaudhuri, 2018; Dutt, 1966, pp. 126-133). The deal was a reminder to Moscow to prevent the emergence of Pakistan as a single weapon in the hands of China in the region. In this respect, the Soviet Union's involvement in Pakistan took place within a triangular strategic dimension of Islamabad-Moscow-Beijing, and the presence of an already existing dimension with India was a limiting factor (Mastny, 2010, pp. 57-63; Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58).

Historical Writing, Analytical Structure, and Methodologies

The historical-analytical approach of the article is mainly realist, based on the principles of alliances and on strategic autonomy. It also recognizes the historiographical distinction between economic liberalisation and political reconciliation: the events of the oil discussions of 1960-1961 should be considered as a preparation of prerequisites, and the important diplomatic shift was not evident until late 1964 and 1965 (Ahmed, 1988, p. 106; Budhraj, 1970, p. 355; Vaidyanath, 1965, pp. 429-430). The realism perspective emphasises the allocation of power, the nearness of threats, and the manner in which nations assess the intentions and capabilities of other actors. The importance of Walt's balance-of-threat theory lies in its explanation of the reasons why states react not just to the strength of other states' military forces, but also to the foreign state's geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived motives (Walt, 1987, pp. 21-26). The apprehensions of Pakistan by America in 1962 for backing India's aggression should be seen in the broader context of America's global conflict with China and the perception of India as the major security threat in the region.

An alternative analytical instrument is the alliance theory. Snyder's reading of the security dilemma in an alliance could be the case of being abandoned and being trapped: a partner might not be able to provide its promised help, and overcommitting may draw a nation into a war that does not benefit it (Snyder, 1997, pp. 180-182). Jervis' understanding of the security dilemma shows that measures taken to increase security may be interpreted as threatening by another state and thus may increase mutual suspicion (Jervis, 1978, pp. 167-174). These themes shed light on the discontent of Pakistan with Western actions in the Sino-Indian War and the diplomatic measures it took to find other channels.

Strategic autonomy represents the ability of a country to increase its diplomatic choices, multiply the countries with which it forms alliances, and act independently in shaping foreign policy. It is not an issue of non-alignment or of being equidistant to the two wars, or of being a breakup of an alliance. Pakistan did not have to give up its western partnership because of its dealings with Moscow, and for Pakistan's part Soviet support for Pakistan did not mean a sacrifice of its Soviet-Indian partnership. The word hedging is hence used to analyse risk diversification, and not necessarily to indicate the actual language used by Pakistan's officials.

The study also examines the domestic political aspects of foreign policy. The Defence requirements and the acquisition of foreign military assistance are part of the strategic framework of Pakistan, as revealed by a modern analysis of Pakistan's military association with the United States Ayub Khan, 1964, pp. 195-209; Venkataramani & Arya, 1966, pp. 124-125). Clary's new study of the 1962-1965 era focuses on the impact of centralised and fragmented decision-making power, especially on the part of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and the political limitations on Ayub Khan's work (Clary, 2022, pp. 133-135). In these reflections, Pakistan has not been viewed as a uniform state with a single foreign policy that can be explained only by external factors.

The article draws on public sources, such as contemporary US diplomatic documents and the Tashkent Declaration, as well as modern academic interpretations and historical knowledge. While useful for understanding Washington's views and policy calculations, diplomatic documentation is sometimes viewed as one-sided in Pakistani or Soviet versions of events. The documentary evidence is then analysed and checked with the Pakistani academic sources, Soviet influenced academic sources, Indian academic sources, and global academic sources (where available). The study does not have access to the unpublished records of the Soviet Politburo and the Pakistani cabinet; therefore, one should be careful in drawing inferences about the internal decision-making processes.

Economic diplomacy and institutional liberalisation in 1960-1962.

The initial discussions which led to the formal economic agreement of March 1961 were the first steps in economic cooperation between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. In 1960, the first route for technology cooperation was opened up by talks of Soviet aid for geological research. From December 1960 to early January 1961, a mission headed by the then Minister of Fuel, Energy and Natural Resources of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, visited the Soviet Union. The visit resulted in the adoption of a more concrete economic cooperation program (Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 28-29).

In March 1961, the Karachi agreement was signed, granting Soviet support in the economic and technological fields in the quest for oil and gas. Funding, said Belokrenitsky, was 27 million rubles distributed over 12 years at an interest rate of 2.5% per year—this must be paid back by Pakistani exports. The recent U.S. intelligence assessment puts the cost of the project at about $30 million (Belokrenitsky, 2023, p. 29; U.S. Department of State, 1961b, pp. 64–65). Due to the fact that the data are given in various currencies and are not consistently valued, they are not substantially standardised but treated as data that are specific to each source.

More than just the prospect of finding commercially viable oil sources, the agreement was significant. Soviet technical help provided Pakistan access to foreign developmental and technical assistance which were not part of the Western bloc. It also reiterated that Pakistan was not deterred from engaging with Moscow on issues of national economic importance due to its participation in a number of security arrangements being run by the Western powers. Under the deal, the Soviet Union was able to have a clear presence in an important nation, but not force Pakistan to take an immediate ideological or military commitment.

Continuous institutional dialogue also resulted from economic cooperation. Technical missions, trade pacts, and barter deals established ties between politicians and business parties that could continue even in the event of political differences. Ayoob's analysis of Pakistan's trade relationship with the Soviet Union puts in perspective the significance of trade relations enhancement. Noman, on the other hand, has considered the developments in Pakistan's trade with socialist countries within the overall economic framework between Islamabad and the socialist bloc (Ayoob, 1969; Noman, 1975). Such agreements were not merely diplomatic arrangements—these agreements gave substance to the bilateral relations.

The economic liberalisation, on the other hand, had definite constraints. It did not make Pakistan a Soviet satellite state, nor did it make Pakistan economically or militarily less dependent on Western countries. The July 1961 U.S. intelligence assessment indicates that Pakistan is likely to remain pro-Western and to want more autonomy and more technology and trade agreements with the USSR. The view that the oil agreement was part of a diversification strategy rather than a full-fledged strategic shift is supported by this assessment (U.S. Department of State, 1961b, pp. 64-65).

The difference between economic engagement and strategic coherence is crucial. Economic statecraft enabled Moscow to prove itself capable of bringing economic benefits without a corresponding need for immediate political buy-in, and it also allowed Islamabad to make an assertive statement on its international relations outside the Western alliance system. In Ayub's interpretation of the Pakistan-American partnership, the picture of Pakistan is one of a country that is still grappling with differences in threat perceptions but has recognized the need for cooperation as an integral part of Pakistan's security system (Ayub Khan, 1964, pp. 205-209). The two countries can thus engage each other in one line of business without having

to share regional security perspectives. The oil agreement served as an institutional bridge, not as a solution to an overall political one.

The Sino-Indian Conflict and the Reevaluation of Alliance Dependability, 1962-1964.

During the Sino-Indian War (October-November 1962), Pakistan's foreign policy started to be reassessed. The crisis forced Washington to side with India in its competition with China, which Islamabad interpreted as a result of an ongoing security conflict with New Delhi. The purpose of American and British military assistance to India was to address the pressing Chinese military menace; however, Pakistani officials were apprehensive that the enhanced resources and capabilities might upset the balance of Western military power. The gap between the perception of global threats by Washington and regional threats by Islamabad increased (Chervin, 2024; McGarr, 2013, pp. 149-153).

The Pakistani government expressed its concerns straight to the United States. A memorandum dated May 1962, which expressed concern over the possible supply of sophisticated American military equipment to India, was sent by Pakistan, and the American representative made it clear that no offer of F-104 aircraft was being made. But in the course of the discussion, Pakistan's deep skepticism regarding the future military power balance was evident. After the Chinese incursion and the subsequent emergency aid to India, Ayub Khan's letters to President John F. Kennedy made it clear that the major concern was that while the aid would strengthen the military forces of India's main regional rival, it would not provide enough reassurance to Pakistan (U.S. Department of State, 1962b, pp. 256-257; U.S. Department of State, 1962c, pp. 378-380).

The event underscores the security dilemma faced by the alliance. For Washington, the foremost strategic challenge was China, and the assistance to India was crucial to offset it. But Pakistan did consider the same option too, with India being its main threat. The newly released study comparing military assistance for both countries sheds new light on the significant impact of shifting the military balance for Islamabad (Som Dutt, 1966, pp. 64-72). What is a smart move from an American point of view could be considered a security concern for the ally from an Islamic point of view. The discontent in Pakistan was not just about a policy choice, but the perception of the primary threat, too.

But Pakistan's reaction should not be interpreted as a simple measure of Pakistan's vulnerability. American officials wondered if Ayub's public roundups were for the purpose of pressure on Washington, increasing his government's homeland legitimacy, or strengthening Pakistan's bargaining power. From the contemporary American assessment of the Harriman mission, Washington saw Pakistan's response as a combination of legitimate security concerns and political calculations U.S. Department of State, 1962a, pp. 426-427). This qualification is very important because it indicates that Pakistan's response was not only reactive, but also strategic, as it was going to use discontent as leverage.

The attitude of the Soviet Union during the Sino-Indian War was not only a choice between China and India, but is more complex. The first attempt of the Moscow government was to create a unified communist image. It did, however, provide some support to China, which Sahni says was motivated by Khrushchev's need for diplomatic leverage during the Cuban Missile Crisis, not any strong affection for Beijing. This policy did not stop Sino-Soviet relations from sinking into disarray, and the war showed just how different China's and the USSR's goals in Asia were. As the differences widened and Khrushchev fell in 1964, India grew to be more significant as a regional ally and later as a counterweight to China and Moscow (Chervin, 2024; Mastny, 2010, pp. 57-63; Sahni, 2024, pp. 55-58).

Pakistan's relations with China began with its ties with the Soviet Union. The 1963 border pact with Beijing gave Islamabad one more line of diplomatic communication and at the same time strengthened the bond that became more and more important for Islamabad in its regional policy. However, Moscow did not want the prospect of Pakistan becoming too close to a China-centric coalition, and instead sought to have direct relations with Islamabad. The Soviet involvement with Pakistan was thus an effort to stop the Chinese influence from becoming dominant, rather than a determination to replace India with Pakistan as the most important South Asian ally for the Soviet Union (Chaudhuri, 2018, pp. 41-64; Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58).

The 1962 conflict was a systemic disruption, but certain domestic and national factors limited the reach of that impact. The shift towards diplomatic diversification in Pakistan has been in response to a discrepancy in regional security concerns and Washington's strategic interests. This divide inspired Pakistani policymakers to look for other avenues of cooperation besides the U.S. and for them, increased diplomacy was a way to keep the nation's autonomy in decision-making. On the other hand, Moscow's reassessment of Pakistan was shaped by the changing geopolitical dynamics. Soviet Union continued to keep its distance and yet knew that antagonism might drive Islamabad further into the clutches of China, especially following the Sino-Indian conflict. Consequently, the next Pakistan-Soviet coalition was not simply a matter of expediency but rather a strategy for furthering Pakistan's own objectives. Pakistan had the intention of gaining strategic independence and negotiating power with the big powers. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, wanted to contain China's regional aggressiveness and gain influence in the South Asian region without jeopardizing its ties with India. This mutual accommodation of aims resulted in a kind of cooperation based on pragmatic, not ideological, considerations, reflecting the variety of motives that underpinned bilateral engagement in the post-1962 world.

Ayub Khan's Visit to Moscow and The Diplomatic Realignment in 1965.

President Ayub Khan's visit to Moscow in April, 1965 consolidated the diplomatic relationship which began in 1960-1961. The visit, in this context, represented the culmination of a political rapprochement which had been in the making in economic and diplomatic circles for several years. The visit marked a significant increase in the level of bilateral contacts and provided an opportunity to discuss trade, technical cooperation, and the overall international climate. It also proved Islamabad's willingness to engage in a transparent dialogue with Moscow without affecting its existing ties with Washington and Beijing.

The visit should not, however, be interpreted to mean that Ayub had concluded the Soviet Union to be a more reliable ally for security purposes as compared to the United States. During his talks with the American ambassador before leaving for Moscow, Ayub released an image of the Soviet threat as more serious than the Chinese threat, and showed that Pakistan wanted to be a part of SEATO and CENTO, and presented the US alliance as a threat to Pakistan's security. It also showed that he wanted to describe the growing relationship between Pakistan and China as a 'limited policy' of good neighbourliness instead of a growing military relationship. The documentation thus reveals a policy that was complex: Ayub was looking for new diplomatic opportunities and attempting to hold on to the old Western policy (U.S. Department of State, 1965c, pp. 204-210).

However, the linguistic content of the Pakistan-Soviet diplomatic contact proved to be of a political nature. Harmonious living, cooperation, and self-governance are mentioned in Pakistan, which is more flexible towards regional conflicts than the Soviet Union. This prompted some Pakistani commentators to raise the possibility of the Russians reconsidering their unwavering support for India in Kashmir. These goals must be pursued with care.

Diplomatic rhetoric in favor of the idea of self-determination was neither an implicit Soviet approval of Pakistan's legal or political stance nor a Soviet willingness to let its ties with India be influenced by its new ties with Islamabad (Chaudhri, 1966, pp. 492-500; Kapur, 1966, pp. 150-157; Rajan, 1966).

There were good reasons for the Soviet authorities to adopt a more flexible strategy. In October 1964, Khrushchev was succeeded by a new collective Leadership consisting of Leonid Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin and Nikolai Podgorny, and this was also a time of regional changes in priorities. The importance of India in Soviet foreign policy continued and the preceding Soviet-Indian alliance had been based on economic interests, diplomatic collaboration and broader commonality of interests (Hilger, 2021; Mastny, 2010). As of now, Moscow is keen to prevent the growing ties between Pakistan and China from turning into an exclusive strategic partnership. The Soviet Union could then back Pakistan and continue to maintain its political and economic ties with New Delhi (Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58).

Diplomatic reset, therefore, was a form of focused engagement. Pakistan found a feasible alternative to the dependence on Washington and Moscow gained access to a country which was strategically significant, and which was close to China. Both governments, however, were not entirely aware of the regional interests of the other. Though Ayub's arrival ended the political tension, it did not resolve the constant tension between Pakistan's security concerns and the constant back and forth between Pakistan and the Soviet Union and India.

The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 and the Soviet Route to Tashkent

Political development was stymied by the Indo-Pakistani crisis of 1965. The precariousness of regional stability had already been demonstrated in the earlier this year Rann of Kutch conflict. The more important battle of August-September 1965, however, cannot be blamed on an outside jolt from the global framework. The outbreak of war proved to be a turning point for Pakistan's decision to launch Operation Gibraltar, a covert operation designed to provoke a rebellion in Jammu and Kashmir and escalate the conflict with India. It was during the war that Pakistan began to consider such a move and launched Operation Gibraltar, an incursion to ignite a rebellion in Jammu and Kashmir and to further escalate the conflict with India on the assumption that the local people would support them. Clary's analysis highlights Bhutto's role in Ayub's thinking and "the cost of divided power and confidences in Pakistan's governance." Meanwhile, McGarr's account places the conflict in the broader context of the Anglo-American diplomatic response to the Rann of Kutch and the 1965 conflict (Clary, 2022, pp. 160-164; McGarr, 2013, pp. 341-344).

This internal component makes it difficult to see the conflict as having been a result of a loss of trust in allies from the West. In the strategic context, Pakistan had also become disillusioned with U.S. policies and was strengthening ties with China, but there was no imperative to engage in military action. The conflict developed from several external motivations, internal political reasons, and a false sense of the regional balance that ultimately was at odds with reality.

The Soviet Union's strategy was motivated by its aim to avert a prolonged war that might destabilise South Asia and provide new avenues for Chinese dominance. The goal of Moscow was to demonstrate its ability to be a major mediator between two non-communist countries. The Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin had contacted the Indian and Pakistani governments, asking them to accept Soviet mediation. Washington was in favor of the Soviet plan and believed it was a viable avenue for the parties to form a political solution, according to U.S. diplomatic records. During December 1965, Acting Secretary of State George Ball communicated to Ayub the United States' acceptance of the Soviet proposal and hope for a

fruitful meeting. Ayub then stated that Pakistan was ready to join but only if "Washington and London could exert their influence (U.S. Department of State, 1965a, pp. 507-509). In the American telegram dated September 1965 about Kosygin's proposed meeting, both the Soviet invitation and resulting diplomatic dispute are referred to (U.S. Department of State, 1965b, pp. 414-415).

Ceasefire should not be equated with the Soviet mediation process. However, in September 1965, the ceasefire mechanism of the United Nations brought an end to the hostilities. The main goals of the Soviet effort were to consolidate the truce, hold a meeting of top officials and set up a political process for the withdrawal of troops and the normalization of relations. The primary objectives of the Soviet effort were to consolidate the truce, to hold a meeting of top officials and to create a political process for the withdrawal of troops and for the normalization of relations. In addition to stopping the war, Moscow's role was to turn a fragile truce into a more viable diplomatic settlement.

The Soviet action fulfilled many objectives. It allowed Moscow to show itself as a good neighbor to the great powers, improve its political ties with both South Asian administrations, and lessen the chance of a long-term conflict which could give Beijing more influence in Pakistan. It also proved that the Soviet Union was able to wield influence within the region without bringing either side into a formal alliance. While Kapur and Vaidyanath have now offered their perspectives on Soviet strategies in South Asia, Noorani's work suggests it was a Soviet interest in maintaining its presence in both capitals and its more intimate connection with India that motivated mediation (Kapur, 1966, pp. 150-157; Noorani, 1979, pp. 31-39; Vaidyanath, 1965; Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58).

Tashkent: Arbitration, Diplomatic Standing, and the Constraints of Resolution

The Pakistan-Soviet reconciliation was the most significant success at the Tashkent Conference (4-10 January 1966). Kosygin arranged a meeting between Ayub Khan and Lal Bahadur Shastri in the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan and succeeded in holding the talks that resulted in the Tashkent Declaration of 10 January 1966. It was proclaimed that both governments should restore peace and friendship, respect the cease-fire, move troops to their respective positions by 25 February 1966, and work towards the normalization of diplomatic, economic, trade, communication and cultural relations (United Nations, 1966, pp. 39-43).

The declaration did not mention Kashmir in an exhaustive manner. The discussions helped each side to state its case, but the outcome of the talks did not lead to a framework for tackling the geographical issue. The exclusion pointed to the lack of harmony between the main arguments of the parties. India wanted to prevent the agreement from being hampered by discussion at the level of Kashmir alone, while Pakistan wanted a plan that would not be interpreted by India as a return to pre-war levels or situations being an acceptable stand-in for a solution. The final message called for de-escalation and for a return to the normalization of relations rather than a discussion of the underlying conflict (Rajan, 1966, pp. 26-28; United Nations, 1966, pp. 39-43). Thus, the difference between conflict management and conflict resolution is significant in the case of Tashkent. The statement reiterated the truce, detailed the duties for the withdrawal of troops and provided a platform for the revival of bilateral relations. But it did not tackle the geographical problem, ease the mistrust between the two sides, or resolve the conflicting national narratives that fueled the ongoing India-Pakistan conflict. Tashkent was a good tool for crisis management but not a sufficient peace solution.

The meeting revealed the restrictions imposed by internal political dynamics. Clary posits that Bhutto was against a more extensive post-war agreement between Ayub and Shastri. This

viewpoint places the internal "battles of power" at the heart of the Tashkent outcome. This is an admission by the Indian side that it has been shying away from bringing up Kashmir at the conference. It does show, however, that the negotiating position of Ayub was challenged not only by the opposition government but also by the political parties within Pakistan. The following discussion about the edict brought down Ayub's political profile (Clary, 2022). It was a great achievement for the Soviet Union in diplomatic terms. Moscow has demonstrated its ability to organize meetings, make deals, and project a sense of global responsibility in an area where the United States and Britain have traditionally held sway. The Soviet Union strengthened its bilateral relations with Pakistan in addition to maintaining its longstanding friendship with India. The conference thus strengthened the Soviet Union's diplomatic presence and ensured the strategic flexibility which Moscow considered essential in South Asia (Kapur, 1966, pp. 150-157; Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58).

Nonetheless, the result was perplexing. Pakistan's relationship with the Soviet Union became more cordial, but Moscow refused to give clear-cut support to Kashmir. Both administrations were under the influence of the USSR, though the latter was unable to resolve the key issue. Tashkent eased off the current hostilities, but retained other considerations that could lead to future conflict. It should be assessed according to the realistic goal of securing a ceasefire and resumption of the diplomatic discussion, not on the basis that one summit can solve long-standing problems facing the subcontinent.

Strategic Independence Without Collaboration

There could be a certain reconciliation between Pakistan and the Soviet Union which can be viewed as a modest strategic independence initiative. The need for international support was not exclusive to Pakistan; it extended the sources of economic assistance and diplomatic involvement, however. This is an important point to note, because strategic autonomy is not non-alignment or equidistance. Existing partnerships can continue with the addition of partnerships with potential competitors to minimize dependence, increase negotiating power, and personalize decision-making authority.

The association was also one-sided. Pakistan asked for financial assistance, diplomatic support, and a better situation in the region. The Soviet Union wanted to have influence, access to its strategic areas, and to restrict the supremacy of the Chinese in Pakistan. Islamabad could develop its ties with Moscow and continue to develop its ties with India. As for Pakistan, it was not possible to replace Soviet cooperation with cooperation from China and Western countries. The impact of reconciliation depended on the degree of success of each administration in furthering its own agenda while ignoring the other one's regional agenda (Malik, 1994, pp. 131-133; Belokrenitsky, 2023, pp. 29-30; Sahni, 2024, pp. 57-58). India's relationship with the Soviet Union continued to be a basic structural constraint. Soviet economic, diplomatic and scientific ties with New Delhi had been steadily growing and were motivated by deeper linkages of political and strategic interests. This relationship has been well documented by contemporary and retrospective scholarship, and Soviet foreign economic policy analysis reveals Moscow's regard for India as an important partner in Soviet relations with the world of decolonization (Kapur, 1966, pp. 150-152; Mastny, 2010; Hilger, 2021; Sahni, 2024). The transparency of Pakistan could play a significant role in shaping Soviet perceptions without eroding the strategic value of India. The transparency of Pakistan could play a significant role in Soviet assessments without compromising Indian strategic value.

But the reconciliation was still subject to domestic political and regional evolutions. The role of Western military support was still very important to the Pakistani military apparatus, and their partnership with China was of paramount importance for the security assessments

(Ayub Khan, 1964, pp. 205-209; Dutt, 1966, pp. 126-129; Som Dutt, 1966). The pros and cons of the Moscow-Pakistan relations have to be considered, with the risk that India may lose favor. The security issue of the alliance helps to explain why the small cooperation was never followed by a full strategic alliance; the parties' threat perceptions were out of sync with their long-term goals (Snyder, 1997, pp. 180-182).

The big lesson to take is that a range of diplomatic options can be used to influence but cannot be used to build strategic unity. Pakistan's policy on Moscow not only helped in its diplomatic isolation but also expanded its avenues for development assistance and the choices of its leadership. It did not, however, make any impression on the Soviet Union to accept Pakistan's position on Kashmir or to alter the basic imbalance between Soviet relations with India and Pakistan. The meeting was significant because it did not meet its more ambitious goals of solving the fundamental geopolitical issues between the two countries.

Conclusion

Summing up, it becomes evident that the reconciliation between Pakistan and the Soviet Union from 1961 to 1966 was not a fundamental change of ideology nor a definitive failure of the United States. It was an economic necessity, an evolution of expectations of alliances, the Sino-Indian war, intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict, and an effort by Moscow to pursue a more influential position in South Asia. The oil accord of March 1961 provided a practical approach to collaboration, while the conflict of 1962 highlighted the difference in threat assessments between Washington and Islamabad; the visit of Ayub Khan in 1965 brought this engagement to the forefront of the political agenda, and the Tashkent negotiations put the Soviet Union in a central role as a regional intermediary. The latter part of the first research question is answered by showing how economic ties provided an institutional connection between the two administrations. Oil and gas discoveries, technological assistance, trade and commerce deals, and similar activities provided a regular linkage that allowed for political orientation. The programs gave Pakistan access to foreign resources and served the USSR as an alternative to immediate military aid, thereby proving that economic diplomacy could help increase influence.

The second is addressed by showing how the controversies of 1962 and 1965 influenced the motives of the two states, but in different ways. In Pakistan, rising concern was that its Western allies did not perceive the Indian threat in the same way. Moscow, by contrast, had an opportunity to reduce Chinese influence and strengthen its diplomacy in Pakistan. The 1965 clash was affected by internal political problems and wars in Pakistan. It cannot be considered a natural byproduct of great power competition. The third question deserves a judicious answer. At Tashkent, diplomatic relations were established and peace was concluded after the war, but no long-term strategic relationships developed, and the Kashmir issue was not discussed. It was a proclamation that showcased the Soviet Union's ability to bring India and Pakistan closer. It also revealed the limitations of great-power diplomacy, in which the basic political agendas of the participating states clash and domestic actors make negotiation difficult.

The general conclusion, indeed, is that countries that have limited material resources might be able to increase their political maneuverability by using examples of great power wars to create a greater degree of independence, but only on a conditional basis. The result depends on the ability to extend relationships but not as a surrogate, and the willingness of external partners to accept personal appraisals. The period between 1961 and 1966 in Pakistan shows both the possibilities and limitations of this kind of diplomacy: Pakistan's policy of

rapprochement with Moscow was a key shift in its foreign policy, but it failed to provide a regional framework or even sustain longer.

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