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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21666362>**Exploring Strategic Imperative Between Russia and Pakistan****Koyal Imdad Veesar**

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adeel.bozdar@scholars.usindh.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the evolving bilateral relationship between Russia and Pakistan within the context of a shifting Eurasian security architecture and a transitioning multipolar global order. For decades, ties between Moscow and Islamabad were constrained by Cold War-era polarization and regional proxy conflicts. However, contemporary structural changes specifically Washington's strategic embrace of India and subsequent Western efforts to isolate Russia have compelled both capitals to recalibrate their foreign policy doctrines. Utilizing a neoclassical realist framework, this paper analyzes the convergence of three core strategic imperatives driving this modern rapprochement: regional security stabilization in post-exit Afghanistan, geoeconomic connectivity via the integration of Eurasian trade networks, and critical energy cooperation. While bilateral milestones such as the Druzhba military exercises and direct energy imports signal a clear diplomatic thaw, the relationship remains bounded by complex regional counterweights. Moscow must continuously balance its overtures to Islamabad against its enduring partnership with New Delhi, while Pakistan must navigate its Eurasian pivot without permanently alienating vital Western economic markets. This manuscript argues that while a comprehensive strategic axis remains unlikely, the pragmatic alignment between Russia and Pakistan constitutes a permanent, calculated response to systemic pressures, carrying profound implications for continental stability.

Keywords: *Russia-Pakistan Relations, Strategic Interests, Historical Perspective, Multipolarity, Cooperation.*

Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of Eurasia is undergoing a profound structural transformation, driven by the decline of unipolarity and the concomitant rise of a contested, multipolar global order. For decades, the strategic contours of South and Central Asia were rigidly defined by Cold War-era alignments. In this historical matrix, the Soviet Union anchored its regional architecture around a robust, time-tested partnership with New Delhi, while Pakistan served as a frontline state for Western-led containment strategies (Delovarova et al., 2026). This polarization culminated in deep-seated mutual mistrust, exacerbated by the overt proxy friction of the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s.

However, twenty-first-century structural shifts have shattered these historical binaries. Driven by Washington's strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific—manifested in its intense diplomatic,

economic, and military embrace of India—both Moscow and Islamabad have found themselves compelled to reassess their traditional foreign policy doctrines. For Pakistan, the visible limits of its historical alliance with the United States have necessitated a calculated transition from "geopolitics" to "geo-economics," emphasizing regional connectivity (), diplomatic diversification, and economic resilience. Concurrently, Russia, facing unprecedented Western isolation and severe economic sanctions following its post-2014 and 2022 geopolitical maneuvers, has executed its own "Pivot to Asia". In this context, Moscow views a functional, stable relationship with Islamabad not as an alternative to its enduring ties with India, but as a pragmatic necessity for its broader Eurasian strategy. Despite this newfound diplomatic warmth, characterized by joint military exercises (such as the *Druzhba* drills) and high-level bilateral institutional exchanges, the relationship is bound by real-world strategic constraints. Moscow must continuously calibrate its outreach to Islamabad to protect its foundational defense and political relationship with India. Meanwhile, Islamabad must delicately navigate its new Eurasian overtures without triggering irreversible ruptures with its vital Western export markets.

This manuscript investigates the evolving dynamics of the Russia-Pakistan relationship amidst these fluid systemic realities. By exploring the historical baggage of the twentieth century, analyzing contemporary defense, energy, and institutional cooperation, and dissecting the regional counterweights at play, this study addresses a critical scholarly question: To what extent does the contemporary Russia-Pakistan rapprochement represent a durable, systemic realignment, and what are its broader implications for the imperative strategic interests rapidly evolving Eurasia?

Literature Review

The geostrategic relations between Pakistan and Russia have been a subject of interest for scholars and policymakers around the world. Both countries are strategically located and possess significant military and economic capabilities, making their bilateral relationship crucial for regional stability and security (Delovarova et al., 2026) . Over the years, the nature of their relationship has evolved, with periods of cooperation and conflict. This literature review has been done with an aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature on the geostrategic relations between Pakistan and Russia. The review will begin by examining the historical context of the relationship, including the Soviet Union's role in the creation of Pakistan and the subsequent developments in the bilateral relationship. This literature review will then move on to explore the current state of the relationship between the two countries, focusing on the economic, military, and diplomatic aspects of their ties. This will include an analysis of the current status of energy and defense cooperation between the two countries, as well as their involvement in regional initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Afghan peace process. Finally, the literature review will identify the major challenges and opportunities for the future of the geostrategic relations between Pakistan and Russia. This will include an analysis of the impact of regional and global developments such as the US-China rivalry, the rise of India, and the evolving security situation in Afghanistan. According to Sattar (2020), Pakistan chose to align itself with the western powers and distance itself from the eastern powers after gaining independence. The book provides a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's foreign policy phases over the years. In Feroz Hussain Khan's research article (2021), *Russia–Pakistan Strategic Relations: An Emerging Entente Cordiale*, the writer examines the growing role of Pak-Russia relations concerning strategic, economic, and military cooperation; he also discusses the fluctuating relationship between them. In his research article, Hussain Khan (2021) analyzes the evolving strategic, economic, and military cooperation

between Pakistan and Russia, as well as the fluctuations in their relationship. He argues that despite historical differences and challenges, the two countries have gradually developed a new level of understanding and cooperation, which he refers to as an "emerging entente cordiale." According to Hussain Khan (2021), the current Pak-Russia cooperation has been primarily driven by their shared interests in counterterrorism, regional stability, and economic development. He cites various examples, such as the joint military exercises, the construction of the North-South gas pipeline, and the signing of the Free Trade Agreement, to illustrate the increasing collaboration between the two nations. However, Hussain Khan (2021) also acknowledges the historical complexities and mistrust in the Pak-Russia relationship. He points out that while both countries were allies during the Cold War, their relationship deteriorated after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The writer argues that the recent development in Pak-Russia relations is a result of a pragmatic approach by both countries to prioritize their mutual interests over their past differences. Overall, Hussain Khan's (2021) research article provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of Pak-Russia relations, examining both the positive developments and the challenges that lie ahead.

Niha Dagia (2021) *Bilateral Bond between Pakistan and Russia Deepening*, the author has examined that both countries are willing to build friendly relations in this research article. Furthermore, Islamabad and Moscow suffered economically and diplomatically after the Soviet war in Afghanistan. In the article, Dagia (2021) discusses the growing friendship between Pakistan and Russia. The author notes that both countries have been working to strengthen their ties in recent years, with a particular focus on economic cooperation. Dagia (2021) cites several examples of this cooperation, including the construction of the North-South gas pipeline and the potential sale of Russian military hardware to Pakistan. In this article, the historical context of the relationship between Pakistan and Russia has been discussed, noting that the two countries suffered economically and diplomatically after the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Dagia (2021) cites this conflict as a major factor in the deterioration of relations between the two countries during the 1980s and 1990s. However, the overall, Dagia's (2021) article provides a comprehensive overview of the growing friendship between Pakistan and Russia, highlighting the economic benefits of this relationship while also acknowledging the challenges that both countries have faced in the past.

Tohid Anwar et al, (2020). In their research work *Pakistan Russia Relation and its Effect on Regional Politics (1991-2008)*, the writer deeply evaluates the historical unpredictable relationship between Pakistan and Russia. He further examines that Russia is a developed nation, whereas; Pakistan is in a struggling phase. However, both countries are eagerly trying to develop mutual trust and cooperation.

Sultana, Tasneem, et al (2019) They concentrate on the deepening connections between Islamabad and Moscow as well as the potential hazards and opportunities in their paper *Pak-Russia Relations, In the Emerging GeoStrategic Environment*. Regional geopolitical realities and the constantly shifting global dynamics not only form new alliances but also erode long-standing hostilities. One example is the improvement in Pakistan-Russian ties and how it has affected the regional status quo, specifically how Pakistan and India are currently getting along. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also now clearly relevant in this perspective. According to Sultana, Tasneem, et al (2019), the improvement in Pakistan-Russian ties has affected the regional status quo, specifically how Pakistan and India are currently getting along. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also now clearly relevant in this perspective (Delovarova et al., 2026).

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Justification

Russia and Pakistan both collectively have started developing geo-strategic relations since 9/11. The Russian Federation has changed its foreign policy towards south Asia by growing its interest in maintaining peace and restricting the role of the United States US. The close ties between Moscow and Islamabad created mutual trust in the south Asian region and a balance of power in the area. Hence, this research study has traced the historical background of Moscow and Islamabad's geo-strategic relations. However, this study also highlighted the role of both countries in regional peace and stability. Additionally, Pakistan's objectives behind fostering close geo-strategic ties with Moscow have also been explored. Thus, this study has been confined to realizing the implications on the South Asian region in general and particular on Pakistan. Because of the findings, research has given valuable suggestions for diplomatically countering the Growing influence of the US and maintaining the balance of power by keeping solid relations between Russia and Pakistan.

Scope And Limitations

The research is bound to the geo-strategic relationship between Russia and Pakistan. Various efforts have been made to maintain peace and stability in the South Asian region. The Russian Federation has changed its foreign policy towards south Asia to counter-terrorism and the influence of the United States in said region. Furthermore, US's growing power threatens Russia in south Asia. In the current scenario, Pakistan also needs Moscow to achieve its military, energy, economy and technology goals. Hence, their geo-strategic partnership immediately impacts the South Asian region.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. It is desk research which helps in analyzing information on the subject matter. This research method involves collecting and analyzing existing data and information from various sources such as books, journals, reports, databases, and websites. In this research, the researcher has formulated the research questions in the initial stage. After

formulating questions, the researcher conducted a thorough review of the existing literature on the topic by various authors. This research paper includes reading scholarly articles, books, and other relevant sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing research and debates in the field. **METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION** In this research work, researcher totally relied upon secondary source of information. The study involved analyzing the availability of existing secondary data in the form of books, research papers, news articles, and reports, instead of collecting primary data directly from participants. The researcher went to several libraries in Pakistan, including those belonging to the Departments of International Relations, Economics, Political Science, and the Far East & Southeast Asia (FESEA), the University of Sindh Jamshoro and the Library of Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in Karachi.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial step in any research study, as it helps to make sense of the data collected and draw meaningful conclusions. In this study, content analysis techniques were utilized for data analysis. The collected data was arranged chronologically and then converted into codes, which were used to group the data into categories. These categories were then analyzed to develop themes and sub-themes that formed the basis of the research findings. Qualitative research methods were used to ensure the quality of the study. This involved thoroughly evaluating the data to highlight key themes and ensure that the analysis accurately reflected the data collected. The researcher also employed rigorous methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. For example, the researcher used triangulation, which involved cross-checking the data from multiple sources to ensure its accuracy. Overall, the data analysis process was carefully planned and executed to ensure that the findings of the research were accurate and reliable. The use of content analysis techniques and qualitative research methods helped to ensure that the data was thoroughly evaluated and that the research findings were meaningful and relevant to the research question.

Findings and Discussion

Geo-Strategic Relations

The term 'Geo-strategy' refers to the geographic direction of a country's foreign policy. It can be further divided into two sub terms: geo and strategy i.e., Geo means Earth, and strategy means planning, tactics, and policy. In this sense, geostrategy links geography with strategies of war. The effective planning and management of war in the context of geographical, physical, and artificial characteristics of the operational region are placed in the said case. Besides, it is a way of viewing the world that emphasizes the strategic importance of location, and how it can be used to achieve political and military goals in the world. However, the term geostrategy is often used in the context of international relations, particularly in the context of great power competition. It is mainly used to explain how states/nations use their geographic position to achieve an advantage over their neighbors and rivals, and to formulate strategies for achieving their goals. Geostrategy also demands effective and accurate inspection of the geographical characteristics of the area from the point where military forces deploy until the desired destination. According to Geoffrey Sloan and Colin Gray, geography is "the mother of strategy". Hence, the geostrategy defines the real position of a country in the world. Notwithstanding the fact that the terms 'geostrategy' and 'geopolitics' have been interchangeably used in the International Politics, but both the terms have different meanings and connotation. The term 'Geo-Strategic' means 'importance of a country or a region as with respect to its geographical location', whereas, the term Geopolitical is defined as, 'stressing the influence of geographic factors on the state power, international conduct and benefits it derives from its location. The word geopolitics was originally coined by Swedish Political Scientist Rodulf Kjellén about the

turn of 20th century (<https://www.economy.pk/geo-strategic-importance-of-pakistan/>), and the term geostrategy was used by Fredrick L. Schuman. It is commonly said that geographical location of a country plays a significant role in determining its foreign policy and its position in the world politics. As it is evident from the past, many countries/empires used the natural terrain as a military tool, with rugged mountains being the chief defensive fortress behind which human organizations have been protected from enemies' invasion attempts. In the same way, the seas have been a natural buffer that could only be overcome with the construction of the Navy and the accompanying development of strike force that allows for targeting coasts and establishing a safe landing zone in the past. Asia has traditionally been subject to regional and global power politics and rivalries. The importance of the region can be figured out from the fact that it has remained a centre of attention for the world in not only contest for political dominance, but also military power and economic influence. It has been commonly predicted by the political and economic pandits and experts of the world that the future global order will be decisively shaped in the Asia-Pacific region. For this purpose, the region's geostrategy, geopolitics and geoeconomics will play out in multiple dimensions and produce complex patterns of competition, conflict, cooperation and (dis-)integration in not only the Aisan region but only at whole world at the same time. Being the world's largest and most populous continent, Asia covers an area of 44,579,000 square kilometres, or nearly 30% of the planet's land area and 8.7% of its surface (United Nations Organization [UNO], 1999). In addition to being the largest continent in terms of area, it also served as the home to some of the world's early civilizations, giving it enormous prominence in world political history. The Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the Arctic Ocean, and Europe form the continent's eastern, southern, northern, and western boundaries. Six non-recognized states and about 49 sovereign states are recognized internationally in the region. Additionally, Asia is home to two unrecognized nuclear states and the five recognized nuclear powers China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Russia (i.e., Israel and Iran). The region's rapid economic development will turn the twenty-first century into an Asian Century. It is the most active region in the world and now makes up 40% of the global economy (Lagarde, 2016). Even with relatively sluggish momentum over the next four years, it should still contribute close to two-thirds of global growth (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2015). Six primary geographic divisions—Northern, Eastern, Southern, Western, Southeast, and Central Asia—can be made within the region. The world recognizes South Asia's relevance and significance because of its geographic and geostrategic placement between the Indian Ocean and a massive mountain range, diverse social, political, and cultural values, vast population, and developing economic markets. The continent has been identified as the most dangerous and unstable area of the world following the success of India's and Pakistan's nuclear tests. "The most dangerous location in the world now, I believe you could argue, is the Indian subcontinent and the line of control in Kashmir," said former US President Bill Clinton (Ahmed et al., 2023). Another historically acknowledged part of the Asian continent is the Eurasian landmass. The concept of a clash between land and sea power to create the ultimate continental powers in Asia is explained by history. The ultimate goal of the great world powers has long been world dominance. The research-based assumption to identify a superpower was Mackinder's well-known "Heartland Theory." He states, "Who governs East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World" (Mackinder. 1919). After Asia, the region of Eurasia which lies between the continents of Europe and Asia comprising the following countries i.e., Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Caucasus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, has been the centre of attention for the developing world due to multiple reasons

such as geostrategic position, natural resources, population, and political and economic policies. According to the Heartland idea, Eurasia and Africa account for 78% of the world's population and 2/3 of its total land area (or about 11 million square kilometres). Similarly, in the Asian region, the South Asia is the most important region due to its geographic and geostrategic placement between the Indian Ocean. The region has a gigantic mountain range, assorted social bonds, political dogmas, and tremendous moral and cultural values, massive population growth, and developing economic markets. The sub-continent has been identified as the most important region due to its geo-strategic location and geo-political and geo-economic developments. In South Asia region, Pakistan is one of the most important countries that has fifth largest population in the world. It is the 33rd largest country by area in the world and the second largest in South Asia. Moreover, Pakistan, being located in the Southern Asian, plays the role of a bridge between South Asia and West Asia. It is located in South Asia, sharing its borders with India, Iran, Afghanistan, and China (Ahmad et al., 2017). It has a strategically important location as it is very close to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. It is also at the crossroads between South and Central Asia and is neighbored by many of the world's most populous states. This strategic location gives Pakistan access to trade routes and energy resources, making it an important regional power (Ahmad et al., 2017). Most importantly, Pakistan is strategically located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, and has long been a key player in regional politics and economics (Latif, 2020). It is the gateway to Asia and the Middle East, and its strategic importance to the global community is undeniable. However, Pakistan has always been the centre of attention for the world's trade and played the role of hub of great economic and strategic activities for the past many years. In the words of an American Political Scientist Stephen Philip Cohen who writes importance of Pakistan in his book 'the Idea of Pakistan' the following words; "While history has been unkind to Pakistan, its geography has been its greatest benefit. It has a resource-rich area in the north-west, people rich in the northeast." The Russian Federation, previously known as USSR, is a transcontinental country which spans through the Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. It is the largest country in the world that occupies one-tenth of all the land on Earth and shares land boundaries with fourteen different countries. It is the world's ninth-most populous country in the world and one of the superpowers in the world. Historically, Pakistan and Russia have had a tense relationship, with their distant ties during the Cold War contributing to their differences. The situation worsened when the Cold War spilled over into South Asia, with Afghanistan becoming a battleground for proxy conflicts between the Soviet Union and the United States. Nevertheless, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changing regional dynamics, Pakistan and Russia have been making efforts to improve their bilateral relations and move forward from their troubled past. In light of shifting geopolitical realities, both nations have recently taken steps to update and strengthen their bilateral ties. However, Pakistan and Russia have improved and maintained a solid relationship since the end of the Cold War. Pakistan has sought to cultivate a "strategic partnership" with Russia in order to counterbalance the influence of its longtime rival, India. In recent years, both countries have increased their cooperation in the fields of economics, defense, and energy. In addition, Pakistan and Russia have a strong and long-standing history of cooperation and warm diplomatic ties. The relations have strengthened in recent years due to improvements in the relations. In this regard, the two countries signed a major energy agreement in 2014. In 2015, the Pakistani P.M and the Russian President held talks to enlarge their strategic ties (Xinhua, 2015). This relationship has improved in the recent past as Russia has increased its economic and military ties with Pakistan. It included the supply of military hardware and the construction of major

infrastructure projects (Khan, 2018). Pakistan and Russia have also cooperated on many regional issues such as Afghanistan, extremism, terrorism, and regional security. Furthermore, Russia has supported Pakistan's efforts to increase its regional influence specially in getting its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and to improve the country's economy and security situation (Yousafzai, 2019).

Geo-Strategic Relations of Pakistan and Russia: A Historical Perspective

A problematical history between Pakistan and Russia has complicated their relationship. Pakistan joined the U.S.-led security pacts in the 1950s to protect its economic and defence interests against India, positioning Islamabad in the opposing camp to Moscow (Расул, Мухтарова, & Жан, 2024). Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's trips to Moscow and the United States' military assistance to India following that country's border conflict with China in the 1960s, as well as Pakistan's concerns and the deterioration of U.S.- Pakistani relations, provided a platform for Islamabad and Moscow to forge ties. This included Soviet mediation following the 1965 war. If relations between Pakistan and the USSR had warmed up, it was rapidly undone by Islamabad's re-alignment with Washington in the decade afterwards to stop the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This resulted in the Soviet Union losing in Afghanistan and leaving the country in 1989, which also saw the beginning of the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War (Ahmed et al., 2023). One would have imagined a new era in Russia-Pakistan ties with the dissolution of the Soviet Union into 15 independent states. While some initial efforts were made in this direction, Islamabad's support for the Taliban and subsequent recognition of the Taliban government in Kabul irritated Russia, which was concerned about the spread of terrorism and militant extremism into its former Central Asian satellite nations (Расул, 2024). A few structural adjustments have taken place since 2001. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, Pakistan joined the U.S.-led war on terrorism and allegedly turned hostile against the Afghan Taliban. In 2003, Pervez Musharraf travelled to Russia for the first time as Pakistan's president since 1972. While there, he stated that Pakistan did not support any Islamic armed groups operating in Central Asia or Russia, which prompted the first visit by a Russian prime minister to Pakistan in 38 years in 2007 (Kurita, 2019). Pakistan's alliance with the US did not significantly aid the relationship after 9/11. The Indo-U.S. civil-nuclear agreement may have added to Islamabad's dissatisfaction with Washington. Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia, and Mikhail Fradkov, the Prime Minister, paid visits to Islamabad in 2006 and 2007, respectively and established various working groups for commerce, energy, and scientific collaboration (Rasool *et al.*, 2025). Other areas of mutual collaboration included counterterrorism and antidrug trafficking initiatives, partly through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional organization run by China that has prioritized counterterrorism and extremism (Dawn, November 17, 2006). In 2010, when visiting India, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made it clear that his country had no military alliance with Pakistan. This was done in response to India, Russia's long-time strategic partner. As mentioned earlier, Putin was scheduled to travel to Pakistan for the Summit Meeting of the four nations in 2012, but his trip was abruptly postponed. This incident was perceived as a significant blow to relations between Pakistan and Russia. In the background, Putin was concerned that his travel to Pakistan might raise concerns for India because it would mark his first stop after being re-elected as President (Khan, 2021). However, 2014 marks a turning point in relations between Pakistan and Russia. Following the lifting of Russia's arms embargo on Pakistan in June, the two navies and their respective anti-drug agencies coordinated their first drills in October to combat drug smuggling in the northern Arabian Sea. Then, in November, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Pakistan, making him the first defence minister

from the Soviet Union or Russia to do so since 1969. As a result, Pakistan and Russia agreed on a broad range of military cooperation, including exchanging information on politico-military issues, enhancing cooperation in the defence and counterterrorism sectors, and having similar perspectives on the developments in Afghanistan (Kurita, 2019). This accord was regarded as historic for the relations between the two nations. From the following year on, additional specialized developments kept happening. A purchase agreement for two Mi-171E multi-role helicopters and four Mi35M attack helicopters was reached because of the lifting of the weapons embargo in 2015. Delivery was finished in 2016 and 2017 accordingly. Additionally, Pakistan could import the Russian-made RD-93 engines used in the JF-17 combat aircraft directly from Russia, which Pakistan could not previously do without going through China (The Diplomat, April 12, 2018). The first combined counterterrorism drills between the Russian and Pakistani forces were held in Pakistan from September to October 2016. India lobbied Russia vehemently not to participate in these drills, but Russia rejected this, and additional exercises of a similar nature were held from September to October 2017. The Pakistani and Russian foreign affairs ministries had their initial meetings on regional problems in December 2016. A Joint Military Consultative Committee (JMCC) was established in 2018 at the level of the deputy defence minister to consult on military cooperation, and in August of that same year, a memorandum of agreement about the extension of naval cooperation was reached (Khatti et al., 2022). A deal was also inked at the Joint Military Consultative Committee's (JMCC) maiden meeting that will allow Pakistani military officers to train in Russian military training facilities for the first time. Although not sure, the Pakistani Minister of Defense stated to the Russian media in April 2018 that Pakistan is interested in purchasing T-90 tanks and air defence systems from Russia. And that a deal to buy Su-35 fighter aircraft from that country would likely be reached in the following two to three years (Khan, 2021). Even in the area of commerce, cooperative efforts are growing. The two nations agreed in October 2015 that Russia would build a two-billion-dollar gas pipeline connecting Pakistan's capital Lahore with the southern port city of Karachi. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Russian company Gazprom and Pakistan's Oil and Gas Development Company, Limited, in July 2017 regarding cooperation for exploration and development. In October, Pakistan and Russia also reached an intergovernmental agreement regarding the supply of LNG, which made it possible for Gazprom to enter negotiations regarding the collection of LNGs to Pakistan. The idea to build a 600 MW gas-fired power station in southern Pakistan with Russian investment is also the subject of consultations (Naqvi and Masood, 2017). Due to three significant difficulties, the reciprocal connections produced little beyond these diplomatic discussions and the occasional combined military exercises. As the second-largest exporter of weaponry to India, Russia and India have a tight defence industrial connection. Moscow has long provided strategic support to India's nuclear and missile program. Second, Russia has generally opposed Pakistan's interests in its diplomatic stance at international forums, particularly the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), especially by vetoing Kashmir resolutions and supporting Pakistan's position on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Third, it is challenging for Pakistan to obtain Russian high-tech defence equipment or development materials due to its financial crisis. Pakistan's preference for Western markets may restrict trade and commercial opportunities with Russia. However, both states have recently demonstrated a more substantial commitment to overcoming these obstacles and fostering closer economic connections. The convergence of security interests in Afghanistan and both states' search for various strategic and financial partners has recently been promising signs. For the first time in nine years, Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, paid a visit to Islamabad in April 2021. He discussed bilateral

cooperation on vaccines, defence, and counterterrorism. Additionally, there have been occasional indications of defence cooperation. During Lavrov's visit in 2021, the issue of Russian military equipment provision, which is currently under discussion—came up. Pakistan purchased four Russian Mi-35 heavy attack helicopters in 2017 for USD 153 million. The relationship has also gained substance thanks to increasingly frequent phone talks, high-level diplomatic visits, and joint military exercises. This environment makes the USD 2.5 billion PSGP agreement more likely. If finalized and maintained, the agreement would also have significant symbolic value because its success would indicate confidence in the partnership and the possibility of future cooperation. The pipeline, expected to be finished in 2024, will be crucial in supplying gas to Pakistan's numerous cities along the Karachi-Kasur route. Even while there is still a long way to go before the pipeline can be built, the general warming of relations between the two nations suggests more opportunities for discussion and exchange to overcome future implementation issues. Strong connections with Russia could boost Pakistan's ambitions to broaden its partner base and to pursue a foreign policy that is more geo-economically oriented. Islamabad may not receive much attention from Washington due to the country's withdrawal from Afghanistan, internal focus, and an Asia policy aimed at containing a rising China through organizations like the Quad and new cooperation with Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, also known as (AUKUS). Islamabad is likely to seek to boost Pakistan's economic and geographic relevance for the major powers, including the United States, China, Russia, Britain, Japan, and others, in place of Pakistan's declining role in American foreign policy and security ties (The New York Times, September 17, 2021).

Conclusion

Russia is uncertain about the extent and nature of its relationship with Pakistan, despite its involvement in the SCO and its new relationship with China. Similarly, China is keeping a close eye on the changes in Pakistan's relationship with Russia. China has been Pakistan's main supplier of defense equipment, especially after the US imposed an arms embargo, and Russia has declined to supply weapons to Pakistan to avoid upsetting India. Russia and China are competing to sell weapons to Pakistan, with China being the main supplier of defense equipment to Pakistan in the past. However, Russia has recently become more open to doing business with Pakistan, offering advanced technology, but at a higher price. In the past, Pakistan has opted for cheaper equipment from China, despite negotiations with Russia, which has disappointed Russian defense companies. If Russia believes that it needs China's approval to sell weapons to Pakistan, this may harm its defense relations with Pakistan.

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