

PAKISTAN-RUSSIA MILITARY COOPERATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic realm of 21st-century international relations, a profound transformation has emerged in the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Russia. This research delves into the intricate dynamics of military cooperation, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that define this critical relationship. Pakistan's strategic position in South Asia and Russia's historical influence converge, presenting substantial potential for addressing shared threats and reinforcing regional stability, particularly in the context of counterterrorism efforts. The burgeoning collaboration between Pakistan and Russia unfolds a spectrum of opportunities for both countries. Furthermore, this research delves into the essence of military collaboration on the global stage within this partnership. It meticulously scrutinizes the potential impacts on the power diminuendos in the region, particularly within the context of the India-Pakistan rivalry. Yet, the path to fortifying military ties is fraught with obstacles. This paper offers an exhaustive analysis of the challenges faced by both countries as strive to expand collaboration. The research study provides a nuanced understanding of the Pakistan-Russia military partnership through a comprehensive investigation of the historical background, contemporary developments, and future prospects. It stands as a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and analysts keen on navigating the intricate terrain of opportunities and hurdles that delineate this evolving strategic alliance. In conclusion, the military cooperation between Pakistan and Russia serves as a pivotal element of the ever-evolving global geopolitical landscape, affording both nations a unique opportunity to leverage shared interests for the betterment of regional and global stability. This paper not only unravels the intricacies of the partnership but underscores the imperative to address the challenges that lie ahead in an ever-shifting global landscape.

KEYWORDS: Russo-Pak relations, Military Collaboration, Opportunities and Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Military cooperation stands as a defining aspect of statecraft in the intricate realm of international relations. The military alliance between Pakistan and Russia, two countries with distinct Cold War-era affiliations, is emblematic of complexity, marked by an intricate history, enduring challenges, and remarkable opportunities. Pakistan and Russia's military connections are a tapestry interspersed with different phases and inflection points (Khan & Altaf,

2013). Pakistan was an essential U.S. ally during the Cold War, while Russia, serving as the Soviet Union, demonstrated a strategic partnership with India. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War has familiarized dramatic changes in the global geopolitical terrain. Pakistan's developing security imperatives, related to Russia's plan of diversified international engagements, have pinnacled in the output of a strategic space for cooperation within the

military orb (Ahmed, 2017). This realignment highlights the dynamism and adaptability of international concerns and sets the stage for an in-depth investigation of the historical background and the recent challenges and opportunities that define this evolving relationship. The military cooperation between Pakistan and Russia encloses a wide range of activities, including defense agreements, joint military exercises, and arms trade. These initiatives present a range of complex questions regarding their broader geopolitical importance. The challenges that encounter military cooperation are rooted in historical mistrust, clashing national interests, and external intimidations, each of which poses the potential to disrupt the trajectory of their engagement.

The consequences of this evolving military cooperation outdo bilateral stakes, echoing through the regional dynamics of South Asia and thundering on the wider global step. Thus, an in-depth understanding of Pakistan-Russia military cooperation is pivotal for deciphering the strategic intricacies that govern contemporary international relations (Khan, 2021). This research paper is an endeavor to peel back the layers of complexity in Pakistan-Russia military cooperation, with an explicit focus on revealing the historical relations, challenges, and opportunities. Through a close examination of the historical context, the state of present-day military relations, the formidable obstacles, and the untapped potential, the researchers aim to provide a comprehensive unveiling of this strategic partnership. This research will utilize secondary data, employing a historical approach as the chosen methodology. Ultimately, the findings will pave the way for future research opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the study (Khan & Altaf, 2013), the rapprochement between Pakistan and Russia and its impact on contemporary global politics revealed the evolving nature of international relations. The research highlights the significance of improved Russia-Pakistan relations in redefining power dynamics and global geopolitical alliances. Besides, focusing on Pak-Russia relations, insights into the current state of affairs, and potential developments that could shape the future of the bilateral relationship are the focus of Ahmed (2017). The

research outcomes are of particular relevance to policymakers and diplomats, offering foundational insights for guiding the trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations. However, Khan (2021) delves into the revival of Pak-Russia relations and the consequences, particularly within the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The research findings are pertinent to economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and regional stability, informing decisions related to CPEC and bilateral collaboration. Primarily, taking a historical perspective, regional challenges within Pakistan-China relations unravel the historical dynamics of this vital regional relationship explored by (Khatti *et al.*, 2022). The research findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and scholars, aiding in a better understanding of the complexities in Pakistan-China relations and influencing regional policy decisions. In the works of Kurita (2019), a meticulous examination was undertaken to uncover both the potential and the intricacies of the relations between Pakistan and Russia. This scholarly endeavor provided an intricate panorama of the nuanced interplay between the two nations. This comprehensive investigation delved deep into the constraints that have historically shaped the Pakistan-Russia relationship, shedding light on recent developments that have significantly altered the dynamics in the contemporary era. It is worth noting that Zia (2018) directed scholarly attention toward novel avenues of engagement concerning Pakistan, underscoring the evolving nature of this bilateral relationship. Notably, the evolving connection between Pakistan and Russia remains firmly anchored in the common ground of counterterrorism efforts and drug control initiatives, a remarkable transformation considering their past adversarial stance. Similarly, Moskalenko & Topychkanov (2014) undertook an exhaustive exploration of Common Opportunities and Shared Challenges, highlighting Russia's apprehensions in the context of South Asian countries due to security-related uncertainties and nebulous policy frameworks, while simultaneously scrutinizing the fragile democratic processes in Pakistan. In this vein, exploration of Khan (2021) in-depth study delves further into the intricate fabric of these ties, discerning the persistent differences and similarities that have marked this complex relationship, despite

the various ebbs and flows in their shared concerns. It is imperative to consider the research, which cogently argues that Pakistan's historical entanglements with the United States during the Cold War, coupled with its steadfast focus on India, have had a detrimental impact on its relations with Russia. After gaining independence, Pakistan embarked on a trilateral strategy involving Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, aimed at maintaining a stable market economy (Ahsan, 2004). However, Pant (2004) astutely underscored the pivotal role of China and India in bolstering Russia's efforts to counter the expanding influence of the United States government in Central and South Asia. Furthermore, the robust diplomatic ties between India and Russia, encompassing the acquisition of Russian weaponry and cooperative ventures in defense technology, constitute a significant factor in the shifting geopolitical landscape.

Consequently, the overarching theme of Strategic Engagement as a Means of Conflict Prevention in Pakistan's defense diplomacy towards Russia, as elucidated by Qazi & Bashir (2022), assumes paramount importance in the present discourse, encapsulating the evolving dynamics and multifaceted dimensions of the Pakistan-Russia relationship.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since the establishment of Pakistan, the interplay of inter-state relations has been marked by intricate dynamics and regional complexities. Furthermore, both nations have grappled with interconnected issues concerning territorial disputes. During the Cold War era, Pakistan emerged as a pivotal member of the United States' alliance, whereas India sought to align itself with the strategic interests of Russia in the expansive regions of Central and South Asia. Amidst these geopolitical challenges, the Pakistan-Russia relationship has been a subject of nuanced scrutiny, simultaneously punctuated by periods of neglect and bursts of enthusiasm, often shaping the broader geopolitical landscape of the region. In this vein, a cadre of scholars (Khan & Altaf, 2013; Ahmed, 2017; Kurita, 2019; Khan, 2021; and Khatti *et al.*, 2022) has meticulously delved into the multifaceted dimensions of Russo-Pakistani relations, encompassing aspects of geostrategic and geopolitical entanglements, defense collaboration,

and economic and energy partnerships. Moreover, the astute gaze of these scholars (Ahsan, 2004; Ahmed, 2004; Moskalenko & Topychkanov, 2014; Zia, 2018; Khan, 2021) has been keenly fixed on the diplomatic intricacies and regional challenges, as well as the influential role played by the United States and other Western powers. Remarkably, it is worth noting that none among them has hitherto embarked upon the contemplated project, which holds the potential to provide a comprehensive and elucidating perspective on the subject matter.

In order to address the existing gaps and challenges in the field, the current research endeavors to explore the intricacies of Pakistan-Russia military cooperation, with a specific focus on both the challenges and opportunities it presents. The outcomes of this investigation are poised to assume a pivotal role in enriching the realms of academia, informing policymaking, and advancing the frontiers of research.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The problems of the research investigation find voids/gaps in the extant literature above, supporting the investigation and results underpins accentuating research aims creating objectives based on the described stances. Pinpointing research aims and objects are the following:

1. To investigate the Pakistan-Russia Military Cooperation
2. To explore Opportunities in Pakistan-Russia Relations
3. To highlight Challenges in Russia and Pakistan Ties

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology constitutes the systematic orchestration of a research endeavor, deftly delineating the initial perspective and scholarly underpinnings, thereby rendering the study's contextual rationale intelligible (Rasool *et al.*, 2023). Within each academic discipline and domain, one encounters a multitude of distinctive modalities for inquiry, analysis, discourse, and research methodologies that serve as the bedrock, imparting a robust, enduring, and standard character to the investigative process. In a commensurate vein, historical methodologies encompass a comprehensive examination of epochs past, tracing

the evolution and vicissitudes of bygone eras (Khatti *et al.*, 2022). The thematic domain under scrutiny is intrinsically linked to the historical aspect of Pakistan-Russia Military Cooperation, with a particular focus on elucidating the challenges and opportunities that pervade this intricate tapestry of relations. The pivotal rationale behind the selection of this salient subject matter lies in the conspicuous absence of scholarly attention bestowed upon this domain (Ahsan, 2004; Ahmed, 2004; Moskalenko & Topychkanov, 2014; Zia, 2018; Khan, 2021; Khatti *et al.*, 2022).

Concurrently, previous researchers have been culpable of inadvertently neglecting a multitude of facets, yet they all share the commonality of adhering to the same methodological roots (Rasool *et al.*, 2023^a; Rasool *et al.*, 2023^b). Within the purview of the present study, a historical mode of inquiry shall be employed to adroitly elucidate and deliberate upon the expanse of extant literature accessible online, about the historical chronicles, stumbling blocks, and incongruities inherent in the multifaceted interplay of Pakistan-Russia Military Cooperation. The research investigation shall be anchored in the historical modality, entailing the deployment of secondary data as its primary arsenal. The anticipated outcome of this methodological venture lies in the validation and rectification of entrenched narratives and discourses that have hitherto been devoid of scholarly scrutiny.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intricate historical tapestry of Pakistan-Russia relations, characterized by intermittent fluctuations and notable inflection points such as the Cold War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, offers a compelling backdrop for this study. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution, these two countries embarked on a deliberate and gradual journey toward fostering amicable and substantive bilateral ties (Afrasiabi & Maleki, 2003). Notably, the 21st century has witnessed substantial collaboration encompassing economic ventures and security initiatives, particularly in response to the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Bilateral exchanges at the highest echelons of diplomacy culminated in the signing of numerous agreements, signifying a discernible transformation in this bilateral relationship (Hussain, 2012). The strategic

positioning of Pakistan and Russia within the Eurasian landscape bears paramount geopolitical significance. The collaboration carries the potential to exert substantial influence on regional stability and security, with the South and Central Asian regions standing as prime focal points (Hanif, 2013). In the post-9/11 era, both Russia and Pakistan have undertaken deliberate efforts to fortify their defense and security ties. The Russian Federation's recalibration of its foreign policy to emphasize peacekeeping initiatives and reduce its dependence on the United States in the South Asian context underscores the emergent paradigm (Chen *et al.*, 2009). The burgeoning rapport between Moscow and Islamabad has, in turn, instilled mutual trust and equilibrium in the South Asian region. As a result, this research not only scrutinizes the historical underpinnings of the geostrategic alliance between Moscow and Islamabad but also accentuates the complementary roles played by these countries in advancing regional peace and stability.

Furthermore, this study delves into the motivations underpinning Pakistan's strategic alignment with Moscow. The research's scope extends to delineating the broader implications for the South Asian region as a whole and Pakistan in particular. The findings furnish valuable insights into diplomatic strategies for mitigating the expanding influence of the United States while sustaining a delicate balance of power through the nurturing of enduring and robust Russo-Pakistani affiliations. By examining these facets, the research not only underscores the profound significance of the Pakistan-Russia relationship but also lays a foundational framework for comprehending the ever-evolving dynamics within the broader purview of international diplomacy and geostrategic realignments.

FINDINGS' DISCUSSIONS

The findings discover the Russo-Pak relations in a friendly arena by military cooperation. Concentrating on opportunities of the relations delves into the new phases and extra dynamics of global politics in the ties. However, it finds that the alliances, ties, and relations can be faced as a challenge for the regional order of the emerging superpowers on the globe.

Investigating Pakistan-Russia Military Cooperation

Pakistan and Russia have steadily built a robust security and defense relationship in the 21st century, marking a significant shift from historical affiliations with the United States and India, respectively (Sultana *et al.*, 2019). The transformative moment began after the 9/11 attacks, gaining momentum with the signing of a defense agreement in 2014 (Khan, 2019). These evolving dynamics reflect the changing geopolitical landscape in South Asia, with Pakistan reassessing its security priorities.

Early Steps towards Collaboration

The formation of a Joint Working Group in 2002, international security challenges, and focus on countering terrorism set the stage for deeper collaboration (Masahiro, 2019). Ex-army chief Pervez Musharraf professed to enrich exchanging data during a 2003 visit to Moscow, particularly regarding groups working in Central Asia and Russia (Qazi & Bashir, 2022). In 2007, Russia reciprocated this commitment when Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visited Pakistan, emphasizing the essential of economic cooperation and security challenges (Tahir, 2016).

Bilateral Visits and Military Exchanges

General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani's official visit to Russia in 2010 marked a critical step in cementing bilateral ties, followed by a visit from Alexander Postnikov in 2011, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces (Khan, 2021). Notably on military exchanges and potential arms deals, further strengthening the relationship (Zia, 2018).

Strengthening Defense Cooperation

In August 2013, General Vladimir Chirkin reciprocated the visit, underlining the importance of enhancing defense cooperation and regional security, particularly concerning Afghanistan post-2014. These interactions, rooted in General Kayani's personal rapport, laid the foundation for more profound regional and international security cooperation.

Significance in the Changing Global Landscape

The deepening ties between Pakistan and Russia bear immense significance against the backdrop of changing global geopolitics. The growing influence of Russia on the world stage underscores the critical role of this relationship. Beyond defense, the two countries share a vested interest in ensuring stability in Afghanistan. While Pakistan traditionally relied on the U.S. and China for military needs, collaboration with Russia opens up an alternative source of military hardware and defense equipment (Jabeen, 2022).

ENERGY COOPERATION

Furthermore, energy cooperation offers another dimension to their relationship. Pakistan's energy needs align with Russia's abundant resources of oil, gas, and coal, promising a sustainable and secure energy future for both nations (Serenko, 2021).

9.6 ARMS TRADE

The acquisition of Russian Mi-35M assault helicopters in 2015 marked a shift from Pakistan's historical reliance on the U.S. and China for military supplies (Qazi *et al.*, 2023). Despite India's reservations, Pakistan sees the economic benefits and peace-promoting potential in deepening its defense ties with Russia. Pakistan and Russia inked a bilateral cooperation pact to fortify military ties in November 2014. An imminent technical cooperation agreement is poised to facilitate the dispatch of Russian military apparatus to Pakistan (Ahmed, 2017). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that Russia's exports to Pakistan were specified to be a mere \$22 million in the (Wezeman *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, Russia has agreed to supply weaponry to the Pakistani military.

TABLE 1
The Main Importers and Exporters of Major Arms (2016–2020) Source (Wezeman Et Al., 2021)

S/NO	Exporter	Global Share %	Importer	Global Share %
1	USA	37	Saudi Arabia	11
2	Russia	20	India	9.5
3	France	8.2	Egypt	5.8
4	Germany	5.5	Australia	5.1
5	China	5.2	China	4.7
6	UK	3.3	Algeria	4.3
7	Spain	3.2	SOUTH KOREA	4.3
8	Israel	3	Qatar	3.8
9	South Korea	2.7	UAE	3
10	Italy	2.2	Pakistan	2.7

The Role of Joint Military Exercises

General Bajwa Qamar Javed reiterated this position during his interactions with the Chief of the Russian Ground Forces in both 2018 and 2019 (Khan, 2021). Similarly, the Russian side conveyed an eagerness to expand the scope of the relationship across multiple spheres. The collaborative military drills involving Pakistan and Russia have not only yielded military advantages but have also conferred noteworthy political and strategic benefits. These exercises have bolstered security cooperation between the two nations, elevated the military capabilities of member states within the SCO, and fostered regional stability.

TABLE 2
Pakistan-Russia Joint Military Exercises (2014-2020)

SET OF EXERCISES	CODING NAME	DATE OF EXERCISES	NAME OF PLACE
THE MARITIME / THE NAVAL	THE ARABIAN MONSOON-I	2014, OCT. 17 to 20	The Arabian Sea of North
	THE ARABIAN MONSOON-II	2015, DEC. 4to 9	
	THE ARABIAN MONSOON-III	2018, NOV 30 to DEC 1	
THE EXERCISES OF SPECIAL WARFARE	THE FRIENDSHIP-2016 or DRUZHBA-I	2016, SEP 24 to OCT 10	Pakistan's Province Of KPK Held at Special Operations School, CHERAT
	THE FRIENDSHIP-2017 or DRUZHBA-II	2017, SEP. 24 to OCT, 4	On The Russian Land of MMINRALNEY VODY IN Side Of North CAUCASUS, KARACHAEVO CHERKES
	THE FRIENDSHIP 2018 Or DRUZHBA-III	2018, OCT. 21 to NOV, 4	The Special Operations SCHOOL of CHERAT, Centre of National Counter Terrorism (NCTC), PABBI, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN
	FRIENDSHIP-2019 or DRUZHBA-IV	2019, OCT. 2 to 11	On Russian Federation of Krasnodar.
	THE FRIENDSHIP-2020 or DRUZHBA-V	2020, NOV. 8 to 19	The Special Service HQ, Located In TARBELLA, Province Of KPK And In Punjab's NCTC
THE MARITIME INTERNATIONAL	THE PEACE-2017 or AMAN-2017	2017, FEB, 10 to 14	At The Site of Arabian Sea
	THE PEACE- 2019 or AMAN-2019	2019, FEB, 08 to 12	
MULTINATIONAL UNDER SCO	THE MISSION OF PEACE- 2018	2018, AUGUST, 22 to 29	At The Place Of Chelyabinsk In Russia
	THE CENTER- 2019 or TSENTR-2019	2019, SEPT. 16 to 21	At Central Military District Of Training Ground In Russia
	THE CAUCASUS 2020 or KAVKAZ-2020	2020, SEPT. OF 21 to 26	At Russia, Southern Military District In The Place Of Training Ground

SOURCE: Given Data Is Assembled From Various Sources Including ISPR, Military Wing <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/>

Institutionalized Cooperation

In 2018, the inception of the Joint Military Consultative Committee (JMCC) created a consistent channel for defense authorities from both nations to deliberate on cooperation and regional security matters (Qazi & Bashir, 2022). The JMCC promotes top-tier defense cooperation and serves as

a venue for Russian military training for Pakistani army officers.

Enhanced Bilateral and Multilateral Drills

Mutual defense forums, such as the Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS), play a significant role in facilitating bilateral discussions. Pakistan utilized the MCIS platform to voice its concerns over regional security (Ahmad & Khalid, 2023).

SCO and Regional Security

Pakistan also seeks to bolster its security and defense collaboration with Russia within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Afzal & Maqsood, 2023). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) holds potential for regional economic growth, aligning with Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Exploring Opportunities in Pakistan-Russia Relations

This finding sheds light on Pakistan's military capabilities in South Asia, particularly in the context of India-Pakistan air confrontations. It also underscores the strategic implications of such confrontations, as well as the convergence of nuclear doctrines, response doctrines, hybrid warfare strategies, and the evolving nature of conflicts. Additionally, it delves into Pakistan's challenges in managing energy needs and its aspirations to become a member of the Nuclear Supplier Group. Overall, these aspects are vital in understanding the strategic shifts taking place amid changing alliances in the region.

Pakistan's Military Capabilities in South Asia

Russia's changing position on defense in South Asia recognizes the validity of Pakistan's imperative to enhance its defense capabilities. This shift in perspective stems from Russia's recognition that a nuclear-armed Pakistan acts as a counterbalance to India's regional dominance ambitions, with China supporting Pakistan to maintain the regional power equilibrium. As the specter of an arms race between India and Pakistan looms, Russia aims to ensure its presence in the international arms market doesn't wane (Singh, 2023).

Strategic Implications of India-Pakistan Air Confrontation

Amid the military standoff between India and Pakistan in 2019, a significant event unfolded when Pakistan successfully brought down an Indian MIG-21 aircraft. This incident shed light on the Indian Air Force's limitations and became an unfortunate moment for the Indian military. In response, Indian authorities alleged that Pakistan had deployed a U.S.-manufactured F-16 fighter jet during the encounter and claimed to have shot down the jet. Nevertheless, India botched to furnish substantial proof to push up the claims. Consequently, Pakistan dismissed India's baseless blames and attributed India's aggressive posture to political objects (Khan, 2019).

NUCLEAR DOCTRINE CONVERGENCES

The rendition of Russia's military canon remains a matter of ongoing ambiguity and debate. Some analysts argue that Russia's technique centers on the deployment of nuclear armaments in response to advanced conventional forces. The strategy is designed to preempt escalation and larger-scale disputes (Tertrais, 2023). According to the perspective, nuclear weapons serve as stances to dissuade prospective assaults on Russia and as a tool for de-escalating limited conflicts should deterrence prove ineffective. The notion of "detering limited conflict" implies that Moscow would exercise restraint when considering the use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield, with the aim of inflicting only adequate damage to discourage aggression (Youhana, 2023).

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE DOCTRINE

Historically, Pakistan's security approach and the utilization of nuclear weapons have been shaped by Western paradigms. However, contemporary years have seen increased interaction and cooperation between Russia and Pakistan. While Russian concepts have not yet entirely reshaped Pakistan's strategic outlook, a noticeable alignment is emerging. This alignment holds particular significance in light of the ongoing intense between the United States of America and Pakistan and the restricted access to training breaks for Pakistani military officials in U.S. military institutes. Consequently, it is a heightened likelihood of Russian concepts exerting a more significant

influence on Pakistan's security doctrines, attributed to the common perspectives shared between the two nations (Zaidi & Nirmal, 2023).

Hybrid Warfare and the Changing Nature of Conflict

Pakistan can draw insights into countering hybrid warfare strategies from Russia, which has extensive experience in this domain. Russian General Valery Gerasimov is renowned for his contributions to the theory of hybrid warfare in Moscow (Yamin, 2019). The Pakistani military is keen on studying the evolving landscape of warfare, with think tanks in Pakistan actively researching "hybrid warfare" or "fifth generation warfare." Pakistan's security discourse indicates that it believes India is employing a range of tactics, including disinformation, support for the insurgency, economic pressure, and diplomatic isolation, as a means to destabilize the country. This shift in India's strategy is attributed to the effectiveness of Pakistan's "full-spectrum deterrence" approach, which has thwarted India's conventional military tactics. Examples like the "Gerasimov doctrine," associated with a Russian military leader, are cited as models for such hybrid warfare (Dalsjo & Jonsson, 2023).

Navigating Pakistan's Energy Dilemmas and Aspirations for Nuclear Supplier Group Membership

Pakistan has grappled with a prolonged energy crisis and has explored various avenues to augment its energy production, including nuclear power generation. A comprehensive 25-year strategic plan aims to enhance energy supply and safety standards, coupled with forging international partnerships to acquire nuclear reactors, fuel, and technical support. Membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is regarded as pivotal for Pakistan to secure a legitimate place in the global nuclear arena, similar to India (Waseem, 2020).

Strategic Shifts amid Changing Alliances

In response to U.S. President Donald Trump's restrictions on Pakistan's participation in the International Military Education Program, Russia seized the opportunity to establish a "Security Training Agreement." This accord enabled Pakistani military officers to receive training in Russian

institutions, serving as a viable alternative to American programs and potentially influencing the strategic perspectives of Pakistani military officers (Kurita, 2019). Additionally, Russia can play a pivotal role in augmenting Pakistan's energy output. Islamabad seeks business partnerships to procure nuclear fuel, reactors, and technical expertise from global nuclear suppliers. Pakistan advocates a criterion-based approach to NSG membership, while France, the UK, and Russia endorse a merit-based approach. Russian diplomatic sources in Islamabad have hinted at a potential policy shift from favoring merit-based criteria to backing the criterion-based approach. Russia's support for Pakistan's NSG membership quest represents a significant step toward fostering harmonious bilateral relations (Nisar, 2023).

Highlighting Challenges in Russia and Pakistan Relations

The implications of the finding bring to the forefront significant disparities in Russo-Pakistani relations. These disparities extend across various facets, including Pakistan's regional strategy, the intricate issue of Kashmir's future, defense collaboration and weaponry deals with India, as well as Pakistan's strategic alignment with China. Furthermore, it raises concerns about the resurgence of historical alliances and Pakistan's enduring dependence on the United States. This multifaceted analysis underscores the nuanced nature of Russo-Pakistani relations and their far-reaching consequences.

Contrasts in Russo-Pakistani Relations

While certain areas exist in which Pakistan and Russia share common interests, fostering a potential alliance, there are pronounced disparities and contentious issues that might imperil the ties. These contain the estate utilization of Islamic republic entities as surrogates, the unsettled Kashmir issue, Russia's robust military ties with India, Pakistan's reliance on China to advance its strategic objectives, and the enduring United States- Pakistan connection (Khan, 2019).

Disparities in Regional Strategy of Pakistan

Russia vehemently opposes Pakistan's military strategy, which relies on the involvement of extremist elements, notably in the Kashmir and

Afghanistan regions (Fair, 2018). While Pakistan has made substantial efforts to disassociate itself from extremist groups, incurring significant human and economic costs, the notion of utilizing jihadist forces as a tactical instrument persists. Unlike the United States, Russia has refrained from public criticism of Pakistan. However, Russia does possess a keen interest in ensuring that Islamabad remains steadfast in its commitment to eradicate and manage violent extremist elements within its borders.

KASHMIR'S DESTINY

The Kashmir region has remained a perpetual source of contention between India and Pakistan ever since their respective independence from British colonial rule. This enduring dispute persists partly because Russia, alongside the international community, acknowledges the division of Kashmir delineated by the Line of Actual Control as a historical fait accompli (Khalid, 2022). Due to diplomatic and geopolitical considerations, Russia, like other major global powers, is inclined to refrain from open discussions on this matter with either India or Pakistan. It is widely accepted that the Kashmir conflict is bereft of a military resolution, primarily due to the presence of nuclear arsenals and well-equipped conventional forces on both sides. Consequently, the existing status quo appears unlikely to undergo any substantial transformation.

Defense Collaboration and Weaponry Deals with India

Russia is unlikely to diminish its security affiliations with India, even in light of India's potential pivot toward procuring weaponry from Western defense suppliers. While Russia once held a nearly exclusive position in India's defense acquisitions, this landscape has since evolved. Nonetheless, Pakistan remains apprehensive about the possibility of Russia providing arms to India (Bakshi, 2006).

Pakistan's Strategic Reliance on China

Russia's stance toward the depth and character of its association with Pakistan remains ambiguous, despite its participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its burgeoning partnership with China. Likewise, China is vigilantly monitoring shifts in Pakistan's rapport with Russia (Arshad, 2023). As the primary source of Pakistan's defense

equipment, particularly following the imposition of a U.S. arms embargo, China holds a dominant position, while Russia, keen on not upsetting India, and has refrained from supplying arms to Pakistan. This backdrop sets the stage for a competitive dynamic, as Russia and China vie for arms deals with Pakistan. China has traditionally served as Pakistan's principal defense supplier, though Russia has begun to entertain the possibility of engaging with Pakistan, presenting advanced technology albeit at a premium price point (Curtis, 2016). In the past, Pakistan has favored cost-effective Chinese equipment over Russian alternatives, despite ongoing discussions with Russian defense firms. This preference has, at times, disappointed Russian defense companies.

Apprehensions of Rekindled Alliances and Persistent U.S. Dependence

Russia acknowledges Pakistan's historical oscillations in its relationship with the United States, often turning to Russia during periods of strained U.S. ties. An illustrative instance was in the late 1960s when Pakistan sought closer ties with the Soviet Union due to discontent with the support it received during the 1965 conflict (Khan, 2021). However, the election of President Nixon promptly revitalized Pakistan's robust association with the United States. Amid ongoing nuclear sanctions, Pakistan underwent its third strategic shift in the year 2001 (Smith, 2011). Russia may have concerns that the current phase of worried relations between Pakistan and the U.S. could potentially resolve, driven by a change in U.S. leadership or a substantial geopolitical circumstances that repositions Pakistan at the vanguard of Western strategies. In light of these historical fluctuations, Russia is likely to maintain a degree of skepticism regarding Pakistan's unwavering commitment to a genuine policy of non-alignment, mutual Eurasian interests, and joint strategic cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The proposed study has emphasized the relationship between Pakistan and Russia, particularly in the context of military collaborations. It has elucidated the opportunities arising from the ties while also addressing the influence of the United States and its impact on the Afghanistan war within the framework of the relations. Furthermore, it has underscored the

challenge posed by the fate of Kashmir and the potential for future collaboration, all of which have been thoroughly examined in this study. The present research offers fresh insights into the dynamics of these connections, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges while introducing novel discourses in the contemporary landscape. The findings resulting from this study have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding, delving into the historical analysis within the context of the research. In conclusion, this research prompts further investigation and discussion, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary ties and their implications within the Russo-Pakistani context.

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