

## **Reviving Pak-Russia Relations: Implications for CPEC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Moscow and Islamabad have experienced many ups and downs throughout the past, but recent Russia Pakistan military and economic cooperation can be comprehended as significant progress in their relationship. As CPEC is a signatory sign of the Sino-Pak relationship, this paper seeks to analyze the need for Russia to be a part of CPEC as its inclusion in the project will also be significant for the regional integration and it will, even more, strengthen the relations of Beijing, Islamabad, and Moscow that will eventually build a new bloc. In addition, by giving the theoretical framework of complex interdependence theory, how Russia and Pakistan can work together in this project. Also, if Russia becomes a part of CPEC, how it can be helpful to eradicate all the apprehension which have been imposed by different entities to defame this project.

**Key Words:** Pakistan, Russia, China, US, South Asia, Cold War, CPEC, Sino-Pak, Relationship & Complex Interdependence Theory

### **Introduction**

Pak-Russia relations face ups and down in history, as Sun Tzu says that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemy in international politics, same goes for Pakistan's relation with Russia. Despite having a profound perspective, the Russia-Pak relationship has time and again been underestimated, primarily on account of misperceived beliefs and wrong approach. Several changes to improve the unsteady relationship were missed due to diverse mind-set and attitude to the international and regional defense and peace perspicacity (Hussain, 2012). It is the call of time for both countries to put aside their bitter terms of the past and focus on developing a coalition with each other in response to the geopolitical demands.

In cold war times, Pakistan and Russia do not have good relations with each other Both the US and USSR were allies, fighting against the Axis powers in the Second World War even though the US and USSR had strained ties. Since long Soviet communism and Russian leader Joseph Stalin had made the US suspicious of them (History.com, 2009). Both the nations were titled as a superpower, but their thoughts differed regarding the economy and the rule. The cold war that they fought was a "war of ideas". In a communist government like USSR, manufacture and means are under the control of the government. The matters related to the jobs and living places of people are also decided by the government. In a capitalist country such as the US, the manufacturing of merchandise is controlled by the people and businesses, and it's the people who make decisions about their jobs and

living places. Following the Second World War, Europe witnessed the start of the Cold War. Eastern Europe came under the control of the USSR. Germany and its capital Berlin was divided into two parts, and USSR had the authority over half part of it, whereas the other half part, Western Germany, was under the control of the US, Britain, and France. Later on, this cold war ended with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the world came into the unipolar system from bipolarity. As India's and Russia had a tilt towards each other, so to balance the power, Pakistan inclined more towards the US, So throughout the cold war, Pakistan and Russia relations were not up to the mark.

India and Russia always enjoy cordial relations towards each other, and they still are, but the recent strategic cooperation between the US and India makes Russia think to diversify their foreign policy. Russia is now looking towards Pakistan as well. Both the nations had a workable and effective partnership over a long period of time, and both of them vow to continue it in each joint statement, in their annual summits especially. But the current changes in international geopolitics have weakened the trust between the two countries. The new strain in the relationship between the US and Russia has also resulted in an unwelcoming situation between Russia and India as a similar situation had constantly occurred between them from the time of the cold war. Russia, now governed by President Vladimir Putin, holds a new perspective of the world. Russian is ardent to become an influential country in numerous parts of the world in order to stay relevant in geopolitics. Hence, Russia is endeavoring to replace the US as a powerful country throughout the regions whenever the uncertainty of the US is observed on strategic issues. It has deep repercussions for the South Asian policy of Russia, particularly affecting the ties between India and Russia. (Kaura, 2018).

As now Russia is also growing economically, so she is also trying to contain the US influence in the world, Russia has made its relations with China in recent times, and China is a good friend of Pakistan, so obviously, it will have a positive spillover effect on Russia-Pakistan relations. The geopolitical scenarios are changing; Russia is interested in having strong control in South Asia and is in search of potential markets to trade its military weapons as well as various natural resources. On the other hand, Pakistan is eager to advance its terms with Russia in economic, military and particularly energy sectors. Other than the potential economic prospects, Pakistan is a significant country for Russia and can play a very pivotal role in the Afghan resolution progression. Other than this, Russia has become more practical in its approach towards Pakistan and is demonstrating serious effort in developing relations with Pakistan. Russia feels obliged to discover the latest security and energy markets only after the Ukraine crisis (Akram, 2016). In 2014, Russia decided to remove its arms embargo that was imposed on Pakistan by Russia. Russia unequivocally did it for the sale of military helicopter and other apparatuses to Pakistan. However, they have only developed their relationship commercially. In November 2014, a Russian Defense Minister paid his first visit to Pakistan, and a military cooperation agreement was concluded between both countries, and Pakistan called it a breakthrough. (Dawn, 2018). This

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type of agreement was signed for the first time between Pakistan and Russia. General Raheel Shareef, who became the army chief of Pakistan after the retirement of General Kayani, went to Russia in June 2015 to hold meetings with the high-level civil and army leadership of Russia (Kaura, 2018). Other than that, there are still numerous projects between them which are in discussion. but still, both the states need some sort of economic cooperation in order to strengthen their relationship, and if Russia is included in the CPEC, the relationship between them can be built even stronger than before. So it is time for Russia to be a part of CPEC to fulfil their geo-economic interests and for regional integration.

### **Complex interdependence theory and CPEC**

“Power and Interdependence” was the first book released by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1977 in which they have talked about “interdependence and transnationalism”. The publishing of this book and the UN decade of development (when countries struggled to make progress economically and socially) took place together. In the course of the Cold War, the decade of the '70s was mostly an unobtrusive time and a time when EC, the European Community, became a reality.

The world was making sizeable progress, and in global politics, the ideologies of the past were losing their relevance. Complex interdependence is an argument and theory within the neoliberal paradigm, where there is a talk about cooperation between the states while not ignoring some realist arguments as well. Joseph Nye and Robert O. Keohane analyzed world politics through this theory and concluded that in this globalized world, interdependence is the only solution to avoid any sort of confrontation between the states, and it also helps the states to come closer and improve their relations. Joseph Nye and Robert O.Keohane believe that if states depend on one another socially, economically, militarily, it will help to change world politics and its nature (Mija & Teosa, n.d). Dependence is a world where one actor is dependent on the other one, and that actor is highly affected or influenced by the external forces, but now, in the present-day world, interdependence is a word that is often used. In world politics, it is a condition where all the actors and entities, whether they are states or even non-state actors, are dependent on one another due to their own national interests but, neoliberals have quite a different point of view regarding the national interest. According to neo-liberals, power is not the only national interest of states. Other than ‘power’ there can be other things which states can consider as their national interest and if it is totally unfair to divide international politics into high and low politics, where high politics refers to military power, and low politics refers to an economic, environmental and social issue. They do agree that the safety of the nation is highly important, but one can’t underestimate the other aspects too so both high and low politics are of equal importance (Rana, 2015). In this theory Actors become sensitive to each other’s needs and vulnerable to each other actions, which eventually help and compel them to grow their relations with the other actor

(Genest, 1996). Furthermore, the state that is less dependent on the other state has more bargaining power than the one that is more dependent.

A realistic view of the world can aptly clarify the “complex interdependence”. Realists claim that the prevailing actor in international politics is the state, and military forces serve as a method that is used by the states in their attempts to accomplish their aims. Although “diametrically opposed Complex interdependence” emphasizes assistance instead of fighting, that’s something that took place after the Second World War ended. However, it is acknowledged that violence and fighting still have not died out, and they are also of the view that non-security matters such as global economic ties and environmental issues are getting more importance. They also claim that the regular affairs of states now are not about the security and military rather supporting the relations for more economic cooperation. According to Keohane and Nye, the presuppositions made by the realists are mostly unfitting, and the politics of interdependence cannot be analyzed based on them. An extreme arrangement or an ideal type, these are the two ways to describe them. However, as an ideal type, Complex Interdependence is contrary to the realist theory. It is easier to understand the term ‘complex’ although there are numerous explanations for the term ‘interdependence’ that generally converges (Khan, 2017).

China is expanding its OBOR (One Belt, One Road) project through the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor). Passing through the continent of Asia, OBOR is a project that will strengthen the infrastructure and various other sectors such as the energy, telecommunications, logistics, and transport of the nearly 66 countries through cooperation which will also impact the politics and economy of Europe and Asia (Khan & Khalid, 2018). There are five important objectives behind this agenda of connectivity and collaboration such as to enact the policy cooperatively, build facilities so that countries are easily connected to each other, a trade without hindrance, linking the financial markets regionally and globally and enable people of different to interact and connect with other. In 2015, the Chinese President delivered a speech at Baoforum for Asia Annual Conference and pointed out that OBOR will encourage the people belonging to different civilizations to develop friendly relationships, make efforts for people to progress and live a life of their choice and maintain peace across the globe (Afridi & Khalid, 2016). CPEC is also a project where China and Pakistan both are dependent on one another due to their own national interest. China is getting a lot of benefits from this project, and the same is the case with Pakistan. Both states don't need to get an equal amount of benefits from the complex interdependence. Most of the time, one state gets more than the other state. CPEC project is also asymmetric in nature because obviously, China is getting more benefit from this project, but more or less both the states will get benefit from it. In the last days of May 2013, China and Pakistan signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) when the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang was on an official visit to Pakistan, as a result of which, the idea like CPEC was conceived.

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CPEC suggested that road, air, and railways should be the means to connect the Kashgar city of Xinjiang with the Gawadar Port. The visit of the Chinese premier Xi Jinping in April 2015 helped to establish the CPEC plan more and stressed to have collaboration with each other in various fields such as insecurity, foreign policy, economy, communication, and to improve the infrastructure, help in the energy sector and provide technical support that will guarantee the social and economic progress of Pakistan as well. Having linkages with the Arabian Sea and the countries in the Middle East and Gulf is advantageous for both countries, Pakistan and China (Rizvi, 2015). If Russia includes it in the CPEC, it will create interdependence between Russia and Pakistan, which will further strengthen the relations between India and Pakistan (Khan, 2019). The benefits which Pakistan and Russia will get after Russia's inclusion in the CPEC will be discussed later in this paper.

### **Pakistan Russia relations: a historical perspective**

Being a long-term ally, Pak-US terms have always outshined Pakistan-Russia relations most of the time in history. Pak-US relations had some good but mostly malign impacts for Pakistan on a long-term basis. The majority of the chances to defrost the cold relationship between Pakistan and Russia were lost because Pakistan bent towards the United States of America and the close association between Russia and India. Let's analyze the historical standpoint of their bond.

### **Cold war: an unpleasant period of hostility**

In the period of the cold war times, Pakistan was inclined more towards the US and as Russia was having hostile relations with the US so it was unable for Pakistan to have good relations with the one who was having sour relations with the US. The US and Pakistan relationship's survival is reliant on each other, and the United States incessantly looks forward to Pakistan's support in combating the war against communism. After the subcontinent partition in 1947, the US was desirous of developing sturdy bilateral relations with both the infant states and anticipated them to preserve regional solidity. But the Indian government did not entertain the US interests, which diverted it to Pakistan. At that critical time, owing to the insecurities from India and fearing the sub-continental reunion, Pakistan extended its warm hand to the US for a "Strategic Alliance." During the cold war era, Pakistan and Russia had an entirely counter-balance policy. Pakistan strived to resist the Indian influence over the region, whereas the US propagated against the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In 1949, Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, was invited by the US while the Soviet Union invited Pakistan for a visit. It was a time when Pakistan and USSR had not developed diplomatic ties with each other, but Liaqat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, decided to visit the USA and probably used the invitation offer of the

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Soviet Union so that the US would invite Pakistan to the US. However, this step resulted in distrust between the two countries, USSR and Pakistan (Amin, 2016).

India was the only country in South Asia that has good ties with the Soviet Union. India and Pakistan were each other's biggest enemies ever since the partition took place. It was a complicated state of affairs where two hostile neighbors were friends of two superpowers, the security situation in the region was at risk, and since partition till 1971 both India and Pakistan had confronted each other in three wars (Ahsan, 2004).

Pakistan signed SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955 and unequivocally became part of the Western Alliances. Considering Pakistan a friend of the US, who was an enemy of the Soviet Union, the relationship between USSR and Pakistan was tense; therefore the Soviet Union explicitly chooses to side with India in every matter, including the Kashmir dispute. Husain Shaheed Suharwardy, the Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1956-57, who presumably adopted a foreign policy that supported the West, had made attempts to make the relationship better between Pakistan and the USSR. But his efforts faced interruption as Pakistan had become an ally of the US at a time when the Cold War was at its boiling point, and in 1957, he also resigned from his post. The US U-2 spy plane, which was used for the reconnaissance mission against the Soviet Union was shot down by the Soviets on May 1, 1960. This incident manifested the abilities of the Soviet Union. When the Soviets learned that Pakistan was also part of US schemes and that the Peshawar Airbase in Pakistan was being used by the US for reconnaissance operations, Pakistan received warnings and serious threats from Khrushchev, the President of the Soviet Union, so that Pakistan would not let its soil to be used against USSR. However, Pakistan unwittingly acted according to the desires of the western alliance rather than securing its own dominion or doing something for the safety of its nation, which enraged a superpower that was not far from Pakistan. The 1965 war between Pakistan and India might serve as a background to explain Pakistan's relations throughout this time. Pakistan was forgotten and neglected in the 1965 Indo-Pak war and did not receive any assistance from the US even though Pakistan was part of SEATO and CENTO. India openly receives military equipment and weapons from USSR, making the USSR the largest provider of weapons to India. After this war, India was able to beat Pakistan in an arms race. However, the Soviet Union played as a mediator and arranged peace negotiations and the ceasefire agreement referred to as the "Tashkent Agreement" between Pakistan and India. Pakistan was unwilling to appease the Soviet Union to an extent as Pakistan and China were enjoying close relationships and also because China and the Soviet Union had a disagreement over the kinds of communism by 1961. Pakistan was again upset as the west failed to fulfill the expectations of Pakistan in the 1971 war even though it was an ally of the west. The Soviet Union was also involved in the war between India and Pakistan in 1971 after both countries, the Soviet Union and India, signed the "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation". The Naval presence of the Soviet Union in the region clearly exhibited USSR's support to India. USSR expressed sympathy for Mukti Bahini, and the

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establishment of Bangladesh as an independent country was a chance for it to bring harm to the US and China, who were the enemies of the USSR.

As it is said that the friend of your enemy is also your enemy, so the Russian Indian-centric approach and its inclination towards India make Pakistan, even more, closer to the US. United States already want to contain the Soviet Union by doing tactics like Iron Curtain and Truman Doctrine and Pakistan wanted to contain India, his historical rival, so this situation compels the US and Pakistan to align together for Russia and Indian containment, respectively. Also, to balance the situation, Pakistan is tilted towards the US (Ahsan, 2004). In this intricate situation, regional security was put at stake when two superpowers had amity with two quarrelsome neighbors.

Pakistan's Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made an effort to develop Pakistan's ties with Russia at the beginning of the 1970s and in 1972, successfully persuaded Russia to build a Steel Mill worth billion dollars in Karachi city which is, even today, a symbol of relations between the USSR and Pakistan. The first Prime Minister of Pakistan to visit the USSR was Bhutto. Soviet Arms Forces presented an honorary guard of honor to Bhutto. But this friendly relationship between Pakistan and USSR did not last long. Bhutto was overthrown from power by General Zia ul Haq in 1977, and the world fairly changed after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The death sentence awarded to Bhutto was criticized by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had even requested to show leniency for him, but it was rejected by General Zia ul Haq. At that time, Pakistan supported not only the Afghan Mujahideen but also the US against Soviet Forces in Afghanistan (The News, 2012). From then on, Pakistan was constantly blamed by USSR for interfering in the internal matters of Afghanistan. Afghan Mujahideen, who were fighting the Soviets and Afghan Forces, had the support of the West, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Thus, at that time, Pakistan was in a war against Russia (Khan, 2019).

#### **After the cold war: a growing bonhomie: 1990-2001**

In the 1990s, Pakistan and Russia had better prospects to improve their relationship with each other. On the diplomatic front, Alexander Rutskoy, the Vice President of Russia, visited Pakistan in 1992, in April 1993, Kozyrev, and the Foreign Minister of Russia, went on a visit to Pakistan, and in May 1994, Adamshin, who was the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, paid a visit to Pakistan. Responding to it, in 1992, Akram Zaki, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, went to Russia. In July 1992, Sardar Asif, who was the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, visited Russia and both the countries signed a key protocol, according to which the talks between the foreign minister of Pakistan and Russia were to be held regularly. A delegation comprised of Russian Parliamentarians paid a visit to Pakistan in September 1995. It was divulged by Alexander Vengerovsky, who was the leader of this delegation, that Russia is willing to provide Pakistan military equipment. But there were some reasons due to which this relationship was

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discontinued such as the Taliban government had the support of Pakistan and Russia was afraid that a number of Central Asian States (CARs) and even Russia would be affected by it by developing separatist ideas. In 1999, Pakistan's Premier Nawaz Sharif went to Russia, and many agreements for trade and commerce were signed. This step relieved tensions between the two countries, and Boris Yeltsin, the President of Russia, called it a "new chapter in relations between the two countries oriented into the 21st century." The representatives of the two nations exchanged visits regularly. Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy paid a visit to Pakistan in September 1999 and held talks with the leadership of Pakistan. He asserted that Pakistan had the ability to bring stability to the region by dealing with certain issues such as global terrorism, smuggling of narcotics and radicalism. In 2001 before the incident of 9/11 in America, General Mehmood, who was the ISI chief, visited Russia as the special envoy of President Musharraf and signed an agreement according to which sixteen MI-17 military cargo helicopters would be sold to Pakistan, and this move helped to improve relations between Pakistan and Russia. From that time till now, both countries are involved in active diplomacy in order to make their relationship better, and the growing collaboration on a high level with each other is unremitting (Hanif, 2013).

When the USSR disintegrated, suppositions were made that now this situation might lead both of them to find something they could mutually agree on and work together. But both countries could not develop valuable relations with each other since Pakistan was involved in Afghanistan, and the Taliban were also being supported by Pakistan. However, the incident of 9/11 changed international politics and Pakistan realized that its ties with Russia (the biggest country in the world in terms of territory) should be revamped (Owais, 2007).

### **Post 9/11: Pak-Russia relationship (2001 to 2014)**

The relationship between Russia and Pakistan became better when Pakistan changed its foreign policy following the incident of 9/11 and renounced its support for the Taliban, and joined the global "war on terror" in Afghanistan by becoming the most important ally. A key working group termed the "Consultative Group" on "strategic stability" was formed by both countries in 2002 to work together to deal with the threats that might destabilize the region. Pervaiz Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, visited Russia in 2002, which is considered the most important improvement in the relationship between both countries. At Almaty and Kuala Lumpur, President Musharraf had previously held meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This meeting and later, the visit of President Musharraf to Russia had really played a role in developing the trust and confidence between both nations (Khan H. U., 2019). Three agreements were concluded between Russia and Pakistan to increase their relations in the areas of culture and diplomacy and to settle visa and immigration restrictions. The development of good relations with Russia was beneficial for Pakistan as Russia then supported Pakistan to get the status of an observer state in SCO (Owais, 2007). In 2007, for the first time in 38



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years, Mikhail Fradkov, the Prime Minister of Russia, visited Pakistan, which improved the ties between the two countries even more, and detailed talks were held between President Musharraf and the Russian Premier, and the need to cooperate more in the economic sector was highlighted as well. In 2012, Pakistan's Chief of army staff, General Ashfaq Parvaiz Kayani, went to Russia and the Russian Defence Minister postponed an already scheduled visit to "Inter-Governmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation in India" which indicates the prominence that was given to the visit of Pakistan's army chief by Russia. This visit invigorated the mutual cooperation between the two countries. To build the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, an offer was officially made by Russia to provide technical and financial assistance. In October 2012, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of Russia, visited Pakistan, and on the issue of drone strikes, he supported the viewpoint of Pakistan. The attacks on Pakistan's Salala Post by the coalition forces were condemned by Russia as well. Russia also issued a public statement on this matter in favor of the viewpoint of Pakistan. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013, both countries held their first strategic talks. These talks provided the agenda and guidelines to further develop mutual ties. The two countries also approved to continue and further boost the coordination in order to come to an agreement on regional and global affairs and invest and assist more in energy and power generation sectors as well (Syed, 2013). Although during this time, India and Russian had enjoyed better relations with each other as compared to the ties between Pakistan and Russia.

### **Post-US withdrawal: new horizons in Russo-Pak relations**

The emerging strategic reliance and stability in South Asia, Russia, and Pakistan, once Cold War opponents, is reinforcing bilateral relationships across assorted territories. This coalition might indicate Pakistan's divergence from its usual strategy of admiring the West and its irresistible enslavement to the United States (Hussain, 2017). Because besides Pakistan's so many sacrifices in the war on terrorism, the US continuously blames Pakistan for providing terrorists safe heavens and always raises the slogan of doing more. On the other hand, the US strategic partnership with India also compel Russia to think about other entities besides India to make alliances for their own interest, and Pakistan was looking for another strong ally besides the US in the international scenario, so Russia also inclined towards Pakistan and vice versa. Russia adopted the balancing approach between India and Pakistan because India is a great trading partner of Russia which uplifts Russia's economy, so Russia cannot isolate itself from India, but by having relations with India, it will also build good relations with Pakistan. In Afghanistan, the existence of the Islamic State (IS) is taken as an utmost risk to Central Asian firmness. Russia is against the enduring existence of the US and its allies in Afghanistan inappropriate for Russian interests.

Russia finds it inevitable to strive for Afghanistan's stability which seems unfeasible without the assistance of Pakistan (Dawn, 2018). Pakistan's

geostrategic location is also very significant to Russia. After the Russian annexation of Crimea, it faces too many sanctions from the West which lessened the oil prices globally and eventually it badly affects the Russian economy. In order to boost its economy, Russia is in search of new global actors to flourish its markets internationally. So Russia decided to change its south Asian policy by making relations with Pakistan. In addition to attaining a right of entry in the Arabian Sea and beyond through CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor), the other major motive seems to be in Afghanistan. There is no second opinion in Pakistan's geostrategic worth in this constituency. Since Pakistan's geographical location is not compressible, and it is likely to join Eurasia Union with the Indian Ocean and past via CPEC, so it is receiving opposition (Korybko, 2015).

Russia is extremely concerned regarding the rising political, defense and diplomatic collaboration between India and the US. Presently, India is the prime defense market for Washington. Developing new international relations is the need of the hour for Pakistan since the US has allowed access to India for their weapons in conjunction with US backing for actions of Indians in the Indian Ocean which is quite disturbing for Pakistan. To counteract the potential Indian hegemony in South Asia, Pakistan needs to reach out to foreign support. Russia, India and China are the two largest defense consumer states. The revenue to the Russian defense-industrial complex has been hugely affected by the growing transformation of the Chinese defense industry and India's change of its defense markets. These circumstances demand Russia look for another defense buyer in order to generate income to sustain its defense trade complex. Pakistan is also longing for improving its defense tools and direly needs for consistent defense markets. These needs on both sides have brought them closer and have led to defense cooperation (Rekha, 2016).

Russia and Pakistan signed a pact of defense cooperation in 2014. This agreement is about supporting weapons control conducts, sustenance of economic, military and counterterrorism attempts, endorsement of international security between both the states (Dawn , 2016). Pakistan purchased four combat helicopters MI-35M from Russia and two foremost exercises on counterterrorism were also executed in each other's states under this defense support contract. Later, the naval forces of both states participated in joint antidrug drills carried out in the Arabian Sea. Pakistani warships also had taken part in the most important Russian Navy Day parade, the latest nautical alliance that happened in St. Petersburg. Pakistan is often lauded by the Russian leaders for eliminating terrorism from Pakistani land, whereas the US has always remained skeptical about Pakistan's genuine efforts in fighting against terrorism. In 2016, Russia and Pakistan combined a military exercise named 'Druzhbha-2016; a Russian word meaning friendship was executed. India's appeal to adjourn the drill owing to the terrorist attacks in Uri was ignored by Moscow. Instead of against India's expectations, the Russian LT Gen approved the drills on Twitter that stating these exercises would bring both states closer.

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Collaboration in the economy can also be seen between these two states. Russia and Pakistan, on December 23, 2014, agreed upon a most needed energy contract of \$1.7 billion intended for laying an LNG (liquefied natural gas) conduit from Karachi to Lahore (Abbas, 2016). A Russian oil and gas delegation paid a visit to Pakistan on January 28, 2018, to bequeath in the energy sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. KPOGCL (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Limited) and the Russian delegation on January 31 signed a pact of founding an oil-refinery in Kohat that was capable of distilling 20,000 barrels of oil per day (The Frontier Post, 2018).

### **CPEC as a driving force for regionalism and globalization**

The geographical immediacy of Pakistan's unites South Asian region via SAARC, Central Asia [Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), China and Afghanistan as well as probable economic corridors [One Belt, One Road, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (OBOR, CPEC)] plus power supply course. This proximity has made Pakistan eminent by enhancing its strategic significance. It has also grabbed the attention of superpowers like Russia, who may gain trade profit from such projects in the impending years (Rekha, 2016).

CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) is an imperative element of the Chinese Belt and Road program. One of the three courses of the Belt and Road initiative is CPEC that aims at fulfilling the transportation fissures and unite the African, Asian and European continents. Pakistan is laying at the junction of colossal supply and demand markets, and through CPEC, it offers passages to the non-coastal central Asian vicinity along with Western China to the Arabian Sea and more. CPEC lies in the southern part and is the non-stop route of the One Belt One Road initiative and endows valuable and proficient local and intra-regional links (khan, Ahmad, Marwat, & Zahid, 2016).

### **CPEC as indicator of Pak-China relations' strength**

The relationship between China and Pakistan has a long historical background, as it is said that the enemy of your enemy is your friend, so likewise China and Pakistan have strong relations, the 1962 war between China and India, which ultimately led to the partnership of China and Pakistan. Pakistan was still a member of the US alliance, which was against communism, but still, this alliance did not create any obstacle in China/Pakistan alliance against India because both the state have one common enemy, India. Since then, China and Pakistan have good quality partnerships (Hussain, 2017). Maritime Silk Road contains many pipelines, railway passages, public roads, and a variety of trade and energy ventures which has been planned to ward off the energy crisis of Pakistan. CPEC is an integral constituent of the Maritime Silk Road, and Pakistan believes that China aspires to speed up its trade and commerce activities through CPEC. Before the start of the CPEC, both China and Pakistan were already enjoying strategic

ties. (Khan, 2014). China has introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), under which the ancient Silk Route would be re-established as this region was part of the primeval Silk Route, and the Chinese merchants had carried out business in this region in the olden days. BRI's initial project is CPEC, and its success will be an example for the new projects in the world. In order to revive the economy of Pakistan and the development of its infrastructure amenities, every possible assistance has been provided by China to Pakistan, and currently, following the setting up of SEZs, Special Economic Zones, CPEC will lead to more harmonious relations between the two countries (Awan, 2008). CPEC links Xinjiang Province with Pakistan's Gwadar Port and hence grants access to China to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, it is anticipated that CPEC will play a major role in improving regional connectivity (Value walk, 2017).

### **Russia-China-Pak triangle and CPEC**

After the Ceriman crisis, the US imposed sanctions on Russia. On the other hand, the US also believes that Russia interferes with the US presidential elections, which also worsens the relations between them. US President Trump imposed a new policy of duty in China and bound her to pay 10% duty on 200 billion dollars on a list of Chinese products for importing from collections from customer commodities to mechanized materials (Khan & Khalid, 2018). This trade stress between China and the US increased after China, the world's second-largest economy, back slapped America, by imposing a 25 percent tariff on steel and aluminum. Both states were left with no other option than doing a partnership with one another (Holodny, 2018). The policies of the current US President, Donald Trump have escalated pressure on both states. A senior fellow, Alexander Gabuev, at the Carnegie Moscow Centre argues that both China and the US were getting along well recently, but the "government of Trump and the US internal political tussle in the US intensified the stress and eventually increased Sino-Russian collaboration. Moreover, they became a great strategic and economic partner, consequently. The increase in the collaboration between China, Pakistan, and Russia has emerged as a threat to the US global dominion. Despite the unpleasant past between Russia and China, Russia will never show reluctance in growing these economic terms with China because it is supporting CPEC. Plus, as China is a friend of Pakistan, so it has a spillover effect on Pakistan-Russia relations as well. A friend of your friend is also your friend. Also, Russia sees its many interests if it includes in CPEC, so this Russia, China, Pakistan axis could be pivotal for strengthening the CPEC project. Russia and China have a mutual agenda in the modern-day international environment and are desirous of combating the US hegemony. Both states are part of several multilateral platforms and institutions like BRICS and SCO so that they can reinforce their strategic corporation, which is dependent upon their mutual regional and global interests. Through the Eurasian Economic Union initiative and OBOR initiative, Russia and

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China both wish to transform the global trade and amalgamate the economics of the world in the course of trans-regional connectivity and shared collaboration.

### **Russia and Pakistan complex interdependence via CPEC**

If Russia includes in the CPEC project, it will benefit Russia as well as Pakistan and China. Russia can join the project to fulfill its own national interest, and Pakistan is already a part of it due to its own national interest (Khan, Ahmad & Khan, 2020). By looking at their own benefits, both the states can be mutually dependent on one another, which will eventually make the relations even more between them. The following are some of the advantages Pakistan and Russia can draw from the project of CPEC.

### **Geographical proximity**

The world is going through transition and progress. The investment of China in the One Belt One Road economic initiative, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and its connectivity with OBOR, and the ideal geographic position of Pakistan can bring major changes and introducing the latest tendencies in the triangular power ties. Under the vibrant leadership of visionary Xi Jinping, China is in pursuit of new economic goals and striving to incorporate Asia with Europe, Middle East, and Africa with its OBOR initiative. Therefore the significance of Asia in this regard cannot be overlooked for the victory to turn up this OBOR initiative. Pakistan is the first linkage to this plan due to its geographic position. Russia and Pakistan are two imperative players in the Chinese dream, i.e., one is the CPEC, and number two is the OBOR incorporation with the Eurasian Economic Union. (Maqsood, 2017). Since Russia and China share the borders, therefore PC can be used as a route by Russia to do business with other countries, including the Middle East and European states.

Figure-3



## **Resourceful Russian's influence in the region**

Russia is enriched in natural resources. Without a doubt, Russia has the world's biggest reserves of natural gas, which, according to OPEC, makes approximately one-fourth of the entire reserves worldwide. Russia had been the world's top oil producer, according to the US Energy Information Administration, in 2016 (Yegorov, 2017). Pakistan and China can import oil and gas from Russia. Alternatively, Pakistan is of equal importance to Russia in dual facets. The primary reason is that it is a channel to the Kremlin, and Central Asian Republics would certainly not wish for shakiness over there. Second, Pakistan geographically unites the Central Asian region with the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, and consequently, Russian products can reach the global market very appropriately through Pakistan. The inclusion of Russia can improve its economy even more. And if it includes in the CPEC, it will also benefit China and Pakistan economically (Hussein, 2018). Both states can benefit from their natural resources.

## **Russia's access to warm waters**

The history of Russia reveals that from Russian Czar, Peter the Great, to the current president, Vladimir Putin, the only wish and effort had been to get entrance to warm waters of Asia. Most of the other seas adjoining Russia are not traversable. Russia is interested in manipulating the geostrategic location of Pakistan harmonizing with CPEC, and the efforts in this regard have already commenced. In the year of the Cold War, USSR failed to counterpart the US military expertise due to, the tactical benefit which the US had because of its geographical position. Atlantic and Pacific Oceans surround most of the US are surrounded, and these oceans are open for any navigational objective. For that reason, it is of huge importance to have the right of entry in Persia and South Asia for the warm waters and the military and economic prowess of Russia (Khan, 2017). Additionally, Russia in CPEC will give a passageway to reach warm waters.

## **Cementing ties by CPEC: an emergence of new regional block**

Regional progress, doubtful US strategy, and the continuous challenges of Afghanistan have amplified the prospects of union among these three countries. Therefore, the associations among Pakistan, China, and Russia are on the rise. Several reasons over time have drifted US and Pakistan apart from each other gradually (Khan, Khalid & Shah, 2018). First, the non-stop US do more slogan, Salala checks post-incident and Raymond Davis case, etc. have intensified the doubts and uncertainties about the US and have developed a harmonious opinion within the Pakistan civil-military leadership to review its foreign policies and trim down its reliance on the United States. For that reason, Pakistan embarked on a search for other reliable partners. Secondly, Chinese strategic antagonism with the

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United States is escalating. Since Pakistan suffers from a dearth of coalitions, so it is an enthusiastic collaborator for China. Even though the Sino-Russian relationship is at a slow pace; still, it is also on an affable enduring path. Also, unstable Xinjiang, a northwestern Chinese province, is a profound matter of concern and worry for her.

China believes that the progress in this province might provoke superior stability for itself and its neighboring states. Third, China is of the view that the bond between U.S.-India has fortified due to weak Pak-US relations and an established strategic fact. Fourth, China's economy is facing perils, and this unpretentious situation has instigated China to look for international markets. The project of CPEC is a golden opportunity and proved a landmark venture for both states. As an outcome of the aforementioned reasons, China is mediating between Pakistan and Russia and facilitating their affiliation (Indus, 2017). And if Russia includes in the CPEC, it will cement ties between these three states, and their trading partners will also grow. On the other hand, Pakistan-Russia-China is making a new bloc because of their own national interests, and if Russia includes in the CPEC, it will make this bloc even stronger. Russia also needs to be a part of CPEC in order to have regional integration and it will benefit china Pakistan and Russia. And will leads towards a new regional economic cooperation venture.

### **Russian support to strengthen CPEC**

There are many apprehensions against CPEC and propaganda are going on to destabilize this economic cooperation project. Undue apprehensions have been expressed by the US Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He raised concerns on the legibility of the project since, according to the US, the corridor lies in between the supposed "disputed territory." The US has been articulating her apprehensions about Pakistan-China relations in general, and particularly the CPEC is pure because of the premeditated computation, keeping in view the geopolitics of this region. Pakistan possesses enormous strategic magnitude due to its geographical setting. Pakistan shares the longest border with Afghanistan in the north while the enriched Gulf in the south. Pakistan keeps seeking financial aid from the US. The United States always plies this aid on every occasion when Pakistan declines US unjustified commands over strategic affairs like Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, the United States is frightened of being swapped by China in the region and losing its value and power to Beijing. Furthermore, disturbed Xinjiang goes well with the US hegemonic interests. The internal dismay and mayhem in china are in favor of the US since it will keep Beijing inattentive to external matters and ultimately preventing China to wield its authority in global politics. But the CPEC is expected to help China triumph over these domestic security predicaments, and the United States is feeling intimidating by the thought of a more fierce Chinese charisma internationally. This fear is compelling the United States to react aggressively towards CPEC (Ahmad, 2018).

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India has also been spitting venom regarding CPEC over and over again and alleges this project to traverse through her terrain. Indian media is also quite vocal and has been prophesying the pessimist and negative aftermaths of CPEC. An alarmingly negative and grave reporting regarding the CPEC was made by Indian Print media in their news stories and proclaimed this project to be a greater regional hazard which can boost the militant support towards Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. It is noticeable that the ratio of unconstructive Indian media coverage against the CPEC project is far greater than its constructive reporting. Indian media has presented Pak-China relationships as an agreement to defy India because of the CPEC proximity to Kashmir. Above all, CPEC has been alleged to be an infringement of Indian autonomy with regard to its territory. India is afraid of the successful execution of the CPEC project and considers it a threat to the peace in Southeast Asia because the strategic interests of the project were framed against India as Russia is also a powerful state and its inclusion in this project can negate all the negative apprehensions and perceptions about this project. This inclusion will make this project even more credible.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan and Russia never enjoyed the best terms for the period of the cold war. But with time, especially in the last two years, both the two states have put in the effort to review and improve their mutual terms. Russia cannot overlook the Pakistan-India vibrant regional significance and worth. Also, the Russian government is well acquainted with the latent impact of Russian and Pakistani intimacy on India, which will certainly be in distress due to their closeness. With Russian incorporation in CPEC, the trilateral liaison between Pakistan, Russia, and China will enhance and, in the long run, result in a supportive economic union in the east. The potential economic opportunities presented by the CPEC are crystal clear, and international media sources have time and again articulated the keenness of several countries in availing the opportunity and utilizing the Gwadar Port for global trade (Maqsood, 2017). There is no second opinion on the decisive role of economics in developing rapport amongst the states. The value of CPEC is above speculations in this regard, and if Russia is encouraged to be a part of it or to at least be urged to invest in diverse segments of Pakistan, it will intensify the economic terms. It will also help Russia to decline US influence in the region. So Russia must include itself in this project for their own national interest and for regional integration.

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