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## Seminar on **Prospects of Pak-Russia Bilateral Relations**

Organized by  
**MUSLIM Institute**

MUSLIM Institute organized a seminar on “Prospects of Pak-Russia Bilateral Relations” on Thursday, February 12, 2015 in National Library, Islamabad. The seminar was attended by people from different walks of life including representatives of international organizations, diplomatic missions, think tanks, media, parliamentarians, scholars and academicians from various disciplines.



The purpose of arranging the seminar was to delve into and explore different aspects and avenues of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Russia that share same region. Former Secretary General Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan Mr. Akram Zaki, First Secretary Embassy of Russian Federation in Islamabad Mr. Anton Chernov, Defence Analyst Air Marshal (R) Masood Akhtar, Chairman MUSLIM Institute Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Ali, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia Mr. Khalid Khattak and Head of International Relations Department National Defence University (NDU) Islamabad Dr. Muhammad

Khan addressed on the occasion. Ambassador (R) Aslam Rizvi, Principal & Deen NIPCONS, National University of Science & Technology Islamabad Major Gen. (R) Shahid Ahmed Hashmat and Deputy Director Research ISSRA, NDU Dr. Saifur Rehman also shared their views during the interactive session. Following are the key points discussed in the seminar.



We are observing a renewed zeal for the promotion of bilateral relations as demonstrated in recent high profile exchanges from Russian and Pakistani governments. There have been many missed opportunities in the past for establishing strong bilateral relations between Pakistan and Russia. Opportunities of cooperation always existed and it is unfortunate that we could not capitalize them. In the early decades after independence of Pakistan there were developments in bilateral relations. Pakistan Steel Mills Karachi, use of Russian machinery by Oil and Gas Development Company Limited and Russian transport helicopters supplied to Pakistan for defence needs indicate the warmth in relations on different occasions. During Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, the relations were on lowest level.



On the 21st of December 1991, before the formal collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Embassy in Islamabad was changed into the Embassy of the Russian Federation. Pakistan has been first state to accept Russian Federation as successor state of Soviet Union. Thus from 1991 a new relationship started.

When cold war was over, new situation emerged and the regional cooperation, regional stability and harmony became more important. Pakistan at that time recognizing the developments took initiative and six neighboring Central Asian Republics were incorporated in Economic Cooperation Organization. By 1996 Russians also came to the realization that for their future they have to look east and their new Asian identity became more prominent. They and the Chinese along with the Central Asian states created first the Shanghai Five and then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). At the moment, Russia is

supporting for the full membership of Islamic Republic of Pakistan in SCO.



In the recent years there have been a number of high profile visits from both Pakistani and Russian sides aimed at improving mutual cooperation. This has resulted in Russia offering to invest in the energy sector of Pakistan. In last December there was penning down of \$1.7 billion energy deal between the two countries for laying LNG pipeline in Pakistan. Russian companies are ready to facilitate the joint implementation of many energy projects in Pakistan including conversion of Muzaffargarh Power House to the coal fired station, to work at Jamshoro Thermal Power Plant, upgradation of Pakistan Steel Mills, Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, exploitation and exploration of offshore oil and gas fields. Russia can provide nuclear reactors to Pakistan as well.

This is an era of change in world and this can be considered a prime time for Pakistan and Russia to gradually improve their relations. In the globalized world, relations with all the key players of world especially in the region should be promoted. However the improvement of bilateral relations should not be at expense of current relations with other countries. Russia and Pakistan have a legitimate right to view prospects of their partnership with optimism and need to do consistent efforts to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation for the benefits of their people as well as in the interest of regional peace and stability.

Current trade volume between two countries is not according to potential of both countries and the Russian Pakistani Inter-governmental commission on trade and economic, scientific and technical cooperation is aimed to promote it. Leading Russian academics have been providing training to dozens of Pakistani officers of anti-narcotics force and last year proposed a special program to facilitate the activities of Pakistani anti narcotics force.



From future perspective, Pakistan can benefit from Russia from its technical breakthroughs and advancement in space, military and civilian technology; oil and precious minerals and metal exploration, their subsequent mining, extraction, processing and refinement. Pakistan on the other hand, is an excellent source of raw materials, agricultural produce, cheap skilled, unskilled and technical manpower, finished and unfinished textile and leather products. People to people contact between both the countries can bring lot of new avenues of mutual benefits.

The same can be attained through cultural exchanges as well as exchange programs of students,

academicians, professionals, experts and parliamentarians. Transit facilities of Pakistan can bring an economic uplift in the region. In energy flow from Central Asia to South Asia, Pakistan can play a pivotal role and cooperation among these countries is quite natural because Russia and Central Asia are rich in resources while South Asia is deficit in energy resources including Pakistan.

We are now in a stage when there is a global triangle in the power structure of the world between United States, Russia and China. It has created the necessity that we have moved away from the age of friends and enemies; every country can has issues on which it cooperates with other and there are issues on which it may be in clash or in conflict. We have to enlarge the areas of cooperation and limit the areas of conflict. A common objective of all the nations in a multi-polar power structure should be peace, stability, cooperation, goodwill, development, peace and progress and welfare of the people.

Pakistan needs to become attractive for world but before that it needs to stabilize itself. Regarding four universal paradigms of vital national interests 1) defense and security 2) economic wellbeing 3) favorable regional and global order 4) promotion of values, it has to improve. In the current era, instead of thinking in terms of alliances, focus should be on network diplomacy to move from one issue to another issue concerned with respective countries. The cooperation has to be issue to issue and network diplomacy to be focused.



### Interactive Session

During the interactive session, there was extensive discussion on different areas concerning Pakistan Russia bilateral relations and regional cooperation. Participants discussed that

In Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia will be on facilitation front but there has to be some kind of regional solution because it is not a problem which the Americans or West or Afghans can solve only. Significance of Pakistan and Russia for one another is in the geographical context. On a question about Russia's stance on Kashmir, the representative of Russian Embassy said that both India and Pakistan should deal and negotiate this issue based on the number of documents including those adopted by the UN Security

Council.

When it comes to the cooperation in the field of anti-narcotics processes, Pakistan and Russia's cooperation is very concrete and they have undertaken even joint operations. The problem is that when it comes to NATO and ISAF forces in Afghanistan, the drug problem is not the main problem for them and they say it is UN mandate to tackle this.

Regarding the cooperation between any two countries, the channels of cooperation are becoming more and more privatized and the big businesses are deciding the quality of economic relations or commercial and trade ties between the different countries. Therefore, the state actors are getting weak and weaker.



## Recommendations

Salient recommendations extracted from the speeches made in seminar are as following:-

- Pakistan and Russia should strengthen bilateral relations and mutual confidence must be developed. These relations should not be at the cost of relations with other countries.
- Russian offers of investment in energy sector of Pakistan like conversion of Muzaffargarh power house to the coal fired station, work at Jamshoro Thermal Power plant, Thar Coal project and oil exploration should be availed and steps should be taken for their implementation.
- For energy flow from energy surplus Central Asia to energy deficit South Asia, Pakistan should play a vital role and in this regard strong Pak-Russia cooperation can bring economic uplift in the entire region.
- Russian cooperation for expansion of Pakistan Steel Mills, precious minerals and metal exploration, their subsequent minning, extraction, processing and refinement, as well as assistance in defence, metallurgical and telecommunication fields, supply of civil, aeronautical

- and helicopter engineering capacity to Pakistan and for other such projects should be sought.
- Pakistani should focus on increasing exports of products like raw materials, agricultural produce, finished and unfinished textile, leather products as well as cheap skilled, unskilled and technical manpower to Russia.
  - Continuous exchange of delegations from official and private sector of both countries, responsible for preparation and implementation of relationship enhancement strategies should be ensured.
  - Cultural exchange programmes as well as exchange programs of students, academicians, professionals, experts and parliamentarians should be encouraged to increase people to people contact.
  - Pakistan-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific and technical Cooperation, Pakistan-Russia Business Forum and other like platforms should be encouraged to play effective role for practical effectiveness of bilateral ties.
  - Pakistan should adopt network diplomacy and deal with countries issue to issue in order to enlarge areas of cooperation and limit the areas of friction.
  - Regional cooperation should be enhanced in the areas of common interest. Russia supports full membership of Pakistan in SCO, this organization should be used effectively to deal the common issues of the region like extremism, drug trafficking, money laundering, cross border organized crimes, security threats etc.
  - Pakistan and Russia should play constructive role in facilitating the peaceful and democratic settlement of Afghanistan situation which should be Afghan led and Afghan owned.
  - Media of both the countries should play constructive role for improvement in bilateral ties between Russia and Pakistan.

