

Opinion Piece  
**Friendship-2016**  
**First Ever Pakistan-Russia Joint Military Exercise**

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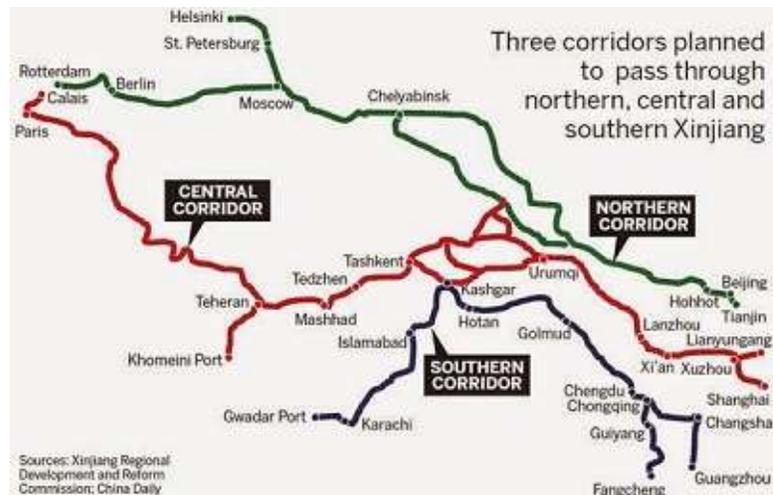
As part of Military Cooperation Pact Signed between Pakistan and Russia in December 2014; 200 personnel are participating in Anti-Terror Drills at Cherat in Pakistan hence focusing on Minor Tactics including procedures for minor operations like raids, ambush, house clearing, sniper, and escort from 24 Sep to 10 Oct 2016. The exercise is a diplomatic manoeuvre that will have regional and extra regional implications. It is vital to evaluate that this military initiative

will strengthen and highlight the improving relations between former Cold War rivals; moreover it is also a

significant sign of a shifting alliance in South Asia. It is imperative to analyse that the exercise has started at a time once Pakistani Gwadar Port is becoming a regional economic hub.

Since its independence in 1947 Pakistan enjoyed friendly relations with former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics till 1950. However those could not develop further and were affected due to Indian involvement with Russia resultantly Union of Soviet Socialist Republics supported India against Pakistan during Indo-Pakistan wars and meanwhile Pakistan's friendly relations with United State paved hostilities between two countries. During a decade long Russo-Afghan War from 1979 to 1990 Pakistan supported the United States and Afghan freedom fighters against Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Due to changing contemporary diplomatic and economic aspects in Asian Region; Pakistan and Russia have joined hands for friendship and cooperation in military and economic fields. Pakistan's Gwadar Port is emerging as naval and economic hub of Chinese One Belt One Road Project and China Pakistan Economic Corridor. With view to enhance its economic and diplomatic strength Beijing is expanding its trade links with Europe, Africa, Russia and



Central Asia and therefore China has planned to link regional and extra regional ports and countries through eight thousand miles long Inter-continental trade link from Madrid to Shanghai, five thousand and seven hundred miles long continental railways to link Moscow with Vladivostok, Rail link from Leipzig to Chongqing, four thousand and three hundred miles rail link between Beijing and Moscow. Beijing is also enhancing its influence by establishing energy pipe lines from Caspian Sea to China and from Turkmenistan to China. A fifteen hundred miles long oil pipeline from Myanmar to China is also part of the project.

In contemporary scenario once the China Pakistan Economic Corridor has come up as a reality so many regional and extra regional countries are becoming interested to share the advantages of China Pakistan Economic Corridor with Beijing and Islamabad. Some of these countries include United States, Russia, Turkey, Germany and Iran. Iran has always been projected against Gwadar Port by India as it has invested millions of U.S \$ in Iranian Chabahar Port against development of Gwadar however on the other hand Iranian Supreme Commander and President have announced their support for Gwadar Port in September 2016. It is vital to understand that 80 % of Iranian export is oil which is mainly exported towards east and alone China buys 30 % of its oil. These projects in combination with Chinese 'String of Pearl Strategy' to secure its sea lines of communication in Indo-Pacific Ocean against United States' domination have further strengthened the Pakistani position in the region.



In order to enhance the sea trade Russia needed ice free ports as most of its ports remain snow covered so warm waters of Indian Ocean being closet appeared to be the best choice however Russia could not achieve its aim by use of force and resultantly it was disintegrated during Russia-Afghan War. Since pull out of Russia from Afghanistan and latest 'war on terror', Russia is pursuing strategic character in Central Asia so Moscow has enhanced its relations with China, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Considering the NATO's expansion to the East including the recent NATO's deployment of the missiles on the eastern border of Turkey in Asia, its concerns about Ukraine, global race to Central Asian resources and the U.S presence in Central Asian Republics, Moscow is improving its relations in South Asia particularly with Pakistan.



Islamabad has offered Russia a shortest access to the much desired warm waters through strategically located Gwadar Sea Port at the gate of Hurmoz Strait. The access to warm water of Indian Ocean will allow Russia to join in the race for African resources and to improve its economy by transporting its oil and gas to even west through the Indian Ocean so as to offset any NATO pressure on energy supplies to

its neighbouring East Europe and to support its naval facility at Tortious. Visit of Pakistan Army Chief to Russia in 2015 has opened vistas of opportunity and cooperation between both the countries.

Friendly relations between Russia and Pakistan will have direct and positive effects on Central Asian Republics. These states need economically feasible energy pipeline itineraries for which Central Asian Republics are still dependent on Russia for exporting their energy. Pakistan-Russia friendly relations will provide opportunities to Central Asian Republics to shun Russian influence and to strengthen their economy by exporting their abundant energy resources through Gwadar Port. Estimated production of dry cargo is more than liquid cargo, which entails requirement of larger ships and thus deep sea port will prove better. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will produce more dry cargo than other Central Asian Republics and Gwadar will prove to be the shortest access to warm waters. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan having more liquid cargo can export it through pipelines and can have an alternate routes to Mediterranean Sea through Caspian Region which is about 1800 km long route whereas through Gwadar it will be 1400 km long.

Improving Russia-Pakistan relations are an eye sour for India however due to recent regional environments combined with Indo-U.S relations especially once a more vibrant and supportive India is essential for the U.S objectives in the Indian Ocean



Region for a decade at least as an effort counter balance to China and to share the energy resources of Central Asian Republics. Washington would like to urge India to stabilise Afghan situation however as India has started realising that it will not have share out of opportunities like China Pakistan Economic Corridor and One Belt One Road Project so it is making well known efforts to keep Afghanistan destabilized even against the interest of its ally, the U.S.

As India is frustrated so it can go to any limit to gain global attention and to secure its integrity. A war hysteria in Kashmir Region can not only win votes for the Indian politicians but it can also influence other freedom movements in its North East and South so it is likely that India will like to adopt this option and the easiest approach is Kashmir. India understands that any war between two arch nuclear rivals will directly influence the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and indirectly it can influence the Chinese Maritime Silk Route. Kashmir being a nuclear flash point between two arch nuclear rivals; India and Pakistan can even destabilize entire Indo-Pacific region so India may initiate some disturbance across Line of Control to gain world attention. India is likely to enhance its brutalities against innocent and un-armed Kashmiri Muslims. It should not be forgotten that Pakistan and India have fought four wars over Kashmir and fifth one is insight.

It is pertinent to understand that if Pakistan and Russia can develop friendly relations, China can resolve its territorial disputes with its neighbours and the U.S can adopt a new defence doctrine so why India cannot review its policy to have friendly relations with its neighbours. It will be prudent to resolve all the regional disputes in a pragmatic manner so as to avoid the efforts to suppress others. It will be beneficial to make efforts for timely resolution of all disputes for better regional securities, economies and development. It is vital for India to understand the regional milieu and to revisit its old age hegemonic designs of Akhand Bharat to Harmonizing India. All the regional countries should exert diplomatic pressure on India to have friendly relations with its neighbours and to withdraw its forces from Kashmir. Pakistan should also realize that it supported the U.S to destabilize the international balance so this time it should try to maintain the much needed global balance.



Considering the fast changing regional scenario, much needed Russian diplo-economic interests in warm waters of Indian Ocean and Pakistan's pragmatic concerns of socio-economic development, the friendly cooperation between two countries will not only bring the two allies together but will also prove to be a prudent facet to attain and maintain regional peace. Russian access to warm waters will have to

be through Afghanistan which will induce and enhance a friendly confidence between both nations thus adding to the regional peace and prosperity. Military cooperation between Pakistan and Russia will also improve the Pakistani military equipment. This military alliance will further pressurise the already frustrated India to avoid any armed venture against Pakistan or China Pakistan Economic Corridor hence this cooperation between two allies will augment the regional peace and prosperity leading to a conducive Blue Diplomacy and ultimately to Universalism.