**President Xi in Moscow: View from Pakistan**

[Muhammad Asif Noor](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/muhammad-asif-noor/)

March 30, 2023

The recent visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Moscow, marking the first high-level engagement after the COVID-19 pandemic and one year of conflict in Ukraine, has attracted significant attention from across the globe, including Pakistan. President Xi presented a proposal to act as a mediator in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which received a positive response from his Russian counterpart, President Vladimir Putin. This move towards peace mediation is a significant development and highlights China’s growing role in shaping international affairs. Additionally, discussions were held on other areas of cooperation, including reforming the international political and economic system, regional peace, and security. Given China’s emerging leadership in the region and as an “All Weather Strategic Partner,” Pakistan is putting high hopes on China and the way the country has emerged as a global peace builder.

The geopolitical landscape of the world is complex and dynamic, with multiple actors competing for influence and power. The meeting between President Putin and President Xi occurred in a challenging environment, with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and Western-sponsored escalation further complicating matters. However, the leaders’ decision to engage in candid discussions on various matters of mutual interest, such as energy, trade, international law, and global governance, indicates a growing recognition of the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving complex global challenges. This meeting highlights the emergence of a strategic partnership between China and Russia, which could have significant implications for the international system’s balance of power.

The recent diplomatic progress between Saudi Arabia and Iran, after years of strained relations, has raised hopes for peace and stability in the region.

This was President Xi Jinping’s first visit to Russia since assuming office as the President of the People’s Republic of China. It was a continuation of President Xi’s outstanding diplomatic efforts at the regional and global levels, which have been widely acknowledged. Additionally, President Xi’s decision after successfully mediating between the regional rivals of Saudi Arabia and Iran underscores the importance that China places on its strategic partnership with Russia. The recent diplomatic progress between Saudi Arabia and Iran, after years of strained relations, has raised hopes for peace and stability in the region.

The visit was primarily aimed at exploring ways to create conditions for peace in the region and to strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries. Discussions were held on how to address global threats and deal with the aggressive behaviour of some powers. Both China and Russia agreed to work together on various fronts, including offering trade in each other’s currencies. If successful, this move could challenge the dominance of the Western world, particularly the US dollar, in the global economic order.

President Xi’s deep personal ties with President Putin have also been a key factor in the growing strategic partnership between China and Russia. He is expected to use his influence to engage in dialogue with the President of Ukraine to de-escalate the tension in the region, which could bolster China’s image as a global power committed to building communities and promoting peace, rather than imposing its ideologies on others.

Pakistan’s decision to remain neutral in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine is understandable given its own experience with long-standing conflicts and their repercussions, particularly in the aftermath of the Soviet era and the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Past wars have resulted in significant destabilization and resentment, both regionally and globally. China and Russia are important partners for Pakistan, with China being a longstanding strategic ally and sharing numerous global and regional interests. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a crucial component of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), reflects China’s commitment to supporting Pakistan’s economic growth. Russia, on the other hand, shares a history of diplomatic ties with Pakistan and is an important partner in energy cooperation and economic relations. The evolving dynamics between China, Russia, and Pakistan, therefore, have important implications for regional and global politics, and it is essential for all stakeholders to carefully evaluate their interests and act accordingly.

Pakistan’s geopolitical positioning in the Asia-Pacific region and its relationship with China and Russia are becoming increasingly important in shaping the country’s foreign policy. The recent peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran highlights the potential benefits of aligning with the forces of development, peace and prosperity in the region. As energy-rich countries, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia offer a valuable source of hydrocarbons for Pakistan to meet its energy needs. Moreover, China’s leadership in promoting democratic transformation in global governance offers smaller countries like Pakistan a more effective platform to achieve their foreign policy goals. In the face of politically motivated sanctions such as those imposed by the FATF, Pakistan’s decision to align itself with these forces of positive change is crucial in determining its future direction. As such, it would be wise for Pakistan to closely observe developments in the region and position itself strategically for long-term success.

*The writer is Founder (Friends of BRI Forum).*