**Pakistan-Russia relations need to grow at a faster pace**

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In the post-cold war and post 9/11 strategic scenario that has impacted the South Asian, Middle Eastern and the Central Asian regions, new strategic alliances, termed as strategic partnerships, are emerging. No doubt,the emerging strategic orientation of the major powers, emerging powers and other countries is greatly impacted by their commercial interests.After the breakup of the former Soviet Union, in the US strategic calculation, India assumed greater importance, to become US partner in containing the next rising power, China. Hence,the US decided to make India a strategic and close defence partner.

This was done despite the fact that India maintained its close strategic partnership with Russia, and despite the fact that India had aligned with the US mainly to get superior military hardware, technology and investments and there were doubts in the US about India’s intentions whether it would really act the US way in containing China. For commercial reasons, even Russia preferred to maintain its strategic partnership and military relations with India, despite India being a close defence partner of the US, and Russia was sceptical that gradually India will shift its priority of purchasing the military technology and hardware from the US, instead of Russia.

Thus, due to major powers commercial interests linked with India as a major consumer market, India, as compared with [Pakistan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/543325/wells-appreciates-pakistans-efforts-against-illegal-us-immigrants/), got into a position of major advantage that it was able to reap the commercial and strategic advantages from western powers as well as from Russia and these countries even started ignoring India’s atrocities on the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Nonetheless, since Pakistan became a non NATO ally in fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan, it regained its strategic importance, although in the middle of the war the US had started doubting the Pakistan’s sincerity in fighting that war. And, India fully misled the US by blaming Pakistan for supporting terrorism in Afghanistan and Kashmir, as it termed the Kashmiris’ freedom struggle as terrorism to get an opportunity to crush it by the use of force without any objections from the major powers.

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However, finally after witnessing that the Pakistan military had rooted out terrorism from its tribal areas adjoining Afghanistan’s border and the positive role, which Pakistan was playing to bring the Taliban on the Table for peace talks with the US, Russia and China, the US and Russia both started realizing that Pakistan was an important country for fighting terrorism, for peace in Afghanistan, the, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Then, the initiation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by China, Pakistan’s strategic significance as a trade route to connect China, Central Asia and Russia to warmer waters to further with the ASEAN, Middle East and North Africa, was further highlighted, although the US became critical of Pakistan becoming a part of the CPEC. However, Russia and Central Asia were looking for joining the CPEC due to their trade interests.Even Iran wanted to connect with Gawader port to join the CPEC, and Afghanistan also joined it.

Thus, Pakistan’s strategic significance as a country to fight terrorism in the region, as a peacemaker in South and West Asia and being a major trade route is quite clear to the major powers and the world. Therefore, whereas India carries its own importance as a major market, Pakistan is equally commercially and strategically significant in its own right. That is why, despite their strategic relations with India, the US, Russia and EU,also want to maintain good relations with Pakistan.

In this context, forgetting the cold war alignments’ bitterness, Pakistan and Russia want to build good bilateral relations, particularly as Russia perceives that ultimately India will prefer the US over Russia and Pakistan thinks that the US is likely to always give priority to India over it, despite that the US would like to keep good working relations with Pakistan. In this context, China-Russia partnership will also be helpful in building good relations between Pakistan and Russia.The US cannot object to the growing Pakistan-Russia relations, as India, despite being a close defence partner of the US is also maintaining strategic and defence partnership with Russia, to which the US has not placed any constraints, and that Pakistan also wants good relations with the US.

In view of the above reasons, it is quite obvious that due to the favourable regional environment Pakistan-Russia relations are growing and Pakistan needs to give further impetus to the improving relations with Russia.Russia’s strong 64 member delegation recently visited Pakistan to discuss various investment initiatives. Russians have shown interest in Pakistan Steel Mills, Aviation industry and energy sectors. A Russian investment in the range of 9 Billion $ also indicates the improved security situation, rising economy, new trade policies and emerging status of Pakistan in the region.With huge investments promised by Saudis, Turks, Malaysians, Russians and China, Pakistan is soon to recover from her economic woes and will play a more effective role in geopolitics of the region.

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