

Round Table Discussion on:
"Pak Russia Relations: An Overview & Future Strategy"

Dated: Oct 06, 2012

Guest Speakers:

Air Marshal (R) Shahid Latif
&
Maj (R) Raja Mujtaba

Organized By:
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On 06 October, 2012 MUSLIM Institute organised round table discussion on the topic "Pak Russia Relations: An Overview & Future Strategy". Air Marshal (R) Shaid Latif and Maj(R) Raja Mujtaba were honorable experts on the occasion.

Tahir Mehmood, program coordinator of MUSLIM Institute, started the program by welcoming the honorable guests and participants from research institutes. He said that MUSLIM Institute is a research-oriented think-tank, which aims to promote academic research and dialogue among Muslims towards addressing and resolving issues and concerns faced by Muslims not just in our country but around the world. Today's round table discussion is to discuss an important issue of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Russia. MUSLIM Institute considers Pak-Russia relations as key to stability and prosperity of the region.

Usman Hasan, research associate of MUSIM Institute, gave brief presentation on the history of Pak-Russia relations with the following points.

- Diplomatic relations established in 1948
- Soviets invited Liaqat Ali Khan in 1949 who then decided to visit USA instead of USSR
- Pakistan joined SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955
- 1960 U-2 American spy plane incident
- Ayub Khan's visits to Russia
- Russian role in 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars
- Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's period and relations improved
- He visited Russia as President and PM of Pakistan
- Steel Mills project
- Many Other projects like Oil & Gas
- In Gen Zia's period relations weakened again
- USSR declared war on Afghanistan in 1979; not welcome by Pakistan
- Pakistan supported mujahedeen against USSR
- In 1988-89 USSR withdrawal from Afghanistan
- USSR dissolved in 1991
- Pakistan was first state to accept Russia as successor state of USSR
- PM Nawaz Sharif visited Russia in 1999
- Post 9/11 relations; Pervez Musharaf's visit in 2003
- Russia observer member of OIC & Pakistan observer member of SCO
- In 2007 Russian PM visited Pakistan
- President Asif Ali Zardari visited Russia in 2011
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Pakistan postponed
- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Pakistan
- Pakistan's Army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani visited Russia
- Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov delayed visit to India

After the presentation, honorable experts addressed the round table discussion. Highlights of the views expressed by the both experts are given in the following paragraphs.

Air Marshal (R) Shahid Latif

Russia is the leading power of the world but despite lapse of 65 years since creation of Pakistan, warm relations with the former could not be developed due to our lack of vision, objectivity and flawed foreign policy. Our leadership should think why our foreign policy makers and managers of the policy failed to manage it? Why did they limit relations to US and ignored Russia from the beginning. We always suffered by mistaking US war as our war, US enemy as our enemy and US interests as our interests.

Today, Americans are in Afghanistan because they have their interests and they will leave only after achieving their own objectives. They are clear in their strategy and not doing any thing by any means for Pakistan. Our leadership is short sighted on many issues including foreign policy. Policy makers must keep in mind that countries are not driven by emotions alone, but by keeping focus on their own interests.

In the early nineties, Jews (Zionists) coined the term "world order". They are behind the curtain and not visible but they direct the US. They are moving in a very systematic way and specifically focusing on Pakistan because we are a nuclear power and our bomb is called the Islamic bomb. Pakistan is the target also because we are the engine of the Muslim countries.

Economy plays vital role to sustain and run the country. These days the Jews are controlling our economy through IMF and World Bank. IMF and World Bank are giving us loans with critical conditions. When economy weakens, infrastructure dissolves and industry cannot be run properly. We can see that our industrialists are shifting their investments to Dhaka and other countries. Similarly, our trade agreements with India will be of no use for us as India will benefit from these agreements but Pakistani local producers will suffer a lot. Indian products are relatively cheap and Pakistani businessmen cannot compete with them in the local as well as international markets.

In 2010, the Russian President Vladimir Putin said that they preferred India in relationship but he did not say any such thing about Pakistan. After that India even developed better relations with US and US agreed to give them civil nuclear technology. US is willing to strengthen India against China, and India on the other hand is trying to strengthen its economy with the help of US. When India moved towards the US in 2011, Russia showed positive signals for Pakistan to improve the relationship.

US and NATO countries are making efforts to capture the resources of Asian region. The US came here from thousands of miles and has eyes on resources of the Middle East and Central Asia. They want to fulfil their energy and economic needs. Russia and China are major stakeholders and they both will not permit US to capture resources of this region. Russia is the supplement not the substitute of US for Pakistan. At this time we are in energy crises and Russia has the energy resources which can solve our problems. They want to invest \$5 billion in gas pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. They also offered us to improve our railway system and Steel Mills.

Russia can boost our economy by assisting us and if we give them corridor to the warm waters via Gawadar, it is in our mutual interest.

In my opinion cancellation of President Putin's visit is not a big issue as their Foreign Minister's visit and our Army Chief's visit are good signs and can be helpful for better relationship. The quadrilateral summit (of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Tajikistan) is a very good idea, but because relationships between Russia and Tajikistan are not good and between Pakistan and Afghanistan are also not warm so it was better to postpone the summit and wait for a better environment before it could be convened. So some home work is needed and thus the conference is delayed.

US and India are keenly observing different happenings in the region. Pakistan must adopt a balanced approach in its relationships. China is our friend and healthy relationship with Russia will be a positive sign. It is a very good opportunity for us. China, Russia and Pakistan can play vital role to bring stability and prosperity in the region and it is the regional alliance that would effectively counter the hegemonic designs of US.

Major (R) Raja Mujtaba

China and Russia are the emerging powers of the region while Pakistan enjoys important strategic location in the region. Pakistan must warm up relations with Russia. In the past, instead of maintaining balance in our relations with US and Russia, we developed relations with US and ultimately Russia went for friendship with India. And due to the friendship treaties with India, Russia helped India in 1971 war. After the dissolution of USSR, Pakistan and Russia tried to develop better relations and some positive steps were taken from both sides. SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) gave an edge to this region over US and NATO. The latter is becoming weak due to internal conflicts and problems. We should improve relations with countries in the region by adopting balanced foreign policy approach. The recent visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov after the cancellation of President Vladimir Putin's shows positive development. The stance of Russian Foreign Minister on drone attacks is an indication for better relations in future.

We should also weight ECO due to its regional importance. We should have a balanced foreign policy. Due to geo-strategic location, Pakistan is important for Russia, China and US and hence we can maintain equilibrium between these states.

To meet the challenges from our enemies, we must focus on our navy and air force. In future these two will play key role in our strength and ensure our defense.

Recommendations

Following recommendations in the light of views of honourable speakers and contribution of the participants are made for making future strategy regarding warm Pak Russia relations:-

Pakistan and Russia need to forget the past and make sincere resolve to improve relations. In this regard, Pakistan needs to adopt balanced foreign policy according priority to its own interests and without being labelled with any bloc.

The postponed visit of the Russian President may be materialised in near future to deprive the anti forces of any opportunity to impede improvement in Pak Russia relations.

Pakistan and Russia need to explore areas of investment for mutual benefit. To begin with, energy sector would be best option as it will help mitigate our energy crises.

In addition to improving bilateral relations, Pakistan and Russia must interact at multilateral forums for strengthening regional cooperation as it will help overcome irritants not only in Pak Russia bilateral relations but also in relations among various countries of the region.

Relations among countries like human relations pass through evolutionary process. Hence, Pak Russia relations may be allowed to grow on the same pattern. We may not expect strategic breakthrough at the outset. Such milestones come with strong bond and unflinching trust. Once that zenith is achieved in our relations with Russia, then we may expect it to play its role in resolving our outstanding issues with the neighbouring countries.

Despite hurdles, Pakistan and Russia must continue their frequent interaction as it will help correct any misperceptions or settle any misgivings. Strengthening of Pak Russia relations is in the interest on not only both countries but also the entire region.

Pakistan and Russia need to enhance the Technological cooperation and can work together on space technology. They can collaborate in defense, especially to enhance capacity of Navel and Air forces.

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