

Pakistan–Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism

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Abstract

Pakistan-Russia relations have a complex history of divergences, contradictions and ambiguities that heightened during the Cold War and subsequent era of Afghan *Jihad*. However, the gradual rapprochement that paved the way for institutionalised engagement started after Pakistan joined the war against terrorism. Based on secondary review of academic and online sources, this article explores how relations between the two countries evolved from estrangement to institutional engagement, with a special focus on why this relationship is significant for both. Economic, energy, defence, counterterrorism, and socio-cultural domains are the important variables that are discussed. Given existing geopolitical compulsions like Moscow’s quest for playing a decisive role in Afghanistan’s security calculus; Pakistan’s pursuit for coming out of the United States’ straitjacket and finding alternative regional partners offer the reasons, challenges and outlook in shaping prospective ties. It is argued that Pakistan-Russia ties are likely to improve in the future, especially in terms of economic, defence and counterterrorism cooperation.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Cold War, Defence Cooperation, Counterterrorism, Geopolitics, Regional Fragility.

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