



A Chinese Perspective on Pakistan-Russian Cooperation in Afghanistan

OE Watch Commentary: On 21 February the Pakistani publication, *The News International*, published an article about statements that a Chinese expert on international affairs made to *China Global Television Network*. According to the article, the Chinese expert is supportive of Russian and Pakistani involvement in Afghanistan because they both have security interests in the country. The expert also expected that since Russia and Pakistan are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), they could utilize the SCO to increase dialogue with both the Afghan government and the Taliban. In addition, the Chinese expert argued that the US decision to suspend security funding to Pakistan “has driven Pakistan and Russian relations even closer,” especially on issues related to security and stability in Afghanistan.

The Chinese expert also hinted at economic implications of the warming Russian-Pakistani relations. He said that the two countries agreed to build a pipeline from Russia to Pakistan to provide natural gas to Pakistan and that this is also driving their greater security cooperation. This pipeline could overlap with the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline, or TAPI, which is set to be completed in 2019. It would therefore inevitably have to pass through Afghanistan as well as other Central Asian countries that are SCO members. Turkmenistan is an exception, however, in that it has attended SCO fora but because of its official policy of neutrality in foreign affairs, it is the only Central Asian country to not have joined the SCO.

The Chinese expert made one final point—the long-standing “all-weather friendship” between China and Pakistan would not be affected by Pakistan’s relations with either Russia or the US. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“He said that Pakistan was now a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), hence both Russia and Pakistan could use this new channel to step up their dialogue concerning Afghanistan and try to bring the Taliban back to the negotiating table.”

Source: “Pakistan, Russia have shared interests to see peace, stability in Afghanistan: Chinese expert,” *The News International*, 21 February 2018. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/283921-pakistan-russia-have-shared-interests-to-see-peace-stability-in-afghanistan-chinese-expert>

While commenting on closer relations between Pakistan and Russia, a Chinese expert on international affairs said that both countries could play a constructive role to bring peace and stability to the region including Afghanistan. He opined that the two countries could also use multilateral channels to enhance their dialogue as Russia, China and Pakistan had a trilateral dialogue concerning Afghanistan. He said that Pakistan was now a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), hence both Russia and Pakistan could use this new channel to step up their dialogue concerning Afghanistan and try to bring the Taliban back to the negotiating table.

He also said “Russia and Pakistan have warmed up relations for several years but certainly the latest U.S. move concerning Pakistan has driven Pakistan and Russian relations even closer.” He said that both the countries had not only agreed to enhance their political consultations but also to increase their cooperation in economic, trade and investment areas. To yet another question, he remarked that Pakistan and China enjoyed an all-weather friendship regardless of Pakistan’s relations with other countries, adding that “China welcomes friendship between Pakistan and Russia.”



Valley in Samangan Province in northern Afghanistan.

Source: US Army, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86#/media/File:Samangan_Province.jpg, (CC BY 2.0).