



India's Reaction to Russian Security Cooperation with Pakistan

OE Watch Commentary: India has maintained a good relationship with Russia for a number of years, particularly through security cooperation. The accompanying excerpted articles show how Indian-Russian security cooperation may change over the next several years, particularly given Russian security cooperation with India's rival, Pakistan.

The first article from the *Times of India*, an English language newspaper, discusses Russia's recent improvement of relations with Pakistan and how the Russian government is working to assuage India that it will not affect its relationship with it. The article includes statements from Nikolay Kudashev, the Russian Ambassador to India, that Russia's recent "joint exercises with Pakistan were focused only on antiterror operations." This statement came "after the first tri-Service "Indra" military exercise between the Indian and Russian armed forces." The "Indra" military exercise has taken place annually since 2003 with the Navies of Russia and India and this year expanded to include ground forces and aircraft.

The second article from *Newsline*, a Pakistani English language magazine, looks at the improvement of ties between Pakistan and Russia and notes that they "have been warming up since 2014, when Russia formally lifted an arms embargo against Pakistan, in place since the Afghan war." As the article also notes, the warming up of relations has resulted in not only "a deal to for Pakistan to purchase four Russian made MI 35M attack helicopters," but also the recent "joint military exercise between the two nations." While some in Pakistan think that this signifies "the emergence of a new regional bloc," the author believes that "there cannot be a regional alliance in South Asia sans India." Other sources in Pakistan note that the relationship is still in an early stage.

The article from *Business Standard*, an English language Indian daily newspaper, does not mention Russian-Pakistani relations, but reports on India's plans to procure new tanks and infantry combat vehicles and this is one area where the Indian government could move away from security cooperation with Russia. The article mentions how the Indian Armed Forces are looking to manufacture what it calls "Future Ready Combat Vehicles" to "replace the ageing T-72 fleet." According to Lieutenant General M J S Kahlon, the Indian Army planning chief, the "process involves identifying a mature, in-service tank in the world, which can be tweaked to meet our requirements." While General Kahlon states that "this would be the first time indigenous production would take care of our armoured requirements," the article mentions that India will "upgrade the existing T-72 tank fleet to remain battle-worthy till the new platforms are inducted." The article also says that the "FRCV is intended to carry out roles other than that of a tank." India could turn to Russia to upgrade its inventory of T-72s and Russia is in a position to bid for the FRCV with its Armata platform, which could fulfill the multiple roles that India is looking to get out of the FRCV. Whether India opts for this option might depend on how far Russia pursues security cooperation with Pakistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Since the FRCV [Future Ready Combat Vehicles] and FICV [Future Infantry Combat Vehicles] projects are time-consuming projects, the army will simultaneously upgrade the existing T-72 tank fleet to remain battle-worthy till the new platforms are inducted..."

Source: "Russia allays India's fears, plays down drill with Pakistan," *The Times of India*, 2 November 2017. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/russia-allays-indias-fears-plays-down-drill-with-pakistan/articleshow/61428230.cms>

Russia said on Wednesday that its relations with India were second to none in the world to downplay its recent joint military exercise with Pakistan, even as it stressed the need for "an open security architecture with space for all"... "Our relations with India are a privileged strategic partnership, second to no other country, while we have a normal inter-state relationship with Pakistan," said Russian ambassador Nikolay Kudashev.

Talking to journalists after the first tri-Service "Indra" military exercise between the Indian and Russian armed forces concluded in Vladivostok on Sunday, Kudashev said his country's joint exercises with Pakistan were focused only on antiterror operations. Russia has begun to hold the "Druzba" (friendship) military exercises with Pakistan since last year...

Source: Aasim Zafar Khan "The Moscow Tilt," *Newsline*, 23 November 2017. <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/the-moscow-tilt/>

Foreign policy experts in Pakistan are a dime a dozen, especially when it comes to the big four: Washington, New Delhi, Beijing and Kabul. Every evening on prime time television, and every morning on the op-ed pages of our newspapers, these experts help us commoners navigate the delicate intricacies of our foreign policy. However, of late, they're a little stumped, because of the entry of a new kid on the block: Mother Russia.

Outreach efforts between the two countries have been warming up since 2014, when Russia formally lifted an arms embargo against Pakistan, in place since the Afghan war. In 2016, during then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General (retd.) Raheel Sharif's visit to Moscow, a deal to purchase four Russian made MI 35M attack helicopters was inked, and the machines were received two months ago.

Most recently, the current COAS, General Bajwa, also visited Russia, to witness a joint military exercise between the two nations...local analysts/strategists, who are professionally disposed against the workings of chance, went into overdrive, hailing the emergence of a new regional bloc...there is much talk about the new bloc in the region: Islamabad, Beijing and Moscow. Or, if one looks at it in a certain light, a minus India bloc...There cannot be a regional alliance in South Asia sans India...

(continued)

Continued: India's Reaction to Russian Security Cooperation with Pakistan

Source: Shukla, Ajai "Army sets ball rolling for biggest-ever arms deal," *Business Standard*, 16 November 2017.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/army-sets-ball-rolling-for-biggest-ever-arms-deal-117111600075_1.html

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat and a battery of senior generals on Wednesday explained the details of India's biggest-ever weapons acquisition — the ongoing procurement of futuristic tanks and infantry combat vehicles (ICVs)...The generals told a defence industry gathering that the mechanised forces would be boosted on three parallel tracks. The first is the manufacture of 1,770 advanced, 50-tonne tanks — termed Future Ready Combat Vehicles (FRCVs) — under the "strategic partner" policy to replace the ageing T-72 fleet..."This process involves identifying a mature, in-service tank in the world, which can be tweaked to meet our requirements," said Lieutenant General M J S Kahlon, the army's planning chief...While the FRCV will be a derivative of an in-service tank, the "future infantry combat vehicle" (FICV) will be a brand-new, futuristic system...

Kahlon pointed out that this would be the first time indigenous production would take care of our armoured requirements. "So far, we bought all our armour on a government-to-government basis — from the west till late 1960s and from the Soviet Union and Russia since then." That dependence forced the army to adapt its warfighting doctrines to platforms that had never been designed with India's tactical needs, geography and manpower in mind. "We bought what was available and adapted our doctrines onto that," rued Kahlon. Since the FRCV and FICV projects are time-consuming projects, the army will simultaneously upgrade the existing T-72 tank fleet to remain battle-worthy till the new platforms are inducted. Shivane said T-72s would get more powerful engines, day- and night-vision thermal sights, and improved guns and ammunition.

The FRCV is intended to carry out roles other than that of a tank. The RFI states it will be the base platform for a range of additional armoured vehicles, including self-propelled artillery and air defence guns, mine trawls, bridge-layer tanks (BLTS), armoured engineering vehicles, etc...



T-72 Ajeya.

Source: Vikramaadityasumbria via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AIndian_Army_T-72_Ajeya.JPG, CC BY-SA 3.0.