

The Russia-Pakistan Strategic Partnership. Russia's Return to South Asia

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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Region: [Asia](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

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A New Phase

The Russian-Pakistani Strategic Partnership (“[Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar](#)”) entered a new phase last week following two significant developments that came just a few weeks after President Putin and Prime Minister Khan’s first meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, during which time it became obvious that the South Asian state is integral to the Eurasian future that the [Russian leader articulated](#) at the event. It therefore shouldn’t be a surprise that the two Great Powers decided to [establish a High-Level Inter-Parliamentary Commission](#) and [expand their joint military ties](#) following the Pakistani Chairman of the National Assembly’s visit to Moscow and the trip that the Russian Ground Force Commander-in-Chief paid to Islamabad, respectively.

Strategic Timing

These visits took place in the context of Russia’s “[Return to South Asia](#)”, whereby the Eurasian Great Power is prioritizing its relations with Pakistan in order to “[balance](#)” out India’s pro-American pivot after New Delhi fully committed itself to the US’ so-called “[Indo-Pacific](#)” strategy for “[containing](#)” China. The latest developments will intensify their political and military cooperation, thus deepening the trust between the two sides that was forged through their [joint diplomatic efforts](#) to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan and the active ones to preemptively thwart the regional terrorist threats that are emanating from the landlocked country. The enhancement of political ties could lead to the diversification of their strategic relations into the much-needed economic and [connectivity](#) realms, while their military ones could foreseeably result in more arms sales.

Substance Over Symbolism

It’s therefore the case that last week’s moves are much more substantial than cynics might think because they position these two Great Powers to take maximum advantage of the success that they’ve hitherto had in their fast-moving strategic partnership. Although a lot of work still remains to be done to broaden their ties to the point where they’re truly comprehensive and involve every sphere of bilateral relations, the groundwork has veritably been created to eventually take them to that level. It shouldn’t be forgotten that few

thought that Russia and Pakistan would ever surmount their Old Cold War-era rivalry after the bitter historical memories that they share over their 1980s proxy war in Afghanistan, but the very fact that their parliaments and militaries are now partnering with one another should be appreciated for the historic new phase that they herald.

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Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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About the author:

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