
THE RUSSIAN-PAKISTANI STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ENTERED A NEW PHASE

- 09.07.2019

Eurasia Future (8 July 2019)

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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 Khans 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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