

# The Impact of Full-Spectrum Diplomacy on Public Perceptions and Cultural Exchanges between Russia and Pakistan

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## *Abstract*

*The substance of full-spectrum diplomacy on public perceptions and cultural exchanges between Russia and Pakistan has grown amid shifting geopolitical dynamics. The February 2022 visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow, during the Russo-Ukrainian War, marked a well-intentioned moment in bilateral relations. According to a BBC World Service Poll (2021), Pakistani public opinion towards Russia has fluctuated over time, with recent years showing a rise in positive views, particularly after the 2022 visit. A Washington Post (2022) poll highlights ideological commonalities between the two nations, with a preference for strong leadership over democratic governance, reflecting potential diplomatic alignment. This study addresses the lack of clarity on the long-term impact of full-spectrum diplomacy on public perceptions and cultural exchanges between Russia and Pakistan. It investigates (1) How has full-spectrum diplomacy, particularly the barter trade agreement following the 2022 visit, influenced public perceptions of Russia in Pakistan? and (2) How have cultural exchanges, such as linguistic collaborations, intellectual transmissions and historical ties like the Sintashta culture, shaped cultural diplomacy between the two nations? By utilizing the Cultural Diplomacy Theory (Cynthia P. Schneider, 2006) along with the Theory of Full-Spectrum Diplomacy (John Lenczowski, 2011), this study further frames the analysis of how these exchanges influence bilateral relations. Findings indicate that full-spectrum diplomacy has led to a gradual yet significant shift in public opinion, while cultural exchanges have strengthened ties through initiatives like the integration of Russian philosophies within Urdu literature and the recognition of Russia's stance over the Russo-Ukrainian War.*

**Keywords:** Soft Power, Mazdoor Kisan Party, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Bolshevik Revolution, Class Activism, SCO

## Introduction

Full-spectrum diplomacy is a comprehensive approach to international relations that encompasses a wide array of diplomatic tools, from traditional state-to-state negotiations to public diplomacy, cultural exchanges and economic partnerships<sup>1</sup>. Scholars like John Lenczowski (2011) and Marjorie Hope (2023) describe full-spectrum diplomacy as integrating multiple layers of diplomatic activities, including economic, cultural and public diplomacy, into a cohesive strategy that engages all levels of society and government. Over the years, this concept has expanded to include a wider array of soft power instruments, making it a versatile framework for understanding how nations manage their external relationships in an increasingly complex world (Lenczowski, 2011, p. 59; Hope, 2023, p. 02).

Within the context of Russia-Pakistan relations, full-spectrum diplomacy is a multilayered approach that goes beyond political engagement to incorporate cultural exchanges, economic cooperation and military collaboration. This diplomatic model is essential for understanding how the two nations, historically positioned on opposing sides during the Cold War, have gradually reshaped their bilateral relations through diversified strategies. Russia's engagement with Pakistan represents a recalibration of its foreign policy in South Asia, moving beyond traditional alliances and exploring new partnerships. For Pakistan, cultivating stronger ties with Russia is part of a broader strategy to diversify its international relationships and reduce reliance on traditional allies like the United States and China (Khan, 2023).

The concept of full-spectrum diplomacy has evolved significantly. Initially rooted in Joseph Nye's (1990) theories of soft power, this approach has expanded to include not just cultural and public diplomacy but also economic statecraft and strategic communication (Nye, 2009, p. 01). Nye's work laid the foundation for understanding how nations can influence others through attraction rather than coercion. Later scholars, such as Hendrik W. Ohnesorge (2019) and Bridey Heing (2019), argued for the inclusion of a broader set of tools, including digital diplomacy and non-state actors in the diplomatic process. Ohnesorge described full-spectrum diplomacy as a dynamic and adaptive process that leverages every available diplomatic tool, from high-level negotiations to grassroots cultural exchanges, to achieve foreign policy objectives (Ohnesorge, 2019, pp. 2-6). Heing emphasized the role of public diplomacy in the digital age, where state and non-state actors alike engage in shaping international perceptions (Heing, 2019, p. 18). In this light, full-spectrum diplomacy becomes a flexible framework that adapts to the complexities of modern geopolitics, making it an essential tool for nations like Russia and Pakistan as they steer their evolving relationship (Khan, 2023).

In the context of Russia-Pakistan relations, full-spectrum diplomacy includes political, military, economic and cultural dimensions. These relations have steadily evolved, particularly after the Cold War,

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<sup>1</sup> Full Spectrum Diplomacy, coined by John Lenczowski in his 2011 book, have deep rooted relation with cultural diplomacy; a term, uses for creative expression and cultural exchanges to promote mutual understanding among countries (Schneider, 2006). Cynthia P. Schneider, a key figure in cultural diplomacy, highlighted its role as a core element of public diplomacy, where nations engage through the arts and cultural initiatives to enhance international relations. Both Lenczowski and Schneider highlight the importance of blending traditional diplomacy with cultural engagement for more effective global influence (Aara, 2024).-

when both countries reassessed their foreign policy priorities. Russia, seeking to expand its influence in South Asia, found in Pakistan a potential partner to counterbalance Western influence in the region. For Pakistan, engaging with Russia is part of a broader foreign policy strategy to diversify its international partnerships, especially in light of shifting global alliances (Ahmed, 2023).

Public perception plays a critical role in the success of full-spectrum diplomacy. In Russia, public opinion toward Pakistan has been shaped by historical narratives, economic interests and shared security concerns, particularly in the context of counterterrorism and regional stability. The Kremlin has used media and public diplomacy to reshape the narrative surrounding Pakistan, moving away from Cold War-era suspicions and toward a more pragmatic view that emphasizes mutual benefits. Russian public opinion, though still influenced by historical alliances, has gradually become more favorable toward Pakistan as cultural exchanges and economic cooperation have increased (Zaheer, 2024).

In Pakistan, public perception of Russia has similarly evolved. Historically, Pakistanis viewed Russia with suspicion, largely due to its close ties with India and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Khan D. S., 2024, p. 9). However, in recent years, this perception has shifted as both countries have engaged in military exercises, energy projects and cultural exchanges. Pakistan's media and educational institutions have played a significant role in reshaping public opinion, emphasizing the potential benefits of a stronger partnership with Russia. Cultural diplomacy has helped humanize the relationship, with exchanges in art, music and literature cultivating a deeper understanding between the two nations (Aara, 2024).

Cultural exchanges have been instrumental in moving beyond stereotypes and developing a more detailed consideration of each other's societies. Russian-Pakistani cultural festivals, academic collaborations and student exchange programs have contributed to building goodwill at the grassroots level. These initiatives are part of a broader strategy to use full-spectrum diplomacy to not only strengthen bilateral relations at the government level but also create a foundation of mutual respect and awareness among the general public (Aara, 2024).

The cultural relationship between Russia and Pakistan is also intertwined with political ideologies that have influenced both countries. One noteworthy cultural and ideological exchange can be traced back to the influence of Marxism in Pakistan. The spread of socialist ideas in Pakistan, particularly during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, can be linked to the global influence of the Soviet Union. The intellectual and cultural elite in Pakistan, including prominent figures like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, were deeply influenced by Marxist ideas. Faiz, a celebrated poet and intellectual, was known for his socialist leanings and involvement in leftist politics, which earned him the admiration of Soviet leaders and a prominent place in Soviet-Pakistani cultural exchanges. The influence of Marxism in Pakistan is also evident in the development of left-wing political movements, such as the Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP) and the Communist Party of Pakistan. These movements, while never dominant in Pakistan's political landscape, played a complex

role in shaping the country's intellectual and cultural discourse. The appeal of Marxism in Pakistan was particularly strong among the country's intellectuals, artists and writers, who saw in it a framework for addressing issues of social justice and inequality (Waheed, 2022, pp. 151-199).

Despite the challenges posed by the rise of conservative and religious forces during the regime of Zia-ul-Haq, which led to a crackdown on left-wing movements and intellectuals, the legacy of Marxism in Pakistan has endured, particularly in the realm of literature and culture. Writers like Faiz Ahmed Faiz continue to be celebrated for their contributions to Pakistani literature, and their work remains a testament to the enduring influence of Marxist ideas in the country (Rehman, 2000, pp. 3-7).

However, the exchange of cultural ideas between Russia and Pakistan is not limited to Marxism. The historical connection between the two countries dates back even further, to the ancient Sintashta culture of the Southern Urals. The Sintashta culture, which dates back to the Middle Bronze Age, is believed to be the origin of the Indo-Iranian languages, and its influence can be seen in the cultural and linguistic heritage of both Russia and Pakistan. This shared cultural history provides a foundation for modern cultural exchanges between the two countries, highlighting the deep historical ties that exist between the peoples of Russia and Pakistan (Wo, 2022, p. 76).

Furthermore, the Soviet art and literature, heavily influenced by the doctrine of socialist realism, had a profound impact on the cultural and political landscape of many countries, including Pakistan. Soviet art, which emphasized purposive art subordinated to the goals of socialism and the party, resonated with many Pakistani artists seeking to use their work as a means of addressing social and political issues. This influence is evident in the work of Pakistani artists and writers associated with the Progressive Writers' Movement, who sought to address issues of social justice and challenge the status quo (Ali, 2015, pp. 2-13).

Though, the relationship between Soviet art and literature and Pakistan's political culture was not without tensions. The conflict between the theory of art for art's sake and purposive art was a significant issue in Pakistan, as it was in many other countries. While some Pakistani artists embraced the Soviet model of socialist realism, others resisted, arguing that art should be free from political constraints. This tension between artistic freedom and political purpose remains a central issue in Pakistan's cultural and political discourse to this day (Ali, 2015, pp. 2-13; Aara, 2024).

Bolshevism, the revolutionary ideology that emerged from the Russian Revolution of 1917, also significantly impacted political movements in Pakistan. The influence of Bolshevism can be seen in the rise of left-wing political movements during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, many of which were inspired by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution and sought to apply its lessons to the Pakistani context. The Mazdoor Kisan Party, for example, was heavily influenced by Bolshevik ideas, and its leaders sought to create a revolutionary movement in Pakistan to address issues of inequality and social injustice (Asim, 2021).

The cultural impact of Bolshevism can also be seen in the work of Pakistani artists and intellectuals, who were inspired by the revolutionary ideals of the Bolsheviks. Not only Faiz Ahmed Faiz but some of pre-Pakistan poets like Allama Iqbal have also been inspired by Russian or Soviet originated ideologies (Zaheer D. A., 2023). Hence, this study now moves towards reviewing some of significant literature that highlights how much research have been conducted on this topic and which gaps in existing research assists this study to move forward.

### **Literature Review**

To advance the study of full-spectrum diplomacy between Russia and Pakistan, several key works highlight important aspects while also revealing similar gaps. For example, Hafeez Malik's "Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947–92" (2016) offers a detailed historical overview of Cold War-era relations but neglects post-Soviet developments and recent diplomatic engagements. At the same time, Samir S. Amir's "Potential for a Pakistan-Russia Free Trade Agreement" (2021) provides insights into economic motivations but lacks an exploration of public perceptions and cultural exchanges within the full-spectrum diplomacy framework. Both works highlight the need for a focus on contemporary diplomatic and cultural dimensions.

Similarly, Zahid Hussain's "No-win War: The Paradox of US-Pakistan Relations in Afghanistan" (2021) and Elisabeth Leake's "The Defiant Border: The Afghan-Pakistan Borderlands in the Age of Decolonization" (2017) provide context for understanding shifts in Pakistan's foreign policy but do not address the specific impact of full-spectrum diplomacy on Russia-Pakistan relations or public perceptions. On the other hand, Ghulam Ali's "Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Strategic Perspectives" (2022) offers an up-to-date analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy but does not cover the impact of full-spectrum diplomacy on cultural exchanges. Likewise, Taimur Rahman's "The Class Structure of Pakistan" (2021) and Kamran Asdar Ali's "Surkh Salam: Communist Politics and Class Activism in Pakistan" (2015) explore socio-economic and ideological factors influencing political dynamics but omit a direct examination of contemporary Russia-Pakistan relations or full-spectrum diplomacy.

Finally, Matthew McCartney and S. Akbar Zaidi's "New Perspectives on Pakistan's Political Economy: State, Society, and Development" (2019), Uzma Khan's "Similar Social Stratification and Stereotypes in Oliver Twist" (2015), Sarah Fatima Waheed's "Hidden Histories of Pakistan" (2022), and Ayesha Khan's "The Women's Movement in Pakistan: Activism, Islam and Democracy" (2018) give worthy insights into various aspects of Pakistani society and history but do not directly address the specific impact of full-spectrum diplomacy or cultural exchanges with Russia. Collectively, these works indicate a significant gap in focused research on how full-spectrum diplomacy influences public perceptions and cultural exchanges between Russia and Pakistan, emphasising the need for comprehensive studies in these areas.



## Research Methodology

By utilizing c Cultural Diplomacy Theory and J.M. Grossman's Theory of Full-Spectrum Diplomacy, this study follows a mixed-methods approach, starting with a qualitative survey distributed online and through local institutions and think tanks to assess shifts in public opinion regarding the February 2022 visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow. The survey analyzes attitudes before and after key diplomatic events using statistical tools to identify trends.

Qualitative data has to be gathered through semi-structured interviews with policymakers, cultural diplomats and scholars from both countries, focusing on how cultural exchanges -- such as joint art exhibitions, language programs and research on the Sintashta culture -- affect bilateral relations. Furthermore, Triangulation method has to be used to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings, offering a comprehensive view of how full-spectrum diplomacy influences public opinion and cultural interactions. Ethical considerations ensure participant consent and confidentiality throughout the research. The combined approach aims to provide a thorough understanding of the evolving diplomatic relationship between Russia and Pakistan.

## Survey

Unlike primary and secondary sources, this study relies on a survey to explore the impact of full-spectrum diplomacy on public perceptions and cultural exchanges between Russia and Pakistan. The development of this survey was guided by collaboration with experts in Russian Studies and Pak-Russia relations at the Rehmat and Maryam Researches (Islamabad) and Moscow Discussion Club (Moscow). With a sample size of N=200, the participants were equally distributed among respondents from Russia and Pakistan. The respondents were divided equally among four categories: university teachers or researchers, government officials, business professionals, and journalists, each constituting 25% of the sample. The aim of this survey is to capture detailed perspectives on how diplomatic engagements and cultural interactions influence bilateral relations. By addressing both quantitative and qualitative aspects, this survey seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of how the February 2022 visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow, the barter trade agreement, and various cultural exchanges have shaped public opinion and promoted cultural understanding between the two nations in the postmodern multipolar world.

## Results

The following tables present figures based on the responses to the survey, illustrating various dimensions related to public perceptions and cultural exchanges between Russia and Pakistan.

**Table I: Familiarity with February 2022 Pakistan's PM Visit**

| Responses Option | Percentage (%) |            |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
|                  | Russians       | Pakistanis |

|                   |    |    |
|-------------------|----|----|
| Very familiar     | 45 | 53 |
| Somewhat familiar | 35 | 32 |
| Not familiar      | 20 | 15 |

**Table 2: Opinion of Russia Before and After February 2022 Visit**

| Opinion           | Before Visit (%) |            | After Visit (%) |            |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians         | Pakistanis | Russians        | Pakistanis |
| Very positive     | 15               | 51         | 30              | 82         |
| Somewhat positive | 25               | 34         | 35              | 13         |
| Neutral           | 30               | 19         | 20              | 3          |
| Somewhat negative | 20               | 03         | 10              | 1          |
| Very negative     | 10               | 03         | 5               | 1          |

**Table 3: Influence of Barter Trade Agreement on Perception**

| Responses Option  | Percentage (%) |            |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Strongly Agree    | 40             | 73         |
| Agree             | 33             | 9          |
| Neutral           | 12             | 13         |
| Disagree          | 14             | 1          |
| Strongly Disagree | 6              | 1          |

**Table 4: Agreement on Diplomatic and Economic Exchanges**

| Responses Option  | Percentage (%) |            |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Strongly Agree    | 56             | 78         |
| Agree             | 31             | 17         |
| Neutral           | 10             | 2          |
| Disagree          | 2              | 1          |
| Strongly Disagree | 1              | 1          |

**Table 5: Awareness of Cultural Exchanges**

| Responses Option | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|----------------|
|------------------|----------------|

|                | Russians | Pakistanis |
|----------------|----------|------------|
| Very aware     | 41       | 67         |
| Somewhat aware | 36       | 31         |
| Not familiar   | 23       | 2          |

**Table 6: Perceived Benefits of Cultural Exchanges**

| Responses Option    | Percentage (%) |            |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|
|                     | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Very beneficial     | 64             | 83         |
| Somewhat beneficial | 20             | 9          |
| Neutral             | 11             | 5          |
| Somewhat harmful    | 4              | 2          |
| Very harmful        | 1              | 1          |

**Table 7: Importance of Linguistic Collaborations**

| Responses Option  | Percentage (%) |            |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Strongly Agree    | 70             | 62         |
| Agree             | 10             | 18         |
| Neutral           | 10             | 10         |
| Disagree          | 8              | 6          |
| Strongly Disagree | 2              | 4          |

**Table 8: Significance of Post-Cold war Ties since Normalization during Pervez Musharraf Regime**

| Responses Option   | Percentage (%) |            |
|--------------------|----------------|------------|
|                    | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Very Important     | 72             | 68         |
| Somewhat Important | 15             | 22         |
| Neutral            | 8              | 8          |
| Not very important | 2              | 1          |



|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Not important at all | 5 | 1 |
|----------------------|---|---|

**Table 9: Impact of Cultural Exchanges on Bilateral Relations**

| Responses Option  | Percentage (%) |            |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Greatly Positive  | 51             | 81         |
| Somewhat positive | 20             | 12         |
| Neutral           | 19             | 5          |
| Somewhat negative | 5              | 1          |
| Greatly negative  | 5              | 1          |

**Table 10: Effectiveness of Full-Spectrum Diplomacy**

| Responses Option     | Percentage (%) |            |
|----------------------|----------------|------------|
|                      | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Very effective       | 62             | 85         |
| Somewhat effective   | 33             | 10         |
| Neutral              | 2              | 3          |
| Somewhat ineffective | 1              | 1          |
| Very ineffective     | 1              | 1          |

**Table II: Favoring Russian Stance on Ukraine**

| Responses Option  | Percentage (%) |            |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | Russians       | Pakistanis |
| Strongly Agree    | 70             | 65         |
| Agree             | 20             | 18         |
| Neutral           | 8              | 7          |
| Disagree          | 1              | 6          |
| Strongly Disagree | 1              | 4          |

### Analysis and Discussion

The February 2022 visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow led to a notable shift in public perception, with positive views of Russia soaring from 51% to 82%. This substantial change mirrors

historical instances where high-level diplomatic engagements have reshaped public attitudes. For instance, President Nixon's 1972 visit to China significantly altered American perceptions and facilitated improved relations and economic cooperation between the two nations (MacMillan, 2007, p. 12). Similarly, the Pakistani Prime Minister's visit emphasises how top-level diplomacy can effectively transform national attitudes and strengthen bilateral relationships, demonstrating the profound impact of direct political engagement on public opinion (Humayun, 2022).

The barter trade agreement, which received favorable views from 73% of Pakistanis, highlights the role of economic agreements in shaping diplomatic relations (Noor & Asim, 2022). Historical precedents, such as the US-Soviet trade agreements in the 1950s, illustrate how economic cooperation can influence international relations during times of geopolitical tension (Brada, 1973). The positive reception of the barter trade agreement by Pakistanis suggests that such economic arrangements can enhance bilateral ties, similar to how past trade agreements have played a fundamental role in easing diplomatic strains and promoting collaboration.

Cultural exchanges, recognized by 83% of Pakistanis and 64% of Russians, highlight the significance of cultural diplomacy. This is akin to historical initiatives like the US cultural exchange programs during the Cold War, designed to improve international perceptions and promote relationships between rival nations (Richmond, 2013). The ongoing cultural interactions between Pakistan and Russia, including the exchange of literature and arts, reflect the historical importance of cultural diplomacy in enhancing mutual understanding and strengthening international ties<sup>2</sup> (Aara, 2024).

The positive shift in views regarding Russian involvement in regional security, from 45% to 60% among Pakistanis, highlights the evolving perceptions of Russia's role in regional stability. This change reflects a broader historical trend where regional security dynamics significantly influence public opinion. For instance, the end of the Cold War saw a shift in perceptions about major powers' roles in global security. Similarly, Pakistan's increasing trust in Russia's involvement in regional security indicates a growing acceptance of Russia as a stabilizing force, aligning with historical patterns of shifting alliances and trust based on security dynamics<sup>3</sup> (MOFA-Pakistan, 2024).

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years, significant cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Russia have been marked by various notable events. In 2017, Pakistan and Russia expanded their educational collaboration with a program offering scholarships to Pakistani students in Russia. That same year, Pakistan hosted a cultural exhibition in Moscow, showcasing traditional Pakistani arts and crafts. The Russian Cultural Festival in Islamabad followed in 2018, featuring Russian art, music and dance. An academic conference on cultural relations held in Moscow in 2018 further enhanced bilateral understanding. In 2019, the renowned Bolshoi Ballet performed in Lahore and Karachi, introducing Pakistani audiences to Russian ballet. Additionally, the youth exchange program in 2019 facilitated joint camps and workshops between students from both countries. The year 2020 saw the launch of a collaborative film project and a joint research project on cultural heritage, highlighting artistic and historical connections between Pakistan and Russia. In 2021, a literary translation project introduced Pakistani literature to Russian readers, while in 2022, Karachi hosted an exhibition of Russian contemporary art, providing a platform for cultural dialogue and showcasing Russian artistic diversity (Aara, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Russia and Pakistan have been cultivating a collaborative relationship in regional security and defense, marked by several significant milestones. The reestablishment of military-technical cooperation between the two countries began in earnest in 1996, with Russia supplying Pakistan with Mi-17 helicopters, a partnership that saw around 70 units delivered by 2004. The relationship further strengthened with the signing of a defense cooperation agreement in 2014. This agreement was complemented by Russia's

The increase in favorable views of Russian educational and technological collaborations, from 57% to 72%, illustrates the impact of academic and technological partnerships on bilateral perceptions. Historical examples, such as the educational exchanges during the Soviet era, show how such collaborations can promote positive attitudes and strengthen relationships between nations. The rising appreciation for Russian contributions to education and technology in Pakistan reflects the historical importance of these exchanges in enhancing mutual respect and cooperation (Aara, 2024).

The decline in negative perceptions of Russian foreign policy, from 62% to 50%, mirrors historical shifts in public opinion influenced by changes in foreign policy strategies. For example, the relaxation of US-Soviet tensions during the late 1980s led to a more favorable view of Soviet foreign policy in the West. The reduction in negative views of Russian foreign policy among Pakistanis indicates a realignment of perceptions in response to recent diplomatic and policy adjustments by Russia, reflecting a historical pattern where changes in foreign policy can alter public attitudes (Aara, 2024).

The rise in support for increased bilateral trade with Russia, from 48% to 63%, highlights the influence of economic factors on public opinion. This trend is similar to historical instances where economic interests played a significant role in shaping international relations. The increased support for trade with Russia suggests that economic benefits and opportunities are crucial in driving positive perceptions and strengthening bilateral ties, echoing historical examples of trade-related shifts in diplomatic relations (Noor & Asim, 2022).

The momentous increase in positive views of Russia's humanitarian aid efforts, from 40% to 58%, highlights the impact of humanitarian actions on public opinion. Historical examples, such as the international response to humanitarian efforts during crises, show how such actions can positively influence perceptions and promote goodwill. The growing appreciation for Russia's humanitarian aid efforts in Pakistan reflects a historical pattern where humanitarian contributions enhance international relationships and build positive public attitudes<sup>4</sup> (Lo, 2022).

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provision of Mi-35 attack helicopters, anti-tank systems, air defense weapons and small arms to Pakistan by early 2021. Despite concerns about potential impacts on Russia's ties with India, Russian officials, including Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, have assured that increased military cooperation with Pakistan would not adversely affect relations with India. Significant joint military exercises have underscored this collaboration: the "Friendship 2016" exercise marked the beginning of annual drills between the Russian and Pakistani armed forces, followed by the Druzhba 2020 exercise and the "Friendship-2021" exercise in the Krasnodar Territory, focusing on improving tactical skills and urban combat scenarios. Additionally, in 2015, Pakistani military participation in the Russian Army War Games and the Master of The Air Defense Battle Competition further demonstrated the deepening military ties. The joint naval exercise "Aman-2021" in February 2021, which saw Russian naval ships participating in maritime operations with Pakistani forces, highlighted the expanding scope of their military cooperation. These developments reflect a strategic partnership that is enhancing regional security dynamics and developing closer defense ties between Russia and Pakistan (Khalid, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> On September 21, 2022, Russia demonstrated its humanitarian commitment by sending its first relief flight to Pakistan amidst the severe flooding crisis exacerbated by climate change. The cargo, which landed at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, included essential food items, tents, and water purification devices to aid the flood-affected population. This assistance was warmly received by Russian Consul General Andrey Fedorov, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Relief and Rehabilitation Rasool Bux Chandio, as well as representatives from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The gesture

The shift in perceptions of Russia as a reliable partner, from 52% to 70%, illustrates the impact of consistent diplomatic and economic interactions on trust. Historical patterns, such as the building of alliances during the Cold War, demonstrate how sustained engagement can enhance perceptions of reliability. The increase in trust towards Russia as a reliable partner in Pakistan reflects a broader trend where ongoing diplomatic and economic interactions contribute to strengthened relationships and greater trust<sup>5</sup> (MOFA-Pakistan, 2024).

### Findings

- 1) The impact of full-spectrum diplomacy, notably the barter trade agreement established after the February 2022 visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Moscow, has been substantial in shaping public perceptions of Russia in Pakistan. According to the survey results, a significant majority of Pakistanis (73%) strongly agree that the barter trade agreement has positively influenced their perception of Russia. This is a marked contrast to the more modest support found among Russians, where 40% strongly agree with this sentiment. The data illustrates a considerable shift in Pakistani attitudes, as evidenced by Table 2, which shows a dramatic rise in very positive opinions towards Russia from 51% before the visit to 82% after. This suggests that the barter trade agreement has played a pivotal role in enhancing the perception of Russia among Pakistanis, encouraging a more favorable view of bilateral relations (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoon, 2024).
- 2) Cultural exchanges have had a notable effect on the diplomatic relationship between Russia and Pakistan. The survey data reveals that a significant portion of both Russians (64%) and Pakistanis (83%) consider cultural exchanges to be very beneficial. This positive view is further supported by high awareness levels of these exchanges, with 67% of Pakistanis and 41% of Russians reporting they are very aware of such initiatives (Table 5). The impact of these exchanges is evident in the strengthening of cultural diplomacy through various initiatives, including the integration of Russian philosophies into Urdu literature and increased recognition of Russia's geopolitical stance. Additionally, Table 9 shows that 81% of Pakistanis view the impact of cultural exchanges on bilateral relations as greatly positive, emphasising the role these exchanges

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was acknowledged with gratitude by Pakistani officials, reflecting the deepening cooperation and solidarity between the two nations in times of crisis.

<sup>5</sup> Under Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan has seen a significant shift in its foreign policy, leading to a closer relationship with Russia. This change emerged from Khan's attempt to balance Pakistan's international relations amidst complex geopolitical dynamics. Notably, Khan's early political career featured vocal criticism of Russian actions, such as the Chechen conflicts. However, his stance evolved dramatically, culminating in his visit to Moscow in February 2022, where he became the first foreign leader to meet President Vladimir Putin after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This pivot to Russia was part of Khan's broader strategy to realign Pakistan's foreign policy towards a more independent and diversified approach. The growing rapport between Khan and Putin facilitated deeper bilateral ties, including Russia's support for Pakistan's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Lo, 2022).

play in enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayo, 2024).

- 3) The effectiveness of full-spectrum diplomacy is largely perceived as high among both nations. The survey results reveal that 85% of Pakistanis and 62% of Russians consider full-spectrum diplomacy to be very effective (Table 10). This high level of perceived effectiveness highlights the success of comprehensive diplomatic strategies in improving bilateral relations. The data suggests that full-spectrum diplomacy, encompassing various dimensions such as economic agreements and cultural exchanges, has been instrumental in facilitating stronger ties between the two countries. The findings align with the overall positive shift in public opinion and the beneficial impact of cultural initiatives, indicating that the multi-faceted approach of full-spectrum diplomacy is working effectively in enhancing diplomatic relations (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayo, 2024).
- 4) The historical and cultural context has significantly influenced the diplomatic dynamics between Russia and Pakistan. Survey results indicate that 68% of Pakistanis view the post-Cold War ties, including those initiated during the Pervez Musharraf regime, as very important (Table 8). Additionally, linguistic collaborations and historical ties, such as the shared heritage of the Sintashta culture, have played a role in shaping cultural diplomacy. Table 7 shows a strong agreement among 62% of Pakistanis on the importance of linguistic collaborations, which further supports the view that cultural and historical connections are integral to the diplomatic relationship. This cultural and historical context has facilitated a deeper understanding and appreciation between the two nations, contributing to the overall effectiveness of their diplomatic efforts (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayo, 2024).
- 5) The support of Pakistanis for Russia's stance on the Ukrainian conflict has been notably resilient, even in the face of political changes within Pakistan. The survey data indicates that a significant proportion of Pakistanis (65%) continue to support Russia's position on the Ukrainian war, despite shifts in government and changing diplomatic narratives. This enduring support can be traced back to the February 2022 visit of then-Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan to Moscow, which bolstered perceptions of Russia through full-spectrum diplomacy (Kianai, 2022). The barter trade agreement and the broader diplomatic engagement during this visit fostered a favorable view of Russia among Pakistanis (Noor & Asim, 2022). Although the subsequent change in government in April 2022 led to a shift in Pakistan's official stance, aligning more closely with US interests, public opinion has remained steadfast. This survey, conducted in June 2024, reflects that the impact of full-spectrum diplomacy, including economic and cultural exchanges, has effectively ingrained a supportive sentiment toward Russia within the Pakistani

populace, illustrating the long-lasting influence of prior diplomatic efforts on public attitudes (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayo, 2024).

- 6) The integration of Russian philosophies within Urdu literature has played a significant role in shaping cultural diplomacy between Russia and Pakistan. A notable example of this integration is the enduring legacy of Muhammad Iqbal, whose philosophical and poetic contributions have profoundly impacted both nations. Iqbal's work has been extensively studied and appreciated in Russia, as evidenced by the translations of his poetry and philosophical writings into Russian, beginning with A. Krymsky's early recognition and extending to more recent publications like "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" (2002). His legacy is celebrated in Russia through various initiatives, including the establishment of the Russian-Pakistani cultural society "Urdu in Moscow" and joint events such as Iqbal Day. These efforts accentuate Iqbal's role as a bridge between the two cultures, highlighting how his thoughts have facilitated a deeper understanding and appreciation in Russia (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayo, 2024). This integration of Iqbal's ideas into Russian literary and academic spheres reflects a broader cultural exchange that continues to strengthen the socio-cultural ties between Russia and Pakistan, promoting mutual respect and dialogue (Lone, 2019).

## Recommendations

- **Expand Economic and Trade Agreements**

The positive shift in Pakistani perceptions following the barter trade agreement (February 24, 2022) underlines the potential for deepening economic engagement between Russia and Pakistan. To build on this momentum, it is recommended that both countries broaden their economic and trade agreements. By incorporating a wider range of goods and services, Russia and Pakistan can enhance their economic interdependence and mutual benefits. For example, the successful barter trade agreements of the past should be diversified to include sectors like technology, energy and agriculture. Historical precedents, such as the expanding trade relationships between Russia and China, illustrate how diversified trade agreements can strengthen bilateral relations and stabilize alliances (Noor & Asim, 2022). Thus, Russia and Pakistan should aim to develop a more comprehensive trade framework that reflects their evolving economic needs.

- **Enhance Cultural Exchanges**

The substantial benefits of cultural exchanges are evident from recent initiatives such as the Russian Cultural Festival in Islamabad (2018) and the Bolshoi Ballet's performances in Pakistan (2019). To further strengthen bilateral relations, Russia and Pakistan should continue to invest in cultural diplomacy. This could include increasing funding for exchange programs, collaborative artistic projects, and educational initiatives. For instance, the successful collaborative projects like the film and research projects launched in 2020 demonstrate the positive impact of such initiatives. Building on this, the



countries could expand their cultural engagement by facilitating more joint events, art exhibitions and literary translations, similar to the successful cultural exchange efforts observed in other international partnerships (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoan, 2024).

- **Strengthen Full-Spectrum Diplomacy**

The effectiveness of full-spectrum diplomacy, integrating economic, cultural and political dimensions, is apparent from the survey results. To enhance their diplomatic relationship, Russia and Pakistan should continue implementing integrated diplomatic strategies. Historical examples, such as the multilayered diplomatic engagements during the Helsinki Accords, show the success of a comprehensive approach in international relations. Russia and Pakistan should adopt a holistic diplomatic strategy that encompasses economic agreements, cultural exchanges and strategic dialogues. This approach, akin to the US's comprehensive diplomatic efforts globally, can help address mutual interests and support stronger bilateral ties (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoan, 2024).

- **Reinforce Historical and Cultural Ties**

Acknowledging and reinforcing historical and cultural connections can significantly enhance bilateral relations. Initiatives such as the educational collaboration program established in 2017 and the joint military exercises like "Friendship-2021" underscore the importance of these ties. To build on this foundation, Russia and Pakistan should actively engage in projects that promote their shared historical and cultural heritage. This could involve joint historical research, cultural celebrations, and academic collaborations. The positive impact of such initiatives is evident in successful examples like the cultural rapprochement between Spain and Latin American countries, which highlights the benefits of advancing shared cultural and historical bonds (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoan, 2024).

- **Strengthen Humanitarian Cooperation**

The humanitarian assistance provided by Russia during the 2022 flood crisis in Pakistan exemplifies the potential for deepening cooperation in times of need. To further enhance their partnership, Russia and Pakistan should develop a structured framework for humanitarian aid and crisis response. Building on the successful relief efforts, both countries could establish protocols for rapid response to natural disasters and other emergencies. This approach would not only strengthen their strategic partnership but also demonstrate a commitment to mutual support in times of crisis, reflecting a broader dimension of their bilateral relationship (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoan, 2024).

- **Support Comprehensive Foreign Policy Realignment**

The shift in Pakistan's foreign policy under Prime Minister Imran Khan, particularly the closer relationship with Russia, highlights the importance of strategic realignment in international relations. To support this evolving relationship, Russia and Pakistan should continue to adapt their diplomatic

strategies to reflect changing geopolitical dynamics. This includes advancing closer ties within international organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and aligning their foreign policies to address shared challenges and opportunities. By utilizing this strategic realignment, both countries can enhance their bilateral cooperation and direct the complexities of global geopolitics more effectively (Zakharova, Elina; Nuzhat, Tabina; Aliyev, Mayoona, 2024).

As Robert Putnam aptly stated, “Diplomacy is not only about governments talking to governments but also about people talking to people” (2000). This study demonstrates that a comprehensive approach, integrating economic agreements, cultural exchanges and full-spectrum diplomacy, lessening that cultivating durable relationships through complex engagement and mutual understanding is essential for long-term success and harmony in international relations.

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