

Pakistan-Soviet Relations: A Comprehensive Study of Political, Cultural, and Economic Relations (1947-1958)



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Abstract: Pakistan emerged as an independent State during the onset of the Cold War between the two ideologically rival superpowers, United States of America and Soviet Union. Initially, Pakistan adhered to a non-aligned foreign policy under the guidance of its founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. However, the conflict over Kashmir, Pakistan pressing economic and military needs, and the complex dynamics of the Cold War era, the world view of Pakistani elite, drew Pakistan closer to the United States. On the other side, in the last year of 1940s, both the super powers paid limited attention to the Indian Subcontinent due to their engagement in Eastern and Central Europe's political settlement. However, certain global events such as the Chinese Revolution and Korean War, etc. prompted both superpowers to shift their focus towards India and Pakistan. Pakistan became an ally of the US in its plans to contain the possible spread of communism. In 1950s, Pakistan entered into four different treaties with the United States. The Soviet Union, in response posed challenges for Pakistan by supporting India and Afghanistan on issues related to Kashmir and Pakhtunistan. During this period of the strained relations between the two States, the Soviet Union had a notable influence on Pakistan's political landscape. Simultaneously, there were persistent initiatives to release the stress between the two States through the improvement of cultural and trade ties.

Keywords: Pakistan, Soviet Union, Cold War, Pacts

Introduction

This research paper explores into the bilateral and economic ties between Pakistan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (also known as Soviet Union), as well as the influence of the Soviet Union on Pakistan's culture and politics from the moment of its independence in August 1947 to the advent of Pakistan's first military government in 1958.

In terms of geography, Pakistan and the Soviet Union were almost neighbours, with only a narrow strip of Afghan territory separated the two countries. The Soviet Union remained committed, to implement Marxism-Leninism both within its borders and beyond since the

establishment of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1919. When Pakistan gained independence, communist regimes had already taken hold in Eastern and Central Europe. Later, the rise of communism in China in 1949, the Korean war (1950 to 1953), and the success of Muhammad Mussadiq (1951 to 1953) in Iran led the US administration to value the geostrategic significance of Pakistan. Due to its strategic location, Pakistan held substantial importance for both superpowers, being as crucial to the Soviet Union in terms of proximity as Cuba was to the United States.

Historically, the British strategic planners had been concerned about the possibility of Russian

expansion into the Indian Subcontinent since the latter half of the 19th century. In this context, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his close associates began seeking economic and military assistance from the United States even before the emergence of Pakistan. The leadership of the All-India Muslim League marketed the proposed contour as a potential geostrategic ally against the Soviet communism. Subsequently, this policy was consistently pursued after the independence of Pakistan as well (Ahmad, 2013, pp. 12-17). During the Indian freedom movement, Muslim League leaders had used the 'Russophobia' as a threat and means of pressure. For instance, in April 1946, Sir Feroz Khan Noon, a Muslim League leader and later the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1957, suggested approaching Russia for support in the struggle for independence. He argued that Indian Muslims "would have preferred being under Communism rather than being under Hindu communalism" (Buheraj, 1973, p. 47).

In December 1946, Liaquat Ali Khan cautioned the United States' *Charge d'Affairs* to India about the potential for chaos and the temptation for the USSR to intervene in the Indian Subcontinent due to the massacre of Muslims in Bihar (Ahmad, 2013, pp. 43-47). In a similar tone, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in May 1947 emphasised the necessity of establishing Pakistan to prevent the spread of 'Hindu Imperialism' into the Middle East. He believed that Muslim countries would unite against the possible Russian aggression and would seek assistance from the United States (Kux, 2000, p. 13).

It's important to highlight that an analysis of the relations of Pakistan with the Soviet Union cannot be done in isolation from its relationship with the United States. Moreover, the dynamic between Pakistan and the United States is closely intertwined with Pakistan's perception of the Indian 'threat' to its sovereignty.

Following its independence, Pakistan had the options of developing alliance with both the

United States of America and the Soviet Union or to remain nonaligned. However, the ruling elite of Pakistan opted to align with the United States. Jinnah, instead of seeking support from Soviet Union, turned to the US to bolster Pakistan's economic and military capacities. The Pakistani leadership recognised that the Soviet Union's economic capabilities had been ravaged by World War II, and between 1945 and 1950, the economic strength of the Soviets was considered as quite constrained (Malik H. , 1990, p. 161).

Trends in the Foreign Policy of Pakistan

The ruling elite of Pakistan had received their education and training in Western academic institutions; therefore, they had a stronger inclination towards the Western countries rather than the Soviet Union. There are substantial historical evidences which provide significant indication that the top leadership of the Muslim League were in favour of pursuing the United States for obtaining economic and military assistance (Malik H. , 1994, p. 37).

Following the establishment of Pakistan, during a cabinet meeting in September 1947, Governor General of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah articulated, "Pakistan [is] a democracy and communism [does] not flourish in the soil of Islam. Our interests [lie] more with the great democratic countries, namely the UK and the US, rather than with Russia" (Kux, 2000, p. 20).

Jinnah also implied a 'Great Game' rationale when he asserted that the security of the North Western Frontier is a global concern and not solely an internal matter of Pakistan. He alleged that Russians were supporting Afghanistan's claim on Pakhtunistan.¹ These tactics were aimed at highlighting Pakistan's strategic significance to the United States as a key player in any strategy to contain Soviet influence (Ahmad, 2013, p. 17 & 88). In September 1947, during an interview with a correspondent, Jinnah opined that,

They reside on the both side of Durand line, i.e., in the North-West of Pakistan and South East of Afghanistan.

¹ Pakhtun, Pashtun or Pashteen is the speaker of Indo-Iranian language –Pakhto or Pashto. Pashtuns are divided in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

“America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America. Pakistan is the pivot of the world, as we are placed, the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves. Russia is not very far away . . . If Russia walks in here, the whole world is menaced” (Paul, 2014, p. 150).

In October 1947, Jinnah sent a confidential special envoy to Washington with the aim of negotiating two distinct aid packages with the State Department, nonetheless, the request was declined in December 1947 (Malik H. , 1994, p. 162). Jinnah's perspective of two coequal nations, Hindu and Muslim, continued to shape the worldview of the succeeding leaders of Pakistan. The socially conservative background of the ruling elites of Pakistan, who were unacquainted with the socialist and atheistic ideology of the USSR and its radical appeals to the most underprivileged segments of society, turned them unfamiliar with the Soviet Union's ideology. Moreover, they sought the backing of a powerful ally in the face of a formidable, stronger and hostile India (Moskalenko, 2014, p. 92). Hence, as they aspired to be a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Pakistani elite naturally found it necessary to engage with the United States in order to secure economic and military support. Initially, the United States showed little interest in including Pakistan in its plans, despite being among the first States to establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed Muslim country. This was because the US was primarily focused on containing communism in Europe (Ahmad, 2013, p. 88). However, by 1951, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower adopted a policy of containing the Soviet Union by establishing military bases in foreign countries. Due to its strategic geographic location, Pakistan became a key player in the strategy of the new Administration of the United

States (Ahmad, 2013, p. 17).

Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan considered the economic disparity between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States at that time. They believed that the United States was a more favourable choice for securing military and economic assistance (Malik H. , 1994, p. 34). The Pakistani leadership's perspective was significantly influenced by Pakistan's notably weak economic and limited military strength (Malik H. , 1994, p. 28).² Although, the Soviet Union opposed the British imperialism, it also had a vested interest in supporting decolonisation for the formation of communist parties and the spread of Marxism in the colonies (Ahmad, 2013, p. 43).

The establishment of Pakistan and India as two dominion States was perceived by the Soviet Union as a somewhat insignificant event and responded towards the creation of Pakistan by a mix of cold and hot feelings (Malik H. , 1990, p. 161). Moscow conceived Pakistan's creation with a religious identity as the beginning of a possible formation of an ‘anti-Soviet bloc of Muslim countries’ (Amin, 2008, p. 6).

In 1947, the Soviet Union was primarily focused on rebuilding its economy in the aftermath of World War II and during 1947-53, the Soviet authorities remained preoccupied with Europe and the Far East (Stein, 1993, p. 81). The birth of Pakistan went largely unnoticed in the Soviet press, and Soviet leadership did not send any official message upon the independence of Pakistan (Malik H. , 1994, p. 32). During Joseph Stalin's era, the Soviet Union viewed both India and Pakistan as territories still influenced by Anglo-British imperialists (Komarov, 1993).³ Additionally, the Soviets believed that Pakistan had religious and ethnic ties with Soviet Central Asia. Early Soviet assessments characterised Pakistan as a predominantly feudal State with minimal industrial development (Malik H. , 1994, pp. 40, 108). Geography books published in the Soviet Union between 1947 and 1952

² It is noteworthy that on the eve of Pakistan's independence, the Cold War had already commenced between the USA and the USSR.

³ Stalin dubbed the very concept of Pakistan as ‘primitive’ and his successor, N. S. Khrushchev, thought that Western imperialism had made the ‘two Hindustan States’ bitter enemies (Buheraj, 1973, p. 214).

referred to India, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and others not as independent but as 'semi-colonial' States, implying they were still striving for what the Soviets considered 'real' independence (Buheraj, 1973, p. 77).

When the United States extended an official invitation to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, it left Pakistan's Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, disappointed. In May 1949, Liaquat Ali Khan had a discussion with the Soviet Charge *d'affairs* in Tehran and was able to receive an invitation from Joseph Stalin to visit Moscow.⁴ However, Liaquat Ali Khan decided against making the trip to Moscow⁵ – the reasons of cancelling the visit are not entirely clear.

Later, in December 1949, the United States also invited Liaquat for a State visit, and instead of visiting the USSR⁶ he went to the US for a three-week trip in May 1950. He also visited Canada and spent 'several leisurely days' there. During this visit, he expressed a commitment to combat the communist threat and aligned himself with the United States' stance on Korea, which he saw as a measure to protect Asia from the dangers of world communism (Haqqani, 2005, p. 33), (Ahmad, 2013, p. 91). Through his speeches and statements during this trip, Liaquat Ali Khan conveyed strong pro-Western sentiments of the government of Pakistan. On the other hand, Soviet leaders were Soviet leaders discontented over the Liaquat's decision not to visit the USSR (Rizvi, 2004, p. 11).

Liaquat Ali Khan's visit can be seen as the starting point of the partnership between Pakistan and the United States.⁷ It appears that the initial interest in a Soviet invitation was

exploited to secure an invitation from Washington. because Liaquat never visited the USSR and Mirza Hassan Isphani, the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, characterised the successful diplomatic move of 'Russian manoeuvre' as a 'masterpiece in strategy' (Buheraj, 1973, p. 48), (Igor Vasilievich Khalevinsky, 1984, p. 15), (Ahmad I. , 2013, p. 90).

On the other side, the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership, was in no hurry to establish diplomatic relations with Pakistan. Initially after the independence, the British representation in Moscow handled Pakistan's interests. Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the USSR were officially established on May 1, 1948.⁸ Consequently, Pakistan's ambassador to the USSR, Mr. Shaoib Qurishi, assumed his office on December 30, 1948, while the Soviet ambassador, Alexander Georgievich Stetsenko, reached Karachi in March 1950⁹ (Igor Vasilievich Khalevinsky, 1984, pp. 16-17), (Malik H. , 1994, p. 32). Additionally, the USSR also supported Pakistan's admission to the United Nations (UN), casting an affirmative vote during the second session of the General Assembly on September 30, 1947. Moreover, in November 1947, the Soviet Foreign Minister in London attempted to include Pakistan in the list of States to be consulted prior the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany (Yuri V. Gankovsky, 1987, p. 187).

From 1947 to 1953, the Soviet Union maintained a neutral stance regarding the Kashmir issue, especially when the Soviet leadership perceived the foreign policy of Pakistan as to be non-aligned.¹⁰ In 1949, the

⁴ The invitation was extended on June 22, 1949 (Hashmi, 2011).

⁵ According to Aijauddin, "Stalin never forgot that slight. Nor did his successors forgive Pakistan's lap-dog relationship with its new master, the United States" (Aijauddin, 2020).

⁶ The action, nevertheless, disgraced and strained Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union (Warming Ties with Russia, 2011).

⁷ This visit was followed by a number of Pakistani high-level officials visiting USA in the preceding years aiming to receive military and financial help

(Dawn, 2012).

⁸ Establishment of embassy in Pakistan: April 27-May 1 (Ponomarev, 1981).

⁹ For the sack of comparison: the ambassador of Pakistan to the US assumed his office in October 1947, while the first American *Charge d'Affairs* arrived Karachi one day before the Pakistan's independence of (Malik H. , 1994, p. 32).

¹⁰ Stalin considered Gandhi as a stooge in the British hand (Gaikwad, 1993, p. 19), and perceived India to be not more than a British satellite State (Malik H. , 1994, p. 32). His government even indicated

USSR supported the idea of conducting a plebiscite in Kashmir under United Nations' supervision. However, in January 1952, the Soviet Union accused the United States and Britain of having intentions to transform Kashmir into a military base against the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. The USSR expressed its protest to Pakistan's negotiations for a military agreement with the US towards the end of 1953 (Buheraj, 1973, p. 270). This marked the beginning of Pakistan's role as a key frontline State in the Western world's efforts to contain communism during the Cold War (Sadiq, 2016, p. xii). Moscow issued protest notes to Pakistan in 1953-54 due to its perceived hostile policy towards the Soviet Union (Malik H. , 1994, pp. 109, 115).

Pakistan, during the Cold War, opted to align itself militarily with the United States, becoming part of the American worldwide strategy to contain the spread of Communism. In response to this role, the first consignment of US armaments arrived in Pakistan in 1951 (Ahmad, 2013, p. 3). By the end of 1953, Pakistan had firmly positioned itself as a supporter of the United States, a decision made in the interest of its own survival (Malik H. , 1994, p. 103). In the mid-1950s, Pakistan and India adopted different stances in global politics, with India pursuing a policy of neutrality and Pakistan becoming a US ally. In the mid-1950s, the newly independent States, India and Pakistan, assumed different positions in the international politics: India followed the principle of neutrality¹¹ while Pakistan became an ally of the USA. This

divergence in their international positions turned the two neighbouring countries into adversaries in the global tug of war. In December 1953, US Vice President Richard M. Nixon's visit to Karachi marked Washington's choice of a regional partner. Consequently, the US President Eisenhower announced a grant of military aid to Pakistan on February 25, 1954. The following month, Moscow registered a protest with Pakistan for granting military bases to the US for reconnaissance (Buheraj, 1973, p. 270).

On May 19, 1954, Pakistan entered into the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the United States. This bilateral agreement stipulated that the US would supply Pakistan with 'equipment, materials and services or other assistance', in line with the United Nations Charter. This agreement set the stage for the strengthening of military ties between the US and Pakistan. In September of the same year, Pakistan joined the US-sponsored South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO)¹², and the following year, it became part of the Baghdad Pact in April 1955, which was later renamed the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO)¹³ in 1959. Pakistan's alignment with Western powers came at the expense of its potential for improved relations with the USSR. To further cement and solidify its credentials as a Western ally, Pakistan maintained relatively low-level relations with pro-Soviet States (Rizvi, 2004, p. 13).

In response to Pakistan's alliance with Western

a preference for Pakistan over India (Malik H. , 1990, p. 166), therefore, the Soviet policy towards Pakistan demonstrates some positive indicators during 1947-53 (Malik H. , 1994, p. 108).

¹¹ The architect of Indian foreign policy Jawaharlal Nehru, after his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1927 observed: "between two such neighbours there can be amity or enmity, indifference is out question" (Ramachandran, 1996, p. 179).

¹² Its eight members included France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and the US as its leader signed the pact at Manila. Pakistan left SEATO in 1973, and the organisation was formally disbanded in 1977 (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954, 2019). US made it clear that

SEATO or Manila Pact pledge applied only to communist aggression or subversion (Rizvi, 2004, p. 12).

¹³ CENTO, originally known as Baghdad Pact or the Middle East Treaty Organisation (METO), however, its name was changed to CENTO after Iraq pulled out of the Pact in 1959. It was formed by United Kingdom, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan. It was formally dissolved in 1979. US made it clear that its support to the military committee and assistance for strengthening the defensive capability of the member States pertained 'solely to communist menace and [carried] no connotations with respect to intra-area matters' (Rizvi, 2004, p. 12).

powers, the Soviet Union actively nurtured a close and stable partnership with India and Afghanistan. Both of these neighbouring countries had ongoing territorial disputes with Pakistan, specifically over Kashmir and the Pakhtunistan issue, respectively. Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin embarked on visits to India and Afghanistan in November-December 1955. During their three-week stay in India, the Soviet leadership expressed support for India's claims over Kashmir and Goa. In Kabul, they backed Afghanistan's call for an 'an impartial plebiscite in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan' (Malik H. , 1994, p. 88). Moscow's support for India and Afghanistan against Pakistan on the Kashmir and Pakhtunistan matters was viewed as a response to Pakistan's involvement in American-sponsored alliances.

A few weeks later, Pakistan achieved a temporary success in lessening Soviet support for India and Afghanistan. In March 1956, a Soviet delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan visited Pakistan. Mikoyan stated in Karachi that "the USSR still adhered to the view that it was for the people of Kashmir to decide their future" (Buheraj, 1973, p. 123). Nevertheless, early in 1957, the Soviet Union exercised its first veto in the United Nations Security Council to block a pro-Pakistani resolution on Kashmir, mainly because the resolution called for the deployment of United Nations forces in Kashmir to facilitate demilitarisation. On the other hand, the United States and Pakistan signed yet another bilateral agreement for mutual security and defence on March 5, 1959, in Ankara.¹⁴ Despite Pakistan's participation in the Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in 1955, Pakistan opted not to join the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

During the mid-1950s, Pakistan was aligned in the US bloc, while India and Afghanistan

deepened their relations with the Soviet Union. In 1956, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, granted the United States a lease for an air station in Peshawar. Subsequently, in July 1959, the government of Pakistan signed a ten-year lease for a 'communication facility' to the United States at Badaber near Peshawar,¹⁵ from where an American spy aircraft 'Lockheed U-2' used to take off for reconnaissance missions. One of these aircraft, taking off from Peshawar, was shot down on May 1, 1960, within Soviet Union's territory, and its pilot was captured alive. This incident led to strong Soviet warnings to Pakistan, threatening retaliation if Pakistan allowed further such flights from its territory.¹⁶ Consequently, Pak-Soviet diplomatic relations reached a low point for a period. However, Moscow handled the situation softly as part of its long-term strategy to detach Pakistan from the West (Buheraj, 1973, p. 132). On the other hand, the downing of U-2 incident also forced Pakistan to reappraise its relations with the Moscow (Malik H. , 1990, p. 28). Barely three months after the debacle, Soviet Union offered financial and technical support for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in Pakistan (Malik H. , 1994, p. 172).

Pak-Soviet Union's Bilateral Relations

According to Pakistani scholars, Pakistan's real motives in joining the Western-sponsored alliances wasn't primarily driven by anti-Soviet sentiments (Yuri V. Gankovsky, 1987, p. 188) but rather by a desire to bolster its defence capabilities in response to the perceived threat from India (Malik H. , 1990, p. 163).

China, unlike the Soviet Union, accepted this explanation. Pakistan's own economic needs and its concerns about its vulnerability vis-à-vis India were major factors in its alignment with the Western bloc. However, events like the Hungarian and the Suez crises in late 1956

¹⁴ US signed the same agreement with Iran and Turkey as well on the same day.

¹⁵ Badaber/Badhaber air base, where the US had acquired extra-territorial rights on 18 July 1959 for ten years, this base was one of the principles, if unstated, justification for large military aid to

Pakistan (Malik H. , 1994, p. 210).

¹⁶ Resultantly, the U-2 flights were stopped, however, Pakistan Air Force used to support the Americans in monitoring the border areas of Soviet Union and China for many years (Ahmad, 2013, p. 125).

further solidified Pakistan's alignment with the United States. In line with the Western bloc's policies, Pakistan criticised the Soviet Union's actions in Hungary, where they suppressed mass anti-government demonstrations, and yet did not support Egypt when it faced aggression from the United Kingdom, France, and Israel during the Suez crisis (Buheraj, 1973, pp. 89,90), (Moskalenko, 2014, p. 96).

Pakistan's pro-China and anti-America stance had a redeeming feature for Moscow as it revealed two important insights. Firstly, Pakistan's commitment to SEATO and CENTO was not primarily aimed at countering 'international communism.' Secondly, Pakistan's growing disillusionment with the West presented Moscow with an opportunity to enhance its relationship with Rawalpindi. If Rawalpindi could sup with Beijing (formerly Peking), it could also dine with Moscow (Buheraj, 1973, p. 146).

Pakistan-Soviet Political Relations

Following the partition in August 1947, the Communist Party of India adhered to Moscow's directives, which asserted that India had not yet attained genuine political and economic independence. During the Second Congress of the CPI held in February-March 1948 in Calcutta,¹⁷ it was decided to split the CPI. This led to the formation of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), and the leadership for the new party was sent from India.¹⁸ Sajjad Zaheer (General Secretary), Sibt-e-Hassan, and Ishfaq Beg, all of whom had a strong educational background and hailed from the North Indian elite, comprised the initial politburo. In respect to East Bengal (later East Pakistan), it was

agreed that the Communist Party of West Bengal would provide guidance to the leadership of the East Bengal Communist Party.

Immediately following its establishment, the Communist Party of Pakistan began operating through various front organisations, such as the Trade Union Federation of Pakistan, the Port Trust Union Karachi, the All-Pakistan Progressive Writers Association¹⁹ and Kissan Committees. By 1950, the CPP had become the second-largest party in Pakistan, particularly in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Dhaka (Paracha, 2020), with the Muslim League being the largest. Soon after the independence, the CPP's political stance became increasingly hostile towards the Muslim League leadership. During Pakistan's first-ever elections in March 1951 (for the Punjab provincial assembly), the CPP fielded eleven candidates, although they were only confident of winning one seat (Jameel, 2013, pp. 298-99), (Ali, 2015, pp. 157, 184-85).

On March 9, 1951, just one day before the Punjab provincial elections, the government led by Liaquat Ali Khan claimed to have uncovered a plot aimed at overthrowing the government. The Prime Minister accused the prominent members of the CPP, with the aid of a few military officers and support from certain foreign powers (implicitly referring to the Soviet Union), of conspiring against the government (Malik H. , 1994, p. 23). Major General Akbar Khan and other 'progressive' individuals within the military had grievances regarding Liaquat Ali Khan's Kashmir policy. They had a meeting with Sajjad Zaheer to discuss the possibility of collaborating to overthrow the government.

¹⁷ Among the 632 delegates to the Calcutta Congress, three were from West Pakistan: M. Hussain Atta from NWFP (KP), Eric Cyprian from Punjab and Jamal-ud-Din Bukhari from Sindh. After passing of the 'Report on Pakistan' by the Party Congress, the delegates from Pakistan met separately and convened the first congress of the CPP, there were less than 50 members who had been left in the whole of West Pakistan. East Bengal, was represented in the congress by thirty-two communists (Ali, 2015, p. 81).

¹⁸ The partition had set back over the prospects of Communist Party in Pakistan as the regions of the

Subcontinent that became Pakistan were comparatively less industrialised and most of the existing Communist Party non-Muslim members fled to India (Ali, 2015, p. 19).

¹⁹ Statistically, Pakistan had inherited only 9 per cent of the total industrial establishment of British India. Only four-fifths of 1 per cent of the Pakistani population were working in industry (East & West parts) and only one quarter of 1 per cent were unionised (Ali, 2015, pp. 105, 102).

Prof. Jamal Naqvi, the general secretary of the CPP, in his book acknowledges the meeting but stated that it ended without reaching any agreement (Naqvi, 2014, p. 27). Basharat Hussain Qizilbash concludes that this meeting had a detrimental impact on the prospects of a 'communist awakening' in Pakistan (Qizilbash, 2018). As a result, the key figures involved in this 'conspiracy,' including Sajjad Zaheer, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Major General Akbar Khan, Brigadier Commander M. A. Latif, and Mrs. Naseem Akbar Khan (wife of Maj. Gen. Akbar Khan), were arrested (Malik H. , 1994, p. 23).

Subsequently, a few more individuals suspected of collaborating with the conspirators were arrested, bringing the total number of arrested individuals to fifteen, eleven of whom were from the armed forces, and four were civilians. A special tribunal established by the parliament sentenced these accused to varying terms of imprisonment. This historical event is commonly referred to as the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. Meanwhile, the government significantly curtailed the activities of the communist movement²⁰ (Jameel, 2013, pp. 196-67, 344) (Ahmad, 2013, pp. 100-01). Following the dismissal of the provincial government in East Bengal and the imposition of governor's rule²¹, with charges of conspiring with the Communist Party of Pakistan to 'undo the unity of Pakistan,' therefore, the CPP was initially banned in the Eastern wing and later in the entire country in the summer of 1954, along with its affiliated mass-front organisations. The CPP had a weak organisational structure and enjoyed limited popularity during its legal existence from 1948 until July 1954. All the prisoners

related to the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case were acquitted in April 1955. Additionally, Ayub Khan's role in thwarting a pro-Soviet military coup in Pakistan earned him recognition and support from the United States Administration.

The Democratic Students Federation (DSF) was established in 1949, which served as a front organisation for the CPP. Within just three years of its inception, it had become the predominant Leftist student organisation in West Pakistan. However, DSF, like the CPP, was also banned in 1954²². Upon this, another student organisation named the National Students Federation (NSF) was formed in 1955. Initially, NSF was a pro-government student group, but it soon saw an influx of former DSF members²³. Over time, one faction of NSF aligned with the Pakistan People's Party, while the other maintained close ties to the National Awami Party²⁴.

The Azad Pakistan Party was another significant political group that espoused Leftist ideologies. It was established by Mian Iftekhhar-ud-Din, who was a wealthy supporter of the CPP²⁵. He resigned from his position as president of the Punjab Muslim League and as a provincial minister in November 1948. In November 1950, he founded the Azad Pakistan Party²⁶, which was driven by progressive ideals. Conversely, there was an anti-Communist League, backed by the United States, that was established in Pakistan with the aim of influencing university students ideologically during 1950 and 1952.

National Awami Party (NAP)

In 1957, progressive and Leftist political forces came together to establish the first national-level political party, known as the National Awami

²⁰ As General Secretary of the CPP, Zaheer remained underground throughout his tenure until his arrest in March 1951 in connection with the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. Soon after his release in 1955, he went back to India.

²¹ Governor rule in East Bengal (later East Pakistan) was imposed on May 30, 1954 after the landslide victory of the United Front in the provincial elections held in March that year.

²² Its outfit was revived in 1977, under the leadership Nazir Abbasi and then reorganised in 1982. It took part in various movements against Gen. Zia's regime (1977-88) before withering away.

²³ For the history and struggle of the National Students Federation please see (Hassan Javed, 2017).

²⁴ NSF is revived by its former members in 2002 (Mahmood A. , 2020).

²⁵ A small number of well-known Leftist politicians who supported the CPP's line hailed from the feudal landowning class (Malik H. , 1990, p. 159).

²⁶ Azad Pakistan Party was established by Mian Iftekhhar-ud-Din and Sardar Shaukat Hayat. Sheikh Muhammad Rasheed was its general secretary (Saleem, 2020).

Party (NAP), which had a clearly defined Leftist ideological orientation (Himayatullah, 2015). Maulana Abdul Hamid Bashani, the Chief of Awami League²⁷ in East Pakistan and the West Pakistan-based Pakistan National Party (PNP)²⁸ merged into NAP. NAP was deeply committed to anti-imperialist principles and aimed to implement land reforms, terminate defence agreements with Western powers, and pursue an independent foreign policy. Many former members and supporters of the CPP also joined the ranks of NAP (Mahmood S. , 2002, pp. 145-46). While NAP, like other political parties, faced a ban in 1958 due to a military coup, it re-emerged as the largest Left-wing party in 1962 when the political ban was lifted²⁹. NAP actively advocated for democracy, provincial autonomy, and socialism, and it threw its support behind Ms. Fatima Jinnah in the presidential election held in January 1965, where she ran against President Ayub Khan.

CULTURAL RELATIONS

Following independence, several members of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) relocated to Pakistan, including prominent figures like Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte-e-Hassan. This move was initiated by the Communist Party of India (CPI) with the directive to not only reorganise the party but also the PWA. The Soviet Union employed the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) and the All-Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association as channels to promote its ideological policies in Pakistan.

All-Pakistan Progressive Writers Association

The All-Pakistan Progressive Writers Association (A-PPWA) was a direct continuation of the All-India Progressive Writers Association, and it had strong affiliations with the newly established Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). Ahmad Nadim Qasimi assumed the role of the first secretary of A-PPWA. The inaugural conference of the Association was held in Lahore in November 1949, with the participation of a four-member Soviet delegation, consisting of a Tajik, an Uzbek and two Russians (Buheraj, 1973, p. 48), (Jameel, 2013, p. 289). Notably, all the Soviet participants were recipients of the Stalin Prize for their outstanding literary work. Sajjad Zaheer was unable to attend the conference due to warrants for his arrest were issued by the government of Pakistan. In 1950, the Soviet delegation extended an invitation to Pakistani Leftist writers to visit the Soviet Union, but the government of Pakistan denied them permission to go (Malik H. , 1994, p. 25), (Igor Vasilievich Khalevinsky, 1984, pp. 17-18).

Cultural Events

The Pakistan–Soviet Cultural Association organised a photo exhibition in October 1950, in Hyderabad and Mirpur Khas. In 1951, Maxim Gorki Day was celebrated in Karachi, and the event was also attended by the Russian ambassador (Malik H. , 1994, p. 43). The second all-Pakistan conference of the Progressive Writers Association (PWA) occurred in Karachi in 1952, with Malvi Abdul Haq and Abdul Majeed Salik presiding over the proceedings. In

²⁷ Rift in the Awami League emerged when Prime Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy supported Britain on the issue of Suez Canal in 1956, and Maulana Bashani departed his ways from the Awami League (Hashmi, 2011).

²⁸ The PNP itself was a merger of six minor parties; Azad Pakistan Party, Red Shirtsic/Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) –established by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in 1929, Sindh Awami Mahaz (Sindh People’s Front) of G. M. Sayed, Sindh Hari (Peasant) Committee, Wror Pakhtoon (Pakhtoon Brotherhood) of Samad Khan Achakzai and Ustaman Gal (People’s Party) of Prince Karim. In first stage the parties of West

Pakistan merged together and formed the Pakistan National Party. Its president was Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mahmud Ali Kasuri was its general secretary. A Leftist political party from East Pakistan ‘Ganatantri Dal’ (People’s Party) also merged in it and made Pakistan National Party on all-Pakistan level in 1956. Next year the breakaway group (from Awami League) under Maulana Bashani joined PNP. NAP was formed at Dacca in July 1957 (Paracha, 2020), (Leghari, 1979, p. 88).

²⁹ The ban was lifted from all political parties –other than the CPI – by implementing the Political Parties Act 1962.

1951, the government classified the PWA as a political party³⁰, and eventually, under pressure from the United States, the Pakistani government banned the association in 1954 (Zaheer, 2005, pp. 159-160), (Fatimi, 2011, pp. 70-1), (Haneef, 2014, p. 100). Nevertheless, the Association managed to continue its activities until 1958. Many prominent poets and literary figures associated with the PWA played a crucial role in the relatively fragile structure of the CPP (Malik H. , 1990, p. 159).

In 1948, Mian Iftekhhar Uddin established Progressive Papers Limited (PPL) and initiated the publication of two newspapers: the *Pakistan Times* (first issue of the English-language daily appeared on February 4, 1947) based in Lahore, and *Roznama Imroz* (inaugural issue of the Urdu-language daily was published on March 4, 1948), also from Lahore (Malik H. , 1994, p. 24). In January 1957, a weekly publication named *Lail-wo-Nahar* was launched, with Sibte-Hassan as its editor and Faiz Ahmad Faiz as its chief editor. Progressive Papers Limited served as a sanctuary for progressive writers. Following the imposition of Martial Law in 1958, the Ayub Khan regime accused PPL of collaborating with a 'foreign power' (i.e., the Soviet Union). Consequently, security forces forcefully occupied its premises³¹, its assets were auctioned, and hence the backbone of progressive writers in Pakistan was broken (Malik H. , 1990, p. 167).

Soon after Pakistan's independence, the Soviet Union, recognising Pakistan's crucial geopolitical significance, persistently emphasised the cultural and religious connections between the people of the West Pakistan and USSR, particularly that of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Malik H. , 1994, p. 131). In the 1950s, some cultural interactions were also established between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, the USSR and

Pakistan initiated mutual cultural contacts. These connections were primarily driven by the historical and traditional bonds between the people of Soviet Central Asia and those living in Pakistan.

Moscow pursued a dual policy in response to Pakistan's alignment with the West. On one hand, Moscow would warn Pakistan while also extending economic incentives to the country. On the other hand, Moscow used to provide diplomatic support to India in the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir and encouraged Afghanistan in its claim on Pakhtunistan. These policies aimed to exert pressure on Pakistan to resolve territorial disputes with its two neighbours, i.e., India and Afghanistan.

This approach towards Pakistan was reaffirmed at the beginning of 1956 with the aim of fostering mutually beneficial relations. In January 1956, the Soviet Union dispatched three delegations to Pakistan, although Pakistan did not reciprocate to Soviet invitations. Anastas Mikoyan, the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, took part in the Republic Day celebrations in Karachi on March 23, 1956 (Malik H. , 1994, p. 132). During his tour, he extended invitations to Miss Fatima Jinnah, the prime minister and the president of Pakistan to visit the Soviet Union, and also invited the Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly to lead a parliamentary delegation to the USSR. In Moscow, Pakistan's Republic Day celebration was attended by the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs and First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union V. M. Molotov. The Soviet State newspaper *Izvestia* and the Communist Party's organ *Pravda* published various articles on Pakistan's first constitution proclamation in 1956 (Buheraj, 1973, p. 126). Furthermore, in 1956, a parliamentary delegation from Pakistan visited the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

³⁰ The charges that the Association was a transmission-belt of the Communist Party of India were true. The fact that Sajjad Zaheer being a communist leader was well-known. The Marxist writers from Punjab including Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi, Zaheer Kashmiri, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi, Upendra Nath Ashk, Rajendra

Singh Bedi, and Krishan Chandar were the members of the PWA (Malik H. , 1994, p. 19).

³¹ The PPL was seized after the implementation of Press and Publication Ordinance on April 26, 1960 (Himayatullah, 2015, p. 140).

As a reciprocal gesture, the Soviet Union sent four delegations to Pakistan to participate in various meetings of different organisations. Pakistani religious scholars (*ulama*) visited Soviet Central Asia and in January 1958, a Soviet parliamentary delegation visited Pakistan. These interactions culminated in the signing of trade agreements that boosted the volume of trade between the two countries.

Trade Relations

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Pakistan and the Soviet Union initiated cooperation across various domains. An article in the Dawn newspaper on May 4, 1948, noted that despite major ideological differences, Pakistan could establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union, similar to its relationships with certain Western nations. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan proposed exploring trade possibilities with the foreign minister of Soviet Union in Paris in October 1948. In line with this, a Soviet trade delegation, consisting of five members, visited both wings of Pakistan in July 1949. However, this trade mission was withdrawn before reaching any formal agreement (Igor Vasilievich Khalevinsky, 1984, p. 12). During this period, the Soviet government agreed to supply Pakistan with 120,000 tons of grain to address Pakistan's wheat production shortfall in 1948. In return, Pakistan was to export raw materials like cotton, jute, and leather to the Soviet Union. In September 1952, a trade agreement based on a barter system was signed, involving the supply of 150,000 tons of wheat to Pakistan in exchange for cotton and jute (Malik H. , 1994, pp. 41-42,109). A number of trade agreements were successfully concluded between Karachi and Moscow in June 1956. It is worth noting that in Pakistan's trade with the Soviet Union, Pakistan consistently maintained a trade surplus (Buheraj, 1973, pp. 48, 85, 127, 269), (Yuri V. Gankovsky, 1987, pp. 187-88)

At the time of Pakistan's independence, the prevailing assumption regarding the Soviet Union was that, due to the extensive economic and industrial damage caused by World War II, it lacked the capacity to provide substantial military and economic assistance to Karachi

which the newly established Pakistan was anticipating and eventually did receive such support from the United States. (Malik H. , 1994, p. 101). However, by 1953, the Soviet Union had emerged as a significant global power for the first time (McCain, 1987 , p. 40). During Pakistan's Republic Day celebrations in Moscow, V. M. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, expressed interest in collaborating to set up a steel mill in Pakistan, similar to offer extended to India (Malik H. , 1994, p. 132).

In the summer of 1956, the Soviet Union delivered a substantial quantity of wheat and rice, to East Pakistan totaling 40,000 tons (Malik H. , 1994, p. 111). Trade between Pakistan and the Soviet Union was quite limited from 1950 to 1956. The first trade agreement between Pakistan and the Soviet Union was signed on June 27, 1956 (Malik H. , 1994, pp. 112, 132), and under this agreement, both nations granted each other the status of 'most favoured nation', with all payments to be made in Pakistani rupees (Buheraj, 1973, p. 127). This agreement had a positive impact on trade volume, with trade increasing thirteen-fold in 1958 compared to 1955. However, it's worth noting that trade with the USSR still accounted less than 1% of Pakistan's total foreign trade (Moskalenko, 2014, p. 96).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the initial years following independence, the Soviet Union maintained a neutral position regarding the Kashmir issue. However, as Pakistan aligned itself with Western military alliances, the Soviet Union shifted its stance from neutrality to a pro-India position. This shift became evident in 1957 when Moscow, for the first time, exercised its veto power to block a resolution on Kashmir in the United Nations. Pakistan's alignment with the United States in an anti-communist alliance did not significantly assist in achieving its primary objectives through this partnership, which included addressing the perceived threat from India and finding a resolution to the Kashmir issue.

In the realm of politics, the Soviet Union had a significant influence that led to the formation of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) in 1948.

The CPP was predominantly shaped by Muslim members of the Communist Party of India (CPI), who had initially supported the Muslim League's demand for the creation of Pakistan. In the 1940s, many Muslim members of the CPI had shifted their allegiance to the All-India Muslim League, denouncing the Indian National Congress as a party representing bourgeoisie. However, the CPP's fortunes took a downturn when it was accused of being involved in an unsuccessful military coup attempt against the government in 1951, known as the Rawalpindi conspiracy. This event proved disastrous for the CPP and the broader socialist movements in Pakistan. Subsequently, a severe crackdown was initiated against the CPP, culminating in the party's ban in 1954. Essentially, Pakistan's decision to align with the Western bloc resulted in the severe suppression of the Communist Party of Pakistan and its eventual prohibition in 1954³². The Soviets viewed the leasing of Pakistani territory to the United States of America for military bases as a move that brought Western powers back into the Subcontinent (Buheraj, 1973, p. 163). The Kremlin noted in 1958 with great regret that "for reasons beyond its control, the relations between the USSR and Pakistan leave much to be desired" (Malik H. , 1990, p. 106).³³

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³² CPP's members and activists remained underground until the last years of the 1980s when they resurfaced, just before its eventual dissolution following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

³³ From 1955 to 1960, while the Soviet leadership supported Afghanistan and India against Pakistan, but the Soviets never shut the diplomatic door for Pakistan to walk in. After making a statement in Srinagar on 10 December

1955 on Kashmir's accession to India, Khrushchev then added that the USSR 'shall persistently strive to improve relations with Pakistan' (Malik H. , 1994, p. 131). In March 1956, A. J. Mikoyan declared: 'Pacts or no pacts, the Soviet Union wants cordial relations with Pakistan'. He further aided, 'the future of Kashmir was not for us to decide. That is for the people of Kashmir to decide' (Malik H. , 1994, p. 205).

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