Azerbaijan and Pakistan: Unpacking the Layers of a Growing Entente

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Abstract

Azerbaijan had been the gate between East and West for ages. Its history reverberates with the echoes of Seljuks, Timurid-Mughals, Ottomans, and Russians. Islam found space in the hearts of its people in the eighth century AD and exhibited a dazzling glitter in medieval Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Khaljis, Ghourids, Ghaznavids, and Timurid Mughals had been catalysing the cross-fertilisations between both civilisations. Drawing from a range of scholarly sources, this review article examined the fabric of the entente cordiale between Azerbaijan and Pakistan in six areas: historical perspectives on Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations; eminent Sufis who have their descent from Azerbaijan; bilateral relations in the canvas of Persianate Sufi poetry; interconnections in global affairs; soviet occupation; and weaving connections through arts and language heritage. To examine the fabric of bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, the meta-analysis technique has been adopted. Data is extracted from various sources, including research papers, journals, books, and secondary sources such as news articles.

Keywords

Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Sufism, Spiritual Ties, Caucasus, Persianate Poetry, Silk Road.

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Introduction

Situated in the south of Caucasus, on the western shores of the Caspian Sea, the land of Azerbaijan cradled one of the oldest human civilisations. It has been a bridge between East and West since millennia. Within its very first century, Islam starts permeating Azerbaijan. Caliph Honourable Umar's army defeated the Sassanids at Qadisiyyah in 638. Muslims entered Azerbaijan after the Hamdan and Nahavand battles of 642 and won Ardabil in 644, Islam thus found its space in the hearts of Azerbaijanis (Aliyeva, 2013; Ismailov, 2017).

With the gradual weakening of Byzantine, Azerbaijani cities Barda, Baku, Beylagan, Derbent, Astrabad, Ardabil, Maraghan, and Nakhchivan drew considerable share of the international trade. These cities opened the Caliphate trade to the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and North-East Asia. Economic prosperity bred the development in education, science, and culture. By the eighth century, Islam had made its complete foothold in Azerbaijan. In the 11th and 12th centuries, this area had been ruled by the great Oghuz Seljuk Sultans (Ismailov, 2017).

Azerbaijan went through three episodes of Mongol invasions from 1220 onwards. Jalal ad-Din Khwarazmshah also ruled this part of the world for some time from 1225 onwards. The third episode of Mongol attack was led by Hulagu Khan in 1256, who completely occupied current day Azerbaijan. Mongols would rule Azerbaijan for hundred years till 1357. Parts of Azerbaijan were included in the Ottoman Empire from Sultan Suleiman Kanuni to Sultan Murad III from 1534 till 1589 (Ismailov, 2017). From the 16th century onwards, Russia started to occupy Central Asia and the Caucasus. Religion had been the main casualty of this occupation (Rorlich, 1983).

The Indus Civilisation has been influenced by Central Asian and Arab-Turkic Civilisations. Though geographically located in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan is part of Turkic culture (Hussain, 2005). The fabric of Pakistan's cultural geography has long stretched towards Central Asia and the Caucasus since millennia. In fact, most of the beautiful colours in the rainbow of South Asian civilisation, including its culture, arts, cuisine, language, architecture, and religion, have been originated from Central Asia and the Caucasus. The lifeline of this civilisational glitter has been

the arteries of ancient trade routes and Silk Road networks (Khan and Talukdar, 2021), which have made the flow of tangible and intangible assets across these regions possible. Sufi literature, specifically Persianate poetry, has been working as one of the unifying forces among South Asian, Central Asian, and civilisations of the Caucasus.

In the Muslim society, the apparent duality of spirit and matter is reconciled in the mould of laws and institutions associated with the culture of Islam (Iqbal, 1930). Pakistan's ideology is sketched in this canvas, and the origins of the lines run through the Turkic and Indus civilisations towards Hijaz. The channel of spiritual and moral closeness has actually been carrying the fragrances of cultures across the geographical distance between the two countries.

Most of the scholarship has been focusing on strategic relations and support on various political and geographical issues, such as Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh (Khan & Syed, 2021). The areas that received the least focus include the spiritual, cultural, Islamic traditional values, and religious heritage between the two states. Reason for the strong cultural bondage of these countries lies in their spiritual and moral closeness. Drawing from various scholarly sources, including research papers, journals, books, and secondary sources such as news articles, this review paper examined the fabric of bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. In this study, Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations within six areas are studied including historical perspectives on Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations; eminent Sufis who have their descent from Azerbaijan; bilateral relations in the canvas of Persianate Sufi poetry; interconnections in global affairs; soviet occupation; and weaving connections through arts and language heritage.

Historical Perspective on Azerbaijan-Pakistan Relations

Azerbaijan had been the Silk Road caravan crossing point for ages, thus serving as a "gate" between the East and the West. Along with the transport of trade commodities, this road also had been catalysing the exchange of cultural and spiritual values. There had been a rich exchange of this precious capital between Azerbaijan and the subcontinent (Karimi, 2021). About five hundred years ago, the rulers of Baku built the Multan

Caravanserai for the traders from the present-day Pakistan region coming to Azerbaijan. This serai is protected by as a valuable example of cultural and historical heritage (Heydar Aliyev Heritage, 2018; Polvonov, 2021). Such historic sites are a major proof of our common socio-cultural roots (MUSLIM Institute, 2022).

As early as the eighth century BC, Multan was a key trade centre, which had been an attractive target for a number of conquerors. Among the more famous include Darius I in the 6th century BC and Alexander in the 4th century BC. Muhammad ibn Qasim conquered it in the eighth century. It grew both as a commercial and cultural centre. Patronage of its wealthy Muslim rulers attracted immigrants from across the Islamic world (Levi, 2007). Under the Khaljis in the 14th century, commercial ventures of traders from this region to the markets of Central Asia increased. This trade relationship in Central Asia was further strengthened during the rule of conqueror Amir Timur in the 14th century (Levi, 2007).

Under the rule of Ghaznavids (975-1187) and Ghurids (1148-1215), these interactions moved into the sphere of Islam (Schimmel, 1980). Timurid-Mughals (1526-1858) further strengthened these connections. Many Central Asians followed the Timurid prince Babur to India, thus expanding the scale of personal travel between the two regions, which resulted in mutual fertilisations in the fields of literature, arts, and sciences (Balci, 2015). Due to different political and religious tensions in the Caucasia and Central Asia, many Sufis migrated to the Timurid Mughal Empire. Most of the Timurid princes had been devotees of Sufi shaykhs and had strong personal associations with many centres of Islamic knowledge in Central Asia (Balci, 2015). Azerbaijan and Pakistan are multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian states. Sufi practices specifically have been playing the role of keeping all this diversity tied together.

Sufism in the Heart of Central Asia and the Caucasus

Sufism has been one of the ideological and practical sociocultural streams of the Azerbaijani civilisation. Many South Asian Sufis have their descent from Azerbaijan. Persianate Sufi literature has been crystallising a rich cultural exchange between the two countries. Azerbaijani literature influenced the outstanding personalities of the East, such as Amir

Khosrau, Abdurrahman Jami, and Muhammad Fuzuli. Sufism ensured survival of Islam under the Soviet state atheism. It adapted itself into the Sovietised national cultures by acquiring different forms. It transformed some spaces, for instance, tea-houses, bakeries, and other secular spaces into kind of undercover religious spaces (Abashin, 2015, pp. 498–548; Salmorbekova & Yemelianova, 2010, p. 216). Defying the muftiate Islam established by Stalin, they continued teaching Hanafi Islam (Al-Maturidi version) in the hujras (meeting places) (Babadzhanov, Muminov, & von Kugelgen, 2007, p. 20). The Azerbaijan and Pakistani governments have always been supporting each other with an open heart. Pakistan provided full support to Azerbaijan during its challenging times with Armenia. Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue (Khan & Syed, 2021). Today, the historic bond between the brotherly countries ought to be capitalized in all spheres of human life.

In the Islamic world, Sufism is considered as one of the most influential and widespread paths of spiritual enlightenment and closeness to God. As an ideological, theoretical, and practical sociocultural stream, Sufism has been defining the development of the Azerbaijan spiritual culture, philosophy, theology, aesthetics, literature, and arts. The doctrine of attaining God through love and the usage of specific mystical symbols in artistic images entered the ontology and gnoseology of Azerbaijani culture. These concepts were embraced by both the representatives of the elite and of popular movements aiming at the restoration of social justice. The ideas of Sufism were also reflected in the court poetry (Todorova, 2020).

Many of the South Asian Sufis have their descent from Central Asia and Caucasus (Tarar, 2019). Naqshbandiyya epitomises the dynamism of the Islamic interactions between Central Asia and the subcontinent. The Naqshbandi order originated in Bukhara, Central Asia, in the 14th century, and it played a crucial role in spreading Islamic teachings and Sufism. Over time, it expanded to the Indian subcontinent. Shaikh Baha ud-Din Naqshband (1318–1389) was a renowned Sufi master from Bukhara, Uzbekistan. He is best known as the founder of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. In a short period, it was realised as Sufi brotherhood in different parts of the the Muslim world. Due to its perseverance and peace-loving nature, it

survived through the Soviet occupation. Khwaja Ahrar (1404–1490) reconsolidated the Naqshbandiyya movement and achieved predominance in the Timurid Mughal empire. There had been strong ties between the political rulers and Sufi shaykhs among the Mughals. Babur, for instance, was strongly associated with a Naqshbandi Sheikh Baqi Billah (1563-1603). It made more space for other Sufi masters to move to the Mughal Empire (Balci, 2015).

Then the most important Naqshbandi shaykh in India is Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi (1564–1624), honoured with the title of Mujaddid Alif Thani, who breathed new spirit into the Naqshbandiyya order and formed his branch known as Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiya. His descendant and successor, Habibullah sent his khalifas from the Mughal Empire to Central Asia. Shaykhs from Bukhara would travel to the Mughal Empire to be bestowed with an ijaza and return to their homeland to spread the teachings (Balci, 2015).

In the 14th century, Omar Sirajaddin al-Khalwati laid the foundation of the Khalwati order in Azerbaijan. However, the tariqa received its true development under Seyyid Yahya Shirvani-Bakuvi. This order went beyond the borders of Azerbaijan and expanded its sphere of influence in the Crimea, Dagestan, the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Mughal Empire, and Africa (Vezirova, 2024).

The birthplace of Abū al-Najīb Abd al-Qādir Suhrawardī was once part of Azerbaijan, as the region of Zanjan and Tabriz were once part of Azerbaijan in Medieval times (Durand-Guédy, 2018). His nephew, a famous Sufi Shehabaddin Abu Hafs Omar Suhrawardi, honoured Bahauddin Zakaria from Multan (present day Pakistan) with the title of spiritual caliph. Bahauddin was the founder of the Suhrawardi school of Sufism in medieval South Asia (Ohlander, 2008). Another famous 11th century Sufi Syed Miran Hussain Zanjani migrated from Zanjan to South Asia (Munir & Jabeen, 2022).

Azerbaijan-Pakistan Relations in the Canvas of Persianate Sufi Poetry

Persianate Sufi literature has been catalysing a rich cultural exchange between the two nations. It is characterized by increased attention to the

internal form of the word and the intensive play with symbolic images. Azerbaijani literature influenced the outstanding personalities of the East, such as Amir Khosrau, Abdurrahman Jami, and Muhammad Fuzuli. Nizami's immortal Khamsa genre became universal for the literature of the Near East (Bagirov, 2020).

Persian was used as a literary language by many peoples of the Near and Middle East, which included vast territories, namely Iran, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Caucasia, and the northwestern subcontinent. A poem written, for instance, in Bukhara was understandable across this part of the world. All these regions thus have equal rights to the huge Persianate literary legacy, which is the result of a rich cultural exchange, and the mutual influence of various ethnic groups (Bagirov, 2020).

Sufi poetry has a marvellous perfection of poetic thought, courage, and soulful sincerity, which is combined with some mysterious illumination of each word, multidimensionality, and exciting unity of form and essence. In the eyes of Sufis, ingenious possession of the word is nothing short of a divine gift. He himself becomes an instrument of the world of secrets. Persianate poetry, which appeared in Azerbaijan in the 10th and 11th centuries, is intricately connected with the Ghaznavid and Bukhara courts. It flourished in Ganja, Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Barda, Maraga, and Baku. It is characterized by increased attention to the internal spirit of the word and the intensive play with symbolic images like the nightingale, rose, candle, and moth, etc. Traditions of this school were inherited by Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209), Ṣāʾib Tabrīzī (1592-1676), Amir Khosrau (1253–1325), Abdurrahman Jami, Alisher Navoi (1441–1501), and Muhammad Fuzuli (1494–1556) (Bagirov, 2020).

Afzaladdin Khagani (1126-1199), the poet-thinker, is one of the most famous literary figures of Azerbaijan. The poet mastered Arabic and Persian literature, linguistics, the Quran, and mathematics. His first poem is "Tuḥfat al-ʿIrāqayn" in Azerbaijani literature influenced the outstanding personalities of the East, such as Amir Khosrau, Abdurrahman Jami, and Muhammad Fuzuli. Nizami's immortal Khamsa: Iskendername, Khosrov and Shirin, Yeddi gezal (Seven Beauties), Sirlar khazinasi (Treasure of secrets), Leyli and Mejnun have earned him fame across the world.

Khamsa consists of thirty thousand double-rhymed verses. The genre form of Khamsa became universal for the literature of the Near East (Bagirov, 2020). He is one of the key figures in the establishment of spiritual intimacy between the people of Azerbaijan and the Mughal Empire. He gave the Mughal Empire a special place in his Khamsa (Karimi, 2021). Nizami criticised the hermits of his time, who, as he said, sold themselves out for a piece of bread. Nizami had also been admonishing the rulers (Bagirov, 2020).

By emulating his Khamsa, Khosrau composed the poem Panj Ganj (Five Treasures), in which he included five masnavis: Laila and Majnun, Matla-ul-Anwar, Hasht-Bihisht, Aina-e-Sikandari, and Khosrau-Shirin. The poem Matla-ul-Anwar included in Khamsa-e-Khosrau is dedicated to Nizami's Makhzanol-Asrâr (the Storehouse of Mysteries) (Karimi, 2021). Khusrau holds a special position in the galaxy of Urdu and Persianate literature. He was a Sufi, courtier, soldier, poet, and music master. He was a descendant of the Turk nobility Saifuddin from Balkh. He was an intellectual and knew many languages, including Turkish and Persian. Along with the realisations of discipleship of Khawaja Nizamuddin, he served in high positions in many courts. He produced two language couplets: where one verse is in Urdu and one in Persian (Iram et al., 2023). He is recognized as one of the pioneers of Urdu language poetry (Khusrou, 2022).

Holding a special position in the Urdu and Persianate literature, Khosrau was a descendant of Turk nobility from Balkh. Ṣāʾib Tabrīzī, as a young man, embarked on a journey to the Mughal Empire and became a favourite of Shāh Jahān's court. Eminent Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fuzuli considered Khosrau's poetry as one of the most exquisite works of art. Fuzuli's own works were also well known to the Muslim sages across the subcontinent. Ibrahim Qutb Shah Wali, who was also of Turkish origin, wrote the first divan in Urdu language. Mīrzā Abdul-Qādir Bēdil was a Sufi and one of the greatest Indo-Persian poets. He was the son of a former Turkic soldier. Another famous poet of the Urdu language, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, was also of Turkic origin. The last Mughal Emperor was also a descendant of a warrior chieftain from the Fergana Valley.

Ṣāʾib Tabrīzī composed poetry in Persian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish languages. As a young man, he embarked on a journey to the Mughal Empire in the subcontinent. He became a favourite of Shāh Jahān's court (Ghazani, 2024; Karimi, 2021). Eminent Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fuzuli included Khosrau among the most beautiful poets of our world. Fuzuli's works have been well known to the Muslim sages across the subcontinent. Seventeenth century poet Ibrahim Ordubadi went to Mughal India to visit Shahjahan's court and was given the responsibility of teaching the children of his prime minister (Karimi, 2021).

Ibrahim Qutb Shah Wali (ruler of the Qutbshahi state), who was also of Turkish origin, wrote the first divan of the Urdu language (Weinstein, 2014). Mīrzā Abdul-Qādir Bēdil – a great Indo-Persian Sufi and poet, was the son of a Turk soldier, Mirza Abd al-Khaliq (d. 1648). Another famous poet of the Urdu language, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, was also of Turkic origin. His ancestors moved to Samarkand after the downfall of the Seljuks. His paternal grandfather, Mirza Qoqan Baig, was a Seljuq Turk who had immigrated to South Asia from Samarkand. Apart from the Urdu language, he was also an expert in Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. Similarly, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah-II was also a famous poet.

Along with the development of invaluable literature, these great poets and thinkers have been doing a great service to the Urdu language and culture with the addition of beautiful pages in the history of Pakistani-Turkish relations, including the modern times in Azerbaijan. A huge wealth of vocabulary in the national language of Pakistan has been derived from the Persian and Turkic languages. Credit goes to many great poets, most of them Sufis, who actually borrowed the pearls full of meaning from these languages and used them in the invaluable pieces of poetry. The poetry of Pakistani poet and philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal is well known in Azerbaijan. There is an Urdu department at Baku State University.

Azerbaijan and Pakistan: Interconnections in Global Affairs

Azerbaijan and Pakistan have a very unique political relationship that has surpassed the geographical distance (Khan, 2018). It encompasses economic, defence, political, and diplomatic cooperation. Today, Pakistan

is the only country that has not established any diplomatic ties with Baku's main foe, Armenia (Shahbazov, 2017b). The long running Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts have been key factors in bringing Baku and Islamabad closer together (Shahbazov 2017a). Azerbaijan always stands with Pakistan with an open heart. Pakistan provided full support to Azerbaijan during its challenging times with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Azerbaijan has been a member of the Contact Group on Kashmir since 1996. This consortium was constituted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (Khan & Syed, 2021).

The Senate of Pakistan expressed full support to Azerbaijan on the Khojaly Muslim massacre (on February 26, 1992) by the Armenian army and recognised it as a genocide (Khan, 2018). The Foreign Relations Committee instituted by this house called for the implementation of four United Nations Security Council resolutions, which stated unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Armenian army from Azerbaijani lands (Fahim, 2020).

Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, who was the 5th Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, during his visit to the USSR in 1962, paid a special visit to Azerbaijan along with his delegation, consisting of famous writers and scholars. The delegation participated in the events dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani playwright and intellectual Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh. Similarly, in 1967, a delegation of the East Pakistan Legislative Assembly visited Azerbaijan and learned about the artistic and cultural environment of Sumgayit and Baku (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, n.d.).

Mirza Abul Hassan Isfahani, a famous scholar and diplomat, wrote his pleasant experiences about friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan in his book 'From Leningrad to Samarkand.' Furthermore, a branch of the Soviet-Pakistani Cultural Relations Association in Baku was established in the 1970s during the Soviet Era. Many Azerbaijani scientists, educators, and artists visited Pakistan through this forum (Hussain, 1987). The relations further strengthened after the collapse of the USSR and the establishment of Azerbaijan as an independent state. Azerbaijan's independence was celebrated on Pakistani media enthusiastically.

Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's stand on the Jammu & Kashmir issue. The Government of Azerbaijan has always supported Pakistan on Kashmir at all forums. On April 10, 1996, a Joint Declaration on twinning the cities of Ganja and Multan was signed. In 2004, English and Urdu versions of a book entitled "Based on the Works of Prominent Azerbaijani Thinker Jalil Mammadguluzade" were published and exhibited at Islamabad (Heydar Aliyev Heritage, 2018).

In the UN Security Council, when resolution 822 was discussed on 30th April 1993, on the invasion of the Kelbadjar district of the Azerbaijan by Armenia, Pakistan provided full support. The state and people of Pakistan stood side by side with their Azerbaijani brothers in their just effort against the Armenian aggression. To show solidarity with Azerbaijan, a renowned research think tank, the MUSLIM Institute, organised a high-level seminar to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Khojaly Genocide. Letters with a resolution of the seminar were sent to more than 24 intergovernmental organisations, including UNO, the European Union, the International Criminal Court, and the European Parliament, to demand justice for Khojaly (MUSLIM Institute, 2024). On the eve of this organised event, the Khjolay Genocide remained a top Twitter trend in Pakistan, which means that the people of Pakistan are not only aware of Azerbaijan's socio-political problems but also stand with them in their struggle. Similarly, under the leadership of Sahibzada Sultan Muhammad Ali, the founding father of the MUSLIM Institute, the solidarity with Azerbaijan was expressed by Pakistani horse riders in 2020. Horses were painted in colours of Turkish and Azerbaijani flags, to express solidarity with Ankara and Baku, and paraded at the culmination of an international horse-riding tournament in Pakistan's province of Punjab (Ismayilova, 2024).

The national leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, at a joint press conference with Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, said:

> Azerbaijan has always supported Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue and continues to support it today. … … the Azerbaijani delegation and I personally supported the position of Pakistan. We have not only defended Pakistan, but also co-written a resolution

condemning India and supporting Pakistan on the Kashmir issue (Heydar Aliyev Heritage, 1995).

Soviet Occupation and Azerbaijan

Muslims established their dominance on Russia in the Middle Ages (Rorlich, 1983). They ruled the Golden Horde (Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Southern Russia, Siberia, Kazakhstan) in the Middle Ages (Abylov, 2019). The turning point occurred in the 16th century when the armies of Ivan the Terrible conquered the Khanate of Kazan in 1552. It triggered a cascade of conquests of Muslim territories stretched over an era of three hundred years, coming to an end with the fall of Merv in 1884. Conquered Muslim lands would go through the impact of Soviet policies for centuries (Rorlich, 1983). A large number of traditional practices and institutions, such as zakat and waqf, Sharia courts, and religious teaching in schools, were abolished. Caveats in the travel to Mecca for pilgrimage were increased. The number of mosques declined to fewer than a couple of thousand from over 25,000 in 1913 (Rorlich, 1983; Yemelianova, 2019).

Official Islam was reorganized and restructured by the Soviet Union by creating four formal religious boards in the occupied Central Asia and Caucasus. In order to control the Muslim population, religious dignitaries were installed with the title of ’mufti‘ in each board. One of the most important factors that contributed to the survival of Islam in Central Asia and Azerbaijan are the presence of Sufi orders. Two Sufi orders had been very popular in Soviet Central Asia: the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya, with numbers of followers in tens of thousands. During the Soviet occupation era, their practice had been that a spiritual leader belonging to either of these two orders would visit the private homes of their followers –in the cities or villages – and would engage them in religious practice in the privacy of their abodes. These spiritual orders thus played a key role in preserving the spirit of religious Islam in these populations (Malik, 1991). Sufi orders endured the Soviet occupation reasonably well (Rorlich, 1983).

Weaving Connections Through Arts and Language Heritage

The development of the ‘Mughal style’ in a vast diversity of arts could not have been materialised without the participation of Azerbaijani

craftsmen who came into the Mughal Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries. Artistic cooperation between the Azerbaijani and Mughal architecture masters appeared under the rule of Babur's son Nasiraddin Humayun (1530-1556). His rule stretched over a vast territory consisting of present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and parts of Northern India. He had visited Ardabil, Tabriz, and other important regions of Azerbaijan, and as a token of appreciation for the works of craftsmen and artists, he brought some of them to his empire. The Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi was built by the architect Mirza Giyas (Karimi 2021). The mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar in Merv, a 12th Century Seljuk sultan, has a direct architectural influence on the mausoleums of Shah Rukn-e-Alam in Multan and Mahra Sharif in the Gomal Valley, Dera Ismail Khan (Tarar, 2019).

Persian and Turkish languages were widely spoken in South Asia. Even the cultural amalgamation led to the development Urdu in the eighth Century (Younas, 2018). Sufi literature is the cornerstone of Urdu language literature. In a study "About the usage of the words "Turk" and "Turkî" in the Urdu language and literature", Halil Toker, a researcher in the Department of Urdu Language and Literature at Istanbul University, writes that Turks had such a profound role in the development of the Urdu language the word Urdu itself is from Turkish origin (Toker, 2011).

The extensive use of the traditional Kashmiri shawl as an ideal in the oral folk literature of Azerbaijan shows that Pakistani culture has been established as one of the essential features of the Caucasian civilisation. In Azerbaijani folklore, a trip to Kashmir is not complete without bringing back a Kashmiri shawl as a gift for a loved one, highlighting the special place Kashmir holds in Azerbaijani culture (Guliyeva, 2021). Similarly, the Novruz festival – the coming of spring – celebrated in Azerbaijan is also celebrated in Pakistan as Basant.

Trade has also been considered as one of the main contributors to the spread of Islam. It has also been catalysing the spread of cultures and religious values across the world (Michalopoulos et. al., 2018). Central Asia and Caucasia are the second largest energy reservoir of oil, gas, and hydrocarbons after the Persian Gulf. Pakistan is located at the convergence of South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia and provides the shortest

access to warm water seas for all landlocked Central Asian and Caucasian states. Including the Gwadar port, it has three major seaports along the Arabian Sea (Akbar and Khan, 2022). Pakistan and Azerbaijan ought to make the best out of the historical connections for the people of both nations.

Conclusion

Unlike alliances that are narrowly strategic or transactional, the Azerbaijan-Pakistan relationship rests on enduring spiritual and cultural affinities. The legacy of Sufi mysticism, Persianate poetry, and shared contributions to Islamic civilization has provided both nations with moral and intellectual foundation that persists even amidst modern global complexities. The trajectory of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations demonstrates that their entente is not a recent convenience of geopolitics, but rather the continuation of a centuries-long civilizational dialogue. This relation is rooted in shared spiritual traditions, cultural affinities, and historical experiences, this bond transcends conventional diplomacy.

Likewise, the survival of Islamic identity under Soviet suppression in Azerbaijan, preserved through Sufi orders, resonates with Pakistan's own vision of Islam as a spiritual and civilizational anchor. From the caravanserais of Baku that welcomed traders from Multan, to the Mughal courts enriched by Azerbaijani poets and craftsmen, history testifies to deep civilizational synthesis. The Sufi literature has played a profound role in shaping the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Urdu language. Such commonalities reveal that their cooperation is not merely opportunistic, but rather organically rooted in shared struggles, values, and aspirations.

Moreover, in contemporary times, this kinship has transformed into unwavering political solidarity. Azerbaijan's principled support for Pakistan or Kashmir and Pakistan's steadfast backing of Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh affirm that their fraternity is not confined to cultural heritage but extends into the realm of modern statecraft. Furthermore, the complementary geopolitical positions of both countries – Pakistan as a gateway to the Arabian Sea and Azerbaijan as a vital energy hub - offer practical avenue for economic, energy, and infrastructural collaboration.

In a fragmented world order, the brotherhood between these two nations stands as an example of how shared history and values can be mobilized to serve not only mutual interest but also the larger cause of Islamic unity and global peace. Ultimately, the Azerbaijan-Pakistan relationship is a reminder that international relations cannot be fully explained through power politics alone. Spiritual, cultural, and civilizational ties often provide the invisible scaffolding upon which durable alliances are built. Going forward, both nations must capitalize on this heritage by expending cooperation in education, culture, trade, energy, and technology-thus weaving their historical fraternity onto a forward-looking partnership that benefits future generations.

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