ARTICLES

Turkey-Pakistan Relations: Towards Multidimensional Regional Integration

Prof. Selcuk Colakoglu* & Mr. Emre Tunc Sakaoglu**

Abstract

In this article; the latest situation in Turkey-Pakistan relations, their recent transformation, and their gradual institutionalization process will be assessed. Within this framework, the high level that has been attained in terms of bilateral cooperation as concerns political, military, and economic matters will be addressed. The common approach that Turkey and Pakistan have been working to develop for the last few decades with an eye to regional and global developments, particularly those of political and economic significance for the Middle East and Central Asia, will also be elaborated. In that regard, complementary and joint efforts aimed at improving bilateral cooperation through both multilateral forums and international organizations will be examined. The following paragraphs will offer insights into the reasons why the tasks of maintaining stability in Afghanistan, gaining the ability to respond various inter-related developments in South Asia and the Middle East, and utilizing several prospective projects on a multilateral basis as envisioned within the framework of China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative (OBOR) have begun to rank high on the bilateral cooperation agenda of the two countries in recent years.

Keywords:

Turkey, Pakistan, Bilateral Cooperation, Regional Integration, Middle Powers.

* Prof. Selcuk Colakoglu is Professor of International Relations at Yildirim Beyazit University & Vice President of International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), Ankara, Turkey.

** Mr. Emre Tunc Sakaoglu is Researcher at USAK, Ankara, Turkey.

Introduction: A Historical Overview of Pak-Turkish Relations

Historical, religious and cultural ties between Turkey and Pakistan that come down from past to present had a great influence in the establishment and rapid development of bilateral relations immediately after Pakistan gained independence in 1947. Nevertheless, security policies played a propellant role in developing bilateral relations during the 1950s. Both feeling threatened by the Communist Bloc pioneered by the Soviet Union, Pakistan and Turkey joined forces with the Western Bloc led by the United States (US). Turkey and Pakistan cooperated in order to prevent the influence of communism from penetrating into the Middle East and South Asia. Although the Baghdad Pact was nondurable, it nevertheless served to create the institutional infrastructure of such a common policy.

Strictly following security policies drafted by the Western Bloc in the beginning of the 1960s, Turkey and Pakistan began to conduct bilateral relations more independently by mid-1960s within the framework of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). While Turkey's relations with the United States deteriorated with the Johnson Letter of 1964, Pakistan also reasoned that the United States has left Pakistan alone in its war against India in 1965. Therefore, Turkey began to develop its ties with the Warsaw Pact and Third World countries, while Pakistan began to approach China in particular (Bishku, 1992).

The 1970s have witnessed two international crises from the point of Turkey and Pakistan. Firstly, East Pakistan has gained independence by the name Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. Ankara supported Pakistan diplomatically and even militarily throughout the process and did not recognize independent Bangladesh until Pakistan did the same in February 1974 (Choudhury, 2016). Regarding the Cyprus issue, Turkey was compelled to intervene with its military to the island in 1974. Besides providing Turkey with military-logistic supply, Pakistan has also been the sole country to give full support to Turkey's stance. Thus, Turkey and Pakistan strongly rooted for each other during 1970s considering their own national security perspectives.

Turkey-Pakistan relations gained significance in the 1980s in a similar fashion with the situation in the 1950s. Security policies within

the framework of the Western alliance burst once again into prominence during that decade. Two significant developments were influential over the emergence of such a policy course. The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 created the risk of Warsaw Pact extending its range to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Iran breaking ties with its traditional ally, the United States, with the Islamic Revolution of 1979 placed the regional interests of Western countries in jeopardy. In this regard, Turkey-Pakistan alliance had gained considerable significance for both preventing the Soviets from reaching farther to the south and containing the influence and activities of the Khomeini regime in Iran. With Pakistani Chief of Staff Zia-ul-Haq seizing power by a coup in 1977 and Turkish Chief of Staff Kenan Evren staging a similar coup in 1980 in Turkey added into the bargain, Turkey-Pakistan relations became the new focus of global security in the first half of 1980s. Both military administrations engaged the United States with utmost sympathy and the US-backed Turkey-Pakistan alliance lasted until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan came to an end (Subtain, Hussain, Farooq, Kahn, 2016).

Bilateral relations witnessed some degree of loosening in 1990s. Not being able to build solid grounds for economic partnership despite intensified political contact was an important factor that led to some cooling in relations. Also, Ankara gave more priority during the 1990s upon relative and friendly peoples of newly independent countries which emerged out of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, in the Balkans and in Eurasia respectively. On the other hand, Pakistan mainly prioritized the stabilization of Afghanistan in the aftermath of the country's invasion by the Soviet Union at that time. As a matter of fact, Afghanistan had become an area of divergence because Pakistan supported the Taliban regime in Kabul while Turkey backed the Northern Alliance in the second half of the 1990s (Hussain, 2008:70).

Throughout the first decade of the 2000s, the challenge of maintaining stability in Afghanistan after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervention rose to become the main headline of bilateral relations between Turkey and Pakistan. NATO's intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 shook Pakistan's sensitive ethnic and religious structure at its core. Turkey strived to contribute to the domestic stability

of Pakistan as well during this era, in addition to taking over official endeavours to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As observed throughout the history of bilateral relations, a common identity shaped around religious-cultural affinity constitutes the main driving force behind Turkey's close relations with Pakistan. At the point of global and national security concerns, an understanding between Ankara and Islamabad regarding cooperation within different frameworks and at different weights relying on contextual or cyclical dynamics took hold. However, despite all the efforts, it is obvious that bilateral relations are still deprived of a strong emphasis on common economic interests. This situation also inhibits the institutionalization of a concrete, consistent, and lingering political partnership.

Moreover, the article aims to show how the two 'middle powers'- Turkey and Pakistan – have played a role in regional and global politics. Studies on 'middle power' have begun to intensify with the end of the Cold War. One major reason for this rise was the increasing transparency in the international system. The global system transformed in a more multilateral framework with the 1990s and the well-equipped middle powers became more prominent than before (Cooper, Higgott, Nossal, 1993). In this new era, middle powers were not necessarily from the Western Alliance. Sweden, Pakistan, Indonesia, India and Turkey appeared to be named as middle powers. For the past decade, there has been growing emphasis on middle powers and the roles they can play on the global stage. Investment banks and consultancy firms, with Goldman Sachs first and foremost, began to point at various promising groupings of middle powers. Next 11 (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, and Vietnam) is one of them and Turkey and Pakistan are considered among prominent middle powers (Kuepper, 2016). Middle powers became more active in international politics with the in the post-Cold War period but it is too early to say that they had achieved a determining role in international politics.

Increasing Institutional Cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan

While mutual amity and a willingness to cooperate in the political field have traditionally characterized Pak-Turkish relations, efforts aimed at upgrading the relationship to the next level have gained further momentum in recent years. Within this framework, Ankara and Islamabad had already begun to take coordinated steps in the direction of boosting their institutional capacity since the turn of the century. The essential motivation behind this strategic drive is twofold: while consolidating their bilateral ties, the two countries also share a desire to harmonize their policies at the regional as well as global levels.

For that purpose, relations between the two countries were endowed with a well-structured, institutional backbone in 2009 with the establishment of the High Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) mechanism. The four meetings that were held within this framework since the diplomatic mechanism's inception were presided by the serving prime ministers of the two countries, and hosted government ministers from each side. While the 2010 and 2013 summits which were hosted by Turkey took place in Ankara, the 2013 and 2015 summits convened in Islamabad (The Express Tribune, 2015). The HLCC's primary objective has been the improvement of bilateral economic relations, even though security-related and political items have also been included in its comprehensive agenda. Both countries are aware of the fact that bilateral relations will stagnate unless real progress is made in the name of deepening economic integration. As clearly manifested by the disheartening data on the total volume and composition of mutual trade; commercial ties between Ankara and Islamabad lag far behind what one may expect looking at the impressive level of historical affinity between the two capitols in the political sphere.

Therefore, the HLCC has to focus on increasing mutual investment and trade. Today, trade between Turkey and Pakistan has yet to reach the desired level. The volume of bilateral trade was $132 million in 1990, and it increased by a mere $3 million to $135 million throughout the entire decade up to 2000. The bilateral trade volume has reached its apex in 2011 with a recorded sum of $1.087, only to decline once again down

to $599 million by 2015 (See Table 1). In fact, Turkey and Pakistan have high trade complementarities and a free trade agreement (FTA) should help facilitate a better outcome in this regard. Pakistan's exports to Turkey are quite concentrated, whereas Turkish exports to Pakistan are much more diversified in comparison. Textile-related goods account for more than 73 percent of Pakistan's exports to Turkey. In contrast, Turkish exports to Pakistan have higher added value and are technologically more advanced (Suvankulov and Ali, 2012:59).

Table 1) Turkey's trade with Pakistan ($ million)

	Export	**Import**	**Total**
1990	48	84	132
2000	53	82	135
2010	248	750	998
2015	289	310	599

Source : Turkish Ministry of Economy

A framework agreement, which lays the groundwork for a full-fledged FTA that is to be signed following further negotiations over details was reached on March 22, 2016. What is aimed by this deal is to lift the volume of bilateral trade to the level of $2 billion in the short-term. Negotiations over a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the two countries were initiated in February 2015 at the 4th meeting of the HLCC (Pakistan Observer, 2016a). Turkey and Pakistan held the third round of FTA negotiations in Ankara in July 2016. There, two parties had the chance to thoroughly discuss matters pertaining to tariffs, customs facilitation, safeguard measures, rules of origin, tariff reduction modality, bilateral investment mechanisms, and services. They decided to hold the fourth round of FTA talks in Islamabad in August 2016 (Daily Times, 2016b).

Without an FTA, the current state of Pak-Turkish relations does not promise much economic potential. This situation is clearly demonstrated by the comparative data on Turkey's trade with individual South Asian countries. The volume of trade between Turkey and Pakistan was recorded at $599 million, out of a total of $8.3 billion between Turkey

and the entire region as of 2015. Pakistan ranks behind India and Bangladesh, as Turkey's third largest trade partner in South Asia. (See Table 2).

Table 2) Turkey's trade with South Asian countries for 2015 ($ million)

Countries	Export	Import	Total	Balance
Pakistan	289	310	599	-21
India	650	5.613	6.263	-4.963
Bangladesh	200	996	1.196	-796
Sri Lanka	51	87	138	-36
Nepal	47	16	63	31
Bhutan	0	2	2	-2
Maldives	18	0	18	18
Total	**1.255**	**7.024**	**8.279**	**-5.769**

Source : Turkish Ministry of Economy

Security and Defence Cooperation

Another promising field for future cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan is security and defence. The two countries have a long history of cooperation against a range of security threats, from the spread of communism in the 1950s to the rise of religious extremism and terrorism in the 2000s. Moreover, multi-dimensional links between the Turkish and Pakistani militaries have consistently flourished, building on but not restricted to joint training programs and the defence industry. Turkey and Pakistan embarked on cooperation in the field of defence for the first time under the Treaty of 1954. The Treaty has since encouraged active cooperation in armament and training between the two countries' armed forces. Later on, the Pakistan-Turkey Military Consultative Group (MCG) was set up in 1988 for extending cooperation on military training and the defence industry. The High Level Military Dialogue (HLMDG) was established in June 2003 between Turkey and Pakistan. (Hussain, 2008:73)

Mutual cooperation between the militaries and the defence industries of the two countries has gained further impetus since early 2000s. Ankara and Islamabad shared military experience, exchanged equipment and goods, and regularly carried out joint exercises (e.g. the 'Anatolian Eagle' and the 'Indus Viper' military drills) in this period. A program on the mutual training and exchange of pilots and air force personnel was also agreed on in 2015 (Khan, 2016). Harmonization of policies in the defence industry bears the potential to facilitate a breakthrough in mutual economic relations. Even though cooperation in this field remained meagre for a long time, Ankara and Islamabad have finally embarked on concrete initiatives in recent years.

Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey Trilateral Summit

Regional issues were also added to the list of items that occupy the agenda of political cooperation between Ankara and Islamabad in the 2000s. Among these, the tedious task of bringing stability to Afghanistan comes first. There are two complementary mechanisms – one trilateral and the other multilateral – that have been pioneered by Turkey for this very purpose. While the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey Trilateral Summit allows Ankara to play the role of facilitator in the resolution of various problems between Islamabad and Kabul, the Istanbul process which is led by Turkey gathers together Afghanistan's immediate neighbours and regional powers in order to pool and channel their individual contributions to the shared cause of securing long-term stability in the country.

On April 29, 2007, Turkey brought together the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, who were on a collision course over the question of counter-terrorism in the face of the Taliban's resurgence after 2005. The First Trilateral Summit meeting in question was hosted in Ankara by Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Afghan President Hamid Karzai participated at the meeting, along with President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf. The major outcome of the meeting was the Ankara Declaration, which was jointly issued with an eye to the advancement of three-way cooperation. The Declaration emphasized the need to reinforce bilateral relations between Islamabad and Kabul on the grounds of good neighbourliness, mutual respect for territorial integrity,

and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other (BBC Turkish, 2007).

At the time the Second Trilateral Summit meeting was held in 2008, Turkey and Pakistan had new presidents. In Turkey, Ahmet Necdet Sezer was succeeded by Abdullah Gul in August 2007 as the former's legal term in office expired. As to Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto who was assassinated in 2007, assumed the country's presidency after Musharraf's military government was forced out of office (Raza and Akbar, 2012). Discussions at the Second Trilateral Summit meeting, thanks to which Turkish President Gul, Afghan President Karzai, and Pakistani President Zardari came together, dwelled on ways to advance three-way cooperation. The Third Trilateral Summit meeting that was held in Ankara on April 1, 2009, hosted high-level military, police, and intelligence officers from the three countries and focused on security cooperation (The Nation, 2010).

The Fourth Trilateral Summit meeting that was held in Istanbul on January 25, 2010, saw the participation of intelligence chiefs and top military officials from Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. At the Summit meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu expressed Turkey's readiness to try persuading the Taliban to end violence and take part in national elections (Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN, 2016).

At the Fifth Trilateral Summit meeting, which was held again in Istanbul, on December 24, 2010; the parties agreed on the gradual extension of the railway network straddling all the way from Turkey to Pakistan into Afghanistan. The parties also reached an understanding on the need to reinforce channels of communication, aviation, trade, and energy transportation between them (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey 2010).

In the same vein, the Sixth Trilateral Summit meeting took place in Istanbul on October 31, 2011, with the participation of presidents Gul, Karzai, and Zardari (Aksam, 2011). Alongside initiatives directed at bolstering cooperation in counter-terrorism, several others were also launched with the aim of furthering political, economic, and cultural convergence between the three countries. The Seventh Trilateral Summit meeting was held on December 12, 2012, in Istanbul, and led to the

establishment of a hotline that is to facilitate instant and direct communication between the presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey "in times of crisis" (Dawn, 2012).

Finally, the Eight Trilateral Summit meeting was held on February 13, 2014, in Ankara. It was the first time that one of the parties was represented at the level of prime minister rather than president. On behalf of Pakistan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif participated at the meeting. Discussions at the Summit meeting revolved around Afghanistan's transformation following the anticipated withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from the country by the end of the same year. The presidential elections that were scheduled to be held soon after the Summit meeting, and the question of how the complex repercussions of the whole process would enfold, were also brought to the table (The Express Tribune, 2014).

More than two years have passed since the Eighth Summit meeting in 2014, but the ninth one is yet to convene, even though such meetings used to be held annually or at least biennially in the past. We can discern two fundamental reasons behind such conspicuous time lag. Firstly, Afghanistan went through a rather troublesome election process in 2014. The election results were announced not in June as initially scheduled, but only three months later (Colakoglu and Yegin, 2014). The newly-elected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was thus obliged to prioritize the distribution of political authority within the country, the consolidation of the regime, and the ongoing struggle against the Taliban.

Secondly, the inherent differences, interwoven disputes, and deep lack of trust between Kabul and Islamabad could not be smoothed out despite the trilateral summit mechanism and all the complementary regional platforms that have been in place since 2007. This has prevented circumstances from growing favourable in an uninterrupted manner in order to allow for the gathering of a ninth summit meeting as was commonly anticipated. That said, neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan has voiced any intention to terminate the trilateral summit mechanism that is still being promoted by Turkey. Therefore, trilateral summits should be expected to take place in the years ahead. Even though it doesn't suffice to completely eliminate the deeply-engrained mistrust between

Islamabad and Kabul, the trilateral summit process that is led by Ankara nevertheless fulfils a key task by providing a reliable platform for the overcoming of recurrent frictions through open diplomatic channels. Having outstanding diplomatic relations with both Pakistan and Afghanistan, Turkey's preservation of such an initiative on its part will contribute dearly to the sound management of mutual disputes between Islamabad and Kabul as well as the development of three-way cooperation in the future.

Table 3): Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey Trilateral Summits

Meetings	**Date**	**Venue**
1st Trilateral Summit	April 30, 2007	Ankara
2nd Trilateral Summit	December 5, 2008	Istanbul
3rd Trilateral Summit	April 1, 2009	Ankara
4th Trilateral Summit	January 25, 2010	Ankara
5th Trilateral Summit	December 24, 2010	Istanbul
6th Trilateral Summit	November 1, 2011	Istanbul
7th Trilateral Summit	December 12, 2012	Istanbul
8th Trilateral Summit	February 13, 2014	Ankara

The Istanbul Process

As for the multilateral process – i.e. the 'Heart of Asia' – that was also launched by Turkey to accompany the trilateral mechanism, its first meeting was held in Istanbul on January 26, 2010. This meeting of the Heart of Asia mechanism, which later came to be known as the Istanbul Process, saw a high level of participation from all over the globe. Along with Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; the Istanbul meeting of 2010 also hosted high-level officials from Iran, China, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States, Japan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC – the Organization of Islamic Cooperation after 2011), the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union.

The Heart of Asia meeting, which was convened to address Afghanistan's problems, had the unintended consequence of having

Turkey caught between two fires in the heated rivalry between India and Pakistan. According to a claim that was raised by the Indian media during the 2010 summit meeting, India issued a diplomatic note to Turkey to protest its exclusion from the list of invitees. Such news as came only two weeks before Turkish President Gul's official visit to India that was scheduled for February 2010 triggered a diplomatic shock in Turkey. Even though the Turkish Foreign Ministry quickly refuted claims that India had sent it a diplomatic note of protest, India's discontent for not being lent an invitation to partake in a key multilateral mechanism that is focused on Afghanistan became obvious. New Delhi refrained from expressing its discontent with Ankara at a higher level though, for it had rather laid the blame at its nemesis in Islamabad (Gupta, 2015). Such diplomatic restraint exercised on the part of New Delhi was also attributed to India's unwillingness to stress mutual relations on the eve of President Gul's official visit.

After the platform was officially transformed into what we today refer as the Istanbul Process, Heart of Asia countries have begun to gather at the foreign ministerial level on an annual basis. Previously, the foreign ministers of invited parties met in Kabul on June 14, 2012, in Almaty on April 26, 2013, in Beijing on October 31, 2014, and in Islamabad on December 9, 2015. Today, 14 regional neighbours of Afghanistan are party to the Istanbul Process. Among these are Turkey, Pakistan, India, China, Iran, four Central Asian countries, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. While Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian country that is not included in this list, Azerbaijan, which is geographically located in Transcaucasia, is a member of the forum. Moreover, several prominent regional platforms, namely the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Colombo Plan, the Economic Cooperation organization (ECO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO) take part in the Istanbul Process. Such broad-based participation has provided an opportunity for the platform to serve a secondary purpose as well, by allowing the parties to seek

commonly agreeable ways to resolve relevant regional issues in addition to working towards their essential objective of addressing the problems of Afghanistan (Wayand, 2015).

The parties are actively seeking common grounds conducive to the coordination of their endeavours in the fields of disaster management, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, regional trade, the intra-regional flow of investment, commerce, regional infrastructure development and capacity building, and education. In that regard, the Istanbul Process offers a unique opportunity for Turkey and Pakistan to develop and promote joint strategies on an extended regional scale. Furthermore, this platform contributes to regional peace thanks to its role in diversifying channels of dialogue between Pakistan on the one hand, and India and Afghanistan on the other.

Table 4) Ministerial Conferences of the Istanbul Process

Conferencess	**Date**	**Venue**
1st Ministerial Conference	June 14, 2012	Kabul, Afghanistan
2nd Ministerial Conference	April 26, 2013	Almaty, Kazakhstan
3rd Ministerial Conference	October 31, 2014	Beijing, China
4th Ministerial Conference	December 9, 2015	Islamabad, Pakistan

The Baghdad Pact-CENTO-RCD-ECO

As a matter of fact, we need to go back a long way in history to trace the origins of the idea of a multilateral platform led by Turkey and Pakistan. The regional cooperation process between these two countries was initially kicked off with the establishment of the Baghdad Pact, which then passed the torch to the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Today's Istanbul Process follows in the footsteps of RCD and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The Baghdad Pact was launched in 1955 with the core purpose of containing the spread of communism and preventing Soviet influence from penetrating into the Middle East and South Asia. Its membership comprised Iran, Iraq, and the UK along with Turkey and Pakistan. The Pact's name was changed to CENTO with the collapse of the Iraqi monarchy in 1959 and the subsequent exit of the new regime in Baghdad. Gradually losing its

significance, CENTO was ultimately dissolved following the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

As early as 1964, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan had already embarked on joint efforts to promote closer cooperation on regional issues through discussions concerning their national and regional agendas in a way that was largely independent of larger Cold War balances. As such, their policies and strategic attention began to diverge from what the ideological reflexes and superpower priorities of the time would normally entail.

There were two main advantages of founding a multilateral platform that excluded the UK. First and foremost; Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan could thus make decisions with an eye to their own national interests before anything else, rather than having to give consideration to those of an extra-regional power like the UK. The other benefit of having a platform that is of an exclusively regional character would be its encouragement of Arab states to join in to tap into the potential economic benefits of an exclusively regional grouping as such, without having to worry about American or British meddling as was the case with CENTO. The subsequent agreement that was signed did not foresee political or ideological alignment, which meant the prioritization of economic integration instead. Thereby, chances for any serious reaction on the part of surrounding countries and powers who may have otherwise felt threatened were being minimized (Colakoglu, 2013).

Interestingly, the fact that these three countries were already involved in three-way cooperation within the framework of CENTO did not engender any serious opposition to the foundation of a new platform on the grounds that nothing new could actually be introduced through an additional body with a similar membership portfolio. That was essentially because CENTO was seen as a platform under US and British guidance, or tutelage, which served as a subordinate link within a larger chain of strategic alliances straddling the Soviet Union's Eurasian periphery from NATO in the west to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in the east. In contrast, the new body was to be built upon the cultural and historical affinity between these three countries, and reflect their shared urge for solidarity in matters

concerning economic development. The lifting of visa requirements between Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan for the purpose of encouraging three-way trade and tourism should be viewed in this light. Against such a backdrop; Ankara, Tehran, and Islamabad established a new organization, namely the RCD, in 1965 (Yalman, 1964). From its inception through the 1970s, RCD had served as an important intermediary to boost the volume of three-way trade while facilitating economic as well as political cooperation between Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. As RCD was also left idle for the most part in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution; the ECO was found to fill the void (Subtain, Hussain, Farooq, Kahn, 2016). ECO has been transformed into a more comprehensive platform to facilitate region-wide cooperation through its expansion following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has admitted Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as members in the process. Even though it failed to become a truly influential regional organization, it nevertheless continues to serve as an important mechanism through which Turkey and Pakistan can effectively push for their economic integration agenda encompassing the larger neighbourhood.

The OIC also shines out as a key platform that has been traditionally utilized by Islamabad and Ankara alike (Ashraf, 2015). Since its foundation in 1969, Turkey and Pakistan had repeatedly tapped into the group's political and strategic potential to mobilize support behind their stances concerning the territorial disputes over Cyprus and Kashmir respectively. The OIC continues to serve as a large if not truly hefty multilateral body that brings together Muslim-majority nations. Ankara and Islamabad have been able to streamline their policies pertaining to various matters of political and economic concern by means of this multilateral platform in addition to others since its inception.

Kashmir and Cyprus

Turkey and Pakistan have traditionally supported each other's position as concerns sovereignty disputes over Cyprus and Kashmir, which are of existential importance for the two nations respectively. For many years, Ankara has consistently backed Islamabad's official discourse and vice versa when it came to these two critical issues.

Pakistan has traditionally called for a free and fair plebiscite to be held in the disputed region under the supervision of the UN, as specified by various UN Security Council resolutions. Despite its political support to Pakistan as concerns the dispute over Kashmir, Turkey has nevertheless been utterly careful not to antagonize India. In principle, Ankara expresses a desire to see the Kashmir dispute resolved in line with the preferences of its indigenous people. Nevertheless, Turkey has revised the details of its Kashmir policy to reflect a more impartial and relatively detached attitude since early 2000s. Here, Ankara lays emphasis on the full normalization of relations between the two South Asian nations through the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute (Hussain, 2013). That said, Turkish public continues to sympathize with Pakistan's stance on the issue for the most part.

In a similar vein, Pakistan has traditionally pursued a policy that spares particular attention to Turkish public interests in Cyprus. On the other hand, Pakistan nevertheless refrains from extending official recognition to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which was established back in 1984. For that matter, neither did Ankara extend any formal request to Islamabad. Cognizant of the minor differences in their approaches towards the Cyprus and Kashmir disputes, Turkey and Pakistan have chosen rather not to dwell on these issues. After all, the two countries have been the preeminent supporters of each other in the diplomatic arena in matters concerning territorial sovereignty over Kashmir and Cyprus to this date.

The Impact of Turkey-India Relations on Mutual Ties with Pakistan

With the advent of the 2000s, Turkey has begun to give more weight to its relations with India as well. While Pakistan and Bangladesh are Turkey's traditional friends in South Asia – a status which owes to these two countries' predominantly Muslim populations who have historically been sympathetic to Turkey, economic considerations began to play an ever greater role in Ankara's foreign policy considerations in the early 21st century. The leading economies of the globe, both advanced and developing, came together to engender the G20 in 1999 (Colakoglu, Hecan and Sakaoglu, 2016). Turkey's inclusion in this highly influential

group broadened the horizon of foreign policy-makers in Ankara. Turkey has thus jumped on the opportunity to maintain closer contact with emerging economies like India, China, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina via the G20. After ignoring the non-Western world for the most part until the 2000s, Turkey was now being offered a chance to build meaningful ties with countries like India within the framework of the G20, without looking as if turning its back on Pakistan (Ozkan, 2010).

Mutual visits by high level representatives were extremely rare occasions in Turkish-Indian relations until early 2000s. In contrast, the past 15 years had seen the frequency of such meetings increase at a tremendous rate. While only a few ministerial visits occurred in all the five decades from 1950 to 2000, one ministerial-level meeting took place almost each year on average since then.

In the post-2000 period, one of the most salient examples of political solidarity between Ankara and New Delhi has been their mutual support for each other's bid to non-permanent membership to the UN Security Council. While New Delhi backed Turkey's candidacy in the 2009-2010 period, Ankara reciprocated by lending support behind India's bid for the same seat two years later (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2011).

Moreover, the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries has swelled in recent years. Today, India competes head-to-head with South Korea to become Turkey's second largest trade partner in Asia after China. The volume of bilateral trade was recorded at $6.3 billion at the end of 2015, reduced by $1.2 billion compared with a year earlier.

At this stage, Ankara has apparently reached an impasse. On the one hand, it has yet to develop a feasible roadmap on how to advance political relations with New Delhi without annoying Islamabad. Every step toward in-depth cooperation with India on Turkey's part is received with utmost caution in Pakistan, raising questions like "Is Turkey abandoning us?" On the other hand, India has misgivings about Turkey's careful handling of Pakistan's occasional displays of sensitivity on the subject. It has been difficult for Ankara to convince New Delhi that Turkey is sincerely willing to engage with India despite its deep-rooted

friendship with Pakistan. Therefore, Ankara is yet to succeed at making its true conviction – that maintaining good relations with Islamabad and New Delhi are not mutually exclusive "alternatives" under today's circumstances – clearly understood.

From this perspective, the partnership that is to be formed with India has to rest on two pillars: one of a political and the other of an economic nature. The political aspect of the partnership first and foremost necessitates Turkey to maintain a delicate balance between Pakistan and India. That means Turkey needs provide first-hand information to Pakistan about its foreign policy towards India, and be able to account for – or "justify" – its diplomatic moves in an overt manner. Turkey can qualify as an ideal facilitator in the resolution of various conflicts and disputes between India and Pakistan, particularly the one concerning Kashmir, should Ankara manage to cement its relationship with New Delhi while preserving amicable relations with Islamabad. For that purpose, the pace of bilateral dialogue between the two South Asian nations has to be in the right direction in the first place.

The confirmation of India's and Pakistan's applications for membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) during the 2016 Tashkent Summit of the group, and their simultaneous admission which is scheduled to be carried into effect by the beginning of 2017, can prove to be a matchless opportunity for the normalization of mutual relations between the two countries. The handling of problems that are essentially of a bilateral character by a larger, more comprehensive international body can help ease persistent tensions. Such multilateral mediation can contribute dearly to the bridging of the trust deficit between the two nations (Putz, 2016). As a dialogue partner of the SCO, Turkey participates in some of the meetings and activities that are carried out by the group. Therefore, the SCO can serve as a leverage as far as the introduction of a joint Asian policy by Ankara, Islamabad and New Delhi is concerned.

The 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative

The introduction of China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative (OBOR) in 2013 shines out as yet another major opportunity that

Pakistan and Turkey need to seize upon if they are to realize economic integration on the bilateral level and beyond. Since its initial announcement, this initiative has deeply resonated with both the region and the wider globe. It is both in terms of their financing and the vast geographical area they are envisaged to cover that the set of projects as designed to form the backbone of OBOR have increasingly become an object of intense discussion. In this sense, it may be useful to elaborate on the two fundamental facets of the Chinese vision that differentiate it from its "peers" which are being promoted by other countries. First of all, the Chinese initiative has a much wider geographical scope – it spans almost the entire Asian continent, extending as far as the shores of East Africa and deep into Europe. Here, multiple interlocking projects as put forth by Beijing with an eye to its larger vision of interconnectivity on a Eurasian scale encompass two major geographical expanses: the first route follows the historical Silk Road through the land-bridge of Central Asia, eventually making its way to Europe via Russia; while the other one (i.e. the southern corridor) traverses Iran and Turkey before reaching southern Europe.

Far from envisaging a merely unidirectional transport corridor, OBOR promises full-fledged economic integration between all the countries along its path. To this purpose; railways, highways, pipelines, communication lines, airports, and harbours will be upgraded and integrated with one another, and wherever necessary, new infrastructure will be constructed from scratch.

The most salient difference between China's Silk Road initiative and rival ones promoted by other countries is the former's extremely generous budget. So far, Beijing has committed to allocate $40 billion of resources to related projects from its newly-found Silk Road Fund. This is the highest figure for any Silk Road-themed initiative. Also, in 2015, the China-led Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) was established with an initial capital base of $50 billion; which is planned to be doubled in near future and funnelled primarily into Silk Road projects. That the AIIB's funds will be used in such a way seem quite likely, especially when we take into account that the initiative covers nearly the entirety of the Asian continent. A third source of revenue for the project

will be a total sum of $62 billion that Beijing is considering to transfer to the coffers of its OBOR partners via the China Development Bank, China Exim Bank, and the Agricultural Development Bank of China. Taken together, these contributions amount to approximately $152 billion – which puts the spotlight on the sheer financial magnitude rather than the actual content of the Chinese initiative (Viehe, 2015).

Two countries lie at the heart of Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) projects, which comprise the overland component of OBOR. One of these countries is Pakistan along the SREB's southern corridor, and the other is Turkey along its western one. Moreover, the integration of Turkey with the China-Pakistan railway via Iran will allow the incorporation of not only these three countries – as worked through by the RCD in the 1960s and 1970s to no avail – but the entire region into a common transportation network. In that regard, China's pledge of financial and technical support for OBOR projects will facilitate multidimensional integration among ECO countries. The prioritization of infrastructural integration between Turkey and Pakistan, particularly in the field of transportation, as part of the broader SREB vision will help consolidate Pak-Turkish ties. Thereby, Ankara and Islamabad will gain a chance to improve their bilateral economic relations while ultimately materializing their long-held vision of regional economic integration among ECO countries in a swift and effective manner.

The conclusion of the Turkey-Pakistan FTA is further expected to consolidate mutual economic connectivity within the framework of OBOR. The potential inclusion of trade in services and investment in the final draft will promote the establishment of joint industrial zones and clusters, technical and vocational cooperation, and joint R&D efforts along with allowing a larger scope for joint ventures in dynamic industries like tourism, resort development, catering, and construction. Increased commercial interaction through trade fairs, sectoral exchanges by delegations of businessmen, and other informal contacts that a comprehensive FTA would inevitably entail can in turn help generate an overall vision of bilateral investment in a similar fashion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. The stock of investments by Turkish companies in Pakistan in industries like information

technologies, renewable energy, communications, and construction in addition to others like food-processing, agro-business, and tourism already stands at $900 billion as of mid-2016 (Pakistan Observer, 2016b).

Further Turkish investments will bring know-how, boost exports to third countries, and revitalize intra-regional supply chains – thus providing much-needed foreign exchange and tax revenue for Pakistan while facilitating region-wide integration at the same time. In this respect, the resumption of scheduled rounds by freight trains between Istanbul and Islamabad via Iran under the aegis of the transportation ministries of each country will further boost regional connectivity along the Turkey-Iran-Pakistan axis (Daily Times, 2016a).

Considering that Turkey ranks among the top producers of construction materials like cement, dye, bricks, steel, wires, valves, ceramics, and glass in the world; Turkish investment in these industries and exports to Central Asia by using Pakistan as a launch-pad will play a complementary role to regional integration as part of OBOR (Directorate-General for Exports under the Turkish Ministry of Economy, 2016). Turkish firms are also known for their decades of experience in implementing a variety of overseas energy projects from hydroelectric dams to coal plants, which can be tapped to facilitate the improvement of the energy grid that links Pakistan to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. As two of the AIIB's founding members, Turkey and Pakistan can throw their weight behind the multilateral financing of such projects. Taken together, Pak-Turkish initiatives that are to be incorporated into the broader OBOR vision would not only help revitalize Pakistan's economy but also create employment opportunities and generate prosperity for the masses across the region, which is a key component of long-term political stability in volatile countries like Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Likewise, a concentrated push by Pakistan and Turkey, both of which share borders with Iran, for the financing of joint infrastructure and transportation projects between them will smooth the way for the opening of Iran's sluggish economy in the immediate aftermath of the lifting of UN sanctions on the country against a backdrop of low energy prices.

From another perspective, OBOR will provide an umbrella platform to bring together various bureaucratic and semi-autonomous entities that are endowed with overlapping or complementary responsibilities as far as the facilitation of trade and economic integration among Turkey, Pakistan, and other regional countries is concerned. Indeed, the Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce was established for the very purpose of streamlining the dispersed agendas, thus boosting the operational efficiency, of a variety of business associations and regular institutional mechanisms such as the Turkey-Pakistan Business Council, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Federation of D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry, ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Istanbul Forum for Economic Cooperation between Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Tang West Market Group, 2015).

Conclusion

Pak-Turkish relations have been characterized by their glaring dynamism and deep-rooted strength since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between the two nations in 1947. Amity and solidarity between these two countries and their people look solid in that regard. But the bilateral relationship was plagued by two persistent deficits until the 2000s. The first one concerned economic and commercial relations, which remained well below the mark. As for the second shortcoming in question, it emanated from a persistent inability on the part of Ankara and Islamabad to leverage such a steady basis like mutual confidence to energize the two countries' shared drive of in-depth cooperation throughout the region and beyond.

Major handicaps that pull down the level of economic and trade relations have yet to be overcome as of 2016. There are two critical thresholds that need to be surpassed before this aspect of bilateral relationship can measure up to expectations. The first threshold here can be surpassed only when prolonged negotiations over a Pak-Turkish FTA are concluded in a satisfying manner – thus opening the floodgates of reciprocal trade and investment flows; while the second one will be inevitably exceeded as China unveils various complementary OBOR

projects. No sooner than OBOR is successfully carried into effect in the form of an instrumental integration scheme for the larger region can an efficient logistical network be set up between Turkey and Pakistan that would in turn catalyse bilateral investment and trade. In that sense, Beijing's financial commitment to OBOR projects will further grease the wheels, considering cost-related difficulties and the shortage of credit that Ankara and Islamabad had to grapple with till date.

The HLCC, which was formed in 2010, has played a crucial role as far as the institutionalization of political relations is concerned. Pak-Turkish ties will further solidify in a range of fields should the HLCC continue to convene regularly, at least on a yearly basis, in order to support concrete projects entailing multidimensional cooperation. Mutual collaboration in the fields of security and defence industry along with a new push in public diplomacy will add depth to the relationship.

Turkey and Pakistan have also taken important steps to boost institutional cooperation on a regional scale since the turn of the century. A chain of successive trilateral mechanisms like the RCD and ECO, which were established during the Cold War era, have since formed the backbone of an ever-stronger diplomatic tradition on the Iran-Pakistan-Turkey axis. From this perspective, ECO's expansion to embrace the newly-independent countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus along with Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War should be regarded as a favourable development in the right direction. However, its three founding members – i.e. Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran – have to come a long way before achieving their ultimate objective of economic integration and political cooperation within the framework of ECO.

If they can be sustained, the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey Trilateral Summit and the Istanbul Process mechanisms can make a great contribution to not only concentrated efforts aimed at bringing stability to Afghanistan but also the bridging of the persistent trust gap between Islamabad and Kabul. Besides, the Istanbul Process has the capacity to comprise a reliable basis for regional cooperation on a broader scale thanks to its inclusive membership portfolio and vast geographical span.

Another major platform that can help Turkey and Pakistan to elevate their relationship to the regional level and even beyond if properly

utilized is the SCO. The SCO has transformed into a genuinely Pan-Asian body that encompasses South Asia as well, following its 2016 Tashkent Summit, where the applications of Pakistan and India for full-fledged membership were both formally accepted. Currently a dialogue partner of the group, Turkey is also expected attain the observer status in the near future. As to the question of whether Turkey can be expected to become a full member, the answer will depend on both the future reorganization of the group as well as the pace of Turkey's relations with NATO and the EU. Even if Turkey does not become a full-member of the SCO, it will participate in the group's activities to a certain extent as either a dialogue partner or an observer. In this respect, the SCO's prospects in terms of offering Turkey and Pakistan a viable channel to seek a common regional strategy are worth taking into account.

In sum, major opportunities for the sake of revitalizing mutual cooperation on both the bilateral and multilateral levels await Turkey and Pakistan in the forthcoming period. The two countries will be able to endow an essentially multilateral character to their mutual ties, thus adding depth and breadth to what is now a largely single-dimensional affair, should they manage to seize these opportunities in a timely and effective manner.

References

Aksam. (2011, November 1). "Türkiye-Afganistan-Pakistan 6. Üçlü Zirvesi" [Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan 6th Trilateral Summit].

Ashraf, Malik Muhammad. (2015, February 20). "Pak-Turkey Relations". *The Nation*.

BBC Turkish. (2007, April 30). "Karzai ve Müşerref'ten bildiri" [Declaration from Karzai and Musharraf], Retrieved on August 20, 2012, from. www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2007/04/070430_turkey_pakistan_afghan.shtml

Bishku, M. B. (1992). In search of identity and security: Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947-77. *Conflict Quarterly*, 12(3), 30-51.

Choudhury, Ziauddin. (2016, May 17). "The Turkey-Pakistan opprobrium". *Dhaka Tribune*.

Colakoglu, Selcuk. (2013). Turkey's Policy towards Pakistan: Main Dynamics of the Bilateral Relations. *Review of International Law & Politics*. .9(34), 27-60.

Colakoglu, Selcuk & Yegin, Mehmet. (2014). *The Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's Contribution*. USAK-IPC-NATO Report.

Colakoglu, Selcuk, Hecan, Mehmet and Sakaoglu, Emre Tunc. (2016, April). *The G20 and Global Governance: An Analysis on the Vision & Capacity of the Group* (Report No. 44). USAK Reports.

Cooper, A. F., Higgott, R. A., & Nossal, K. R.. (1993). *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vol. 6). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Daily Times. (2016a, May 15). Pak-Turk Cargo Train to be a Promising Project.

Daily Times. (2016b, July 28). Pakistan, Turkey agree to pursue free trade agreement negotiations.

Dawn. (2012, December 10). 'Crisis hotline' set up between Pakistan, Afghan, Turkish presidents.

Directorate-General for Exports under the Turkish Ministry of Economy. (2016, February). Construction Materials Industry Report. Accessed on July 30, 2016 from: http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr/portal/content/conn/UCM/uuid/dDocName:EK-226610;jsessionid=xi3ArdFRB2Y76BZNYzsy55KMQSsobWHDTCNnSEZ_um0T7XUgyZSL!1415355959

Gupta, Kanchi. (2015, November 26). India's Turkish opportunity. *Hurriyet Daily News*.

Hussain, Munir. (2008). Pak-Turkey Relations: On the Common Ties. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations.* 7(2&3), pp. 67-85.

Khan, Bilal. (2016, June 27). *Turkey and Pakistan Agree to Enhance Defence Industry Ties*. Quwa: Defence News & Analyses Group.

Kuepper, Justin. (2016, August 9). *What are the Next Eleven? Goldman Sachs' List of 11 Future Economic Giants*. The Balance.

Ozkan, Mehmet. (2010, September). Can the Rise of New Turkey Lead to a New Era in India-Turkey Relations?. *IDSA Issue Brief*. 6-10.

Pakistan Observer. (2016a, March 19). Pak-Turkey signing FTA next week. Turkish envoy.

Pakistan Observer. (2016b, August 2). Pakistan, Turkey to Sign FTA Soon.

Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN in New York. (2016). Turkey Hosts Succession of Afghanistan Summits ahead of London. Accessed on June 30, 2016 from http://afghanistan-un.org/2010/01/turkey-hosts-succession-of-afghanistan-summits-ahead-of-london/

Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. (2010, December 24). Istanbul'da Türkiye-Afganistan-Pakistan Üçlü Zirve Toplantısı [Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit Meeting in Istanbul]. Accessed on September 15, 2012 from http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/170/78467/istanbulda-turkiyeafganistanpakistan-uclu-zirve-toplantisi.html

Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. (2011) India Exclusive. Accessed on February 21, 211 from http://www.tccb.gov.tr/pages/visits/hindistan-ozel

Putz, Catherine. (2016, May 26). *India and Pakistan to Join SCO, Is Iran Next?*. The Diplomat.

Raza, Muhammad & Akbar, Muhammad Wasim. (2012). Image of President Asif Ali Zardari as Portrayed by Daily Dawn and News: A Discourse Analysis of Editorials. *Mass Communication and Journalism*, 2(4), 1-6.

Subtain, M., Hussain, M., Farooq, M. A. & Khan, M.. (2016). Dimensions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy: From Inception to the 9/11 Incident (1947-2001)- An Analytical Study. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*. 3(4), 61-65.

Suvankulov, Farrukh & Ali, Wazir. (2012). Recent Trends and Prospects of Bilateral Trade between Pakistan and Turkey: A Gravity Model Approach. *Journal of International and Global Economic Studies*. 5(1), 57-72.

Tang West Market Group. (2015). Tang West Market Group: World Chambers Congress Business Leaders in Torino, Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce Architects in Hong-Kong. Accessed on July 29, 2016 from http://www.tangwestmarket.com/projects/srcic/announcing-the-silk-road-chamber-of-international-commerce/ , http://www.srcic.com/about/profile/

The Express Tribune. (2014, February 13). Pakistan committed to Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process: Nawaz.

The Express Tribune. (2015, February 17). Regional peace: Pakistan, Turkey to explore peace options in Afghanistan.

The Nation (2010, June 7). Pakistan, Afghanistan express solidarity with Turkey for heavy loss of lives caused by Israeli attack on Freedom Flotilla.

Viehe, Ariella. (2015, July 13). U.S. and China Silk Road Visions: Collaboration, not Competition. (Rudy deLeon and Jiemian Yang. Eds.). *Exploring Avenues for China-U.S. Cooperation on the Middle East*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 34-44.

Wayand, Habib. (2015, December 7). The 'Heart of Asia' Conference: A Fresh Start?. *The Diplomat.*

Yalman, Ahmet Emin. (1964, October 16). 150 Milyonluk Bir Blok [A 150-Million Bloc], *Milliyet*.