



Now's the chance to clinch a Russia-Pakistan Military Relationship

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Moscow shouldn't be shy about seizing the golden opportunity that Trump unwittingly presented it with when Washington announced that it was cutting off most military aid to Islamabad, as this amounts to rolling out the red carpet for a Russian-Pakistani military partnership. Reuters [reported](#) that the US is cutting off almost \$1 billion of security assistance to Pakistan by slashing the amount of money the South Asian state receives for foreign military financing and coalition support funds, which are described as "funding purchases of U.S. military hardware, training and services" and "reimbursing Pakistan for counter-terrorism operations", respectively.

In practice, this effectively ends the existing US-Pakistani military partnership and stands to make Islamabad much more dependent on Beijing in this sphere, though not if Pakistan prudently reaches out to Russia in attempting to strike a strategic balance and prevent the swapping of one state patron for another. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2016 report on "[Trends In International Arms Transfers](#)" indicates that 35% of Chinese arms exports from 2012-2016 went to Pakistan, which constituted 68% of Pakistani arms imports during that period, while the US occupied 16% of that country's market share at that time.

The US used to provide a larger percentage of arms to Pakistan from 2007-2011 but SIPRI notes in a [different analysis](#) that Washington later switched its regional focus to India and the resultant vacuum was filled by China, exactly as it's about to be now. Pakistan, however, has come to appreciate the benefits that can be achieved by reaching a balance between various players in the emerging [Multipolar World Order](#), and it's with this outlook in mind that it has enthusiastically striven to accelerate its [recent rapprochement](#) with Russia, with Moscow being [more than eager](#) to reciprocate because of [shared security concerns](#) stemming from Afghanistan and its own desire to "[balance](#)" Eurasian geopolitics.

Up until now, however, there has been a certain reluctance in Russia to visibly taking the military partnership much further despite this being the [natural evolution](#) of this fast-moving relationship, with certain voices in the country's permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies ("deep state") concerned that it will antagonize India and result in Russia losing an even bigger share of the world's largest arms market to the US at a quicker pace than is already happening.

Those fears should have been dispelled after the US unveiled its [National Security Strategy](#) earlier last month that praised the country's global alliance with India and pledged to take it as far as possible in supporting its newfound strategic partner in all fields, proving that there is indeed a seemingly irreversible trend of India drifting closer to America and that it's only a matter of time before Russia comes under more sustained pressure in the arms industry there, among all the other spheres that it's presently active in.

Faced with the inevitability that Russia's profitable arms sales to India will begin to decline in the face of pronounced American competition while the US aggressively tries to capture as much market share as it can during this crucial transitional period, which might even see the bestowment of possible state subsidies just like those that were previously given to Pakistan as a crafty bid to make American arms even more attractive to India, it's only logical for Moscow to reconsider its existing hesitancy to selling conventional arms to

Islamabad as a means of compensating for impending losses from New Delhi in the coming future.

For as overly sensitive as some Russian "deep state" representatives might be to India's concerns, they should reflect on the recent fact that their country has decided to sell state-of-the-art S-400 anti-air missile systems to NATO-member Turkey and the US' top Mideast Muslim ally [Saudi Arabia](#) in spite of Russia's trusted partnerships with their Syrian and Iranian rivals, respectively, just as it hasn't lost the opportunity to increase its arms sales to [Azerbaijan](#) even though Russia is in a mutual defense alliance with Armenia.

The above examples epitomize Russia's "[military diplomacy](#)" and show that it is willing to take daring steps in its ambitious attempt to become the supreme balancing force in 21st-century Eurasia, so it would hold true that Moscow might now be willing to engage in the same multifaceted "balancing" act in South Asia that it has previously perfected in West Asia, especially since the US' de-facto withdrawal from the Pakistani military-industrial complex stands to leave a sudden 16% void in that country's market share which would otherwise be filled by China.

Russia and China are very close strategic partners and therefore able to engage in "[friendly competition](#)" over this profitable opportunity to supply the necessary 16% of Pakistan's military needs that the US just forfeited, and in the interests of striking a balance between its two partners and advancing its own strategic objectives in the former Soviet states of Central Asia, Islamabad might opt to give preference to Moscow in this regard.

Russia and Pakistan are both in the same strategic position vis-a-vis China in the sense that each of them satisfies an irreplaceable transit significance for the Silk Road projects of the Eurasian Land Bridge and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor ([CPEC](#)), respectively, so they have an incentive to deepen their cooperation with one another so as to improve their bargaining prospects for reaching better, fairer, and more equal deals with China in the future and asymmetrically counteracting the economic leverage that Beijing wields in each bilateral relationship.

If Pakistan's "deep state" takes advantage of this golden opportunity and succeeds in urgently conveying to its Russian counterparts the win-win benefits that each of them are poised to obtain from this inadvertently auspicious moment, then Moscow might finally feel confident enough to resist the influential pressure of certain pro-Indian legacy figures within the country and take the unprecedented step of entering into a full-spectrum military partnership with Pakistan, thereby "balancing" South Asian affairs and delivering an unexpected judo-like blow to Trump's global strategy.

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