



Pakistan's Serendipitous Chance in Syria

Briefing Paper
August 2017

© 2017, **CommandEleven**. All rights reserved.

For more information about receiving this, or other **CommandEleven** analysis documents, please visit <http://www.commandeleven.com/>.

REPORT AUTHORS

"Pakistan's Serendipitous Chance in Syria" was researched, compiled and written by **Andrew Korybko**, Contributing Analyst.

ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

CommandEleven is a research organization focused on Pakistan's national security aspects and enhancing global understanding and collaboration opportunities for the nation.

Founded in 2015, **CommandEleven** provides situational awareness to facilitate a better understanding of the key dynamics that effect Pakistan from a national security perspective, especially in relation to terrorism, insurgencies and extremism.

CommandEleven seeks to inform and guide public policy and decision makers in government, business and military through a rigorous program of publications, conferences, digital medias, policy briefings and recommendations.

Visit <http://commandeleven.com> for more information or contact info@commandeleven.com.

Pakistan has a serendipitous chance to greatly expand its growing Eurasian influence through skillfully taking advantage of the Syrian fallout from India's newfound military-strategic partnership with "Israel".

One of President Assad's closest and most trusted advisors, Mrs. Bouthaina Shabaan, spoke out earlier this week in an interview with [Hindustan Times](#) against Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to "Israel" early last month, saying that Syria is now hesitant about allowing India to rebuild the devastated country because of the huge disappointment that its people have in New Delhi as a result. Her remarks were very important and therefore deserve to be quoted in full so that readers can truly understand all of what she meant, including the deeper nuances hidden in her words:

"Allow me to say that the Syrian people are very disappointed with the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Israel, because Israel is an occupying and a colonial force which has deprived Palestinians of their indigenous rights. We never expected India will move from its righteous and moral stand and pay that huge courtesy to Israel. I can say that while we call for a role for China and a role for Russia, we are very hesitant to call for a role for India (in rebuilding Syria). Regardless of the economic and military relations, because we know there are relations between India and Israel, the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Israel was really shocking."

The journalist who interviewed her also reported that "it wasn't India's working relationship with Israel but the prime ministerial visit and the optics it entailed that had baffled Syria, she added", which makes it seem like the global pomp and circumstance deliberately promoted by the government-influenced Mainstream Media in India was what put Syria in a defensive position whereby it, as a dignified defender of Palestine, had no choice but to respond with the choice words that Mrs. Shabaan used. However, there might be a little bit more behind Syria's response than it might initially seem.

INTRIGUING INFLUENCES

It's not to say that Syria responded as it did entirely because of the below speculative influences that three of its key partners could have played, but just to raise awareness about why they certainly can't be ruled out given each player's preexisting and various levels of disagreements/friction with India. To be clear, Syria is a sovereign state and correspondingly issued its statement through Mrs. Shabaan in accordance with the country's grand strategic interests, but the below arguments attempt to make the case that this overlapped with the interests of its main international partners as well:

Iran

Syria is Iran's top Mideast ally, and the relationship between the Islamic Republic and India has become tumultuous ever since Modi's trip to "Israel", with the Ayatollah even [invoking the cause of Kashmir](#) for the first time in 7 years and his government deciding to [play hardball](#) with India over the Farzad B offshore gas field as part of Iran's asymmetrical response to this visit. It wouldn't be unreasonable that Iran raised the issue with its Syrian partner afterwards, understanding that Damascus has a lot more pressing matters to be concerned about in handling its War on Terror than keeping tabs on India and might not have paid as much attention to the trip as it otherwise would have. In this case, Iran might

have discretely brought up Modi's summit with the intent that Syria would rightly respond as it did, knowing that this would undeniably be seen as one of the Multipolar World's strongest signals yet about its supreme disapproval of India's pro-Western pivot.

China

China, too, has a bone to pick with India, though not because of its alliance with "Israel", which actually isn't anything new in and of itself considering the [billions of dollars of arms](#) that New Delhi has purchased from it over the years. Rather, Beijing is caught up in the "[Donglang Drama](#)" with New Delhi after the latter decided to invade China's territory while Modi was visiting Trump in mid-June. Seeing as how this standoff has the very real risk of breaking BRICS, sowing discord within the SCO, and turning India into the US' New Cold War proxy against China, it makes sense why Beijing would be interested in taking proactive measures to mitigate New Delhi's influence elsewhere in places such as Syria, where the People's Republic is committing [billions of dollars](#) in rebuilding the country so that it could function as a [pivotal node in the New Silk Roads](#). Given the relatively more powerful clout that China wields in Syria compared to India, it probably wouldn't have been hard for Beijing to convince Damascus to "send a message" to New Delhi like the one that Mrs. Shabaan did earlier this week.

Russia

Lastly, Russia has no serious problems with India, though it's well aware of the [game-changing military-strategic partnership](#) that New Delhi struck up with Washington through LEMOA and its subsequent designation as the US' official "Major Defense Partner". Moreover, India is jealously upset that Russia has returned to South Asia as a neutral balancing actor uninterested in taking sides in the country's dispute with Pakistan, seeking instead to enter into a fast-moving and comprehensive rapprochement with Islamabad so as to better Moscow's geopolitical balancing potential in 21st-century Eurasia. That being said, Russia harbors no ill will towards India, despite this open-minded respectfulness of New Delhi's sovereign geopolitical choices not being reciprocated towards Moscow, so it wouldn't have lobbied for Syria to threaten the de-facto downscaling of relations with India, but at the same time, given Damascus' own self-respected and dignified interests, as well as those of its Iranian and Chinese partners, Russia also probably wouldn't have objected to this or intervened in support of India either.

PAKISTAN AS THE PERFECT REPLACEMENT

Considering that Syria is distancing itself from India due to the latter's solid embrace of Zionism, now is the perfect opportunity for Pakistan to present itself as the polar opposite to its rival in all regards and make inroads in replacing India's uncertain role in Syria.

Anti-Zionism

Pakistan is proudly committed to the cause of anti-Zionism and doesn't have any relations with "Israel", unlike India which is almost boastful of its new alliance with the Mideast polity and took great pains to globally publicize Modi's recent visit there. About that, it

would be utterly unthinkable for any Pakistani leader, let alone any Pakistani dignitary or even citizen in general, to ever pay a visit to “Israel”, which is assuredly a very attractive standpoint from Syria’s official perspective. Moreover, Pakistan is such an anti-Zionist state that its Defense Minister [threatened](#) on Twitter late last year to nuke “Israel” in response to the fake news that Tel Aviv supposedly said it would nuke Islamabad first if it joined the Russian-led anti-Daesh international coalition there. Although somewhat embarrassing in a sense, the silver lining is that Pakistan had no reservations about reacting in a symmetrical way, making it perhaps the only country in the history of the world which openly said that it would use nuclear weapons to defend itself from “Israeli” aggression.

Great Power Synergy

Pakistan’s replacement of India in Syria would most likely be met with hearty applause from Syria’s three most important Great Power partners. Iran, which could admittedly have better relations with Pakistan, enjoys positive ties with its neighboring state, and the two sides have actually sought to strengthen their partnership in recent months, especially following the [Indian-managed false flag terrorist attacks](#) along their shared border in the Balochistan region which ultimately failed to drive a wedge between them. As for China, the People’s Republic is Pakistan’s all-weather and comprehensive strategic ally, and the two parties have joined forces to pioneer the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which will function upon completion as the [Zipper of Pan-Eurasian Integration](#) at the [Convergence of Civilizations](#). Concerning Russia, it was already remarked how the country has been rapidly improving its relations with Pakistan over the past couple of years, motivated first and foremost by the [shared interest](#) in resolving the War on Afghanistan but having then taken on a more holistic and grand strategic character.

Complete Pakistan’s Pivot

The final reason why Pakistan would be an excellent replacement for India in Syria is that the very act of Islamabad enhancing its relationship with Damascus would in and of itself symbolically complete the geostrategic pivot that the country has been making in transitioning from the unipolar camp to the multipolar one. Pakistan’s decision makers need to urgently understand that this is the most pragmatic course of action that they could take at this time, as it’s long overdue for them to recognize the reality that Russia’s decisive anti-terrorist intervention in Syria has neutralized the efforts of Islamabad’s allies in Riyadh to forcibly bring about regime change. Furthermore, what seems to be an impending Syrian-Indian falling out will itself likely precede India’s eventual withdraw from the multipolar bloc as a consequence of its brinksmanship with China, leaving a South Asian void across Eurasia which could naturally be filled by Pakistan. Since the first front of India’s “multipolar retreat” looks to be in Syria, Pakistan would be wise to seize this opportunity right away.

A WIN-WIN FOR THE AGES

Syria and Pakistan both stand to gain immensely by cooperating with one another in rebuilding the war-torn Arab Republic, no matter if the initial agreement that’s prospectively reached is small and symbolic in dealing only with bridges and roads, or if it’s elevated with time into something much larger concerning hospitals and other

physical infrastructure such as power plants and schools. Here's a brief run-down of the win-win advantages that each side could obtain from a rapprochement with one another at this crucial time:

Syria

Great Power Balancing

It's in Syria's interests to show the world that it's a sovereign multipolar state capable of balancing between competing Great Powers such as India and Pakistan, and Damascus could even reap rewards from both countries if it's successful enough in leveraging its geostrategic position through this diplomatic tactic.

Counter the Sectarian Narrative

Inviting a Sunni-majority and Ummah-wide influential country of nearly 200 million people to rebuild Syria would send a powerful signal that the War on Syria was never really a sectarian conflict to begin with (even if some elements of it descended to this point with time) but was always an externally managed regime change plot.

The Start of Something Bigger

Cooperation between Syria and Pakistan obviously wouldn't have to be limited to the former's reconstruction, but could also expand into other spheres such as the military one, as Damascus could surely learn a lot from Islamabad's anti-terrorist experiences in Operations Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad in keeping the peace after Daesh is finally defeated.

Pakistan

Soft Power Blessing

There is no better opportunity for Pakistan to "rebrand" its international reputation in the eyes of the multipolar world and its affiliated Alternative Media Community than to play a positive part in officially rebuilding the Syrian Arab Republic, especially following what might soon be India's disgraceful dismissal from this role.

Replacing India In Multipolarity

Provided that the current trajectory of India's pro-Western pivot remains on course (and there are no grounds for doubting that), then New Delhi will probably soon "defect" to the unipolar bloc, leaving a strategic vacuum in its wake in Syria and across the world which would have to be filled by a sincerely multipolar state from South Asia, which in this case could only realistically be Pakistan.

Strengthen Great Power Collaboration

Syria has become the meeting ground for all of the world's leading multipolar countries to converge and cooperate with one another in constructing the [Multipolar World Order](#), and Pakistan would do well to capitalize off of India's mistakes as soon as it can in order to get in on the action before this priceless window of opportunity closes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Korybko is a political analyst, journalist and a regular contributor to several online journals, as well as a member of the expert council for the Institute of Strategic Studies and Predictions at the People's Friendship University of Russia. He specializes in Russian affairs and geopolitics, specifically the US strategy in Eurasia. His other areas of focus include tactics of regime change, color revolutions and unconventional warfare used across the world. His book, "Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change", extensively analyzes the situations in Syria and Ukraine and claims to prove that they represent a new model of strategic warfare being waged by the US.

ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

CommandEleven is a research organization focused on Pakistan's national security aspects and enhancing global understanding and collaboration opportunities for the nation.

Founded in 2015, **Command**Eleven provides situational awareness to facilitate a better understanding of the key dynamics that effect Pakistan from a national security perspective, especially in relation to terrorism, insurgencies and extremism.

CommandEleven seeks to inform and guide public policy and decision makers in government, business and military through a rigorous program of publications, conferences, digital medias, policy briefings and recommendations.

Visit <http://commandeleven.com> for more information or contact info@commandeleven.com.