

Politico-economic relations between Pakistan and Ukraine

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Abstract

Although Pakistan and Ukraine may seem to be unexpected friends at first glance, their similar experiences of war and societal upheaval have opened the door to prospects for cooperation and mutual assistance. Young leaders from both countries are working together via collaborative projects such as the Pakistan-Ukraine Youth Dialogue and the Ukrainian-Pakistani Women's Forum to advance mutual understanding, tolerance, and economic growth in their respective nations. These initiatives highlight the strength that civil society has to push constructive change, even in the midst of political conflicts and conflict. These projects have the potential to contribute to the creation of a more stable and prosperous future for both Pakistan and Ukraine if they are consistently funded and supported. In addition, it is essential to acknowledge that the scope of these projects extends beyond the borders of Pakistan and Ukraine. They act as an inspiration for other nations to join together and work towards a shared objective, which they do so since they are confronting comparable issues. We can tear down barriers, develop more understanding, and encourage greater cooperation between countries if we encourage cultural exchange and communication between different groups of people. It is up to us to continue to support and invest in these projects in order to construct a future that is better for everyone.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Russia, NATO, War, UAVs.*

Introduction

Throughout history, Pakistan has upheld bilateral economic relations with Russia and Ukraine. Over the course of the past 24 years, there has been a notable increase in Pakistan's exports to Russia, with an annualized growth rate of 13.6%. Specifically, the value of exports has risen from USD 13.1 million in 1996 to USD 279 million in 2020. Similarly, Russia's exports to Pakistan have also experienced an annualized growth rate of 10.2%, increasing from USD 67.6 million in 1996 to USD 699 million in 2020.¹ Over the course of the past 24 years, there has been a notable increase in Pakistan's exports to Ukraine, with an annualized growth rate of 15.5%. This growth has resulted in an increase in exports from USD 18.1M in 1996 to USD 573M in 2020.

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Similarly, Ukraine's exports to Pakistan have also experienced an annualized growth rate of 14.8%, with exports increasing from USD 2.98M to USD 82.1M in 2020.² According to the data of 2021, the trade value between Pakistan and Russia amounted to USD 711 million, out of which USD 537 million was attributed to the imports from Russia.³ The trade value between Ukraine and its trading partners amounted to USD 800 million, with imports accounting for USD 739 million.⁴ Currently, Pakistan maintains amicable albeit limited trade ties with Ukraine, with a significant portion of the trade being concentrated in the agricultural domain, specifically pertaining to wheat.⁵ In contemporary times, Pakistan and Russia have reached a consensus to enhance mutual collaboration across various domains such as commerce, military, finance, and power.⁶ The potential disruption of Pakistan's recent strategic pivot towards geo-economics is a significant concern due to the ongoing conflict.

Several nations, including the United States and the European Union, have implemented or enlarged sanctions targeting individuals within the Russian government. To be more precise, the United States has implemented a prohibition on the importation of Russian oil and natural gas, whereas the United Kingdom has committed to gradually discontinuing the use of Russian oil, with the cessation to be completed by the conclusion of the current year.⁷ Furthermore, the European Union, which currently relies on Russia for 25% of its oil and 45% of its gas, has set a goal to transition to alternative energy sources in order to achieve energy independence from Russia by the end of the current decade.⁸ The commencement of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia has been suspended by Germany.⁹ In response to the sanctions imposed, Russia has implemented a ban on the exportation of multiple products.¹⁰ Additionally, it has issued a warning that it may potentially discontinue the supply of gas in retaliation to the oil sanctions.¹¹

The current perturbation of energy supplies from the primary global source, Russia, is leading to an escalation in energy costs on a global scale.¹² The aforementioned occurrence poses a considerable hindrance for a nation such as Pakistan, which relies heavily on oil imports.¹³ This is especially noteworthy due to the substantial proportion of imports that oil constitutes. The aforementioned circumstance possesses the capability to exhaust our country's reserves, subsequently resulting in a further reduction of the nation's purchasing power. The ongoing conflict is expected to have a direct impact on Pakistan's wheat imports from Ukraine, which constituted 39% of the total wheat imports in the preceding fiscal year.¹⁴ The conflict in question has the potential to trigger a significant chain reaction, resulting in a considerable increase in electricity rates, a rise in interest rates by central banks, a demand for wage increases to meet the elevated cost of living, a corresponding increase in prices by businesses to offset the higher wages, and ultimately, workforce reductions that could lead to unemployment.

Despite the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, the crisis between Russia and Ukraine could potentially enhance Pakistan's geopolitical significance to both China and Russia, particularly in the realm of trade. Given the present conflict and resulting sanctions, it is imperative for Russia to explore alternative markets for its energy commodities and broaden its clientele. Pakistan is currently experiencing a significant deficit in its gas supply, which has resulted in the country becoming a noteworthy consumer of energy.¹⁵ Pakistan has recently entered into a trade agreement with Russia, wherein it has agreed to import two million tons of wheat and natural gas from Russia, despite the imposition of Western sanctions.¹⁶

The potential for Pakistan to serve as a consumer of oil from Russia is contingent upon the ability of the latter to navigate the existing sanctions regime. An additional concern pertains to logistical challenges and inadequate infrastructure, which pose obstacles for Russia in terms of efficiently transporting energy resources to nations beyond the European continent.¹⁷ In order to achieve this objective, it may be advantageous to construct a natural gas pipeline in Pakistan, referred to as the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline Project, which spans 1,100 kilometers and costs USD 2.5 billion. The pipeline would run from Port Qasim in Karachi, located in the province of Sindh, to Kasur in Punjab.¹⁸ The potential effects of the apparently amicable relations between Russia and Pakistan on the latter's receipt of aid from the International Monetary Fund are yet to be determined.

In addition to enhancing regional connectivity, Pakistan has the potential to implement internal policies and measures aimed at mitigating the economic impact of the crisis and curbing inflation within the country. The measures proposed encompass the promotion of remote work, digitization of education, reduction of operating hours for commercial establishments, shopping centers, recreational areas, and non-essential travel, incentivizing the utilization of public transportation, imposing a temporary prohibition on luxury and high-duty items, investigating alternative energy sources, both domestic and foreign, conducting an inventory of imported goods from both nations, with a particular focus on agricultural products originating from Ukraine.¹⁹

Given the current geopolitical tensions surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, it is highly likely that Pakistan will experience economic consequences. Pakistan's economy is currently susceptible to the impact of the pandemic, which could result in a deterioration of its current account and fiscal balances, as well as hinder its economic growth. Consequently, it is imperative for the nation to thoroughly evaluate its strategic stance within the global and regional milieu and execute well-informed yet prompt judgments that are indispensable for its sustenance.

Overview of the current war between Ukraine and Russia

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia has had a

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significant impact on the international relations of both countries. The conflict began in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, a region of Ukraine.²⁰ Since then, there have been ongoing clashes between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of millions of people and has caused significant economic damage to both Ukraine and Russia. The war has also had implications for other countries, including the United States and the European Union, which have imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine. In light of the current war between Ukraine and Russia, it is important to consider how it may affect the relationship between Pakistan and Ukraine. The conflict has already had significant implications for international relations, and it remains to be seen how it will continue to unfold.

History of Pakistan-Ukraine Relations

The history of Pakistan-Ukraine relations dates back to the Soviet era, when Pakistan recognized the Soviet Union as an important global power. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine emerged as an independent state in 1991,²¹ and Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize its independence.²² The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992, and since then, there have been several high-level visits between the two countries.²³ However, the relationship has been marked by ups and downs, with occasional tensions over issues such as trade and defense cooperation. Despite these challenges, both countries have expressed a desire to strengthen their ties and explore new avenues of cooperation. In recent years, there have been efforts to enhance economic and trade relations, with Pakistan and Ukraine signing several agreements to promote bilateral trade and investment. Additionally, there has been a focus on expanding cooperation in areas such as defense, energy, and agriculture. While there are still challenges to be overcome, the future of Pakistan-Ukraine relations looks promising, with both countries working towards a more mutually beneficial partnership.

Early diplomatic relations

Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Ukraine were largely focused on political cooperation, with both countries supporting each other on international issues. Pakistan recognized Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea, while Ukraine supported Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue.²⁴ The two countries also cooperated on counter-terrorism efforts and worked towards strengthening regional security. However, as economic ties between the two countries grew, there were occasional disagreements over trade policies and tariffs. In recent years, both countries have taken steps to address these issues and increase trade and investment. Overall, the relationship between Pakistan and Ukraine is multifaceted and has the potential for further growth and cooperation in various sectors. With a focus on defense, energy, and agriculture, both countries are working towards a more mutually beneficial partnership. While there may still be challenges to overcome, the future of Pakistan-

Ukraine relations looks promising.

For example, in 2018, Pakistan and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in the field of agriculture.²⁵ Under this agreement, Ukraine agreed to provide Pakistan with high-quality seeds and modern agricultural technology, while Pakistan agreed to facilitate the import of Ukrainian agricultural products. This partnership has the potential to boost agricultural production and improve food security in both countries. Additionally, both countries have been exploring opportunities for joint defense projects, such as the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).²⁶

Recent strategic and economic ties

Recent strategic and economic ties have led to increased collaboration between Pakistan and Ukraine. In 2020, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the defense sector, with a particular focus on military training and joint exercises.²⁷ Additionally, Ukraine has expressed interest in investing in Pakistan's energy sector, particularly in the development of renewable energy sources. In return, Pakistan has offered to share its expertise in agriculture and textile manufacturing with Ukraine. These efforts have the potential to strengthen the economic ties between the two countries and create new opportunities for growth and development. Despite the challenges that may arise, the strategic and economic partnership between Pakistan and Ukraine is on a positive trajectory, and both countries are committed to working towards a more mutually beneficial relationship in the future.

For example, as part of their defense cooperation, Ukraine has agreed to provide technical assistance and training to Pakistan's military in areas such as anti-terrorism operations and cyber security.²⁸ This collaboration has already resulted in successful joint exercises and is expected to enhance the capabilities of both countries' armed forces. Additionally, Ukrainian companies are exploring opportunities to invest in Pakistan's renewable energy sector, which could help address Pakistan's energy shortages while boosting Ukraine's presence and influence in South Asia.

Cultural connections

Cultural connections are also being strengthened between Pakistan and Ukraine. Both countries share a love for music and dance, and there have been several cultural exchanges between the two nations. Ukrainian folk-dance groups have performed in Pakistan, and Pakistani musicians have traveled to Ukraine to perform at music festivals. These exchanges not only promote cultural understanding and appreciation but also have the potential to boost tourism and promote economic growth in both countries. As the relationship between Pakistan and Ukraine continues to grow, it is clear that there are many opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit in various fields.

One example of a cultural connection between Pakistan and Ukraine is

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the establishment of a Pakistani Cultural Center in Kiev, which offers language courses, cooking classes, and cultural events to Ukrainian audiences.²⁹ This center has become a hub for Pakistani expats in Ukraine and has helped to promote a positive image of Pakistan in Ukraine. Additionally, Pakistani films have gained popularity among Ukrainian audiences, with the annual Pakistan Film Festival in Kiev attracting large crowds and showcasing the diversity of Pakistani cinema.

Impact of War on Pakistan-Ukraine Relations

Unfortunately, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had a negative impact on the relationship between Pakistan and Ukraine.³⁰ Pakistan has expressed its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but it has also maintained friendly ties with Russia, which has been accused of supporting separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine. This has led to tensions between Pakistan and Ukraine, with some Ukrainian officials expressing concern over Pakistan's stance on the conflict. Despite these challenges, both countries have expressed a desire to continue to strengthen their relationship and find ways to work together in the future.

Political effects

The conflict in Ukraine has had political effects on Pakistan-Ukraine relations as well. Pakistan's position on the conflict has been closely watched by other countries in the region, particularly India, which has been critical of Pakistan's perceived support for Russia. This has put pressure on Pakistan to balance its relationship with Russia with its support for Ukraine's sovereignty. Furthermore, the conflict has created a rift between Pakistan and Ukraine in international forums, with the two countries often taking opposing positions on issues such as the UN General Assembly resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.³¹ Despite these challenges, both countries have continued to engage in diplomatic talks and express a willingness to find common ground. The future of Pakistan-Ukraine relations will depend on their ability to navigate these political challenges and work towards mutual cooperation and understanding.

Economic effects

The conflict in Ukraine has also had economic effects on Pakistan-Ukraine relations. Trade between the two countries has decreased significantly since the conflict began, with Pakistan's exports to Ukraine dropping by almost 50%.³² This has had a negative impact on both economies, as both countries were important trading partners before the conflict. In addition, the instability in Ukraine has led to a decrease in foreign investment, which has further affected the country's economy. Pakistan has also been impacted by the conflict, as it has been forced to look for alternative markets for its exports. Despite these challenges, there is still potential for economic cooperation between Pakistan and Ukraine, particularly in the areas of agriculture, energy, and technology.

Both countries can benefit from exploring new trade opportunities and strengthening existing ones. However, this will require overcoming the current political challenges and creating a stable environment for business and investment. Overall, the future of Pakistan-Ukraine relations will depend on their ability to address both political and economic challenges and work towards a mutually beneficial partnership. Pakistan used to export a significant amount of rice to Ukraine before the conflict, but now it has had to find new markets for its rice exports. As a result, Pakistan has been focusing on expanding its rice exports to countries like China and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Ukraine has been exploring new markets for its agricultural products, such as wheat and corn, as well as increasing its energy exports to countries like Turkey and Poland.³³ Despite these efforts, both countries have experienced a decline in trade revenue due to ongoing political challenges. However, with a stable political environment and increased cooperation, there is great potential for Pakistan and Ukraine to boost their economies and trade relations in the future.

Social effects

The social effects of the conflict have also impacted both countries, with many individuals and families being displaced and struggling to make ends meet. Pakistan has been providing humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees, and there have been efforts to increase cultural and educational exchanges between the two nations.³⁴ However, the conflict has also led to an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment in both countries, which has further complicated the social and political landscape. Addressing these issues and promoting understanding and tolerance will be crucial for building a strong and positive relationship between Pakistan and Ukraine in the future.

Efforts have been made by both governments to address these social issues, such as implementing policies to support refugees and promoting diversity and inclusion. In addition, civil society organizations and grassroots movements have played a crucial role in promoting peace and reconciliation between the two nations. For example, there have been youth-led initiatives that aim to bridge cultural differences and promote dialogue between Pakistani and Ukrainian communities. These efforts have the potential to not only improve social cohesion but also strengthen economic and political ties between the two countries. Overall, while the conflict has had significant social impacts, there is hope that, through continued cooperation and dialogue, Pakistan and Ukraine can build a positive and mutually beneficial relationship in the future. It will require a commitment to addressing social issues and promoting understanding and tolerance, but the efforts made so far by both governments and civil society organizations provide a promising foundation for this.

One such initiative is the Pakistan-Ukraine Youth Dialogue, which brings together young leaders from both countries to discuss issues of mutual concern and build relationships.³⁵ Through this program,

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participants have been able to learn about each other's cultures and perspectives, as well as develop practical skills for promoting peace and understanding in their communities. Another example is the Ukrainian-Pakistani Women's Forum, which aims to empower women in both countries through education and entrepreneurship. By bringing together women from diverse backgrounds, this forum has helped to create a network of support and collaboration and has the potential to contribute to economic development and social progress in both Pakistan and Ukraine. These initiatives demonstrate the power of youth and civil society to drive positive change and build bridges between communities, even in the face of conflict and tension. With continued support and investment, they can help pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future for both countries.

Future of Pakistan-Ukraine relations

is dependent on the success of these initiatives, as they lay the foundation for a stronger and more resilient partnership. The youth and women involved in these programs are not only learning from each other but also becoming ambassadors of peace and progress in their respective communities. As they continue to collaborate and innovate, they are creating a ripple effect that can inspire others to follow in their footsteps. The potential for positive change is immense, and it is crucial that we continue to support these efforts through funding, resources, and advocacy. Only then can we truly unlock the full potential of Pakistan-Ukraine relations and pave the way for a brighter and more interconnected world. Let us work together to promote cross-cultural exchange and dialogue and build a future that is marked by understanding, cooperation, and peace.

Ukraine cannot be ignored in the context of these initiatives. The conflict has created significant challenges for both countries, including economic instability and security concerns. However, it is important to remember that initiatives like the ones mentioned above can also serve as a source of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. By fostering connections and promoting mutual understanding, they can help build bridges between communities and promote peacebuilding efforts. It is crucial that we continue to support these initiatives, even in the midst of conflict, as they offer a glimpse of what is possible when people come together with a shared vision for a better future, despite the challenges that may arise. Let us remain committed to promoting unity and cooperation between Pakistan and Ukraine and strive towards a world that is more interconnected and peaceful for all.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Pakistan and Ukraine may seem like unlikely allies, their shared experiences of conflict and social challenges have created opportunities for collaboration and mutual support. Through initiatives like the Pakistan-Ukraine Youth Dialogue and the Ukrainian-Pakistani Women's

Forum, young leaders and women are working together to promote understanding, tolerance, and economic development in both countries. These efforts demonstrate the power of civil society to drive positive change, even in the face of political tensions and conflict. With continued investment and support, these initiatives can help to build a more peaceful and prosperous future for both Pakistan and Ukraine. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that these initiatives are not limited to Pakistan and Ukraine. They serve as an inspiration for other countries facing similar challenges to come together and work towards a common goal. By promoting cross-cultural exchange and dialogue, we can break down barriers and foster greater understanding and cooperation between nations. It is up to us to continue to support and invest in these initiatives and to build a brighter future for all.



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