

PAKISTAN-FRENCH RELATIONS IN THE 21st CENTURY

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Abstract: The article discusses the political, economic and cultural cooperation of Pakistan with France in the twenty-first century. Attention is drawn to a peculiar bias towards France in the frequency of political and diplomatic visits by representatives of Pakistan. Due to the fact that France is a traditional donor of the Pakistani economy, attention is drawn to the desire of the parties to increase the role of public diplomacy in the development of trade and economic relations. Meanwhile, France is Pakistan's long-standing export partner, one of the top ten countries in which Pakistan exports its goods. The importance of developing such areas of cooperation as energy and transport is emphasized. Military-technical cooperation is singled out as a traditional area of cooperation between Pakistan and France. The role of France in the creation and development of the naval forces of Pakistan is indicated. The complicated relations between countries on the issue of nuclear cooperation are shown. The article also discusses security issues, namely, current bilateral documents, joint efforts to combat terrorism, and there gime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are presented. Interaction in the field of culture is presented on the example of the work of the three centers of the French public organization Alliance de Frances. Separately, attention is drawn to the interaction of state structures of the two countries regarding the return of relics illegally exported from Pakistan. In conclusion, it is concluded that Pakistan's orientation towards France is quite justified, since this European state has always been friendly to it, is powerful in its economic potential and resources, and the development of relations with this country does not conflict with the orientation towards the United States.

Key Words: Pakistan, France, trade and economic relations, naval forces, security.

Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and France were established on July 31, 1951. Primary attention was initially paid to creating a legal framework for the interaction of the two states. By 1970, the countries signed technical cooperation agreements, an agreement in the field of investment and taxation, science and education. At present, an extensive contractual framework has been created, which includes treaties and agreements in all main areas of international cooperation.

Bilateral relations between the states are distinguished by the fact that representatives of Pakistan visit France more often than their French partners. For example, in 2017–2019. The Republic of France was visited by several

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delegations from Pakistan at the ministerial level. The number of French return visits to Pakistan is noticeably less. Between the top leaders of France and Pakistan, telephone calls are periodically held. The last time a telephone conversation between the Prime Minister of Pakistan I. Khan and French President E. Macron took place on August 28, 2019 was dedicated to another exacerbation in Kashmir. Incidentally, France has always taken a fairly moderate and favorable position for Pakistan regarding the Kashmir issue. French representatives often confine themselves to calls for an early resolution of the problem, trying to generally distance themselves from interfering in this difficult issue.

It is noteworthy that in the foreign policy structures of France, unlike, for example, Germany, there is no post of special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan. At the same time, several non-state bilateral economic associations are actively functioning, which once again emphasizes the traditional nature of the development of trade and economic ties between Pakistan and France. Pakistan's desire to diversify its foreign policy relations as much as possible, including with the countries of Europe and, in particular, France, is also explained by the need to reduce its dependence on China.

Trade and economic cooperation of Pakistan and France

France, along with the United States, has always been one of Pakistan's main donor countries. This trend continues in the twenty-first century. France continues to invest in strategically important industries for Pakistan. At the same time, the parties are taking steps to strengthen the role of interstate advisory bodies. For example, in February 2020, the French Development Agency, with the mediation of the French Embassy, signed an agreement with the Pakistani side on a grant to build the capacity of the Energy and Infrastructure Council. Although this document does not have significant financial content (only 0.5 million euros), it outlines one area of strategic cooperation for Pakistan – energy¹.

It is supposed to focus the Council's activity precisely on the subject of setting energy tariffs and developing feasibility studies for energy projects. Interestingly, France grants such grants systematically through its Development Agency. Since 2016, this organization has allocated €700 million to the Pakistan energy and urban development sector alone. These financial injections are taking place against the backdrop of increased French attention to the project of the Sino-Pakistan economic corridor. Meanwhile, the delegation of French parliamentarians visited Gwadar back in 2017.

In this vein, decision on the allocation by the French agency of a loan of €130 million to Pakistan for the implementation of a bus project in Peshawar

¹ France and Pakistan sign €0.5 million grant agreement for capacity building of Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB). URL: <https://pk.ambafrance.org/France-and-Pakistan-sign-EURO-5-million-grant-agreement-for-capacity-building> (access date: 14.03.2020).

seems logical². This project of the Government of Pakistan is aimed at solving the problems of urban transport in north-west Pakistan. It should provide a safe, efficient and convenient public transport system that will be well integrated with existing vehicles and help improve energy efficiency.

A feature of trade and economic relations between the states under consideration is the significant excess of Pakistani exports over French imports. France is one of the top ten countries in which Pakistan traditionally exports its goods. The volume of Pakistani exports in 2018 amounted to almost \$ 447 million³. This export figure is significantly higher compared, for example, to Russian-Pakistani trade. In 2017, all trade between Russia and Pakistan amounted to \$ 320 million, including export of \$ 132 million⁴. The remoteness of Pakistan from France compared with Russia once again emphasizes this discrepancy.

Another distinguishing feature of the economic ties between Pakistan and France is the small amount of direct investment. Over the past ten years, according to the Pakistan Investment Bureau, France is not among the ten countries investing in the country's economy. A negative moment in the relations between the two countries was France's support for the refusal by members of the Financial Action

Task Force to Combat Money Laundering – the FATF to exclude Pakistan from the “gray” list of economically problematic countries. This international organization was created in 1989 and is developing global standards in the field of combating money laundering and financing organized crime. In June 2018, Pakistan made a political commitment at the government level to cooperate with the FATF. Islamabad should complete the implementation of the national action plan by June 2020 aimed at preventing the circulation of illegally obtained financial resources. Otherwise, at the next plenary meeting, the organization will decide to urge its members to try to avoid business relationships and financial transactions with Pakistan⁵.

Unlike many leading states, France was never afraid to cooperate with Pakistan in such a delicate area as nuclear. Back in 1976, an agreement was signed between Pakistan and France regarding the construction of a uranium enrichment plant, but terminated under US pressure. A new agreement on scientific and technical cooperation in the field of nuclear technology was signed only in 1993⁶.

² France gives €130m loan for Peshawar bus project. URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1459245> Dawn 23.01.2019 (access date: 01.03.2020).

³ Pakistan Exports By Country. URL: <https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/exports-by-country> (access date: 18.03.2020).

⁴ Kamenev S. N. History of Economic Processes in Pakistan (20th – beginning of 21th Century). Moscow, 2019. 335 p.

⁵ Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring – 21 February 2020. URL: <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/high-risk-and-other-monitored-jurisdictions/documents/increased-monitoring-February-2020.html#Pakistan> (access date: 20.03.2020).

⁶ Encyclopedia of Pakistan. Moscow, 1998. 330 p.

France's current position on nuclear non-proliferation in the region is as follows. In general, Paris is opposed to the expansion of the "nuclear club". At the same time, not endorsing the nuclear status of India and Pakistan and refraining from supplying them with nuclear material that can be used for military purposes, France did not join the sanctions against both countries – importers of its military and civilian products. Unable to interfere with the nuclear program of both countries, Paris, in fact, resigned to their nuclear status, focusing on the development of a peaceful atom⁷⁷.

Military-technical cooperation has always been an important component of trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and France. The military technical ties of Islamabad and Paris took shape in 1967, when the French side for the first time decided to supply the first shipments of equipment for the Pakistani naval forces. In the future, the cooperation of the two states in the military sphere only strengthened and gained its development, primarily in the field of sales of naval and air equipment by France to Pakistan. At the beginning of the XXI century, after Pakistan joined the anti-Taliban coalition, France followed the United States with military assistance. France created a bilateral commission on weapons issues. Submarines began to be delivered to Pakistan from this country⁸. For the Pakistani authorities, military-technical cooperation with France is also an opportunity to diversify the supply of military equipment, thereby reducing dependence on China and the United States.

Pakistan-France Security Cooperation

The joint French-Pakistani security commission has regularly held meetings since 2011, when a bilateral declaration on cooperation between the countries was adopted. In 2016, the Counter-Terrorism Convention was signed between Paris and Islamabad. Activity in this area is constantly growing. In 2019 alone, Pakistan and France held six rounds of negotiations on joint security and counter-terrorism issues. During the plenary meeting on July 1–2, 2019, both sides conducted a comprehensive review of progress on previously discussed issues. The security arrangements of the two states are constantly expanding and cover all new participants. So, in 2019, the Agreement on Academic Cooperation between the University of National Defense of Pakistan and the Institute of Higher Studies of the National Defense of France was signed⁹.

Over the past few years, contacts have been established on the exchange of experience in the fight against terrorism, on the scientific and technical issues of the fight against crime and on the identification of counterfeit documents

⁷⁷ Timofeyev P. Asia-Pacific in Contemporary France's Foreign Policy/ Asia –Pacific: a New Centre of Global Politics and Economy? (Global Development. iss.17). Moscow, 2017. 164 p.

⁸ Belokrenitsky V.Y., Moskalenko V. N. History of Pakistan. Moscow, 2008. 457 p.

⁹ Sixth round of Pakistan-France Joint Security Commission Talks. URL: <https://pk.ambafrance.org/Sixth-round-of-Pakistan-France-Joint-Security-Commission-Talks-July-1st-and-2nd> (access date: 14.03.2020).

between the law enforcement agencies of Pakistan and France. Back in 2016, two states signed a memorandum on the implementation of a three-year program for the exchange of best law enforcement practices. Pakistan-French consultations on non-proliferation and disarmament were held in Islamabad in 2017. During this dialogue were discussed issues of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and prospects for Pakistan's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

The security sector and the list of constantly discussed issues in Pakistan-France relations serves as a definite indicator trust not only bilateral relations, but also the development of all contacts Islamabad with foreign Europe. By the way, official contacts between the military of Pakistan and France were carried out as part of the operation NATO forces in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan plays the role of the main transport hub.

Cooperation between Pakistan and France in the field of culture

Cultural ties between Pakistan and France are constantly being strengthened. In Pakistan, there are now three centers of the French Alliance de Frances public organization (in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi). This non-governmental organization annually provides thousands of publications in French for all interested, including magazines, novels, art books, children's books and materials for learning French. At the same time, up to 100 thousand Pakistanis now live in France according to various estimates. Most of the migrants are in Paris.

A negative aspect of Pakistani-French intercultural relations was the events of January 2015, when cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad were published in one of the issues of the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan condemned the blasphemous cartoons. It was pointed out that freedom of speech should not be used to insult religious feelings. In the official statement of the foreign ministry, these publications were called an attempt to sow discord between civilizations, a call was made to strengthen interethnic and intercommunal harmony.

Against this background, the recent retaliatory step by French diplomacy to return the relics illegally exported from Pakistan looks very indicative. Not so long ago, Paris handed over to Islamabad about 450 ancient relics stolen in Balochistan and detained by French customs in 2006¹⁰.

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An analysis of bilateral relations between Pakistan and France shows their development independently of existing relations with other powers. The French direction remains one of the main vectors of Pakistan's foreign policy in Europe.

¹⁰ France returns looted relics to Pakistan. URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/149168903.07.2019> (access date: 15.03.2020).

Cooperation with France contributes to the economic development of Pakistan, contributes to military-technical cooperation and security, however, this provides Islamabad with great opportunities for maneuver in relations with China and increases its independence in the international arena. In addition, partnership with France allows Pakistan to develop a strategically important type of armed forces – the Navy.

It seems that for Pakistan, the development of political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations with France is justified, since this European state has always been, of course, friendly to its foreign policy, has great financial capabilities, and the development of contacts with it does not interfere with Pakistan-US partnership.

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