

**H. E. QAZI M. KHALILULLAH<sup>1</sup>**

Dear Chairman,  
Honorable Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies,  
Excellences,  
Dear Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good Afternoon.

**A**t the outset, let me on behalf of the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh, which I am heading as Executive Director, as well as on my own behalf, as former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Russian Federation, convey my profound gratitude to Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies Prof. Dr. Alikber Alikberov and his team for making an extraordinary effort to gather a galaxy of luminaries from Pakistan and Russia to participate physically and virtually in this Conference to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union/Russia.

I am grateful for the invitation and honored to speak on this important occasion. I am pleased to recall that during my diplomatic assignment as Ambassador of Pakistan to the Russian Federation from March 2016 to December 2019, I worked closely with my counterparts in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government departments, Institute of Oriental Studies, think tanks, media and friends of Pakistan to contribute to efforts to enhance Pakistan-Russia relations in diverse fields.

I worked very closely with Prof. Dr. Vyacheslav Y. Belokrenitsky and Dr. Irina Serenko to exchange views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest from time to time.

Pakistan and Russia enjoy close and multifaceted relations based on mutual respect, goodwill and trust. Over the last two decades, both sides have worked closely and succeeded in enhancing relations in various areas including economic, energy and security. Pakistan and Russia also enjoy close cooperation in multilateral fora.

I am happy to note three recent developments that will go a long way in enhancing trade between Pakistan and Russia: (i) First shipment of Russian discounted oil imported by Pakistan; (ii) Protocol on customs cooperation between Pakistan and Russia signed recently in Kazan; and (iii) Commencement of direct shipping service between St. Petersburg and Karachi, with Russian NECO Line vessel “MV Crystal St. Petersburg”. We hope that this will be helpful in making Karachi a trans-shipment hub for containerized cargo to and from St. Petersburg.

As it has been pointed out by other Speakers, Pakistan-Soviet relations developed gradually after establishment of diplomatic relations on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1948. Although Pakistan was in the Western bloc during the Cold War, Pakistan and Soviet Union were able to cooperate on a number of important projects such as establishment of Pakistan Steel Mills, power projects at Guddu and Muzaffargarh and OGDCL.

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As during the Soviet period, focus of economic cooperation between Pakistan and Russia has remained on energy projects. These projects include: Agreement on 1100 km long Pakistan Stream gas pipeline from Karachi to Kasur, Agreement on purchase of LNG from Russia signed in October 2017 and MoU on Feasibility Study of an undersea gas pipeline from Persian Gulf to South Asia signed in 2019. Both sides also have the possibility to cooperate on regional energy related projects such as TAPI gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan and CASA-1000 electricity transmission project from Tajikistan to Pakistan as building blocks of a regional energy corridor.

Pakistan's membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has opened up new opportunities for cooperation with Russia and other member states within the framework of SCO.

While speaking on current situation in the world, policy of Pakistan and Russia, I wish to share with you some thoughts for the future of our region which has suffered due to foreign interventions and ongoing geopolitical contestation, unilateralism and imbalance created at the global level due to common policies of Western economic cooperation and security institutions.

End of Cold War, dismantling of the Warsaw Pact, coming down of the Berlin Wall and assurances given to Russia, that NATO would not expand even an inch eastward, had given rise to hopes of a relatively peaceful world with all countries having the opportunity to freely choose their economic and strategic partners. However, today the world stands on the edge of a precipice due to a number of well-known reasons. Let me highlight some of them: (i) Collective action by Western countries against so called countries of concern; (ii) Use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy; (iii) Economic strangulation of developing countries; (iv) Penchant for military solution of disputes; (v) Rejection of multipolarity to maintain global preponderance of certain countries; (vi) Trade and Tech wars against adversaries; (vii) Branding competitors as revisionist countries; (viii) Containment of adversaries through security alliances; and (ix) Selective application of rules of the so called rules-based international order.

However, recently some important developments have taken place in the Middle East which are likely to have significant impact on the region. I am referring to the emergence of Saudi Arabia as peace-maker with support and indulgence of China. Recent rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Saudi Arabia's efforts to promote peace in Yemen and Syria, readmission of Syria in the Arab League and willingness of Riyadh to play a role in the settlement of Ukraine crisis are noteworthy initiatives.

No less significant are many other developments, that have taken place in the region. These include chaotic withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, enhanced opportunities for transit trade between Pakistan, Russia and Central Asian States through Afghanistan, MoU signed between Pakistan and Uzbekistan for railway link through Afghanistan, Chinese investment of over 25 billion dollars in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) since 2015, decision of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan to include Afghanistan in the CPEC, China's agreement to invest US dollar 400 billion in Iran over the next 25 years, Russia's investment in Iran for development of infrastructure, agreement between Pakistan and Iran for opening of six border trading points and import of electricity by Pakistan from Iran, inclusion of Iran in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and interest shown by Saudi Arabia in becoming a dialogue partner of the SCO. These important developments have prompted many observers to talk about an emerging Eurasian Order.

At the moment, we have a number of potent and important organizations in the Eurasian region, including the SCO, Economic Cooperation Organization, Eurasian Economic Union, Collective Security Treaty Organization and Common Wealth of Independent States, which have common objectives to a great extent and overlapping membership. However, the Eurasian region does not have organizations of the size, scale, scope and effectiveness of NATO and European Union. I am wondering whether

organizations of that kind can be established in the Eurasian space by merging some or all of the organizations that exist today to create balance of power at the global level.

In my view, priority areas for a Eurasian Order could be: (i) To develop a Eurasian security architecture for protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of regional countries; (ii) Resolution of outstanding disputes in the region; (iii) Cooperation to combat terrorism and trans-national crimes; (iv) Intra-regional trade in local currencies to the extent possible; (v) Developing mechanisms to protect member states from the impact of unilateral or collective sanctions; (vi) Adopting common policies on global and regional issues; and (vii) Promoting connectivity for development.

Thank you.