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THE FACTOR OF PAKISTAN IN INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS (1991-1999)

Hoang Xuan Truongi

Dr., University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

Abstract:

After the Cold War, India-Russia relations have undergone drastic changes and movements under the influence of many factors. This article is going to clarify the impact of the Pakistan factor on India-Russia relations in the period 1991 - 1999. The research results show that, through each historical period, the impact of the Pakistan factor on India-Russia relations is two-sided. Accordingly, it both hinders their relations and promotes their connection.

Keywords: India, Russia, Pakistan, India-Russia relations

1. Introduction

Entering the 90s of the 20th century, with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the socialist regime in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, international relations had many profound changes. Faced with that situation, relations between countries all had changes. India - Russia relations in the period 1991-1999 went through many different stages. The period 1991-1992 marked a decline and indifference in bilateral relations. Relations between the two countries were restarted when the two sides signed the Agreement in 1993. From 1993 to 1999, relations between the two countries began to be strengthened with similarities in common strategic interests. These changes in India - Russia relations were clearly influenced by many factors, including the factor of Pakistan.

As an Islamic country that emerged after the Mountbatten Plan in 1947, Pakistan is an important factor in the strategies of the major powers in South Asia. In the India-Russia relations, the factor of Pakistan has both promoted the two countries to strengthen their relationship but also posed great challenges. With the intertwined relations in South Asia, Pakistan has emerged as an important variable, contributing to shaping the nature and direction of the India-Russia bilateral relationship in the period 1991-1999.

i Correspondence: email truonghx@tnue.edu.vn

2. Literature Review

Some scholars have studied the historical context after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changes in Russia's foreign policy in South Asia. In his work "The Future of CIS... Will it survive", T.N.Kaul stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union forced Russia to prioritize internal stability and the consolidation of the post-Soviet space instead of focusing on traditional strategic areas such as South Asia [9]. Researcher J.A.Naik, in his work "Russia's Policy Towards India: From Stalin to Yeltsin" argued that in the early 1990s, Russia's policy changed when Russia began to consider its relationship with Pakistan and reduced its priority towards India [18]. Author T. Shaumian in the article "Russia's Eastern Diplomacy and India" argues that in the early 1990s, Russia still considered India a key pillar in its Asian policy, but made tentative moves towards Pakistan, but this move was only aimed at seeking benefits in the new geopolitical context [23]. In the article "Russia's Changing Relations with Pakistan and Taliban: Implications for India", Vinay Kaura argues that changes in global politics after the Cold War have led to some differences between Russia and India in their approach to the Pakistan and Taliban factors [10].

Some works mention Russia's foreign policy in seeking "balance" with India and Pakistan. In the work "Soviet Collapse: Implications for India", scholars argued that since 1991, Russia began to build close relations with Pakistan. As a result, India lost support from Russia as a balancing factor in the South Asia and Indian Ocean region [4]. In the article "Russian Policy Towards South Asia", J. Bakshi argued that Russia's policy towards South Asia in the 90s reflected a "balancing" trend, in which India remained a priority partner, while Pakistan was approached for regional security purposes [3]. In the article "India-Russia Relations and New Features of Russia's Policy towards South Asia", Le Viet Duyen argued that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's policy towards the South Asia region has become more pragmatic, Russia not only maintains strategic relations with India but also seeks to establish positive diplomatic relations with Pakistan [11]. In the article "Russian Policy towards South Asia: An Update", M. Malek stated that Russia's top priority in South Asia is for India. Although Russia has made some efforts to improve relations with Pakistan, the results are still modest [14]. Author Vireshraj, in his work "Russian Policy Towards India And Pakistan Since 1991: A Comparative Study", compared Russia's policies towards India and Pakistan from 1991 to the beginning of the 21st century. The author asserted that Russia-India relations are strategic in nature, while with Pakistan, Russia only maintains bilateral relations in its South Asia strategy [21]. In the article "Russia's Relations With India & Pakistan", Mark A Smith stated that Russia considers India a strategic partner but also considers Pakistan an important partner to prevent radical Islam [27].

In addition, some works emphasize the catalytic role of Pakistan in promoting relations between India and Russia. In the work "India and Russia: Towards Strategic Partnership" edited by Shams-ud-din, scholars have argued that Pakistan plays the role of an "intermediary agent" that pushes India and Russia closer together [24]. Researchers in the work "New Trends in Indo-Russian Relations" stated that it is the increasing influence of Pakistan in Central Asia as well as in relations with the US and China that indirectly

pushes Russia and India to strengthen their relations [5]. The work "Russia and the Kashmir issue since 1991: Perception, attitude and policy" by D.A.Mahapatra has shown that Pakistan is a security "spike" that makes Russia and India closer together [12].

Thus, the research works have generally mentioned the two-sided impact of the Pakistan factor in India-Russia relations since the Cold War. However, the works are mainly analyzed individually, not placed in the overall national development policy, as well as originating from the strategic interests and internal changes of both India and Russia. Therefore, this article aims to provide a comprehensive view of the above issue.

3. Material and Methods

The article uses documents on the foreign policies of India, Russia, and Pakistan. Besides, agreements, joint statements extracted from the information portal of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia or through original documents printed in selected works. In the article, the historical method is used to recreate the context and changes of India-Russia relations in the period 1991 - 1999, thereby highlighting the milestones where the factor of Pakistan affects the relationship between the two countries. The logical method aims to find the nature and draw an assessment of the Pakistan factor in India-Russia relations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The factor of Pakistan in India-Russia relations in the period 1991-1992

Before 1991, India-Soviet relations had achieved many important achievements in many fields. Relations with the Soviet Union helped India receive the Soviet Union's support on the Kashmir issue, prevent threats from Pakistan, and create a balance with the Pakistan-US alliance. For the Soviet Union, relations with India ensured strategic balance on the Southeast, South Asia, and Near East flanks. On the contrary, Pakistan was considered by the Soviet Union as an opposing force. However, since 1991, India-Russia relations have undergone changes associated with the impact of the Pakistan factor, which is reflected in the following aspects:

India and Pakistan have had a poor relationship over the Kashmir dispute and cross-border terrorism. During this period, the challenge India faced was terrorism based in Pakistan. Since 1989, after the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, extremists in Pakistan have turned to increasing cross-border terrorism, causing conflicts in the Indian states of Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab. In addition, Pakistan has used human rights and attracted external forces to pressure and isolate India. Therefore, Indian policymakers believe that "India should go beyond the narrow limits of South Asia" and expand relations with foreign countries [7; p.309]. Pakistan is a factor that motivates India to seek to strengthen relations with Russia, especially to seek security support.

However, after the Cold War, Russia did not want its policy to be too pro-India and sent signals of its intention to improve relations with Pakistan. In November 1991, Russia supported a Pakistan-sponsored UN resolution calling for the establishment of a

nuclear-free zone in South Asia. This move shocked India because it meant that India would have to abandon its nuclear program. Then, during his visit to Pakistan on December 19-22, 1991, Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi emphasized "the desire to develop relations with Muslim countries according to new principles, free from ideological barriers and based on respect, goodwill and mutual benefit" [31; p.33]. By abandoning the traditional Soviet-era view, Rutskoi supported the settlement of the Kashmir issue under the auspices of the United Nations. This move negated India's position as well as the Shimla Agreement, which considered Kashmir a bilateral issue [13; p.43-44].

There were several reasons for the change in Russia's relations with Pakistan. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the rise of "Islamic elements" in Afghanistan and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia considered Pakistan and the Muslim countries in the South to be more important due to their proximity to the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan. Russia also wanted to use Pakistan to help free prisoners of war still held by the Mujahideen in Afghanistan (a force supported by Pakistan). Moreover, the Taliban had now advanced close to the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, so improving relations with Pakistan also helped Russia block the Taliban's path to Central Asia. Second, the US's suspension of arms supplies to Pakistan in 1990 also brought Pakistan closer to Russia. Pakistan sought to purchase MIG-29 and SU-27 fighters [30; p.176]. Third, at this time, the Indian side was not friendly with the new Russian regime, so it did not bring sympathy to the Russian leaders [3; p.1375].

The above context created an opportunity for the improvement of Russia-Pakistan relations, but strongly affected India-Russia relations. Russia's attempt to end the special relationship with India, which they believed negatively affected relations with Pakistan, caused India-Russia relations to decline sharply in the period of 1991-1992.

However, Russia's intention to improve relations with Pakistan was hindered. In April 1992, an international conference was held in Moscow on relations between Pakistan and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). During the conference, Pakistan expressed its desire to establish an Islamic alliance in southern Russia, including Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian republics. Pakistan also hoped to form a common market of Muslim countries in the region, China's Xinjiang region, Kashmir region, and the southern republics of Russia with large Muslim populations such as Tatrstan, Bashkartastan, Chechen Ingushetia, Daghestan...[15; p.315-316]. This contradicted Russia's interests, forcing Russia to review its relations with India. In May 1992, Russian State Secretary Gennady Burbulis visited India. In New Delhi, he stated that: "Relations with India occupy a key place in Russia's overall foreign policy strategy, but these relations must be based on new realities and be more pragmatic" [8; p. 28]. This marks the beginning of a new stage in bilateral relations between Russia and India.

4.2. The factor of Pakistan in India-Russia relations in the period 1993 - 1999

In early 1993, the difficult situation in Russia, combined with the instability in the Caucasus and Central Asia, made Russia wary of Pakistan and began to pay attention to India. But in Russia, the policy towards India and Pakistan remained a controversial topic. Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev doubted the need to maintain a special

relationship with India and proposed the principle of "balance" towards both India and Pakistan [17; p.233-234]. However, many members of the government believed that close relations with India did not hinder Russia's relations with Pakistan [17; p.234]. On January 25, 1993, the Russian Foreign Ministry published its Foreign Policy Concept, which stated: "Economic and geopolitical considerations require close relations with India… At the same time, we must also take into account India's opposing factor — Pakistan. Our policy must not be perceived by other countries as deliberately too pro-Indian, or as an obstacle to the development of relations, especially with Pakistan" [16; p.15]. This was a way of conveying to India that in the post-Cold War era, Russia did not want "special relations" with any country.

After two postponements, President B. Yeltsin visited India from 27 to 29 January 1993. This was a sign of Russia's reluctance in its relations with India [22; p.83]. The two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (on 28 January 1993) to replace the 1971 Treaty that expired in 1991. Referring to the Pakistan factor, President B. Yeltsin stated, "Russia will not seek to improve relations with Pakistan if it harms India", but affirmed that Russia will maintain some relations with Pakistan.

In November 1993, US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel, while visiting Pakistan, mentioned India's annexation of Kashmir and its declaration of Kashmir as a disputed territory [2]. Subsequently, the US removed Pakistan from its list of countries sponsoring terrorism. Furthermore, on November 23, 1993, President B. Clinton sent to the US Congress a draft bill to replace the Pressler Act (which prohibited US companies from selling equipment that could be used to develop nuclear programs of certain countries, including Pakistan) [2]. These moves brought India and Russia closer together. In November 1993, when the terrorist attack in Hazratbal (Jammu & Kashmir state) occurred, Russia criticized Pakistan and declared Jammu & Kashmir an inseparable part of India.

Entering 1994, India-Russia relations were also greatly affected by the Pakistan factor. Pakistan's cooperation with China on missile and nuclear programs and the joint US-Pakistan military exercises in January 1994 caused concern for India and Russia. Pakistan also made strong appeals at the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations General Assembly about the so-called "human rights violations" in Jammu & Kashmir (February 1994). Along with that, Pakistan increased its involvement in Central Asia when it signed the Military and Defense Cooperation Agreement with Turkmenistan in April 1994 [29]. In light of these developments, from June 29 to July 2, 1994, Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Russia to further develop and strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

However, at this time, Russia was facing the separatist problem in Chechnya. Therefore, they still intended to balance relations with India and Pakistan. Therefore, right after Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit, on July 3-5, 1994, Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ali visited Russia at the invitation of Foreign Minister Kozyrev. During this visit, President B. Yeltsin invited Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to visit Russia in December 1994. In that context, at the end of August 1994, Indian Deputy Foreign Minister K. Srinivasan visited Russia. And the notable consequence after this visit

was that Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's plan to visit Russia was postponed. Pakistan cited domestic issues as the reason [1; p.45], while Russia said that "Russian leaders were busy" [28]. In fact, Russia and Pakistan had conflicts over the issues of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Moreover, Russia also suspected that Pakistan had connections with separatist forces in Chechnya. Therefore, in Russian politics at this time, everyone supported maintaining a "special relationship" with India [17; p.234]. More surprisingly, while postponing the visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Russia, on December 22-24, 1994, Russian Prime Minister V. Chernomyrdin visited India.

On January 10, 1995, US Secretary of Defense William Perry criticized the Pressler Act during his visit to Pakistan. After this visit, the US lifted most of the sanctions and allowed the sale of military equipment to Pakistan. The US also did not sanction China when China transferred M-11 missiles to Pakistan [19; p.105-106]. The need to ensure security and balance of power again urged India and Russia to move closer together. As evidence, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Russia twice on May 8-10 and August 3-6, 1995.

Immediately after taking office, on March 30-31, 1996, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov chose India as his first destination. Of course, Primakov's visit to India was also influenced by external factors. Previously, on March 20, 1996, the US had invoked the Brown Amendment to sell military equipment to Pakistan. During this visit, India and Russia both opposed Pakistan's support for the Taliban. Russia supported India's position on resolving the Kashmir issue within the framework of the Shimla Agreement [14; p.389].

Pakistan's attempts to purchase weapons from Ukraine and build relations with Muslim countries in Central Asia caused concern for India and Russia. In particular, in September 1996, the Pakistani President visited Kazakhstan and received support from President Nazarbaev for the idea of holding a referendum on the status of Kashmir [6; p.275]. In Afghanistan, Pakistani intelligence contributed significantly to the Taliban's rise to power. This led to the visit to India of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov on October 26-30, 1996.

Continuing the trend of increasingly deep cooperation between India and Russia, Indian Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda visited Russia on March 24, 1997. During this visit, Russia pledged not to supply weapons to Pakistan and to prevent the transfer of weapons from Ukraine to Pakistan. Along with its increasingly pro-Indian policy, Russia also showed a tougher attitude towards Pakistan. During Pakistani Foreign Minister Gauhar Ayub Khan's visit to Russia in July 1997, Russia frankly warned Pakistan about its support for the Taliban as well as its increasingly deep involvement in the situation in Afghanistan [25; p.256]. While Russia-Pakistan relations were at a standstill, relations between Russia and India improved. Russia's soft and cautious attitude towards India's nuclear tests in May 1998 pushed the two countries closer. While other countries were isolating India, from December 20 to 22, 1998, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov visited India, affirming India's priority position in Moscow's foreign policy.

After a decade of wars, Pakistan planned to confront India directly in early 1999. To facilitate the move, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Russia from April

19 to 21, 1999. The visit ended without any significant bilateral agreements being signed [1; p.46]. A few weeks later, on May 3, 1999, Pakistan launched a large-scale incursion into India's Kargil region. Russia was the first country to voice its support for India's military campaign to repel the "invaders" and demanded that Pakistan withdraw its troops [20]. Despite the internal crisis, Russia quickly provided aid to help India repel Pakistan [26; p.57]. Russia's support not only helps India gain an advantage over Pakistan but also deepens the relationship between India and Russia, laying the foundation for the transition from "friendly partnership" to "strategic partnership" at a later stage.

5. Conclusion

India-Russia relations in the 1991-1999 period were clearly influenced by the Pakistan factor. It was a factor that promoted the strengthening of India-Russia cooperation, but it was also a factor that hindered this relationship. Challenges from Pakistan related to cross-border terrorism, efforts to internationalize the Kashmir issue prompted India to strengthen and deepen its strategic relationship with Russia. However, after the Cold War, the regional geopolitical context changed, so there was a time when Russia wanted to expand its relationship with Pakistan. This move eroded India's special position in the Russia-Russia relationship. However, Pakistan's ambition not only increased concerns for Russia but also strengthened the strategic nature of the relationship between Moscow and New Delhi.

It can be said that studying the Pakistan factor in India-Russia relations in the 1991-1999 period contributed to opening up a more multi-dimensional perspective on the history of international relations after the Cold War. After all, thinking about national interests is the core factor that has been and is governing the interaction between subjects in international relations during this period.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Hoang Xuan Truong is a lecturer at the Faculty of History, Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam. His main research areas are world history and international relations.

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