

# **SOVIET RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN**

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**An affinity between Pakistan and the Soviet Union would have seemed natural, given the former's status as a British colony (until 1947) and the latter's role as supporter of nations oppressed by capitalist imperialists. However, in 1959 Pakistan – along with Turkey and Iran --- joined the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which was engineered by President Dwight Eisenhower's energetic Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. The security treaty replaced the Baghdad Pact and was intended to provide a southern bulwark to Soviet expansion toward the Indian Ocean and the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. CENTO also enabled the United States to aid Pakistan and cement a close security relationship with the country that has thus become the cornerstone of U.S. policy in South Asia for more than three decades. This relationship reinforced Moscow's efforts to maintain close relations with Pakistan's rival, India. Beginning in June 1955 with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Moscow, and First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev's return trip to India in the fall of 1955, the foundations were laid for cordial Soviet-Indian relations. While in India, Khrushchev announced Moscow's support for Indian sovereignty over the Kashmir region. Leading to the eventual partition of British India in 1947, Kashmir has been a key source of contention for centuries between Hindus and Muslims. Pakistan asserts Kashmiris' rights to self-**

determination through a plebiscite in accordance with an earlier Indian pledge and a UN resolution. This dispute triggered wars between the two countries, not only in 1947, but also in 1965. (Moscow maintained neutrality in 1965). In December 1971, Pakistan and India again went to war, following a political crisis in what was then East Pakistan and the flight of millions of Bengali refugees to India. The two armies reached an impasse, but a decisive Indian victory in the east resulted in the creation of Bangladesh.

New strains appeared both in Soviet-Pakistan relations after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the Afghan resistance, while India implicitly supported Soviet occupation. Pakistan accommodated an influx of refugees (over 3.2 million people) resulting from the Soviet occupation (December 1979-February 1989). In the following eight years, the USSR and India voiced increasing concern over Pakistani arms purchases, U.S. military aid to Pakistan, and Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. In May 1998 India, and then Pakistan, conducted nuclear tests.

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Pakistan's relations with Washington grew strained, while its relations with Moscow improved. Although Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, agreed to provide the United States with bases in Pakistan for launching military operations against Pakistan's erstwhile ally – the Taleban -- in Afghanistan, his actions fuelled electoral successes of Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan who oppose his pro-U.S. stance. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has played a key mediating role in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. In February 2003, Musharraf met with Putin in Moscow to

discuss trade and defense ties. This was the first official state visit by a Pakistani leader to Moscow since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s. Pakistan and India massed about a million troops along the U.N.-drawn Line of Control that divides their sectors of the state officially called Jammu and Kashmir -- raising international fears of a possible nuclear war.

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