



Available Online at EScience Press
Journal of South Asian Studies

ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)
<https://esciencepress.net/journals/JSAS>

PAKISTAN AND THE QUESTION OF RECOGNIZING ARMENIA: PAKISTAN-ARMENIA RELATIONS, THE ISSUE OF KASHMIR & NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Muhammad Fahim

Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Corresponding Author Email ID: muhammadfahimdawer@gmail.com*

A B S T R A C T

This article aims to study the estrangement between Pakistan and Armenia in light of the issue of Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh. Most Pakistanis are not aware of the fact that Pakistan does not recognize Armenia nor have any official diplomatic relations with her due to Pakistan's principle stance over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Armenia occupied more than 20 percent internationally recognized Azeri territory during the 1992 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Pakistan has brotherly and cordial relations with Azerbaijan. Pakistan not only supports the Azeri stance over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue but goes out of the way to not recognize Armenia as a sovereign state. In turn, Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir dispute. On the contrary, Armenia not only refused to withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized Azeri land but supports Pakistan's arch-enemy India on the Kashmir issue as a diplomatic move to counter Pakistan. This is the first-ever study conducted on Pakistan-Armenia relations. The article explores the reasons behind Pakistan's decision not to recognize Armenia in great detail. It discusses the estrangement between the two countries, especially in light of the Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

Keywords: Pakistan-Armenia relations, Recognition, Diplomatic relations, Nagorno-Karabakh, Kashmir.

INTRODUCTION

Almost all Pakistanis are aware of the fact that Pakistan does not recognize Israel. However, most Pakistanis do not know that Pakistan does not recognize Armenia nor have any diplomatic relations with her. Armenia does not have any diplomatic relations with Turkey either, but Turkey does recognize Armenia as a state (Ameen, 2018). However, Armenia and her subjects consider Turkey as her second biggest enemy after Azerbaijan (Edwards, 2013).

The reason behind Pakistan's decision to not recognize Armenia is the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Upon the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in the 1990s, Armenian forces and local ethnic Armenian separatist organizations attacked Azerbaijan and commenced the genocide of Azeri Muslims in an unannounced war in 1992. As a result, Armenia occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other Azeri districts as well. More than 700,000 thousand Azeri people had become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). With the help of Armenian state machinery, the rebels self-

declared a state by the name Republic of Artsakh in the occupied territory. The United Nations scrapped their declaration of an independent state and passed four resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884), which not only recognize full sovereignty of Azerbaijan over the conflict region but called for a complete withdrawal of Armenian forces from the area they occupied. However, Armenia never complied to date (Saeed, 2018). That is the reason that Pakistan does not recognize Armenia (Saeed, 2019). The Senate of Pakistan expressed full support to Azerbaijan on the above-said issue and recognized the Khojaly massacre of Muslim civilians by the Armenian army on February 26, 1992 as a genocide (Khan, 2018). Countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Armenia includes Turkey, Botswana, Lesotho, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Sudan, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Pakistan, Hungary, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the Nagorno-Karabakh war, as mentioned earlier, Pakistan supported Azerbaijan (Ameen, 2018; Saeed,

2019). Pakistan has brotherly and cordial relations with both Turkey and Azerbaijan. Thus, in response, Armenia supports India's stance on the Kashmir dispute and maintains a very close relationship with Pakistan's arch-foe, India. Pakistan is supporting the Turkish stance over the Armenia claims of the alleged 1915 Armenian genocide [allegedly] by the Ottomans [during the Arminian revolt against the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in mass killings of Turks by the Armenian rebels] (Ameen, 2018).

The Khojaly genocide of Azeri Muslims by Armenian Christians during the 1992 war is also one of the reasons that coerced Pakistan to not recognize Armenia as a sovereign state (Rajabova, 2015). Secondly, Pakistan fully supports Azerbaijan's stance on the above-said issue (Rajabova, 2015; Saeed, 2019). Pakistan deems Azerbaijan as a brotherly nation, and the Pakistani authorities repeatedly mentioned that they would not accord recognition to an aggressor until Armenia returns the occupied Azeri land to Azerbaijan. In February 2012, Pakistan's senate committee on foreign relations passed a resolution denouncing the Khojaly genocide of Azeri Muslims and the illegal occupation of internationally recognized Azerbaijani land by the Armenian forces. Moreover, the foreign relations committee of Pakistan's senate called for the execution of four United Nations Security Council resolutions on the unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Armenian army from Azerbaijan's internationally recognized land (Rajabova, 2015).

In a Seminar conducted by the Azeri embassy at Islamabad upon the 27th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide, the then Minister of Interprovincial Coordination, Fehmida Mirza, reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. She said: "Pakistan will continue to support the position of Azerbaijan in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict." Furthermore, she added that Pakistan does not recognize Armenia for her aggression, occupation of Azeri land, and genocide they committed in the past. Pakistan fully echoes the Azerbaijani and Turkish values and goals to bring peace and stability to the region (Vestnik Kavkaza, 2019). On 10 January 2020, a news article appeared on an Azeri internet website wrongly claiming that Pakistan is considering formalizing relations with Armenia. However, in response to the article, the Pakistani embassy at Baku vehemently negated the news by stating, "There is no change in Pakistan's stated

position with regards to the recognition of Armenia (ONA, 2020).

In the economic sphere, in June 2016, Pakistan officially commenced negotiations with Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) for a free trade agreement. However, Armenia is a permanent member of the Russian-led EEU, and Pakistan's attempt to bypass Armenia fueled anger in the latter (Pan Armenia, 2016).

On May 11, 2017, during a seminar held by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on "**Pakistan Relations with Central Asian Republics & Azerbaijan: Prospects and Challenges**," the ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Mr. Ali Alizada, called the bilateral and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan time tested. In addition, he appreciated that Pakistan was one of the first nations that recognized Azerbaijan after its independence and censured the Armenian aggression (ISSI, 2017).

As a geopolitical and economic move, Pakistan teamed up with its brotherly countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan. In November 2017, Pakistan-Turkey-Azerbaijan trilateral relations were launched during a meeting between the foreign ministers of the said three brotherly countries in Baku. They agreed upon an increase of trade, defense cooperation, and supporting each other in International Organizations (Eurasian Time, 2020). Today, Pakistan-Turkey-Azerbaijan enjoys friendly and brotherly relations. Not only political and diplomatic, but military relations between the three brotherly nations are stronger and deeper than ever before.

With regards to the Pak-Azeri intensification of relations, in 2010, during his visit to Baku, Pakistan's Defense Minister Syed Ather Ali met with Azerbaijan head of state Ilham Aliyev and discussed strengthening defense and military liaison. President Aliyev expressed his gratitude towards Pakistan for backing Azerbaijan in the U.N. and not recognizing their arch-foe Armenia for its illegal occupation of Azeri land. The then President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussain, in March 2015, visited Baku and reiterated Pakistan's position that Pakistan fully supports Azerbaijan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and said that Pakistan's parliament recognized the Khojaly massacre as genocide (Sassounian, 2016).

In April 2016, during the border clashes, also known as the "April war", between Azerbaijan's military and the de facto so-called Republic of Artsakh Army, backed by the Armenian Armed Forces, Pakistan censured Armenia for "violating the ceasefire." Azerbaijan's Defense

Minister Yavar Jamalov visited Pakistan the same month and showed his intentions of buying military hardware from the latter. Furthermore, on September 27, 2016 the then Pakistan's Defense Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain met with President Aliyev in Baku and discussed further intensification of defense and military relations between the two brotherly countries. The same year on 14 October, during the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif meeting with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in Baku, Sharif expressed interest in joint military drills, and he reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. President Aliyev also reiterated their support to Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute (Sassounian, 2016).

Moreover, in October 2018, the visit of Pakistani military delegation to Baku led by Brigadier General Rehan ended the denial about the sale of JF-17 jets – jointly manufactured by China and Pakistan – to Azerbaijan. The acquisition of JF-17 thunder jets will make the Azerbaijani air defense more superior than her traditional rival Armenia. Furthermore, enhancing and deepening military and defense cooperation between the two brotherly countries was also discussed (Sarma, 2019).

On September 23, 2019, at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) contact group meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) the foreign minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qurashi, said that Pakistan is the only country that does not recognize Armenia [because of the illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's land]. He further argued that "the world must put pressure on Armenia to liberate Azerbaijani areas and stop aggression against the Azerbaijani nation" (Mirza, 2020).

On the contrary, on November 24, 2016 Armenia, as a permanent member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) vetoed Pakistan's bid to become an observer member of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly. Thus, by vetoing it, Armenia removed the discussion of the Pakistani bid from the assembly agenda. Armenia argued that "because of the Karabakh conflict Pakistan has refused to not only establish diplomatic relations with Armenia but also formally does not recognize the latter as an independent state" (Panneerselvam, 2020; RFEA, 2016). Furthermore, Armenia supports India's position on the Kashmir dispute and has full cordial relations with the arch-foe of Pakistan (Bhaduri, 2020; Panneerselvam, 2020). An Indian

ambassador to Armenia, Achal Malhotra, once said: "It is difficult to identify an issue which can be termed as a bilateral irritant" (Bhaduri, 2020). To counter the Azeri-Turkish-Pakistani trilateral front and to solidify her defense, Armenia strengthened defense relations with Russia. The Russian military bases in Armenia and her joining of CSTO and EEU is a clear manifestation of her policies to make Russia as a guarantor of her defense. However, it should be noted that Russia not only sells weapons to Azerbaijan but intensified her relations with Pakistan as well (Eur Asian Time, 2020).

The article explores the reasons behind Pakistan's decision not to recognize Armenia in detail. It discusses the estrangement between the two countries, especially considering the Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh's issues. The article is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on Armenia-India cooperation (against Pakistan and Azerbaijan). The second section focuses on Pakistan-Azerbaijan brotherly, economic, military, strategic, and diplomatic relations, and cooperation, especially on the issue of Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh disputes.

ARMENIA-INDIA COLLABORATION OVER KASHMIR & NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Since the inception of Azerbaijan after the collapse of the USSR, Pakistan and Azerbaijan are supporting each other over the disputed territories on various international platforms. On the contrary, India and Armenia are doing the same as well. India sided with Armenia and opposed the UNGA Resolution titled "The Situation in the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan", adopted on March 14, 2008 at the 62nd session of the General Assembly, [which reaffirming the territorial sovereignty of Azerbaijan over the disputed land] (Abrahamyan, 2017). In turn, Armenia not only supports India's stance on Kashmir but also supports India candidature for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council. Armenia, as a permanent member of EEU, is supporting India's accession into the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) (Malhotra, 2018).

On 24 April 2017, a high-level Indian delegation led by Vice President M. Hamid Ansari visited Yerevan and meet with the then Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, and Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan, which resulted in the signing of various agreements. The Indian delegation also visited the Tsitsernakaberd memorial to commemorate the victims of the [alleged] Armenian [so called] Genocide (Government-of-Armenia, 2017). The most noticeable

agreement was about the Erath Observation Satellite (EOS). Delhi will not only help Yerevan to build EOS but will train their scientist in the use of system handling as well (Spacewatch.Global, 2017). Soon after the Indian vice president visit to Yerevan, the same year from 3rd to 5th November, the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan visited New Delhi and reiterated Armenia's support to India on the Kashmir dispute (Malhotra, 2018).

On September 27, 2019 in an interview with India's WION television, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said: "on Kashmir issue, we fully defend India's position, and it is our firm position. We hope that in this case, we will be able to create international cooperation for solving this issue peacefully" (WION, 2019). The statement came during his meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sideline of the UNGA-2019, which was a diplomatic move of India against Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir and censured India for striping Kashmir of its special status through the revocation of article 370. Article 370 of the Indian constitution allowed the state of Jammu and Kashmir a certain amount of autonomy - its own constitution, a separate flag, and freedom to make laws. However, foreign affairs, communication, and defense were directly under the central jurisdiction government. Moreover, Narendra Modi not only met with Armenia's head of state, but he met with two other arch-foes of Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus, head of states [to pressurize Turkey and compel her to reconsider her stance on Kashmir] (Bhaduri, 2020).

According to the India Today news reports on March 2, 2020, India secured a deal in Armenia worth \$40 million to supply Swathi weapon locating radars to Armenia. The radar is capable to concurrently detect several projectiles fired from distinct weapons at separate settings. Armenia tested Polish and Russian weapons as well, which were good, but Armenia chose to buy the Indian weapons. Indian has installed the same Swathi radars in Kashmir near the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan (Negi, 2020). This was not only a weapon deal, but the leaders of Armenia were attempting to give a befitting response to the Azerbaijani and Pakistani fraternal relations by quarreling India with Azerbaijan through deepening their relations with Pakistan's arch-enemy, India (Mammadov, 2020).

AZERBAIJAN-PAKISTAN RELATIONS & COLLABORATION OVER KASHMIR & KARABAKH

Pakistan was the second country that accorded recognition to Azerbaijan after her independence upon the collapse of the USSR. Since then, Pakistan has cordial and brotherly relations with Azerbaijan. These relations and brotherhood are based on traditions, history, culture, religion, politics, and strategic ties. Pakistan not only stands with Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue but did not recognize Armenia as a sovereign state for her illegal occupation of internationally recognized Azeri land. Pakistan's parliament passed resolutions that officially censured the Khojaly genocide of Azeri Muslim civilians by Armenia. Pakistan and Azerbaijan all backed each other in the international arena. Azerbaijan vehemently supports Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir dispute. (Noor, 2020).

HIGH LEVEL VISITS AND CONTACTS

It was October 1995 when Pakistan and Azerbaijan made the very first high-level contact when the then President of Pakistan, Farooq Leghari, visited Azerbaijan and later in April 1996 the then President and founder of Modern Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan. Later on, Presidents of both countries officially met during the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in 2000 and 2002 in Tehran and Istanbul, respectively. Moreover, during the UNGA 58th session in 2003, the President of Pakistan and Azerbaijan met again. (Noor, 2020). In April 2005, the incumbent President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, arrived in Islamabad on a two-day state visit and met with the then President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf not only appreciated and thanked Azerbaijan for her support on the Kashmir issue but reaffirmed Pakistan's support to Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (PIIA, 2005). The then President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain, in March 2015, visited Baku and reiterated Pakistan's position that Pakistan fully supporting Azerbaijan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and said that Pakistan's parliament recognized the Khojaly genocide. On 14 October 2016, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, met with the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in Baku. Sharif expressed interest in joint military drills and reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (Sassounian, 2016).

In 2010, during his visit to Baku, Pakistan's Defense Minister Syed Ather Ali met with Azerbaijan head of state

Ilham Aliyev. Furthermore, on 27 September 2016 the then Pakistan's Defense Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain met with President Aliyev in Baku (Sassounian, 2016). In November 2017, Pakistan-Turkey-Azerbaijan trilateral relations were launched during a meeting between the foreign ministers of the said three brotherly countries in Baku. They agreed upon an increase of trade, defense cooperation, and supporting each other in International organizations (Eur Asian Time, 2020). In Oct 2018, a high-level Pakistani military delegation led by Brigadier General Rehan visited Baku (Sarma, 2019).

On May 3, 2013 during a roundtable on "Pakistan-Azerbaijan Relations" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad to commemorate the legacy of Azerbaijan's first president Heyder Aliyev on the occasion of his 90th birthday, the then ambassador of Azerbaijan Dashgi Shikarov said: "Pakistan and Azerbaijan are more than friends, they are brothers." Furthermore, he added that Azerbaijan continuously supports Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, and we frequently invite the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to the embassy of Azerbaijan in Islamabad. The First Secretary at the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Islamabad, Dr. Ilham Mammadov, added that Pakistan's National Bank was the first foreign bank that was allowed to establish a branch in Baku (Aarish U. Khan, 2013).

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation, which was signed between Pakistan and Azerbaijan in October 1995, expired in 1998. Since then, both countries failed to ink any substantial agreement on trade and economic affairs. Thus, the lack of institutional agreements hinders investors and businessmen from taking economic initiatives. Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) is the only formal institutional existing economic agreement between both countries. However, in spite of such hindrances, Pakistan and Azerbaijan trade volume grew from \$10.33 million in 2011-12 to \$37.45 million in 2013-14. But the bilateral trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Pakistan sharply dropped 7.3 million USD during the second half of 2018. Between 2013 and 2014, Pakistan's export to Azerbaijan grew from \$29.97 to \$37.43 million U.S dollars. However, Pakistan exports to Azerbaijan declined from \$37.34 million to \$16.04 million during 2019, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade. This rapid growth in Pakistani exports to Azerbaijan was largely owing to the

rice and synthetic fabric worth \$26.531 million U.S dollars (Makili-Aliyev & Abbas, 2016). Pakistan is an attractive market for Azerbaijan's oil and gas, while Azerbaijan is a huge market for Pakistan's Agricultural commodities, including surgical and sports goods (Noor, 2018).

DEFENSE COOPERATION

Pakistan yearned to be the main weapon exporter in the region and constructed an effective military industry. Pakistan's armed forces are more advanced and experienced as compared to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is looking for ways to expand its defense sector as oil and gas brought billions of dollars to their economy, which expanded their defense budget manifold. Baku is keen to expand defense cooperation with Islamabad. In May 2003, both countries inked a defense pact, which enables Azerbaijan's armed forces to participate in military drills together with the Pakistani military annually (Shahbazov, 2017).

In 2010, during his visit to Baku, Pakistan's Defense Minister Syed Ather Ali met with Azerbaijan's head of state Ilham Aliyev and discussed to strengthen defense and military liaison. In March 2013, Pakistan conducted its biggest-ever naval exercise called AMAN-2013, which was attended by over 30 countries, including Azerbaijan (Hasan, 2013). On September 27, 2016 during the then Pakistan's Defense Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain met with President Aliyev in Baku and discussed further intensification of defense and military relations between the two brotherly countries (Sassounian, 2016). Moreover, the Pakistani military has trained more than 100 Azerbaijani military units in Azerbaijan over the past decade. Also, Pakistan and Azerbaijan launched a business forum with a special emphasis on defense equipment (Shahbazov, 2017).

During the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Military Cooperation in February 2014, Pakistan and Azerbaijan inked Bilateral Military Cooperation Agreement in Islamabad. Furthermore, during the Working Group meeting on April 1, 2015 both countries signed the same updated document in Baku. In September 2014, both country's Defense Ministers met during the first Azerbaijan International Defense Industry Exhibition in Baku. The same year in November, Azerbaijan's Defense Minister, Zakir Hasanov, paid a visit to Islamabad and held several meetings with both political and military leadership. In March 2015, during the then President of

Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain's visit to Baku, military cooperation was adjudged as a building block for enhancing bilateral relations (Makili-Aliyev& Abbas, 2016).

Azerbaijan is also keen on purchasing JF-17 fighter jets (also known as the FC-1 Xiaolong) (Shahbazov, 2017). In Oct 2018, the visit of Pakistani military delegation to Baku led by Brigadier General Rehan ended the denial about the sale of JF-17 fighter jets – jointly manufactured by China and Pakistan – to Azerbaijan. The acquisition of JF-17 thunder jets will make the Azerbaijani air defense more superior than her traditional rival Armenia. Furthermore, enhancing, and deepening military and defense cooperation between the two brotherly countries was also discussed (Sarma, 2019).

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Pakistan will not back from her principal stance and will not accord recognition to Armenia until Armenia withdraws its forces from the internationally recognized Azerbaijani land. Secondly, Pakistan won't cozy up with a country that teamed up with her arch-enemy, India, against her interest. Thirdly, Pakistan will never jeopardize her cordial and brotherly relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey for a small nation, Armenia, that does not offer much while on the contrary, Azerbaijan is rich in natural resources and shares a common culture, religion, and a sense of oneness with Pakistan. These are the major reasons that bar Pakistan from according recognition to Armenia.

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