

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد  
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم  
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپائی

MAY 4, 2018

by BRIAN CLOUGHLEY  
05.05.2018

## Another Major Reset in US-Pakistan Relations is Taking Place



Photograph DVIDSHUB | [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

In February 2018 Pakistan's foreign minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, visited Moscow where his counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, [said that](#) Russia is "planning to continue giving practical assistance in strengthening the counterterrorism potential of your country." This was a welcome statement and decidedly different from the intentions of the US President whose first tweet of the year comprehensively insulted the people of Pakistan.

[Reuters reported](#) that "Trump was at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida when he posted his tweet at 7:12 a.m. on January 1, after hosting a lavish New Year's Eve party. Until then he

had kept a relatively low public profile while he mostly golfed. The United States, he tweeted, had “foolishly” given Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid and ‘they have given us nothing but lies and deceit, thinking our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!’”

Trump’s menacing message was sent after a year in which terrorists in Pakistan killed 3,000 civilians and 676 soldiers, while military operations accounted for 1,700 terrorists of various sorts. Since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 drove extremists over the border, Pakistan has suffered 468 suicide bombing attacks in which 7,230 people were killed. Before 2001 there was *one* such attack, in 1995 by a crazy Egyptian who drove a bombed-up lorry into the Egyptian Embassy’s gates. But Trump doesn’t know anything about all this and probably couldn’t find Pakistan on a map.

Over the past fifteen years, during the period of its unsuccessful military operations in Afghanistan, the US has grown closer to India, especially in regard to sales of advanced military equipment, much of which has in the past been provided by Russia. It became apparent that although India’s policy towards Pakistan remains one of unremitting hostility (and vice versa), its other international priorities are changing, which involves endorsing America First and distancing itself from Russia, although taking care to avoid disrupting existing agreements concerning Russian weapons’ sales.

On April 3 there was a vote at a meeting of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons at The Hague concerning Russia’s motion to have a joint investigation into the poisoning in England of the British spy and former Russian citizen, Sergei Skripal. In a most surprising movement in bilateral relations, India supported the US position by refusing to back Russia, and abstained, while Pakistan voted in favor of Russia’s proposal.

There have been important changes in the sub-continent’s dealings with the West and Russia, especially as regards development and depth of US-India relations, so it was not surprising when in April Pakistan’s National Security Adviser, retired General Nasser Khan Janjua, visited Moscow accompanied by the Chief of the Army Staff, General Farooq Bajwa, who had discussions with his opposite number, the Commander of Russian Federation Ground Forces, Colonel General Oleg Salyukov. They announced that it is intended to expand existing bilateral military cooperation, and while there are no details as to how this might proceed, statements by both countries sent a message to India and the United States that neither Russia nor Pakistan is comfortable with the confrontational US-India alliance.

While Pakistan's senior representatives were having discussions in Moscow, on 20 April *IHS Jane's* reported that "the Indian Air Force has shelved its 11-year old collaborative Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft program with Russia following enduring differences over its developmental cost and technological capabilities. Senior Indian officials, including National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra, recently informed a visiting Russian ministerial delegation that India was withdrawing from the program." This was a major bilateral accord, intended to continue for decades, and although Russia will not be overly inconvenienced by India's abrupt cancellation, the political message is unmistakable: India is reluctant to enter into long-term defense equipment agreements with Russia.

In testimony to the US Senate Armed Services Committee on April 19, Admiral Philip S Davidson testified that "Russian operations and engagements throughout the Indo-Pacific continue to rise — both to advance their own strategic interests and to undermine US interests. Russia also sees economic opportunities to build markets for energy exports and arms sales in the region." It is entirely unremarkable that Russia is seeking commercial opportunities in India and, indeed, all over the world, but in the eyes of New Cold War Washington, anything that might benefit Russia is an abomination.

Admiral Davidson made US policy crystal clear by declaring that Russia's involvement in the Asia-Pacific region was increasing "both to advance their own strategic interests and to undermine US interests." He ditched Pakistan by stating that "I think the historic opportunity for the United States going forward is probably with India and that would be a relationship that I intend to work on with great energy [when appointed commander of the United States Pacific Command]"

The US is obsessed with the supposed menace posed by Russia, as evidenced by statements such as that of the Commander of US Strategic Command, General John Hyten, who said "Russia is the most significant threat just because they pose the only existential threat to the [United States] right now." It is not known how he equates this with the Reuter's report of 2 May, 2018, that the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's findings that "while global military spending rose one percent to \$1,739 billion last year, Russia's fell 20 percent in real terms to \$66.3 billion." Reuters also noted that "President Vladimir Putin has also called for higher living standards and higher spending on social infrastructure, such as healthcare and education," which is hardly the leitmotif of a someone intent on military domination.

In an interesting comparison with Russia, US military spending of \$610 billion in 2016-2017 was [increased in 2018-2019](#) to “\$716 billion for national security, \$686 billion of which is for the Department of Defense.”

Given the Pentagon’s policy and the belligerent anti-Russia and anti-Pakistan attitude of so many members of the US Congress, Pakistan would be wise to pursue further engagement with Russia and withdraw from engagement with the United States. As [noted by Pakistan’s Prime Minister](#), Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, “We have common ground [with Russia] on most issues at diplomatic levels. It’s a relationship that will grow substantially in the future.”

The present-day state of US-Pakistan relations is far from novel. As [the Chicago Tribune records](#), the US ambassador to Pakistan more than a decade ago, Ryan Crocker, “spoke with the head of the Pakistani army, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani [who] asked him “How long are you staying this time? Because you come and you go. If you think we are going to turn the Taliban and Haqqanis [the Afghan extremist militants fighting for ascendancy in their country] and others into mortal enemies of ours and watch you walk out the door, you are completely crazy. Are we hedging our bets? You bet we are.”

The time for hedging has ended. Pakistan should ditch America and boost its promising ties with Russia.