INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES

PAKISTAN-RUSSIA

STRENGTHENING TRADE EDUCATION & ENERGY COLLABORATION

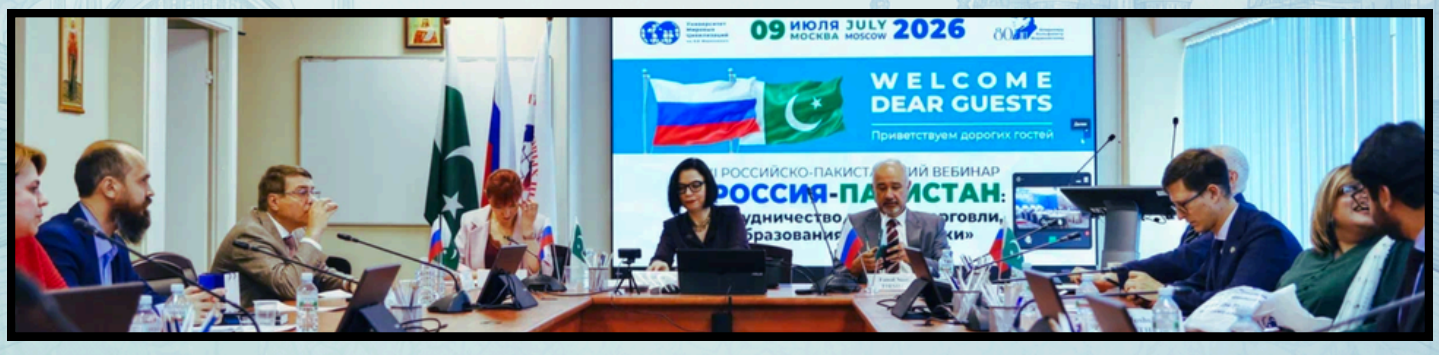
Dr. Usman W. Chohan & Dr. Bilal Habib

JULY 2026
INTERNATIONAL
WEBINAR #2
POST-EVENT REPORT









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INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES, ISLAMABAD

in partnership with the University of World Civilizations, Moscow

Pakistan–Russia Webinar Series, Webinar II

STRENGTHENING TRADE, EDUCATION & ENERGY COLLABORATION

July 9, 2026
1100–1345 Hrs (Moscow)
1300–1545 Hrs (Islamabad)

Held simultaneously at the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, and the University of World Civilizations, Moscow, connected via videoconference.

Prepared by

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES

The **Institute of Regional Studies** (IRS) is one of Pakistan's leading independent policy research institutions. Established in Islamabad, IRS conducts in-depth research and analysis on regional geopolitics, security, economic integration, and social policy. The Institute provides evidence-based policy guidance to government bodies, civil society organizations, and international institutions. IRS engages systematically with Pakistan's core strategic challenges, including security, education reform, counter-extremism, and inter-civilizational dialogue, through rigorous primary research, comparative policy analysis, and structured engagement with government stakeholders. The Institute's publications are addressed directly to policymakers and are designed to provide actionable, evidence-grounded recommendations.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is IRS's official post-event record of Webinar II in the Pakistan-Russia Webinar Series, "Strengthening Trade, Education & Energy Collaboration," held on July 9, 2026, in partnership with the University of World Civilizations, Moscow (UWCM). It documents the full proceedings, including the inaugural remarks, keynote addresses, and the two thematic sessions on trade, connectivity, energy, business-to-business ties, and education, drawing on the official concept note, detailed speaker notes, and prepared remarks from participating speakers. Beyond a narrative record, the report consolidates the actionable recommendations arising from the discussion, situates them within IRS's own assessment of the trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations, and provides a visual record of the event, including speaker profiles and photographs from the proceedings at IRS, Islamabad. It is intended as a working reference for policymakers, diplomats, researchers, and other stakeholders following the bilateral relationship, and as a basis for IRS follow-up with relevant stakeholders in both governments.

04 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The milestone international **webinar** titled “Strengthening Trade, Education & Energy Collaboration,” was convened on July 9, 2026, as the second step in a multi-phase Pakistan-Russia webinar series, and jointly organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, and the University of World Civilizations, Moscow (UWCM). The aim of this second webinar was to focus on the areas where **maximum mutual gains** would be achieved, and where experts could convene to provide precise, tangible, and significant recommendations that both countries could implement in a feasible and mutually beneficial manner. The **energy**, **trade**, and **education** sectors had been identified as the three most optimal areas of Pakistan-Russia collaboration going forward, and therefore, the webinar brought together senior officials and **subject matter specialists** in these three domains from both countries.

While the preceding webinar, hosted by ISSI in June 2026, focused on changes in the broader geopolitical context within which the bilateral relationship was confined, this second webinar organized by IRS was deliberately structured around the **three areas** where a shared assessment among speakers existed that the Pakistan-Russia relationship, albeit cordial, remained **underexplored** and underdeveloped relative to its **potential**. A recurring theme across both sessions was the search for practical, bankable projects, and proposals ranged from a revived Trans-Afghan / five-nation **rail corridor** and a prospective “MIR **Trade Route”** via Wakhan and Tajikistan, to the **modernization** of Pakistan’s Soviet-era **energy & industrial assets**, expansion of **scholarships** and Russian-**language training**, and closer engagement between Pakistan and the **Eurasian Economic Union** (EAEU).

Discussions were also framed, especially by Russian participants, within the lens of a fragmenting, **multipolar** order in which Eurasian regional cooperation conducted through the **SCO**, **BRICS** and **bilateral** tracks, offered both countries a hedge against Western-centric globalization. The webinar concluded with a set of **consolidated recommendations**, which IRS has compiled herewith for onward transmission to relevant stakeholders in both governments. These recommendations, summarized later in this report, centre on **institutionalizing implementation t**hrough the existing **Intergovernmental Commission**, developing a multi-year **Comprehensive Economic Roadmap,** operationalizing barter and **local-currency** settlement mechanisms, prioritizing rail and logistics **connectivity,** and scaling **educational** and people-to-people exchange.

05 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The event was attended by full houses at the IRS and UWCM, receiving positive feedback from **participants** on both sides and from online observers. It also received considerable **media attention** in Pakistan and Russia, with positive coverage of the event across print, online, and television media. The presence of senior officials from both sides also lent due weight to, and enriched the substance of, the webinar's proceedings. This report, prepared by IRS as co-organizer of the webinar, provides a detailed sector-by-sector record of the proceedings, it situates the discussion within the broader trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations, and it sets out the key recommendations brought forth by the participants in distilled form in the following pages. It is hoped that this report will help to inform thought, discussion, and action on practical steps towards invigorating the Pakistan-Russia bilateral relationship in the fields of trade, education, and energy.

06 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

A. INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

1. Institutionalize implementation through the **Intergovernmental Commission**. Create sector-wise implementation **groups** for energy, trade, transport, education, agriculture, digital economy and finance, with annual targets and quarterly reviews.
2. Develop a Pakistan-Russia **Comprehensive Economic Roadmap**. Prepare a 5–10-year roadmap that covers trade, industrial cooperation, investment, connectivity, and technology transfer, rather than isolated initiatives.
3. Create business-ready **institutional architecture.** Convert existing MoUs into **project pipelines** with designated focal persons, timelines, sectoral company lists, and investment proposals.
4. Use Pakistan's 2027 **SCO Business Council chairmanship** strategically. Advance practical agendas in agro-logistics, digital documentation, standards, food security, investment, and connectivity rather than ceremonial activities.

B. TRADE, FINANCE AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

1. Accelerate work on Pakistan-EAEU **economic integration.** Prepare Pakistan's negotiating **position**, undertake sectoral **impact studies** and **identify products** for preferential market access under a future EAEU arrangement.
2. Operationalize **barter trade** mechanisms. Revive structured barter and bilateral **clearing** arrangements for selected commodities to reduce dependence on hard currency, drawing on the historical Pakistan-USSR experience and approvals already in place in both countries.
3. Establish dedicated **payment** and **settlement mechanisms**. Examine local currency settlement, banking channels, supplier credit arrangements and trade finance solutions to facilitate uninterrupted bilateral commerce.
4. **Improve investment climate** and **business facilitation**. Address certification, customs, documentation, insurance, dispute resolution and regulatory barriers that discourage private-sector participation.

07 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

CONNECTIVITY AND LOGISTICS

1. Launch a **Pakistan–Russia Trade Corridor** initiative. Evaluate the proposed **MIR Trade Route** through Pakistan, the Wakhan Corridor, and Tajikistan as part of a broader Eurasian logistics strategy linking Pakistan to Central Asia and Russia.
2. Prioritize **railway connectivity**. Commission feasibility studies on rail connectivity integrated with highways, dry ports, and multimodal logistics to support long-term regional trade.
3. Develop **integrated logistics infrastructure**. Invest in cold chains, grain terminals, container services, bonded warehousing, flexitank facilities, customs digitization and cargo tracking.
4. Position Pakistan as Eurasia's **Southern logistics hub.** Leverage Gwadar and Karachi ports to serve Central Asia and Russia through reliable multimodal transport corridors.

ENERGY & INDUSTRY

1. Expand **broad energy cooperation** beyond hydrocarbons. Explore LNG, oil, refining, electricity infrastructure, transmission systems, energy efficiency, renewable technologies and engineering cooperation.
2. Strengthen **agricultural** and **food security** cooperation. Promote trade in grain, edible oils, fertilizers, veterinary products, irrigation systems, agricultural machinery and food processing while harmonizing SPS and halal standards.
3. Promote **industrial** cooperation. Encourage joint ventures in railway engineering, mining, steel, heavy machinery, packaging, refrigeration and agro-processing.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

1. Expand **digital economy cooperation.** Develop partnerships in e-government, digital public infrastructure, AI, cybersecurity and ICT services.

08 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

EDUCATION & PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES

1. Invest in human capital. Introduce Russian-language training for diplomats, engineers, customs officials, energy professionals, and trade negotiators as professional capacity-building rather than only academic study.
2. Scale educational cooperation. Increase scholarships, reciprocal student exchanges, TORFL certification, joint research centers, and dual-degree programs, and facilitate the establishment of campuses of leading Russian universities in Pakistan.
3. Institutionalise people-to-people links. Develop alum networks, think-tank dialogue, university consortia and sustained cultural exchanges so cooperation does not depend on individual office holders.
4. Promote province-to-province cooperation. Strengthen partnerships between regional chambers, provincial governments and industrial clusters to broaden commercial engagement.

REGIONAL STABILITY

1. Support long-term regional stability, noting that improved conditions in Afghanistan would enhance both connectivity and energy security for the wider region.

A joint collaboration between **University of World Civilizations Moscow (UWCM)** *and* **Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad**

Webinar

on

Pakistan – Russia: Strengthening Trade, Education & Energy Collaboration

July 09, 2026 | **1300 Islamabad Time, 1100 Moscow Time** | **Institute of Regional Studies**



Amb. Jauhar Saleem
President, Institute of Regional Studies



Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari
Federal Minister for Energy, Pakistan



Alexey V Gruzdev
Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Russia



Amb. Faisal Niaz Tirmizi
Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia



Boris Burmistrov
Deputy Director Second Department for Asia, Russia



Amb. M Qazi Khalilullah
Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh & former Amb. to Russia



Dr. Svetlana Minyurova
Director, Centre for Pedagogical Development, Russian Academy of Education



Mohsin Sheikh
Chairman, Pakistan-Russia Business Council, FPCCI



Dr. Asma Naveed
Head of Department of Russian, NUML



Dr. Prokhor Tebin
Director, Centre for Defense & Economic Research



Dmitriy Antonov
Chair of Business Council for Cooperation with Pakistan



Dr. Roxolana Zigon
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PROGRAM

Segment	Speaker	*Topic / Designation*
Inaugural Remarks	Amb. Jauhar Saleem (President, IRS)	*Welcome and framing remarks*
Keynote	Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari	*Federal Minister for Energy, Islamic Republic of Pakistan*
Keynote	Alexey V. Gruzdev	*Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Russian Federation*
Keynote	Amb. Faisal Niaz Tirmizi	*Ambassador of Pakistan to Russia*
Keynote	Boris A. Burmistrov	*Deputy Director, Second Asia Department, MFA Russia*
Session I (Moderator: Dr Roxolana Zigon)	Mohsin Sheikh	*Enhancing trade through new trade routes, barter, investment and logistics*
Session I	Amb. M. Qazi Khalilullah	*Building resilient energy partnerships*
Session I	Dr Prokhor Tebin	*Geo-economic synergy amid disrupted globalization*
Session I: Conclusion	Dr Roxolana Zigon	*Findings of Session I*
Session II (Moderator: Dr Usman W. Chohan)	Dmitri Antonov	*Resolving systemic challenges in Pakistan-Russia B2B ties*
Session II	Dr Asma Naveed	*Building human capital: Russian language education, mobility, training*
Session II	Dr Svetlana Minyurova	*Russia-Pakistan initiatives in educational sciences*
Closing	Amb. Jauhar Saleem	*Concluding remarks*

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SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
AMBASSADOR JAUHAR SALEEM

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem opened the session by welcoming participants to the second webinar in the series and thanking the Russian side, particularly Dr Roxolana Zigon, for her role in organizing the collaboration. He located the current session within the arc of the series as a whole: where the first webinar, hosted by ISSI, had examined the broader geopolitical context of the relationship, the second was intended to move from strategic vision to practical implementation. He framed the central question of the session as how the two countries could **cooperate more effectively** and translate goodwill into measurable outcomes, defined explicitly as projects initiated, investments facilitated, students exchanged, businesses connected, technologies shared and institutions built, rather than the number of meetings held. He noted that the three themes chosen for the session, namely **trade**, **energy** and **education**, had been selected **deliberately**: trade because it remains below the true potential of two economies, he described as **complementary**; energy because Pakistan is diversifying its partnerships while Russia retains deep sectoral expertise; and education because academic exchange, joint research, language training and mobility represent a long-term trust-building investment. He indicated that IRS intended to consolidate the day's recommendations and present them to relevant stakeholders.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
SARDAR AWAIS AHMED KHAN LEGHARI

Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Awais Leghari characterized the trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations over the past two decades as **positive**, and argued that the relationship should be **valued** on its own terms rather than framed in relation to either country's ties with third parties. He grounded the relationship in UN centrality, respect for international law, and mutual trust. Turning to **trade**, he cited bilateral trade of $240 million in 2025, a figure he characterized as far below the relationship's true potential. He pointed to the revival of **historic** trade routes and greater familiarity between the two countries' business communities as prerequisites for growth.

On **connectivity**, he highlighted the potential of a **rail link** between the two countries, referencing the proposed Trans-Afghan Railway/five-nation **rail corridor** running through Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and proposed direct and code-sharing **flight routes**, particularly for **cargo**. He also called for eased **visa arrangements** for business travelers. On energy, he described significant scope for cooperation given Russia's position as a major global energy producer, expressed particular interest in **modernizing** Pakistan's existing hydraulic and refining facilities, and cited the prospective **revival** of the Pakistan Steel Mill as a flagship symbol of the relationship. On education, he noted that 1,087 Pakistani students are currently studying in Russia and requested an increase in the number of Russian **scholarships**, particularly in science and technology. He closed by proposing that the session's recommendations be formally drafted and passed on to policymakers.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
ALEXEY V. GRUZDEV

Deputy Minister Gruzdev offered a more cautious reading of recent **trade** performance, noting that mutual trade has grown over the medium term but that last year's trade reportedly declined to approximately $360 million (-60%), which he attributed in part to low diversification in the trade structure. He struck an optimistic note on recovery prospects through **diversification**, observing that industrial goods accounted for around 57 percent of bilateral trade in the January-April period this year. He confirmed that negotiations are ongoing to revive the construction of Pakistan's largest steel mill. He identified **priority areas** for cooperation, including sustainable development, health, agricultural development, fertilizer supply, agro-mechanization, water purification, and facial/object recognition technology, offering Russian expertise and "**comprehensive solutions**" across these fields. He positioned Russia as a major historical supplier of certain goods to Pakistan, noting recent supply disruptions linked to instability in the Middle East.

He further referenced the role of a trade representation office and a bilateral business council in supporting business participation, pointed to a session held last November and an upcoming session in Moscow as platforms for resolving obstacles to cooperation, and cited Russian domestic digital-tool adoption figures (approximately 80 percent for financial-management systems, 40 percent for automation and process platforms, and over 60 percent for resource-management tools) as illustrative of the potential for digital-economy cooperation.

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BORIS A. BURMISTROV

Mr Burmistrov situated Pakistan-Russia relations within a broader Russian narrative of a more just, secure and sustainable **world order** emerging amid what he described as Western decline and the rise of the Global South, referencing President Putin's concept of a **Eurasian security architecture** premised on the indivisibility of security and open to all Eurasian states. He noted that bilateral and multilateral **engagement**, conducted mainly through the UN and the SCO, continues to be steered at the leaders' level, pointing to two meetings between President Putin and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif over the past year, at the SCO Summit in Beijing and the International Peace and Trust Forum, as well as a substantive call between Foreign Minister Lavrov and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in May. He recalled Russia's historical **support** for Pakistan since its earliest years, including training national specialists, and stated that Russia continues to offer **scholarships** at no cost to Pakistani students, with a significant increase planned for the coming year.

On institutional mechanisms, he noted that the Bilateral Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation held its jubilee 10th session in Islamabad the previous year, with Moscow to host the next session. He confirmed that Russia welcomes Pakistan's aspiration to advance cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), including toward a **free trade zone**, noting that the Eurasian Economic Council announced in January 2026 its decision to launch negotiations with Islamabad. He highlighted the importance of province-to-province ties, crediting Ambassador Tirmizi's work in this area, and underscored Pakistan's transport and transit capacity as a potential catalyst for broader cooperation.

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SESSION 1 SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

MOHSIN SHEIKH

Drawing on 44 years of business experience and over two decades of direct engagement with Russia, Mr Sheikh reviewed the **agreements** signed to date to strengthen bilateral relations and reiterated Pakistan's **interest** in expanding exports to Russia. He recalled that barter trade with Russia was approved in 2023 and referenced Pakistan's repayment of a Soviet-era barter debt. He argued that Pakistani businesses remain ready to learn from their Russian counterparts and called for improved information exchange between the two business communities. Situating bilateral trade within a wider regional context, he pointed to **China**'s strategic access via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and to Russia-China ties as relevant precedents, framing the economic and strategic returns of large-scale **connectivity** investment, citing a $20 billion order of magnitude, as ultimately justified. He acknowledged substantial **obstacles**, including security conditions, political stability, tunneling and engineering challenges in high-altitude terrain, and financing constraints, but described them as **solvable** with a long-term strategic vision. He closed by emphasizing sustainable economic growth and Pakistan's potential role in linking Central Asia and Eurasia with the Arabian Sea.

AMBASSADOR M. QAZI KHALILULLAH

Ambassador Khalilullah framed Pakistan-Russia relations as **multifaceted** and grounded in **goodwill**, noting recent progress in **diversifying** ties. He argued that the erosion of the international rules-based order makes regional cooperation a priority for safeguarding national interest, and recalled the Soviet Union's historical role in developing Pakistan's energy sector.
He referenced the existing **legal architecture** for energy cooperation, including an intergovernmental agreement on gas pipeline construction between Karachi and Lahore, a further agreement on energy cooperation, and a September 2013 memorandum of understanding for a physical study of offshore gas. He described 2023 as an auspicious year for energy cooperation, citing sustained government-to-government engagement, and noted that Pakistan imported approximately one million tonnes of Russian oil, with payment reportedly made in yuan.

He further called for **out-of-the-box** solutions to enhance trade in a fast-changing global environment, proposing a **dedicated cargo service** for petroleum transportation and appointing **special representatives** for bilateral and regional energy projects, including other regional pipeline initiatives. He concluded that **energy** cooperation has the potential to become a central pillar of the bilateral relationship.

DR. PROKHOR TEBIN

Dr Tebin situated the discussion within a broader analysis of a fragmenting and regionalizing global economy, arguing that the post-Cold War liberal order is giving way to **realpolitik** and great-power rivalry, and that **economic policy** and trade are increasingly deployed as instruments of geopolitical competition and coercion. He noted the persistence of global challenges, including poverty, hunger, disaster risk, regional conflict, and demographic and energy pressures, alongside a shift from an arms race toward a technology race. He argued that Eurasian countries, including Russia and Pakistan, must **prioritize** long-term economic growth as a foundation for security and stability, pursued through BRICS, the SCO and bilateral tracks.

Specifically, regarding the bilateral relationship, he assessed the trend as **positive**. Still, he noted that absolute trade volume, diversification and balance remain limited, and that neither country currently ranks among the other's largest trading partners. He framed durable **improvement** as a long-term undertaking requiring a better investment climate, while identifying near-term "low-hanging fruit" opportunities. He welcomed the EAEU's exploration of a free trade agreement with Pakistan. He **identified** energy, logistics, pharmaceuticals, education, and agricultural products as priority sectors, alongside significant room for growth in digital technology and digital government cooperation. He cited the **conflict** involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as illustrating the need for **diversified** energy supply routes and transport corridors across Eurasia. He argued that normalization around Iran and Afghanistan could meaningfully boost economic cooperation between Pakistan and Russia.

SESSION 2 SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

DMITRIY ANTONOV

Mr Antonov, who also chairs the Russian Chamber's Business Council for Cooperation with Pakistan, cited agreements already signed with regional **chambers of commerce** in Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Sialkot. He described this **regional-chamber framework** as one of the most useful instruments available and pointed to the need to be convert them into direct working contacts, sectoral company lists, designated focal persons, project pipelines and properly prepared business proposals. His central argument was that Russia-Pakistan business cooperation must shift from one-off events and exhibitions toward a **sustainable institutional architecture** built on chambers, working groups, focal points, logistics routes, documentation, certification, payments and investment projects.

He identified three concrete priorities. First, the **agro-industrial agenda**: Russia as a reliable supplier of grain, vegetable oils, feed ingredients, fertilizers, and veterinary and agricultural technologies, paired with Pakistan's own agricultural base and export potential. Second, **agro-logistics:** framing routes through Central Asia, Iran and onward to Pakistan as working transport products, and calling for investment in cold-chain capacity, flexitank for food liquids and container liners for bulk agricultural cargo. Third, m**echanical and railway engineering:** machinery, spare parts, maintenance, refrigeration, packaging, grain elevators, processing lines, irrigation solutions and terminal infrastructure, which he framed as the point at which trade converts into industrial cooperation and long-term projects.

He further noted that Pakistan's forthcoming 2027 **chairmanship** of the SCO Business Council should be marked by a **practical**, a**griculture-centered agend**a, covering food security, standards, digital documentation, veterinary and phytosanitary procedures, agro-logistics, and investment projects. On the EAEU-Pakistan track, he urged business to prepare the agro-food block in advance, covering goods, barriers, certification, halal requirements, logistics, settlements, machinery, investment and regulatory issues. He closed by stressing that **business councils** are useful but should not substitute for direct chamber-to-chamber cooperation, and that the positive political backdrop between Russia and Pakistan must now be translated into a working business system with responsible counterparts and concrete projects.

DR. ASMA NAVEED

Dr Naveed, argued in a concise and powerful discourse that language constitutes the foundational infrastructure on which all other cooperation is built. She framed the Pakistan-Russia relationship in the education domain as moving from aspiration toward operationalization, contingent on four factors: (1) building **Russian-language capacity** for professional development (not only academic study); (2) activating existing **memoranda** of understanding while Russian universities remain engaged; (3) building **institutional memory** around past cooperation; and (4) establishing Russian-language e**ducational offerings** in Pakistan at both junior and senior levels. She stressed that reciprocity, with exchange flowing in both directions rather than predominantly toward Russia, would be key to the sustainability of educational cooperation.

DR. SVETLANA MINYUROVA

Dr Minyurova called for **joint educational research** between the two countries, citing the role of Russia's Academy of Excellence in Education, and proposed **comparative studies** of their education systems. She offered Russian **expertise** in the evaluation and adaptation of educational **technology**, and called for **collaboration** spanning research institutions, universities and schools. She proposed developing joint programs in teacher education. She called for the exchange of **educational innovations** and **digital pedagogy** practices, concluding with an emphasis on both countries' shared commitment to long-term cooperation in the education sector.

CONCLUDING REMARKS
AMBASSADOR JAUHAR SALEEM

Ambassador Saleem described the session as **productive**, characterizing the ideas presented as reflecting a genuine and keen desire on both sides to foster a **closer relationship**. He thanked all speakers for their insights and observations, noted Russia's standing as the world's largest country and one of the richest in natural resources, and argued that the scale of the two civilizations involved calls for a multi-dimensional framework for cooperation. He closed by cautioning that political goodwill must ultimately be substantiated by private-sector engagement if the relationship is to progress beyond the level of diplomatic statements.

18 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Trade emerged as the session's most closely scrutinized theme, and the figures discussed by experts on both sides together underscore the point that bilateral trade remains far below what two economies of this size and complementarity should be able to sustain. Speakers converged on several structural explanations for the current situation: limited **diversification** of the trade basket (with industrial goods dominating), insufficient **familiarity** between the two countries' business communities, underdeveloped **logistics** and **payment** infrastructure, and the absence of a mature **institutional** architecture for resolving day-to-day commercial obstacles. Proposed **solutions** included operationalizing the 2023 **barter-trade** approval, developing **local-currency** and **alternative settlement** mechanisms, converting the extensive stock of memoranda of understanding into a **pipeline** of bankable projects, and using upcoming sessions of the bilateral **Intergovernmental Commission** and business councils as delivery mechanisms. In addition, it was notable that existing **chamber-to-chamber** agreements, including those already signed, illustrate that **formal frameworks** for cooperation exist, but the deficit lies in converting protocol-level agreements into **sectoral company lists**, designated **focal persons** and prepared **business proposals**.

CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

Multiple speakers treated **regional connectivity** as the structural **precondition** for any substantial expansion of trade. **Three overlapping corridor concepts** were referenced throughout the session: a Trans-Afghan Railway/five-nation rail corridor linking Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan; a proposed "MIR Trade Route" via Wakhan and Tajikistan, referenced in the consolidated recommendations; and a route via Iran, raised separately by Mr Antonov. Mr Sheikh's explicit invocation of **CPEC** as a **template**, including its estimated cost and the security, engineering and financing obstacles it has had to overcome, signalled an implicit argument that Pakistan-Russia connectivity investments of comparable scale and difficulty could be similarly justified by long-term strategic and economic returns. Several speakers also linked connectivity to Pakistan's coastal geography, describing Gwadar and Karachi as potential logistics gateways linking Central Asia and southern Russia to the Arabian Sea and international shipping lanes, a role explicitly referenced in the consolidated recommendations as positioning "Pakistan as Eurasia's southern logistics hub."

19 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

ENERGY COOPERATION

Energy was framed by several speakers, particularly Ambassador Khalilullah, as an area with the deepest **historical** roots, and correspondingly the clearest existing legal and institutional foundation, including **intergovernmental agreements** on gas pipeline construction and a 2013 memorandum on offshore gas studies. Concrete recent activity cited included Pakistan's import of roughly one million tonnes of Russian oil, reportedly settled in yuan, and ongoing **negotiations** to revive the Soviet-era steel mill referenced by both Minister Leghari and Deputy Minister Gruzdev. Proposals for expanding cooperation extended beyond **hydrocarbons** to include LNG, refining, and electricity infrastructure; modernization of existing hydraulic and refining facilities; renewables; and a **dedicated cargo/shipping** service for petroleum transport. Ambassador Khalilullah's proposal for s**pecial representatives** dedicated to bilateral and regional energy projects, including other regional pipeline initiatives, points toward a recognition that energy cooperation to date has depended heavily on episodic government-to-government engagement, a gap can be addressed through sector-wise **working groups** under the **Intergovernmental Commission**.

EDUCATION & PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES

Education was consistently positioned, by the IRS President in his opening remarks and by both Dr Naveed and Dr Minyurova in Session II, as the **long-horizon, trust-building** complement to the trade and energy agendas. Concrete figures cited included 1,087 Pakistani students currently studying in Russia, and a Russian commitment to a significant increase in the number of **free scholarships** in the coming year. The substantive proposals in this domain were notably specific: Dr Naveed's **four-part framework** (Russian-language capacity for professionals rather than only academic study; activation of dormant MoUs; institutional memory-building; and establishment of Russian-language education at junior and senior levels in Pakistan) and Dr Minyurova's proposals for **comparative education-system** studies, joint teacher-education programs and exchange of digital-pedagogy practices together sketch a plausible near-term work plan. Both speakers underscored **reciprocity**, with exchange flowing toward Russia as well as from it, as the condition for the sustainability of educational cooperation.

20 GALLERY



Speakers and organizers on stage at IRS, Islamabad, in front of the event backdrop after the webinar



Speakers and organizers at the University of World Civilizations, Moscow after the webinar

20 GALLERY



Chief guest, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, at the commencement of proceedings



Ambassador Jauhar Saleem opening the session at IRS, Islamabad



Keynote Speakers: Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem

21 GALLERY



Mr Mohsin Sheik, Chairman of the Pakistan-Russia Business Council, delivering his remarks.



Dr. Roxolana Zigon and Ambassador Faisal Tirmizi



Dr Asma Naveed delivering her remarks on Russian-language education and academic mobility.



Dr Usman W. Chohan, Research Fellow, IRS, moderating Session II.

22 GALLERY



A view from the stage of the IRS auditorium



A wide view of the venue at IRS, Islamabad.

23 GALLERY



Speakers and organizers from UWCM after the webinar



Webinar proceedings from the Muscovite perspective



UWCM at the commencement of proceedings

24 GALLERY



Members of the audience at the IRS in Islamabad, taking notes during the proceedings.



In-person audience at IRS, Islamabad.



The videoconference screen connecting participants in Moscow

INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL STUDIES, ISLAMABAD

in partnership with the University of World Civilizations, Moscow

Pakistan–Russia Webinar Series, Webinar II

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