

I. Aliyev and R. Erdogan about to deepen alliance with Pakistan

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According to the news in the Azerbaijani and Pakistani media, the leader of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev will make an official visit to Pakistan this month. According to the Pakistani English-language publication *Business Recorder*, during the visit, a number of strategic agreements will be signed between the two countries in the communications, energy and defense sectors. In particular, we are mainly talking about the allocation by Azerbaijan of two loan packages to Pakistan for the construction of the Sukkur–Hyderabad (M-6) and Hyderabad–Karachi (M-9) highways. An agreement on loans totaling \$2 billion will be signed in the presence of I. Aliyev. In addition, it is possible that with his participation a contract on supply of Pakistani *JF-17 Block 3* fighters to Azerbaijan will be signed. It is expected that the parties will discuss at the highest level the deepening of cooperation in the fields of transport, energy, industrial development and defense production.

The deepening of the Azerbaijan–Pakistan strategic relations was a predictable trend arising from the logic of the creation of a larger Turkey–Pakistan alliance, which in turn was formed under the influence of global changes in the Asian region. Islamabad’s desire for an alliance with Ankara is explained by Pakistan’s loss of previous support from traditional allies. Over the past decade, Pakistan has found itself outside the attention of the United States, which once stably maintained the financial and economic balance of an Islamic country that does not have significant mineral resources and an industrial base. With D.Trump’s return to power, the trend of the U.S. moving away from Pakistan’s financial and economic problems will further intensify, given that the new administration in Washington intends to reconsider the bulk of its support for even its closest allies. On the other hand, China’s interest in the financial and economic stability of Pakistan and its military-political role in South Asia has also decreased. The visible process of normalization of the Indian-Chinese relations contributed to a noticeable decline of Beijing’s interest in Islamabad as a natural ally restraining the military-political weight of New Delhi. In the current geopolitical realities, Pakistan is constantly facing challenges due to the lack of reliable support necessary in the arms race and political and economic rivalry with India. The breakthrough development of the Indian economy in recent years has provided New Delhi with an overwhelming advantage in the field of high technology, defense industry, army construction and strengthening the overall might in the event of a full-scale conflict with Islamabad. Today, Pakistan lags behind India in all respects, and the extremely weak economy, coupled with the permanently deteriorating social situation in the country, leads to permanent destabilization and undermining of Pakistan’s political system. In such conditions, the country is forced to look for new partners and strategic allies to maintain a balance of power in geopolitical rivalry with India. An alliance with the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem, if not entirely, then to a significant extent, can compensate Islamabad for the loss of the previous attention and support of the United States and China. In addition, Ankara and Baku have great influence in the region, which could complicate India’s plans to build a global “North–South” trade and logistics route that bypasses Pakistan and its communications.

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 09.04.2025.

As for Turkey's interest in a close rapprochement with Pakistan, it stems primarily from the expectation to provide a reliable rear for its expansionist policy in the Turkic republics of Central Asia, and in the future to gain access to Islamabad's military technologies, which are closed to Ankara in the direction of NATO. It is posited that the primary subject of discussion pertains to Pakistan's nuclear technologies and arsenal, to which a certain level of access could potentially serve to bolster Ankara's objectives of augmenting its geopolitical influence within Eurasia. Turkey cannot officially attain the status of a "nuclear power". However, Ankara may be open to nuclear collaboration with Pakistan, drawing parallels to the U.S.–Israel cooperation that led to Israel's nuclear arsenal without formally declaring its nuclear status. In this regard, Turkey's large program to develop medium- and long-range ballistic missiles becomes of particular interest, as it would hardly make sense for Ankara to move in that way without the idea of installing high-power warheads on the future missiles. Pakistan itself has neither a range of such missiles nor advanced technologies to them, and its nuclear arsenal consists almost entirely of air-based tactical warheads. It is logical to assume that the strategic rapprochement between Turkey and Pakistan in the field of defense cooperation could involve cooperation in the creation and development of, at least, a joint "*nuclear umbrella*".

It seems that Azerbaijan's activation on the Pakistani track should be considered precisely in the context of strengthening the Turkish-Pakistani alliance. Baku is duplicating and backing up the policy of the senior partner, mainly by providing Islamabad with financial and economic assistance Turkey, stroked by economic recession, has been unable to provide in the recent years. While the loans for infrastructure projects, Caspian oil supplies, and Azerbaijan's purchase of Pakistani combat aircraft (which are not considered the most advanced or high-quality globally) may not significantly boost Pakistani stagnant economy, they will likely increase goodwill towards the Turkish-Azerbaijani partnership among Pakistani elites and society. This could pave the way for bolder future cooperation, potentially even in the realm of military nuclear technology.

All the prerequisites are in place for further trilateral deepening of relations. Azerbaijani-Pakistani relations themselves are based on the solid platform of past decade's cooperation. Pakistan still remains the only UN member state that has not recognized the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia. Islamabad has always been a vocal supporter of Baku's position on the Karabakh conflict on international platforms since the early 1990s. In 2020, as can be judged from open sources, Pakistani army Special Forces were directly involved in Azerbaijan's large-scale aggression against the Republic of Artsakh. These realities have laid a solid basis for the parties to increase the quality of their relations. In this sense, I. Aliyev's visit is quite logical and does not contain elements of surprise, just like the similar visit of R. T. Erdogan to Islamabad on January 12, 2025. Rather, both visits are a record of the long-started processes of forming a new alliance in Eurasia, which in the near future will claim to compete with the traditional political actors and power centers.