

Pak[istan] Army and its alliance with the US

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India-centred explanations of the US-Pakistan military alliance of the 1950s (and its subsequent re-incarnations) obscure its true purpose and the overall dynamics of Pakistan's foreign policy as a protégé of the US - Hamza Alavi Economic and Political Weekly June 20, 1998.

Pakistan's military plays an essential part in the administration of the US Empire. Pakistan's military role in the administration of the Middle East on behalf of the US makes Pakistan military the most important power base within Pakistan. Hamza, writing in the article quoted above, suggested that we should distinguish the propagandist view of the Pakistan-US military alliance from the real factors driving the alliance between the US and Pakistan's military. This is also true of the Westward shift of Pakistan ideologically, politically and militarily. Hamza argues that this westward shift of Pakistan is US driven. Hamza suggests that this shift dates back to the Musadaq's nationalisation of Iran's oil resources. It was the challenge from Iran to Western interests in the region in the fifties to the West of Pakistan that prompted US to develop links with Pakistan, and in particular with its military.

Pakistan's military was from then on cultivated to protect US and Western interests in the Middle East. This it has done with some success and continues to do so despite the rhetoric from the US and Pakistan administrations. Today US still views Pakistan's military as the most cost effective and essential means to protect US interests in the region. Hamza quoted Congressman Vorys testifying to the hearing on Mutual Security Act in 1956 saying that whereas it costs US \$5,900 to have an American soldier overseas without a gun, it costs the US a mere \$744 to have a Pakistani soldier carrying a gun under joint US/Pakistan military command. Together with the added political advantage of fewer American casualties Pakistani troops offer US a favourable option in US's foreign adventures. Today US deployment in Afghanistan is becoming economically and politically more costly than Obama's administration can bear. As Obama approaches election for the second term he is pressurising Pakistan to do more in the US's war on terror. Pak-US relationship is the main factor restricting the genuine development of Pakistan and its civil structures.

Historically, when Nasser nationalised the Suez in 1956 US had just arrived in the region as a power to be reckoned with. Pakistan was not as yet part of any US strategy of building a US empire. Indeed, US administration was more concerned about dislodging the old crumbling empires of the European powers from the region. US ended up ordering Britain, France and Israel to leave Egypt alone. Musadaq's nationalisation of Iran's oil fields saw the start of the development of an alliance between the Pakistan Army and the US in the guarding of the US assets to the West of Pakistan. By the time of Kassem's coup in Iraq in 1958, although Pakistan was part of the Baghdad Pact but its military was not totally in command and Ayub was in the process of preparing a coup of his own. The idea of intervention in Iraq by Pakistan and Turkey was considered but abandoned. Instead Ayub staged his own coup d'état in October of that year and established the army's rule over Pakistan. It was after Ayub's takeover that Pakistan's military was actively deployed in Saudi Arabia and Iran to bolster the West oriented regimes against the nationalists in the region in Iraq and Egypt. When the Iranians started to rise against the Shah, the US itself, having suffered the defeat in Vietnam, was

not sure of how far to go in preserving the Shah's regime. Even the Shah was receiving mixed signals from the US about how far he can go to preserve his administration. Soviet Union was already starting its incursion in Afghanistan. Again, it was not possible to deploy the Pakistan army to protect US interests in Iran. However, by that time Pakistan had already served the US in Jordan by assisting King Hussein to expel the Palestinians from Jordan and had troops stationed in Saudi Arabia to protect Saudi rulers and US interests in the kingdom.

Following the intervention of Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Pakistan's army under General Zia played the most significant role as US proxy. Ultimately it was the decade of Zia's rule and Pakistan Army's incursion into Afghanistan became the defining moments for Pakistan, the US and the Soviet Union. It was in Zia's rule that Arabisation of the language and culture of Pakistan took foothold. From Zia's and US perspective, the Arabisation of Pakistan was essential to isolate Iran after its overthrow of the Shah and if need be prepare Pakistan for intervention in Iran when deemed necessary. The Soviet empire crumbled. The Warsaw Pact was dismantled. Pakistan became unstable to the point of being almost ungovernable. Pakistan was unanchored from its South Asian routes. This became easier following the separation of Bengal from Pakistan. US became the only super power, completely in control of the global village. The Zia regime and its policies, both foreign and internal, were driven by two international events in the region. One was the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and the other was the US animosity towards the Islamic Revolution. At least that is how Hamza saw it in his article of June 20th 1998 in the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Since 1971, Pakistan army has only been deployed in any fighting on behalf of the US, or internally in Baluchistan. In the eighties it fought a proxy war for the US in Afghanistan. Today it is engaged in supporting the US occupying Afghanistan. May be in the future it hopes to be part of the administration of Afghanistan on the US's behalf? By now Pakistani troops have suffered more casualties while deployed on behalf of the US in the War on Terror than in fighting India since its existence. Unless Pakistani Army totally loses its marbles, it is unlikely ever to fight India for the foreseeable future. Pakistan lost some 3,800 soldiers during the 1965 war with India, whereas in the current deployment in the West of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan Pakistan has lost a similar number of soldiers. However, the civilian casualties are in tens of thousands. The occupation of Afghanistan would not have been feasible without the active support of the Pakistan Army. Pakistan forms the key irreplaceable supply line for the NATO troops in Afghanistan. It is not only the supply lines, but also the military and air bases within Pakistan form part of the key logistic support for the US forces in the region. Some of these bases are used to launch attacks within Pakistan's own borders. All this would not be possible without the willing co-operation of the Pakistan Army. It is not sufficient that Pakistan's Army is fighting the US war; it is also the case that Pakistan's people who are perhaps one of the poorest peoples in the world are also financing that war. In the financial year 2010/2011 Pakistan's military budget amounted to some \$5.17 billion dollars. Pakistan in the ten years since 9/11 has received \$15 billion dollars in aid, this amount to around 1.5 billion dollar per year, less than 20% of the total military budget. In the same period only wars Pakistan had been involved in are US driven. Pakistan has effectively contributed over 3 billion dollars to US's military strategy in the region just in one financial year alone. This amounts to the people of Pakistan contributing fifteen billion dollars to the US since 9/11.

Hamza Alavi had argued in the article published in *Economic and Political Weekly* June 20 1998 that Pakistan-US relations in any particular period is decided by what is in the interest of the US, not Pakistan. However, he cautioned that Pakistan for its part needs to consider how its own interests are served by that involvement, for they do not necessarily coincide with those of the US. I can imagine that Hamza today would be arguing for Pakistan to de-link itself with the war on terror and with the US policy in the region as a key to resolving the key challenges peoples of Pakistan face today. Hamza was able to see through the cloud of propaganda the real forces driving particular

events of history. Today Hamza Alavi is seriously missed amidst the progressive elements in Pakistan as we lack an intellectual on the left, within Pakistan, with the ability to see through propaganda and dissect reality.

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