

US inks Indian Defence Agreement: 'Pakistan First'



American and Indian ties have noticeably grown warmer in recent years, a stark contrast from the Cold War era when India sided with the Soviet Union. This transformation is evident with numerous American companies now investing and offshoring their work to India; more significantly since President George W. Bush's 'War on Terror' the Americans have actively wooed India. So it came as little surprise when in August 2016 the US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter [signed with his Indian](#) counterpart Manohar Parrikar an agreement enabling both countries to call on each other's military facilities and supply logistics. The [Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement \(LEMOA\)](#) allows both countries to make use of each other's military bases as Carter said, *"What it does is make possible and make easier operating together when we choose to.... It is fully mutual. In other words, we grant one another completely equal access and ease under this agreement."* Moreover both countries are working towards [further agreements](#) on sharing secure communications and intelligence.

The impact of this agreement on Pakistan is self-evident; it serves primarily to strengthen India's offensive military capability. This proposed co-operation between the two represents only the beginning of burgeoning ties; the US has named India as a [major defence partner](#). The [US welcomed India's entry](#) into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) which will allow the transfer of [advanced missile](#) technology; it is [actively supporting](#) India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), something which has only been delayed because of Chinese opposition. It is also looking at shifting its entire remaining [production of F-16 fighter aircraft](#) to India thereby giving India an automatic veto over further sales and support to Pakistan. Joint ventures are also being planned to [develop high tech inventory](#) such as jet engines and aircraft carriers although this enticement is more likely just a means to sell US defence equipment to a cash paying customer.

In contrast Pakistan currently is not in a position to procure even a few fighter jets from America after funding for eight F-16 jets [was terminated](#) by the US Congress. It's also important to note that after the events of September 11 when the US demanded logistics and bases provision from Pakistan to invade Afghanistan no such reciprocal agreement was signed giving Pakistan equal access to US bases. So the question to be asked here is, is the US in the process of re-aligning its patronage away from Pakistan in the Indian sub-continent?

If so, then it represents a humiliating and damning indictment of the failure of Pakistan's rulers and their foreign policy. For many years now the Pakistani regime has tried its best to justify or hide the full extent of its US subservience. Under General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan readily embraced the US in 2001 [after US sanctions under the infamous 'Pressler Amendment'](#) during the 1990s denied Pakistan US military and financial aid. This was despite Pakistan being an 'indispensable ally' in the fight against the Soviet Union which saw Pakistan's tribal belt

being turned into a 'Jihad factory' by the CIA for over 10 years. The US has proven in the past that it can ditch Pakistan whenever it suits its interests.

Yet opposition to a change in Pakistan's Afghanistan policy and its 'strategic depth' was swept aside under Musharraf's 'Pakistan First' mantra despite public opinion being against such a policy and warnings by many Pakistani analysts that America could not be trusted again. Musharraf used a mixture of coercion such as the apparent US threat to bomb Pakistan 'back into the stone age' and US aid money to achieve this huge abrupt change. The US in turn established its military footprint in the region as Pakistan provided crucial logistics through the provision of its bases, supply lines and intelligence. Pakistan's military continues to carry out operations in the tribal areas in an attempt to eliminate the sanctuaries of the Pashtun fighters who resist the US occupation of Afghanistan. In the years that have passed, the US occupation of Afghanistan has directly changed the dynamic of India's regional influence. Despite India being the traditional enemy of Pakistan, the US has completely ignored those concerns and invited India to play a direct role in Afghanistan to augment its occupation. In the process India has naturally [established its own presence](#); those in Pakistan who so firmly advocated serving US interests in the region cannot even begin to countenance their own folly.

This glaringly counter-productive and damaging Pakistani policy continues today under the Nawaz Sharif-General Raheel Sharif regime; today India has grown in presence and influence inside Afghanistan at the cost of Pakistan. Today India has [at least 5 openly declared diplomatic missions](#) on Afghan soil despite there being no mass Afghan migration to India; Afghanistan provides India a priceless staging post for covert activity inside Pakistan with Balochistan a particular focus because of the development of the Gwadar port with China. None of this would have ever been possible had the US not encouraged India to enter Afghanistan; that in turn would never have been possible had Pakistan not provided the logistics to the US to occupy Afghanistan.

This has not been the only cost; today Pakistan is mired in military operations against its own people, both in the tribal areas of FATA and other parts of Pakistan. Terrorist attacks, which have mushroomed ever since the US landed in the AfPak region post September 2001, have seen [at least 80,000 Pakistanis killed as documented in a report by Physicians for Social Responsibility](#); economically Pakistan has lost nearly \$120 billion over the last 14 years as claimed by the Pakistani government's [own annual economic survey](#). So many are right to ask that where is the argument for Pakistan to continue acting as a sub-contractor for the United States foreign policy?

Pakistan's failed US policy and America's growing Indian ties have also been brought into sharp focus recently with the Indian 'surgical strike' across the 'Line of Control' in Kashmir (LOC). This so called 'strike' after the attack on an Indian base in Uri which India blamed on Pakistan was not condemned by the US effectively endorsing the Indian position. Moreover the US in adopting such a position has completely ignored the brutal occupation of Kashmir which has seen over 100,000 killed and the systematic gang rape of thousands of Muslim Kashmiri women. Tomorrow if war breaks out between Pakistan and India, the key question is will the US honour its new Indian defence pact and enable India to open up a second front through Afghanistan via its bases there?

The truth is that Pakistan's so called alliance with the US has never been about serving Pakistani security interests; rather it has damaged those vital interests. The US-Pakistani relationship is one where Pakistan hears and obeys in return for petty US bribe money through economic and military 'aid' and IMF loans which only increase the country's debt. In the process longer term damage is occurring to Pakistan's security and weakening its position with respect to India. Moreover those who advocated such a policy in Pakistan have failed to realise that the US has a larger geo-political view of the region in which Pakistan is just one piece. The US has long sought a tie up with India in its 'pivot' to Asia in order to deal with the growing military strength of China and to make sure no dominant power arises in Eurasia.

For India though the China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (CPEC) [is a red line which it has termed as 'unacceptable'](#); since more Chinese goods will be able to ship to markets both faster

and cheaper, it will undermine and damage Indian aspirations to compete with Chinese manufacturers'. Moreover the CPEC incorporates 'Azad Kashmir' into its route thereby realistically ending any chance for India to claim the territory. It also strengthens the perception of Chinese encirclement of India through its ['String of Pearls' strategy](#) of developing key military installations in the region. From a US perspective China will always continue to develop its military, albeit at a slower rate even if CPEC didn't materialise. However the advent of CPEC further pushes a traditionally reluctant non-aligned India into joining an alliance with the US because of the perceived impact of CPEC. As the competition between the US and China intensifies, India has been forced by events to finally openly become a US military partner, something which the US can only welcome. Commenting on Indian ruler Narendra Modi's recent [failure to attend the Non-Aligned Movement \(NAM\) summit](#) in Margarita, Venezuela, former Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid said, *"If PM Modi doesn't wish to honour NAM, it will just show that the government is dumping all former foreign policy in a wholesale manner."*

The overriding US objective is to thwart any international rival or competition in its quest for both global and regional hegemony. This is why the US is not going to attempt to cage China both politically and militarily only to allow India to take its place. That is not going to happen and any Indian politician or policy maker who believes that is simply naïve. China today has a GDP five times bigger than India; its public military spending stands at [over \\$214 billion whilst India's is at a paltry \\$51 billion](#). China's cities, ports, roads, and industrial setup are simply way ahead of India's. India in reality is not on par with China whilst its self-obsessed desire for great power status is the only thing that matches Chinese ambition making it a ready vassal state for America.

This also clearly demonstrates that despite its Hollywood scripting the US is not as powerful as it likes to project itself; for the US to attempt to control key regions it needs alliances with countries like India just as it is partnering with Russia and Turkey today to control Syria and the Middle East. However the US has also shown it can readily abandon and change alliances in real time as ordinary Pakistanis have learnt bitterly. Tomorrow when change such as the emergence of a strong Caliphate takes place the US still has the option to withdraw and safely carry on the fight from its shores over 7,000 miles away while India will be left to fend for itself in the region in the aftermath of its bloody Kashmir occupation and rivalry with China.

Today the US is anxious to ensure that China remains integrated and synchronised with its global led order. China though has its own internal problems and contradictions; after adopting free market economics in the place of Communism it has no cohesive ideology apart from crude nationalism around which to bind its people which is why the regime resorts to authoritarian rule. China may export many products today but the one product it lacks is an ideology. Therefore in the long run, if China can be contained militarily, it does not represent a political and an ideological threat to the US and its values of secularism and capitalism which underpin its own domestic and international world order.

What the US fears most from Pakistan is its Islamic identity and the values that its Muslims continue to carry; an unstable Pakistan, because of its failing secular democracy, is ripe for the formation of an Islamic Caliphate. India too is well aware of this; today it is led by a right wing Hindu BJP government which is closely tied to its ideological zealots of the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS) who harbour [their dream of 'Akhand Bharat'](#) ('Greater India') as part of their Hindutva ideology. [Narendra Modi remains a lifelong member](#) of the RSS and his vicious hatred for Muslims has already been demonstrated [when he orchestrated the massacres in Gujrat](#) when he was its Chief Minister. The US today, who itself [once denied an entry visa](#) to Modi, has chosen to partner with a man who the Indian Congress leader Sonia Gandhi once labelled as a ['maut ka saudagar'](#) (merchant of death).

The US partnership with India is more than just about dealing with China; it is also a hedge designed to deal with the Islamic revival happening not just in Pakistan but throughout the Muslim world including Central Asia. This is why although the US may deal with the subordinate rulers in Islamabad on a transactional basis it prefers a deeper, strategic partnership

with India – it knows the regime in Islamabad is vulnerable to being deposed. India makes for a natural partner with the US in its war against Islam both militarily and politically. This is also why the US continues to ignore the huge weapons build up by India, including both a land and sea based second strike nuclear capability.

Pakistan's foreign policy is not rooted in any ideology or even principles; its pragmatic decisions are based on some short term benefit for the secular regime where it can gain some arms sales or a few billion dollars in aid or IMF loans so that it can survive. In the process it deliberately ignores the needs of its people who continue to suffer from poverty. Today the Pakistani regime believes the CPEC has cemented its relationship with China. In reality though it will act as little more than a transitory gateway; the alleged \$46 billion to be invested is easily eclipsed by the annual revenue of a single multinational corporation. Once more there is no thought unlike the Caliphate which will invest in developing its own industrial capacity together with agricultural land reforms to kick start real economic revival in a region such as Pakistan. Today it is the US dictating terms to Pakistan, tomorrow it will be the Chinese.

Pakistan's pathetic rulers, whether military or democratic, have shown they can only act as a client regime for one patron or another; as allegiances and interests change in the shifting sands of world politics these patrons are bound to re-evaluate their tactics and alliances. This is why the US can relegate Pakistani security concerns and join hands with a fundamentalist Indian regime led by Modi the [murderous fanatic](#) who would waste no opportunity to destabilise Pakistan or worse given half a chance. Zamir Akram, a former Pakistani ambassador, [recently](#) wrote, *"The Americans are actually aiding and abetting the Indian build-up, including in the areas of BMD and long range missiles as well as nuclear capable cruise missiles apart from the transfer of the latest generation of conventional weapons. Consequently, the US is actually facilitating India's ability to enforce its adventurous "Cold Start or "Proactive" doctrine to be able to launch a conventional attack on Pakistan"*.

Pakistan has only itself to blame for this outcome; so while [200,000 Muslim Pakistani troops](#) are shifted to the west to fight and die for America's war in the tribal areas, leaving the eastern border weakened, the US directly aids India's military build-up. Pakistan's blind support of facilitating the US occupation of Afghanistan has directly led to this. Pakistan had a choice not to sustain this American occupation, it always had a choice. US politicians and policymakers know this too; [in September 2016 Danial Markey testified before a US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on Pakistan](#) that *"Air corridors are readily closed and drones are easy to shoot down, so if Pakistan had really wanted to end what in 2009, then-CIA Director Leon Panetta called the "only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qaida leadership," or to further complicate the US war effort in Afghanistan, it could have done so without breaking much of a sweat. It still could."*

Reliance on US has crippled Pakistan's independence and it continues to use the country for its goals whilst empowering its existential enemy India. The wretched rulers in Islamabad have no capability or desire to change this rotten course. They remain beholden to foreign powers retaining no honour or principle but only betrayal and stupidity as their strategy. This is not a case of putting 'Pakistan First' but a situation of Pakistan and its people being put last as always by a callous and failed secular regime. The only way forward for Pakistan is to abandon its support for US military, diplomatic, intelligence and political presence in the region. Close the US embassy and expel US and other Western diplomats. However such steps will not be taken by the current Pakistani rulers. Pakistan needs a new system of governance, the Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the methodology of the Prophethood, which will produce Muslim rulers who only have the interests of Muslims as their priority and who will work to not only expel America and other colonial and belligerent nations from Muslim lands but also seek to return the Muslim Ummah as a leading nation in global affairs, just as it was in the past for more than a thousand years.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Muhammad Aif**