

i militarism

is recruited to fighting communism. This time, a ragtag army of holy warriors who would do battle with the Evil Empire. Welcoming a delegation of the mujahideen to the White House, Reagan said they would one day occupy the same position in Afghan history as the Founding Fathers of the US did in American history. The blowback from the Afghan-Soviet War continues to roil Pakistan and the US to this day.

For the US, military rule in Pakistan has always been the lesser of two evils. During the cold war, the greater evil was the communist threat. Thus, the US did not object to Ghulam Mohammad's dismal of a constitutionally valid government. It did not object to Ayub Khan's coup d'état or to Yahya Khan's campaign of repression against the civilian population of East Pakistan. In Zia's period, General K M Arif boldly told Reagan's Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, "We would not like to hear from you the type of government we should have." Nonchalantly, Haig replied, "General, your internal situation is your problem."

In the present age, the greater evil for Washington is the terrorist threat and that explains why it continues to support military rule in Pakistan. The Bush administration has given Pakistan the status of a major non-NATO ally. This is a symbolic gesture that will not yield Pakistan the F-16s it has long

sought, Ambassador Qazi's euphoric comment about this 'historical development', notwithstanding. Pakistan's generals remain true to Ayub's commitment about making their army Washington's army. They will even send Pakistani troops to Iraq and recognise Israel, if that will re-institute their status as America's most allied-ally in Asia.

None of this is a new development. General Musharraf regards Nixon's book, 'Leaders,' as one of his favourites and considers Nixon a role model. It is increasingly difficult to quibble with the cynics who say that Pakistan's military leaders are little more than a lickspittle for Washington: they jump even higher than requested.

By strengthening the army at the expense of all other domestic institutions, American aid to Pakistan has led to adventurism in Kashmir and worse, to the partition of the country in 1971. The army is now almost fifty percent larger and the country smaller and less secure. What sounded like an inexpensive way of defending Pakistani borders to Ayub has turned out to be a rather expensive way of defending American interests in the region.

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