

# Pakistan, Afghanistan and a History of Mistrust

Husain Haqqani

Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States (2008-11); Director, South & Central Asia, Hudson Institute

Chair: Xenia Wickett

Project Director, US; Dean, The Queen Elizabeth II Academy for Leadership in International Affairs,  
Chatham House

2 March 2015

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the speaker(s) and participants do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions. The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

### Xenia Wickett

Many of you will know me, I run the US Programme here at Chatham House and I'm Dean of the Academy. But we're actually here not to talk about the US but to talk about Pakistan and its neighbours: 'Pakistan, Afghanistan and a History of Mistrust'. There have been some really – this is a very opportune moment to have this conversation. For those of you who follow the region, you will know that there have been some really interesting small steps in the last couple of weeks between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The foreign minister of India is actually going to be visiting Pakistan tomorrow. So we're potentially at a moment of change, and I guess the question that hopefully Husain is going to answer for us in some respects is: is this really a moment of change? Could it be a moment of change, and what's going to stop it perhaps, given the mistrust?

We're incredibly lucky to have Ambassador Haqqani with us, Husain Haqqani. I've known Husain for a decade, plus or minus – we'll just leave it like that – when I was in DC and covering South Asia, the White House. Husain Haqqani was Pakistan's ambassador to the US from 2008 to 2011. For those of you who followed his trajectory, there were some interesting machinations, shall we say, towards the end of his time in Washington, DC. He is currently the director for South and Central Asia at the Hudson Institute in Washington. He also co-edits the journal *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*. He's been a journalist, an academic and a diplomat, and adviser to four Pakistani prime ministers over the years. Came out in 2003 with a book called *Magnificent Delusions: US, Pakistan and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*. We'll hopefully pick up some of the themes of that tonight.

Unlike our normal events, this is on the record. If you want to take the opportunity to tweet, you're welcome to use #CHEvents. With that, let me not speak any further. Husain, why don't you give us a little intro?

### Husain Haqqani

Thank you very much for that very kind introduction. It's a pleasure to be here at Chatham House, speaking on Pakistan and its neighbours, Afghanistan in particular. But Pakistan can hardly ever be discussed without reference to its other, much larger neighbour, India, so it will end up becoming a discussion of Pakistani foreign policy.

Before I start, I would like to recognize in the audience my former colleague and friend, Ambassador Wajid Shamsul Hasan, the former Pakistani high commissioner to the United Kingdom. Thank you very much for joining us.

Let me begin by saying that these days are days of optimism, especially about Pakistan and Afghanistan. Everybody has been concerned about Afghanistan for at least the last three decades, since the collapse of the Soviet-installed regime in Afghanistan in 1992, Afghanistan's civil war and then the rise of the Taliban. Then their association and close ties with Al Qaeda, the developments after 9/11. Afghanistan has always been at the centre of the world's concerns, at least for the last three decades.

But it's very interesting that in 2008, while running for president, President Obama said that America's main interests lie to the east of the Durand Line, which is the Pakistan-Afghanistan border – meaning, Afghanistan is not important of itself but it's important in relation to the two countries lying to its east, Pakistan and [India]. Pakistan is seen, at least in the United States – and I haven't spent enough time in the UK to know how people look at it here, considering that there is a significant population of Pakistani origin here – Pakistan is seen in the United States as a dysfunctional state, as a state that is a source of

considerable concern. It's a nuclear-armed country but at the same time it's a country where one-third of the population lives below the poverty line, one-third lives just above it. Has had four military dictatorships, has an intelligence service which is not always considered to be responsive to concerns of elected civilian leaders. Has a political structure which is far too polarized. There are other countries, I'm sure, that have political polarization but Pakistan's political polarization is much greater, even by the standards of political polarization in most parliamentary democracies. Above all, Pakistan is seen as an incubator for Islamist terrorism.

As a Pakistani, of course that concerns me and – I see Pakistani officials in the audience. The natural Pakistani urge is to turn around and say: that's not so. Look at our artists, they are painting very well. Look at our singers and musicians, they are creating good music. Look at me, I'm such a nice guy, or I'm such a nice woman. It's a defensive approach. But Pakistan does have a problem, and that problem is that since 1947, Pakistan has focused primarily on competing with India, after it was carved up.

Going back to 1947, Pakistan has had – in what I described in my first book, which was published in 2005, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* – a policy paradigm which was born out of an identity crisis. All of a sudden, on the 15th of August, 1947, people who had until the day before been Indians found themselves to be Pakistanis. Not all of them were on board with the idea of Pakistan. Therefore, an identity had to be created, and that identity was created around two major concepts.

One was around Islam: we are Pakistani because we are unique, we are South Asian Muslims. That concept got a bit of a blow in 1971 when the larger half of Pakistan, more populous – East Pakistan – went on to become Bangladesh. So now all of a sudden, Pakistan had fewer South Asian Muslims than India and Bangladesh together.

So the other thing has been Pakistan's rivalry with India. What Pakistan has consistently sought is not just security in relation to India, even though we often say that that's what we are seeking. We have often sought parity with India, in everything. It has to be head-to-head parity. The idea is that somehow India wants to terminate Pakistan's existence or, at least, dilute its ideological identity.

So Pakistan's foreign policy, in my opinion, is essentially motivated by ideology rather than by pragmatic considerations. It's this ideology that has got Pakistan involved in Afghanistan in the way it has got involved. If you think about it, there is no pragmatic advantage to Pakistan from having supported the Taliban. The Taliban were people who represented a very 7th or 8th century vision that was going to come back and bite Pakistan, which it is doing now – now we have a Pakistani Taliban who are a threat to the Pakistani state and whom the Pakistani military is fighting, with great courage and great effort. But it wouldn't have happened if Pakistan had understood that if we want to be a 20th and 21st century nation, we certainly cannot prop up people with a 7th and 8th century vision.

But the idea of supporting the Taliban and, before that, some of the most conservative and hard-line Islamist elements within the mujahideen who fought the Soviets, came from Pakistan's concerns about India. Some people call them concerns; I am now, having no responsibility of representing the state anymore, freed from that. I can afford to say: sometimes an obsession with India causes Pakistan to look at everything from the prism of India.

So we look at Afghanistan not as a neighbour with overlapping ethnicity – Pakistan's Pashtuns and Afghanistan's Pashtuns have a shared ethnicity – and not as a country with whom we can have a lot of cultural and historic ties (many of the Muslim rulers of the subcontinent came from Afghanistan or through Afghanistan). Instead, Pakistan looks upon Afghanistan as a potential source of trouble if it

becomes an Indian bridgehead in Pakistan's northwest. Ironically, India has never had troops stationed in Afghanistan. During the wars with India in 1965 and 1971, Afghanistan sided with Pakistan, not with India. India has never asked or got military bases in Afghanistan. India's relationship with Afghanistan, of course, is based on trade, now increasingly aid; educational exchanges; cultural exchanges. But that has not helped Pakistanis understand that an Indian presence in Afghanistan is not necessarily inimical to Pakistan.

So Pakistan was trying to hedge against an imaginary threat. If there is any Indian influence in Afghanistan, if the Afghan president has gone to school in India or the Afghan foreign service comprises officials who have been trained or educated in India, that is somehow antagonistic towards Pakistan. I argue that that is not a security concern. That's more an ideological concern, because we are concerned that if a Muslim country that is on our northwest has close ties with India, whom Pakistanis are taught to look upon not as a secular state but as a Hindu state, then Pakistan's identity somehow gets diluted.

Since 1947, Pakistan's concerns with Afghanistan have manifested in various ways. So in the 1950s, Pakistan shut down, for example, transit trade. Afghanistan is a landlocked country, dependent on Pakistan. I was involved in the renegotiation for getting a new transit trade agreement and you won't believe how difficult it was, not in our negotiations with the Afghans but the civilian government's negotiations with the Pakistani military and intelligence service, which wanted to put in more and more conditions on this transit trade. Definitely deny it to India. There can be transit trade but it cannot have Indian goods transiting through Pakistan. Look at the map and you will immediately understand why the Afghans didn't want it that way. For them, the greatest advantage of transit trade through Pakistan would be to be able to have Indian products coming into Afghanistan by road and possibly by train, if Pakistan and Afghanistan can at some point resolve the issue of different track gauges that the two countries have.

We all know about the rise of the Taliban. I was very amused recently to see an interview by General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's last military dictator, in the *Guardian*, in which he acknowledged that his government had supported the Taliban even after 9/11 – after having vehemently denied it for so many years and after having described many Pakistanis, including yours truly, as traitors for pointing it out, that Pakistan was supporting the Taliban. So he acknowledged it finally, belatedly, that Pakistan supported the Taliban. Then he went on to explain why they did it. He said: we did it to exclude India from Afghanistan.

The question I ask is: what is Pakistan trying to exclude India from in Afghanistan? From giving economic assistance, which Pakistan cannot make up for? Pakistan does not have the economic depth to be able to provide assistance to Afghanistan. Pakistan is itself an aid-receiving country right now. Is it academic opportunities? There are several hundred Afghans who have scholarships to study at Indian institutes of technology. Pakistan does not have a competing academic system that the Afghans could come to.

Basically, it is the very notion that somehow Afghanistan should be a country in Pakistan's sphere of influence. That is what this whole thing has been about, not a calculated decision in Pakistan's security interests.

Recently, there has been an attempt to try and bridge that divide. President Ashraf Ghani has been gentler in his approach to Pakistan. He has been talking to Pakistan's military chief and intelligence chief directly. He has been offering reassurances. He has said: we will not accept military equipment or even advanced military training from India, so that Pakistan can rest assured the Afghan national army will not be 'ideologically predisposed to antagonism toward Pakistan'.

Then there is the idea of involving China in Afghanistan's affairs a little bit more, as America and the NATO powers recede. China, having been a close friend of Pakistan, reassures Pakistan. There is an assumption that India is drawing too close to the United States and Pakistan would be at a disadvantage in an American-dominated Afghanistan.

I would argue that these overtures are not going to last. They will not last because at some point people in Afghanistan will start arguing that Pakistan is trying to impinge on Afghanistan's sovereign decision-making in relation to economic and other choices. Because, after all, either Pakistan picks up the slack – if Pakistan had the kind of money, then Pakistan would give the assistance that India is giving (almost \$2 billion were promised, \$1 billion has been delivered). If Pakistan would be able to give hundreds of scholarships – in the last round of meetings, Pakistan offered six scholarships at the Lahore University of Management Science. Six scholarships are not what a country will allow another country to tell them what to do over, when the other rival whom they are trying to exclude, in a very 19th century way of sphere of influence thinking – you're telling Afghans you can't have anything to do with India but you are not able to rise up to the plate. You can't match. So this will start running into trouble.

The meeting that Xenia referred to between India and Pakistan that starts tomorrow, again, I think, will be the same dance that we have had for years. There will be a phase of interaction, there will be warmth, there will be small steps – and then there will be small steps back. Then there will be something big that will disrupt the relationship.

The reason why I say all this is not only based on history – and by the way, my book, *Magnificent Delusions*, which generally got good reviews – I don't know if Chatham House rules prohibit me from making a commercial break here, but it's pretty legitimate in the 21st century era of globalization. It's a book that people must read. It's a recounting of US-Pakistan relations from 1947. As a Pakistani who's concerned about Pakistan, I'm critiquing my own government's behaviour consistently for several decades. I now am expanding that to include our attitude toward Afghanistan and India.

I think that parity with India is not an attainable objective for Pakistan. It's as unobtainable as Belgium seeking to be France or Germany's rival. Size matters in international relations. Pakistan can have sovereign equality, which all countries do, but Pakistan cannot have military or status parity, as Pakistan seeks.

Similarly, in the case of Afghanistan, the best bet for Pakistan – and, for that matter, for India – is to let Afghanistan be. Pakistan considered Afghanistan a threat at a time when Afghanistan's population was 12 million, in the 1950s, and Afghanistan didn't even have a significant military. Why would Pakistan not keep thinking the same way now when the Americans are leaving behind a much larger military and a state that is stronger? Historically, the Afghans had a great sense of nation but their state was weak. Pakistan, on the other hand, in 1947 started out with a very strong state but not a strong enough sense of nationhood and identity. That has been built over the years.

The best strategy for Pakistan would be to focus inward. India's economy is a \$2 trillion economy. Pakistan's economy is about \$245 billion worth, in real terms. The population of India is six times larger than Pakistan, the size of the economy is ten times larger, the foreign exchange reserves are twenty times larger. The number of PhDs India produces in science and technology every year is equal to the number of PhDs that Pakistani universities have produced since 1947, in 67 years. So there is no real competition. It's a competition that has held Pakistan back.

As a Pakistani, my greatest concern is the welfare and the security of Pakistan. I think the more Pakistan tries to compete with India, the less secure it gets. We obtained nuclear weapons essentially to be able to have the capacity to prevent India from running us over – that was the theory. Now we have nuclear weapons and we are still insecure. What is this insecurity? This insecurity is definitely psychological and political and not one that can be addressed in concrete terms. You can give assurances, which is something that President Karzai tried. Before that also, during the talks with the various mujahideen groups, Pakistan always had the problem – it was always a question of 'we would like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to lead Afghanistan', rather than 'we will deal with whoever you choose to lead Afghanistan'.

So President Ghani's willingness to come to terms with Pakistan and to accept Pakistan's demands, I think, is going to run against the Pakistani military's entrenched way of thinking – the Pakistani military and the intelligence apparatus and their entrenched way of thinking, of seeing everything through the prism of India. Not only that, they also see the local problems of Pakistan through the prism of India. For example, the Baluch in Pakistan are unhappy with the way they have been treated by the federation. They have been making that argument for ages. In my book, I found the historic record on that very interesting. For example, in the 1970s, Pakistan had a civil war in which Pakistan tried to put down a Baluch insurgency, and Pakistan constantly argued that that Baluch insurgency was being supported by the Soviet Union and by India through Afghanistan. It's very interesting that Henry Kissinger, who was secretary of state at that time, had several studies done at Pakistan's urging, and always came back saying there is no evidence of Soviet or Indian involvement. The Indians may be in touch with certain Baluch leaders.

I got a glimpse of this way of thinking when I became ambassador to the US. I was called for a briefing in Rawalpindi. I was told that this is a briefing about Indian involvement in Baluchistan. So I thought, gosh, now I'm going to get the real stuff, pictures of training camps, terrorists travelling across, etc. I was shown photocopies of air tickets, e-tickets, of a Baluch leader, his wife and two kids, travelling from Kabul to Delhi. Then some pictures of the wife of the Baluch leader standing outside a hotel in Delhi with her two children, with shopping bags. That was somehow supposed to be evidence of India supporting the Baluch insurgency. So I asked: do those bags contain weapons? Is it just a cover? The Ritu Kumar bag – Ritu Kumar is a designer in India – does the Ritu Kumar bag cover up actual grenades and explosives, or what is this meant to be? And they said: don't you get it? The very fact that they travelled from Kabul to India shows that there is a nexus, and the very fact that nexus exists is evidence that it's a threat to us. That is a way of thinking, I think, Pakistan will have to shed, in Pakistan's interest. We will have to move beyond that.

What can the international community do? I think the international community needs to work, on the one hand, in encouraging India and Pakistan to continue to talk, and Afghanistan and Pakistan to continue to talk. But at the same time, I think a lot more needs to be done in changing this internal psycho-political paradigm of Pakistan, and convincing Pakistan, especially its military and intelligence services, that real insecurities they need to address, but that in the desire for parity with India, they have actually increased insecurities that come from having a smaller economy, having a largely inadequately educated population. For example, just compare: 92 per cent of Indian children between the age of 5 and 15 go to primary school and complete five years; only 54 per cent do so in Pakistan. It's the lowest school enrolment of any country in South Asia.

Similarly, the quality of education is another issue. The vice-chancellor of Pakistan's Punjab University, which is the country's largest university, is a physicist who was educated here in England, got a PhD from here, went to – and I'm not indicting the British educational system at all by citing this story – he went on a Fulbright to the United States. Then he wrote a book recently which says that 9/11 was an inside job,

that it was meant to create circumstances for an attack on the Muslim *umma*. But more important, he said something very strange. He said that the world is controlled by a cabal of bankers that implants microchips in the heads of leaders who cooperate with them. As somebody who does cooperate or has been known to cooperate with the West, I actually volunteered that if he could have my head opened and find that microchip – because after all, as a physics PhD he should be interested in empiricism, he should be interested in checking things out for themselves. Yet, with no evidence, he says that. But what worries me more is not that he said it – every now and then there are academics who say strange things, everywhere in the world. The fact that even after he said all this, he has not been removed from his position as vice-chancellor of Pakistan's largest university, worries me.

So there is the quality of education, there is the numbers going to school. There is the economic growth rate. There is the political confrontation. I think the security of Afghanistan depends on Pakistan, and Pakistan's own security depends on Pakistan overcoming its desire and ambition for parity with India, and a more realistic, reality-based foreign policy paradigm in which Pakistan recognizes its weaknesses and works on them.

Now, I understand and I anticipate the very first question: how do you get there? We'll talk about it in the Q&A. I think I have already completed the time that was allocated for me to make my presentation. Thank you all very much.