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FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Transcript

## CARNEGIE CENTENNIAL

CONVERSATION WITH HIS EXCELLENCY HUSAIN HAQQANI,  
AMBASSADOR OF PAKISTAN TO THE UNITED STATES

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STEVE INSKEEP: Good afternoon. Can everyone hear me OK? Excellent. My name is Steve Inskeep with NPR's Morning Edition. It's a tremendous honor for me to be here today to help Carnegie celebrate its centennial. And it is just as much of an honor for me to introduce and lead a conversation with Ambassador Husain Haqqani. I won't go through the ambassador's entire background, but I will mention that he has many years in government service, many years as a diplomat. He is the author of "Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military," which is really one of the essential books to learn about Pakistan for those of us who want to learn, and which was published by Carnegie in 2005.

Now he has, without doubt, one of the most difficult jobs in Washington, which he has executed with great energy. And I think it is fair to say for those who know him that he's one of the great conversationalists in Washington. So it's wonderful to have you here, Ambassador. Welcome.

AMBASSADOR HUSAIN HAQQANI: Thank you very much, Steve.

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MR. INSKEEP: And I want to mention that as part of his campaign for his country, Ambassador Haqqani has been tweeting vociferously, if you can tweet vociferously. And over the weekend, I saw a tweet from Ambassador Haqqani in Urdu: (In Urdu). (In English) – pardon my pronunciation – (continues in Urdu). Did I pronounce that OK?

AMB. HAQQANI: More or less.

MR. INSKEEP: And the – (laughter). More or less. Close enough.

AMB. HAQQANI: It's better than my English pronunciation.

(Laughter.)

[00:01:28]

MR. INSKEEP: I shared it with my Urdu tutor, and she immediately recognized this as the – as a well-known Urdu poem which translates, "They don't know where they have to go. Nevertheless, those travelers are on their way," which I think is a great thought for us to begin with here today, although it reminds me of the somewhat opposite thought by the well-known American poet David Byrne of the Talking Heads: "We know where we're going, but we don't know where we've been" – kind of an opposite sentiment, but maybe that's appropriate for the conversation here.

Ambassador, let me begin by asking you if you feel you know where the U.S.-Pakistan relationship is going at this troubled moment.

AMB. HAQQANI: I think that the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been troubled for a long time. But the good news is that this is one of those troubled relationships that's not going to come to an end anytime soon. The U.S. knows it needs Pakistan for certain things; Pakistan knows it needs the U.S. for certain reasons.

And in the end, the advantages of cooperation are far greater than the scenario that may emerge if the two do not work together. So there will be a lot of complaining. And I think a lot of – the complaining essentially comes from different cultural contexts. Pakistan sort of has a cultural reality in which there are different points of view contending within Pakistan about what should Pakistan be; what kind of a country do we want in Pakistan.

And then, of course, there is a point of view, very strong, that we need to decide our future ourselves, not because some wise men or not such – or not so wise men in Washington, D.C., want to decide it – decide for us. So that makes it difficult for the U.S. and Pakistan to always state in public what they are doing together in private.

And of course, the brunt of that is borne by me, or people in jobs similar to mine, because I have the job of keeping a lot of things that we work together on, not necessarily keeping them from public view in Pakistan, because the Pakistani public would say, gosh, we are giving away our sort of, you know, decision making or – on a number of things to the Americans instead of understanding that it's the nature of the cooperation.

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And then there is the American end. There will always be some senator from Idaho who will turn around and say, why did the Pakistani prime minister say that – not realizing that the Pakistanis are a very proud nation, very sort of cognizant and aware of their sovereignty, a nation that acquired nuclear weapons primarily to prove a point, not because anybody – there are crazies who might want to use it, but then there were crazies like that in this country, too; not because anybody does not understand the significance of nuclear weapons but because it had to do with national pride and identity and security and sovereignty.

And so that is the real reason why the U.S.-Pakistan relationship looks so complex: a lot happening together, neither side wanting to give up, but neither side being able to fully sort of announce the layers and layers of cooperation, and for that matter, areas of noncooperation. As the great Richard Holbrooke summarized it: It's complicated.

MR. INSKEEP: (Laughs.) That's an – that's an impressive summary, Ambassador. But of course, as you know, American officials have spoken in recent days of Pakistan as having been humiliated by the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. Pakistani officials have made more and more public moves toward China, which are seen here as an effort to perhaps build up the relationship with China at the expense of the United States. China has been described as an all-weather friend, whereas the United States is described as a fair-weather friend.

Are you prepared to say that a lot of this tension is just on the surface and that below the surface things are still moving cooperatively?

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AMB. HAQQANI: Absolutely. First of all, let's look at the China relationship. Pakistan has been close to China since 1949. I don't know how many people in this very young audience are old enough to remember that in 1969, it was Henry Kissinger who approached Pakistan to help with the China relationship for the United States. And Pakistan facilitated that; it wasn't Romania, which was the other possible channel. It was Pakistan that was a channel that Kissinger used to reach out to China. So Pakistan has never looked upon China and the United States as mutually exclusive.

That said, you must remember that there is a political discourse in Pakistan. And all politics is local, in the end. And the local politics requires that Pakistan's people feel that whenever they – whenever the United States is being too

much of a bully, that they have somebody to turn to, and that's when China provides the comfort level. It doesn't mean that those who of us who are making policy don't understand the limits of our relationship with either the United States or with China or anybody else. I mean, foreign policymaking in Pakistan is handled primarily by hardnosed realists.

That said, can we stop some Pakistani political leader from saying if the Americans are not nice to us, we'll go into China's arms and then a few editorials about that? Absolutely – I mean, if you took every editorial seriously in this country, you'd be at war with the rest of the world every day. So that's how it is. China is our friend. China has proven to be a consistent friend.

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And actually, it's not just all weather versus, you know, fair weather. It's another thing. The Chinese are very good at keeping – being discreet in their relationships. So when they give something, they don't make a big noise.

Now, you know, my all-time favorite ads – you know, I do occasionally watch television – my all-time favorite ad is that famous Carlsberg beer ad – you know, I don't know if anybody remembers – where there's a big mug of beer filling up slowly. And then just a small, little thing comes on screen saying, if you make a great beer, you don't need to make a great noise.

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Now of course, considering that this ad was made by an American ad company, if I'm – if I'm not wrong, the Americans don't understand that principle. They have to make a big noise about everything.

And so the Chinese have an advantage there. The – in terms of culturally, a proud nation likes the Chinese approach to things. You know, they help, but they don't make a big noise. And they don't always tell Pakistan whenever they want to tell Pakistan that you need to do something; they do that privately. And it's not 97 voices, it's not strongly worded editorials, it's not a lot of finger pointing on television. And so generally Pakistani public opinion is a little more favorably disposed towards China than it is towards the United States. It's essentially a management of local politics that's going on here.

Pakistan does not consider China and the U.S. mutually exclusive. Both are our friends. They have different roles in our own strategy. China is a neighbor. You know, we have a border with China in the north. We don't have a border with the United States. And that's basically what it is.

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Now, what happened after the Osama bin Laden operation was, initially our government's response was, you know, we welcome the fact that Osama bin Laden is no more, but at the same time we are concerned that you didn't consult us or consider us as sort of, you know, part of the operation. We've done a lot of joint operations. I mean, most people in Guantanamo came there because Pakistan worked together with U.S. intelligence.

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On this particular matter, I don't think – and the U.S. government has now communicated to us that it wasn't just mistrust – which is what everybody here is sort of, you know, causing a drumbeat about – it was the operational advantages of keeping it close. We don't agree with that. We think we would have still been of help if this had been

a joint operation. It would not have annoyed Pakistani public opinion. It wouldn't have infuriated hyper-nationalists in Pakistan who are saying, OK, so if the Americans can come with stealth helicopters, then they can, you know, do something else tomorrow, et cetera, et cetera. And you would have saved about, you know, whatever the repairs costs on that \$65 million helicopter that you had to leave behind, because you wouldn't have to leave it behind. We would have helped you transport it back in a C-7 after the operation. So it would have worked – it would have worked for both of us.

Yet, there's politics here. You know, I mean, would the operation have been as much a political success if it had been a cooperative operation with Pakistan? The fact remains that the U.S. ability to get to Osama bin Laden would not have been there if the earliest intelligence on this has not come from Pakistan. As recently as April – as recently as April – the U.S. and Pakistani intelligence services exchanged intelligence on both the compound and on some of the people relating to the compound. So it's not like we had no role in it. We did. It's just that it wasn't politically expedient on the American side to take us all the way to the final stages.

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MR. INSKEEP: When you referred to Pakistanis feeling the U.S. sometimes acts like a bully, is the U.S. acting like a bully right now?

AMB. HAQQANI: Look, I mean, if I was in my old job at Carnegie sort of, you know, I would have given you a straightforward answer. I have given you most – (laughter) – I've given you most straight – most straightforward answers than anybody else ever does in my kind of job, but this one I'm going to pass.

(Laughter.)

MR. INSKEEP: OK. Let me ask another tough one then. You referred to the mistrust that may have been part of the U.S. calculation, although you argue it was not the entire calculation. The newspaper columnist and novelist David Ignatius is one of many, many people in recent days who has written of Pakistan playing what he calls a "double game." In fairness, he also suggested the United States is playing a kind of double game. Let's talk about both of those in turn.

Is Pakistan playing a double game with Islamist militants?

AMB. HAQQANI: First of all, let's understand the history of this. I know Americans don't like history lessons, you know, but let's remember: Everybody got together a huge operation in Afghanistan against the Soviets, lots of people brought in from all over the world, a center of kind of radical Islam – a radical Islam international-created.

Then, of course, Pakistan got its – got into its own act, you know, vis-a-vis Jammu and Kashmir, vis-à-vis Afghanistan, et cetera; Taliban come to power. And at that time, no one here is particularly interested in what's going on there. It's a sideshow. Then comes 9/11, and all of sudden, in usual manner, you know, it's issue number one, having had no attention paid to it earlier. In fact, on 9/11 – I don't know if everybody in this room remembers – there was no desk officer for Afghanistan at the CIA. There was no desk officer for Afghanistan at the foreign office at the State Department, because, basically, it wasn't supposed to be that important. And then it became important.

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And there was hurried cooperation that was put together. And we had General Musharraf running the country who was somebody who had taken power in a military coup, and he was supposed to execute a U-turn on short notice. And the manner he did it is what we are hearing all the complaints about.

The fact of the matter is that something changed with the advent of the civilian government in 2008. The civilian government, with whatever its weaknesses that The New York Times keeps complaining about, still had a very clear direction, which was: We will work together with the United States and the international community in making sure that all the extremist jihadist groups that have converged on Pakistan are put out of business. That has been the declared policy; that has been the clear, effective policy.

However, in about 20 years, these groups have their own networks. They have their own networks of support which may or may not have individuals within various layers of Pakistan's huge military, intelligence, police, law enforcement, other law enforcement and civil society structures. They have connections. And so we don't have to consciously play a double game to be stuck with a double game. You know, it's not – it's not necessarily what we decide to do.

It's just the circumstances, a nation of 180 million with a – with a very young population; half of the population is below the age of 18, so that's 90 million young people, 48 percent of whom don't go to school. And the 52 percent who do, 2 to 3 percent of them go to madrassas. So there's a huge recruitment pool. There are huge networks that are already there. In absolute numbers, you know, even if 10 percent of Pakistan's population had sympathy for the jihadis, you would have 18 million actual people supporting that. If it was 1 percent, it would be 1.8 million. These are huge, gigantic figures.

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So when David Ignatius says that there's a double game, he needs to qualify that. And everybody – but the problem is that complexity is not easily understood. I mean, I remember talking to a journalist who said, well, you see, our job is to reinforce stereotypes and oversimplify. Our job is not to – (laughter) – our job is not to give the complex story, but the complex reality is what I'm trying to explain to you.

So we don't want to play a double game. We are not intentionally playing a double game, but are we stuck with a double game on all sides? There are people in American intelligence who carry – who carry a sort of -- you know, sort of scab wounds of old battles with our intelligence people. The way they look at it, it's Pakistanis. I mean, come on. There's no single monolith that's Pakistanis. There's me, there's 180 million others. And there are different people with different shades of opinions about the U.S, very few who actually have a very positive view of the United States. And that's something for Americans to consider, why – you know, Americans get all angry and say: We give so much money; why don't they – you know, as if love can be bought. (Laughter.) You know –

MR. INSKEEP: It can't?

AMB. HAQQANI: And then – and then there are those – and then – and then there are those in Pakistan who turn it on and say why does America always tell us what to do?

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So at the top, there is a willingness to cooperate, complete the U-turn. But problem is that the wounds of the preceding years are bleeding right now. And there are people here who kind of cite things – for example, it's – I'll



just give you one small example. There was something called the coalition support funds, which was created during the first few years immediately after 9/11. And the idea was that –

MR. INSKEEP: This was U.S. aid to Pakistan, military?

AMB. HAQQANI: U.S. – well, U.S. reimbursement for military costs of conducting operations against the Taliban.

So under Musharraf, of course, there were – there was a complaint of inflated bills, et cetera, et cetera. And Congress passed legislation that made many – introduced many layers of auditing, et cetera, et cetera.

Guess what? You have a democratic government now that America wants to support. Secretary Clinton made a statement to that effect just this morning that we want to continue to support the democratic government. But who's bearing the brunt of the excessive auditing requirements under the coalition support funds? Sort of -- it's the new democratic government, which wants to be able to allocate more money for education and health care and sort of remove the – and work on the law enforcement angle of support networks for terrorists.

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And so they get frustrated, and they get angry. I mean, I wish you could – no, actually I don't wish that – (laughter). But if people actually heard some of the testy conversations between our civilian leaders and myself over the telephone, most of them are just complaining about one thing, that why don't the Americans realize we are paying the same price? Look, 30,000 Pakistanis have been killed at the hands of terrorists at the last decade. Three thousand Pakistani soldiers have been killed, which is a bigger number than all NATO losses in Afghanistan. Four of ISI's offices in different towns, the local regional offices, have been blown up by the terrorists. Surely the terrorists don't want to blow up the offices of the organization that they see as their patron. Obviously, some of them don't see it as their patron anymore.

And so it's a – as I keep pointing out, it's executing a U-turn that's not always easy. And that's why we resent it when people say you're playing a double game. You consider there is a double game in which America and Pakistan are caught. Fair enough. Both sides are caught in that double game. There are American intelligence operatives who say, do I want to share this intelligence with this guy? But I still want intelligence out of him. And then our guys turn around and say, show me respect, and I'll show you the intel. And things like that.

So there's a – there's a complexity to the relationship. But to simplify it into a double game, no one in their right mind in Pakistan – and the terrorists are not in their right mind, in my opinion, and nor are their supporters – no one in their right mind in Pakistan thinks it is in Pakistan's advantage to have terrorist jihadi groups running, sort of – you know, overrunning our military bases, killing our civilian and political leaders, hitting at our military officers and our intelligence personnel. And the vision we have for Pakistan -- what do we want? We want to be able to educate our people. Yes, we have security concerns about India, but no, we also want to improve the standard of living of our people. And that can't be done with a double game with the U.S.

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MR. INSKEEP: Let me ask a narrower question then. Is it possible – do you believe it's possible that in spite of the policy of your government that there are senior national security figures in Pakistan who still believe in the utility of militant groups as an instrument of foreign policy in Afghanistan or Kashmir?

AMB. HAQQANI: I think most people have understood that militant and terrorist groups cannot be an instrument of foreign policy in this day and age. Everybody understands that. However, implementing that realization is not always convenient and easy when you have such a huge sort of operation that you have to revisit. That's it basically.

I mean, go back in your own history, you know. It takes a long – it takes a much longer time to get people to give up arms than it does to make them take up arms. And when there is an ideology involved and a religion-motivated ideology, it's even more complex. So do we want an open civil war in Pakistan by letting all these groups totally sort of run against the state? No, we don't.

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And therefore, we need to balance it out. But do we want them to survive anymore? I don't think so. I don't think anybody in the Pakistani military or the Pakistani government or the Pakistani intelligence service has any illusions anymore about the – about the extremist groups. But it's a question of how to deal with it. You're sitting far away. So it's very easy for you to sort of say, blow them all up, clean them all out. But, you know, they are living in our cities. They are part of our society. They're connected by various kinds of tribal and religious and social relationships to our people.

And so to work against them has to be a longer-term strategy. We actually have developed a longer-term strategy. And we've shared it with the American side. But you know what? The usual answer is, can you do what you're thinking you'll do in 10 years in 10 months? And we just can't.

MR. INSKEEP: Should the civilian government in Pakistan use the occasion of bin Laden's killing to assert greater control over the military establishment?

AMB. HAQQANI: Look, again, we are prisoners of history here. We have a military leadership that actually wants to concede more and more leadership to Pakistan's civilian government. The civilians have some time of – they will take some time to grow from being local politicians into people with ideas about foreign policy and national security. I mean, that happens in this country too. Try and visualize the United States where Mayor Richard Daley is all of a sudden elected president of the U.S. I mean, would he really have an understanding of – old man Richard Daley – (laughter) – would he have full understanding of foreign policy and national security, et cetera, after having had 30-odd – 30-odd years of managing alderman and precinct politics? No.

So what we have is a political class that has less experience of foreign policy and national security policy. But General Kayani has been very clear. He has been – always been very deferential to President Zardari. What people want is sudden change, and it doesn't happen. I don't know how many people remember there used to be a time when everybody used to make fun of India's rate of growth and used to call it – and one particular economist came up with the term "Hindu rate of growth" because they had a very slow rate of growth. Well, guess what? They were laying the foundations of their faster growth later on. People just didn't get it, because that's one of the flaws of looking from outside in.

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So we understand what we are doing. We know what we are trying to do. Our military is understanding the need for greater civilian input. Does that mean some retired military leaders who are former coup makers -- they don't want the old days back? Absolutely they do. So they're ranting and raving on Pakistani television all the time, saying the civilians know nothing; the army shouldn't concede space to them. And then there are the old civilian politicians who are not in power right now saying, oh, but the civilians should actually hit the military on the head. It's our



military. We want it to turn around. We want it to not be praetorian anymore. I know somebody could have taken out an extract from my book and said, you know, he talks about the – yeah, the Pakistani military ought not to be a praetorian military. And we think the current leadership of the military does want the civilians to exercise control. But are the civilians sufficiently experienced in all realms of sort of national security policy to take over right away? And does the military – is it ready to completely concede overnight? No. It's going to be a process. It will happen, but it will happen over time.

MR. INSKEEP: I'm glad you mentioned your book. I want to conclude by asking you about that. I don't want to summarize the entire intricacy of the arguments there, but the subtitle does it very nicely, "Between Mosque and Military," two of the great conflicts in Pakistan's history going back to the earliest days. What role is the military going to play in the state? What role is religion supposed to play in the state? And you portrayed a country caught between those two dilemmas.

That was six years ago. How much, if at all, has the situation evolved since then?

AMB. HAQQANI: I think that the military-civilian relationship is evolving, with the civilians having more say than they have ever had before, much more say than they've ever had before.

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MR. INSKEEP: What's some evidence of that?

AMB. HAQQANI: Well, for example, the process of normalization with India, despite all the difficulties, has continued to move forward. We have a much better relationship with Afghanistan today than we've ever had. I don't know if you remember the famous picture of Hamid Karzai and President George W. Bush and Musharraf, where Musharraf is not shaking hands with Karzai. Now Karzai and President Zardari are the best of friends. Pakistan's military leadership went under the leadership of the civilian prime minister for talks with President Karzai on a number of issues.

And by the way, on a lighter note, I'm still here. I mean, if you believe the Pakistani press – (laughter) – the Pakistani military's never wanted me as ambassador here. So it's been three years. Obviously the civilians kind of get their way on something.

So that's happening. It's not happening as fast as Pakistan's anti-military left wing would want it. So you read that commentary, and you say, oh, god, the civilians don't have full control. They don't. It's a process. It's a process that's moving forward.

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On the other side, as far as the mosque is concerned, again, there is realization, but in the process of the last several years, the religious groups have just become too strong. They have wide social welfare networks. It's comparable to Hamas and Hezbollah in some ways. Some of these groups have these networks that are – that have roots.

And so to uproot them, you can't just bomb them. You have to actually cut their support base. And that cannot be done without a lot of flow of resources, which is not necessarily forthcoming because we are caught in a catch 22. People say we'll give you resources if you're a hundred percent sure that you can do it. Well, we can't do it unless you provide us the resources. And so you have this problem.

We have definitely, definitely reduced the footprint of the extremist jihadis in large parts of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Swat – I don't know if people recall the images of the Swat Valley two years ago, two and a half years ago. We pursued a very complicated policy. The policy was, we will engage these people in a dialogue to be able to prove to the people that they do not keep their promises. And we did. And there was a lot of criticism here – why are you talking to them? Why are you not killing them? President Zardari actually said it to President Bush and said, please give me the chance of doing the – going through the motions. I know they will not keep their promises, and we will then be able to move against them with popular support. And that's what -- exactly what happened. And we have conducted military operations in six out of the seven tribal regions, leaving only North Waziristan.

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Now, is that enough to eliminate al-Qaida and its related groups from Pakistan? Maybe it's not enough at this moment, but it's going in the right direction. And even after the Osama raid -- the political noise notwithstanding on both sides -- if you were to ask me, have their specific targets been met between the two sides? Absolutely. Whatever the U.S. side has sought from us in the realm of intelligence sharing and pursuit of the others -- because it's not just Osama bin Laden; you have to get the -- you just don't get the head. You need to get -- sort of this is a multi-headed Hydra. You have to get all of them. And we are working on all of that together.

But a lot of it is going to come out in my memoirs when they finally get written. (Laughter.) Hopefully everybody will buy a hard copy. (Laughter.) But –

MR. INSKEEP: I think I hear a six-figure advance on the – (inaudible).

AMB. HAQQANI: But a lot of it is happening. Unfortunately, if we talk too much about it in public, we just run the risk of infuriating Pakistani public opinion, which says don't do things just because Uncle Sam tells you to. And if we make it public here, first of all, it won't remain here, because it will be – you know, within an hour it will be playing on Pakistani TV. So there's – so – and then if you do it – if the American side is told what Pakistani requirements are being fulfilled, I bet there are people who will say, oh, but don't do that because you can't trust them.

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So the problem with mistrust is that once it sets in, then rebuilding trust is a complex procedure and process that takes a lot of time. And a lot of people in this town generally do not seem to have much time.

MR. INSKEEP: Well, we are out of time – (laughter) – so we'll end right there.

AMB. HAQQANI: I rest my case.

MR. INSKEEP: Ambassador, thank you very much. Wonderful.

AMB. HAQQANI: Thank you.

MR. INSKEEP: Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)