



## The 'Haqqani' network By Ikram Sehgal



Erstwhile phone buddies Husain Haqqani and Mansoor Ijaz have amply proven each other to be dubious characters, and such people have a recurring habit of falling out. The truth about Memogate's sponsors notwithstanding, the motivation was primarily to bring the Pakistani security establishment to heel, the ultimate goal being to "de-nuke" Pakistan. Mansoor Ijaz being an American-born US citizen was safe promoting stated US policy. What was Pakistan's ambassador to the US, His Excellency Husain Haqqani, up to? The Supreme Court did the right thing appointing a really high-powered Judicial Commission (chief justices of three provincial high courts) to sift fact from fiction.

Mansoor Ijaz scored big by giving his BlackBerry PIN number to the Judicial Commission and offering to hand over his BlackBerry and all related data. Husain Haqqani seemed to suffer from "memory loss" about where his device was, saying it was somewhere in his home in Washington DC. He later obfuscated, initially flatly declining to have his BlackBerry data investigated, then allowing limited access. The government (and his buddies in the media) faithfully parroted Haqqani's defence about the memo being fake.

Mansoor Ijaz went one better by presenting additional forensic evidence in London on May 10 to experts engaged by the Judicial Commission. The eight-hour examination of his computer and BlackBerry handsets by forensic experts verified and validated each and every word of all BBM chat exchanges, e-mails, SMS messages and the telephone calls exchanged between him and Husain Haqqani. Many deleted messages were also recovered in the process. Haqqani and his lawyers boycotted the proceedings on the grounds that the examination should have been conducted earlier during the cross-examination of Mansoor Ijaz.

Husain Haqqani started his political career as president of the extremely militant Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba, the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami. A far-right Islamist political party, the Jamaat advocates religious fundamentalism and a theocracy-based government system in Pakistan. The MQM then not being in existence, the Jamaat virtually ruled Karachi. Haqqani's academic brilliance was recognised by Ziaul Haq's martial law regime, which assiduously promoted his career as a journalist.

After Zia's death he started working for the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), created by Zia's military and civilian supporters to counter Benazir Bhutto's resurgent Pakistan Peoples Party. A past master at giving spin to facts, he excelled himself serving the PML-N. His "dirty tricks" were too much for then political neophyte Mian Nawaz Sharif to stomach, so Haqqani fell out with the PML-N to join its ideological opposite, the PPP. Reincarnated as a liberal, Haqqani spewed poison against his former rightist mentors.

The Supreme Court was naive in generously allowing him to leave the country during the Memogate hearings despite being repeatedly advised that he would never come back. Not surprisingly, Haqqani, who never fails to eventually maul whoever helps him, has now turned his guns on those honourable judges. His latest article "How Pakistan lets terrorism fester, why Pakistani courts are biased?" is a shameful attempt at maligning the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Lashing out at the intelligence agencies, he does not spare the media either, "While fighting Pakistan's endemic corruption is vital, the media and judiciary have helped redirect attention away from the threat of jihadist ideology by constantly targeting the governing party – a convenient situation for the intelligence services, which would prefer to keep the spotlight on the civilian government rather than on the militant groups they have historically supported."

Ahmad Noorani unmasked Haqqani's real face in his excellent rejoinder on May 14: "In his true colours: why is sacked ambassador shy of the truth?" "He (Haqqani) says our national discourse has been hijacked by those seeking to deflect attention from militant Islamic extremism and Gen Zia and Musharraf were mainly responsible. What a marvel of a statement if he had only looked at his own career and growth. Was he himself not an Islamist militant student leader? Did Gen Zia not promote him as a journalist in the Far Eastern Economic Review? Was he not

advising the dictator, free of cost or for whatever returns. He forgot to admit that he was a member of Team Zia, which played havoc with this country.

This scribe has a state-run TV's video showing Haqqani weeping at the time of the death of his mentor Ziaul Haq. Haqqani accuses the Supreme Court judges of carrying out their 'own partisan agenda.' What he calls an agenda is actually the blowback of his own party government's massive corruption, loot and plunder, which Mr Haqqani conveniently refuses to see.

The PPP leaders have all along shouted from housetops that in 11 years nothing was proved against them. Now that the courts are proving charges of corruption, judges have become biased and carrying agendas! Is there any limit to the depth of shamelessness that Mr Haqqani and his bosses will stop at?"

Noorani adds: "Haqqani says the Pakistani media has done little to help generate support for eliminating extremism and fighting terrorism. What the media has done for him, he will never talk about. Can he tell us how many hundreds or thousands of calls he has made to each and every media person to push his point of view? How many fake websites he and his cronies, getting funds from one secret fund or other, have been running to malign his opponents and promote him as a victim and as a hero?"

How many fake names has he been using to respond to legal and criminal questions that he was supposed to answer but ran away? Haqqani's cronies in the print and electronic media are ready to do his bidding "as and when required." Coordinated disinformation by media celebrities never ceases to amaze. His "media network" outdid itself doing an about-turn justifying Haqqani's excuses to avoid appearing before the Memogate Commission in person in Pakistan.

Haqqani got away with disparaging the country's institutions while officially being its ambassador. There is "nothing official" anymore about his venom, or hidden. Americans can sometimes be very naive, but they will never fully trust a man who does not show patriotism for his country, at least while he still claims to be a Pakistani citizen. Having the power of the pen, tarnishing reputations comes naturally to Haqqani, Blogs planted by his minions proliferate. He should remember everyone does not play by the "Marques of Queensbury rules" that others have to adhere to.

Even before the Memogate case came to light, I had said: "For Pakistan's sake we should first dismantle the far more dangerous 'Haqqani network' in Washington DC."

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Ikram Sehgal, "The 'Haqqani' network," *The News*. 17-05-2012.

**Keywords:** Political science, Political issues, Memo gate, Political process, Government-Pakistan, Mass media, Politics, Politicians, Terrorism, Terrorists, Corruption, Husain Haqqani, Mansoor Ijaz, Gen Zia ul haq, Gen Musharraf, London, United States, MQM, PMLN