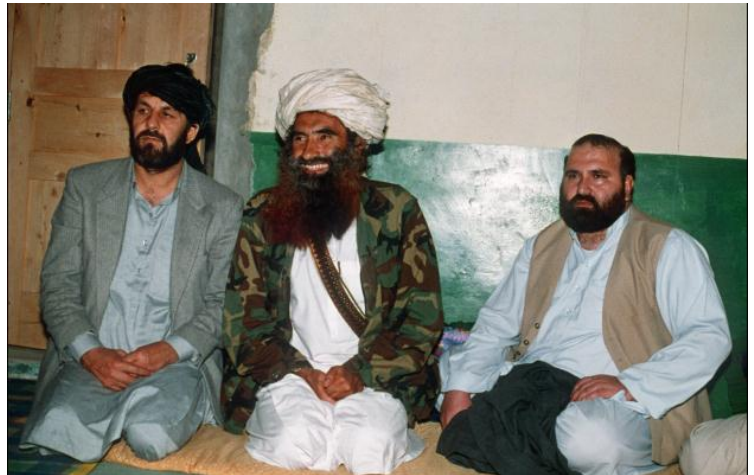


State of Terror

Why Obama should blacklist Pakistan -- not just the Haqqanis.

BY C. CHRISTINE FAIR / SEPTEMBER 10, 2012

In September 2011, Adm. Mike Mullen, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, astonished the American public when he declared at a congressional hearing that the network of Jalaluddin Haqqani was a "virtual arm" of Pakistan's top spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate. Pakistanis were surprised, as Mullen had been one of the most outspoken defenders of Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies and their efforts to combat Islamist terrorists within Pakistan. Since Mullen's head-turning testimony, pressure has continued to mount on the Obama administration, forcing it take a stronger position on Pakistan's intransigent support for one of the most lethal organizations killing Americans and allied forces in Afghanistan.



On Sept. 7, after considerable hemming and hawing, the Obama administration finally announced it would [designate](#) the so-called [Haqqani network](#) as a foreign terrorist organization. The call was long overdue. Members of the Haqqani network move back and forth between Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency (and other localities) as well as the Paktiya, Paktika, and Khost provinces of Afghanistan. The network provides sanctuary, manpower, weapons, financing, and other amenities to several other terrorist and insurgent networks such as the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and al Qaeda, among others. Its financial assets are vast and derive from [numerous illicit and licit](#) activities spanning South Asia and the Middle East. The Haqqani network is behind some of the most devastating and complex attacks against United States, NATO, and Afghan forces. U.S. officials hold it responsible for the 2008 assault on the Indian Embassy in Kabul, last September's attack on the U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarters employing rocket-propelled grenades, assassination attempts against President Hamid Karzai and other leaders, as well as numerous kidnappings.

The Obama administration touted its decision to list the Haqqanis as an important step in being able to go after the vast resources of the network -- never mind that the move was taken under considerable congressional pressure.

Why the long wait? Listing the Haqqanis was always considered sensitive because Pakistan views the network as one of its few reliable assets to shape Afghanistan in desirable directions, including restraining India's influence and physical presence. Given the tenterhooks upon which U.S.-Pakistan relations have hung over the last two years, critics of the decision will argue it amounts to further provocation for little payoff. Moreover, some in the U.S. State Department thought that the Haqqani network deserved a seat at the negotiating table even if doing so served no other purpose than placating Pakistan, according to my discussions with an array of U.S. officials. Others feared that declaring the Haqqanis a foreign terrorist organization would lead to greater insistence from Congress and other quarters to label Pakistan itself a state that supports terrorism -- a club populated by Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria. For this reason, the administration went to great lengths to clarify that this move does not pave the way for putting Pakistan on that inauspicious list.

And that was a huge blunder. Unfortunately, if the administration believed that designating the Haqqani network would have any hope of mobilizing Pakistanis to abandon its jihad habit, categorically removing the threat of a State Department designation from the table vitiated any such potential. Pakistan's response will likely be to double down.

There can be no doubt that Pakistan's unrelenting support for the Afghan Taliban and allied militant organizations, of which the Haqqani network is just one of many, has made any kind of victory -- however defined -- elusive if not unobtainable for the United States and its allies. The crux of the matter: The United States and Pakistan have fundamentally divergent strategic interests in Afghanistan. America's allies, such as India, are Pakistan's enemies, while Pakistan's allies, such as the Haqqani network and the Afghan Taliban, are America's enemies. Unfortunately, Pakistan's ongoing support for these groups has become an altogether easy hook on which the Americans and their allies have hung their failures in Afghanistan.

But even if Pakistan were not actively undermining U.S. and allied efforts in Afghanistan, would the country be any more stable than it was on Sept. 10, 2001? The United States and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan have stumbled from one strategic disaster to another. The delusional belief in population-centric counterinsurgency is simply the latest chimera that plagued international efforts to bring Afghans a modicum of peace and security. The various national missions strewn across Afghanistan under the ISAF banner have been a disjointed disaster; more like a militarized version of Epcot Center than a cohesive effort. Some of the best development projects these national partners have undertaken have been restricted to their own bases and provisional reconstruction teams (PRTs). One of my most memorable moments during a 2009 visit to Afghanistan occurred at a German PRT, notable for its perfectly paved and LED-lit sidewalks, sleeping quarters equipped with duvets and duvet covers and individually heated commodes. That was surprising enough -- but nothing prepared me for the sight of a scantily clad German rollerblading about the perfectly groomed pavement of the PRT. Needless to say, none of this development was in evidence *outside* the PRT.

Equally disappointing has been the Afghan government, with its own dogged dedication to remaining a narcokleptocracy. For all the hopes placed on him over the years, here is the stark reality: President Karzai has squandered some 11 years and billions of dollars. Had he shown commitment to better governance, less corruption, and greater transparency, his country may have registered gains that could be sustainable. The most recent "[news](#)" about corruption strangling the extraction of national resources serves as only the latest reminder of Karzai's impotence and incompetence.

Pakistan certainly hasn't helped in Afghanistan, but the United States must be clear-eyed about the sources of failure. There is plenty of culpability to go around, and the Haqqanis are only part of a much larger story of disorganization, missed opportunities, and intractable obstacles.

None of which, by the way, gets Pakistan off the hook. After thoroughly accepting its military and political failures in Afghanistan, the United States must also recognize that its haphazard policies toward Pakistan are an enduring part of the problem. For all the buzz about "AfPak," neither the Bush administration nor the Obama team has ever successfully integrated its Pakistan strategy with its Afghanistan strategy. Under Bush, Pakistan continued to partake of U.S. funds as a bona fide partner in the global "war on terror" while continuing to support an array of Islamist terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Haqqani network, and various insurgent groups such as the Afghan Taliban. The Pakistanis have long exploited these inconsistencies in U.S. policy to advance their own interests -- by noting, for instance, that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton conceded in the fall of 2011 that the United States was meeting with the Haqqani network. She defended the engagements by explaining that the United States saw no contradiction in [fighting while talking](#). Pakistan could clearly justify its own inaction in light of America's discordant policy towards the group. And it did.

Why the discord? Part of the U.S. government -- particularly in some quarters of the the military and intelligence communities -- has long supported designating the group as a foreign terrorist organization. However, others, particularly within the U.S. State Department, demurred from doing so, fearing that it would compromise any sort of negotiated settlement in Afghanistan. Why these officials believed that the Haqqani network had anything to offer is somewhat beyond comprehension. Unlike Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is a political actor, the Haqqani network is a provider of violence and little more. The Haqqanis do not offer vote banks. They have not established any reputation for providing much-needed social services. Keeping them in the game therefore amounts to little more than pandering to Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies in the hopes of persuading Pakistan to be a part of some solution to Afghanistan rather than a continued hindrance.

Now that the Haqqani network has been designated, this interagency bickering has been ostensibly silenced. As Heritage Foundation scholar [Lisa Curtis](#) correctly noted, this action will enable the U.S. government to enlist more cooperation from other foreign governments and put greater pressure on the network's ability to raise funds in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and elsewhere. It would also give some hope to Afghans who have looked warily at the various terrorists, insurgents, and warlords seeking to gain control over their country without offering anything positive in return.

Let's be clear: Designating the Haqqani network was a welcome, if belated, move. The problem is that Pakistan's military and intelligence agency has paid no price for continuing to support the very organizations that the United States recognizes as its enemies. After the mistaken U.S. killing of 24 Pakistani troops in November 2011

and Pakistan's subsequent decision to close the ground supply routes to Afghanistan, Pakistani officials watched warily as the United States learned to make do without them. Cutting the cord to Pakistan and thus freeing them to wage their war in Afghanistan, U.S. officials began imagining even bolder steps to punish Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies for continuing to use militant proxies in the region -- many of whom are killing Americans with weapons subsidized by the American taxpayer.

All of which explains why Pakistan eventually backed down. Notably, the Pakistanis did not get a higher price per vehicle, and they got no more apology than they had received in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. What was achieved by this was important: Pakistan could reinsert itself into the game, remain relevant to U.S. interests, and stave off any further aggressive U.S. action.

As the 11th anniversary of 9/11 and the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom looms, Pakistan's commitment to the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network has likely intensified rather than diminished. In part, this is because Pakistan believes its strategic interests have been jeopardized, not secured. Pakistan believes that India has exploited the U.S. security umbrella and is poised to harm Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. While Americans and certainly Indians dismiss these claims, they remain bedrock truth for Pakistan -- diplomatic niceties, financial allurements, and conventional weapons have done little to persuade Pakistan to change course.

If the United States does want Pakistan's military and intelligence agency to change course, the United States needs to change course as well. Designating the Haqqani network -- like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and other Pakistan-based terror groups -- should pave the way for public discussions about declaring Pakistan to be a state that supports terrorism. After all, surely Pakistan's support for terrorism exceeds that of Cuba and Iran, two of the four countries so designated?

The logical and empirical case for listing Pakistan is strong; what about the diplomatic one? Taking the threat of action off the table signaled to Pakistan that the United States is still not serious about the nature of the threat that Pakistan poses. Why would any of Pakistan's men in khaki take this latest designation seriously? Why would they expect that this designation would be any different from that of the other numerous [Pakistani groups so designated](#) -- i.e., quickly ignored? The answer is simple: They won't.

The United States needs to either take its counterterrorism goals seriously or stop harping about them. Continuing to berate the Pakistanis for supporting these groups while enabling their ability to do so only erodes U.S. credibility further.

Of course, one of the principal reasons *not* to declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism is that it is virtually impossible to get off that list. It also punishes the elected civilian government, which has no control over Pakistan's jihad policies even if it objects to them. The United States needs to find a way to be selective in its punitive actions -- there should be a clear path forward with identified and verifiable steps that Pakistan can take to rehabilitate itself over time. Efforts to designate Pakistan as a state that sponsors terrorism must lay out key milestones that would enable it to remove this pariah status should it choose to, and offer inducements for doing so.

The United States must also think more creatively about sanctioning individuals rather than entire organizations, much less the entire country. The United States should consider creative ways to pursue specific individuals for whom there is credible evidence of material support to designated groups. This could include U.S. Department of Treasury moves against personal financial resources, coordinated visa restrictions among the United States and European partners, and coordinated actions through Interpol that could lead to the arrest and prosecution of the individuals in question. All that might make the Pakistani ISI finally sit up and take notice.

Alternatively, the United States can pat itself on the back for finally having the courage to simply state the obvious: that the Haqqani network is a terrorist group that kills Americans. And keep flying home those body bags -- also paid for by the U.S. taxpayer.