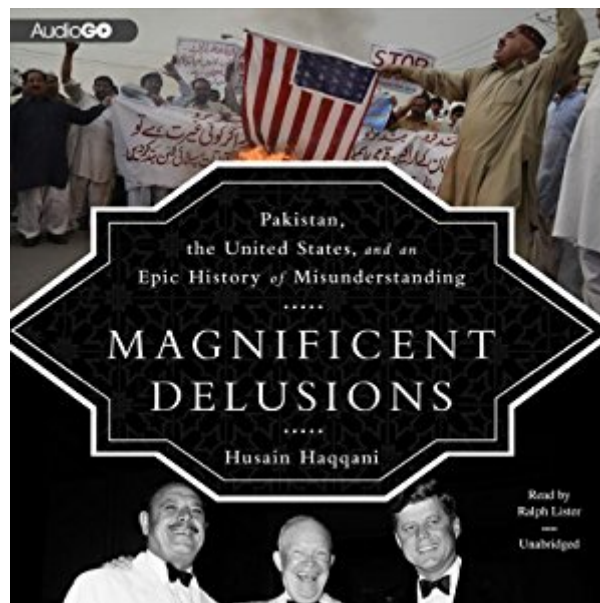


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Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, The United States, And An Epic History Of Misunderstanding



Synopsis

A character-driven history that describes the bizarrely ill-suited alliance between America and Pakistan, written by a uniquely insightful participant: Pakistan's former ambassador to the US. The relationship between America and Pakistan is based on mutual incomprehension, and always has been. Pakistan - to American eyes - has gone from being a stabilizing friend to an essential military ally to a seedbed of terror. America - to Pakistani eyes - has been a guarantee of security, a coldly distant scold, an enthusiastic military supplier and ally, and now a threat to national security and a source of humiliation. In their sixty-five year relationship, one country has become a global superpower, the other perilously close to a failed state - perhaps one of the most dangerous places in the world. Husain Haqqani has a unique insight into Pakistan, his homeland, and America, where he was the Pakistani ambassador and is now a professor at Boston University. His life has mapped the relationship of Pakistan and America, and he has found himself often close to the heart of it - sometimes in very confrontational circumstances, even under house arrest - which has allowed him to write the story of the two countries' turbulent affair, here memorably laid bare.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Haqqani, former Pakistani Ambassador to the United States and currently persona non grata (extremely non grata) from his homeland, denounced as a traitor and accused of betraying the Pakistani military in favor of the United States, has no illusions about who runs his native land and who benefits from it. While "Magnificent Delusions" may seem over the top in places the more one reads about and studies South Asia the more one realizes that his book is very much on the

money. Haqqani writes that Pakistan has had an inflated view of its importance on the world stage since 1947 and expects the United States to fund and arm it. At the same time U.S. intelligence and political leaders refused to see that the Pakistani military was created, trained and deployed for war with India particularly to force the return of Kashmir to Pakistan. They continued to tell themselves that Pakistan was part of a bulwark against the USSR. In reality the Pakistani enemies list started and stopped with India although there were always belligerent noises toward Israel. The pro forma pronouncements against the Soviets in Afghanistan were mainly to keep the flow of funds moving from Washington. In recent years, their erstwhile proxies (Pakistan Taliban, al Qaeda, etc.) have turned their guns on the Pakistani state itself. While the sorry tale of the huge increase in U.S. military aid to Pakistan after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan doesn't need retelling, one unintended consequence was increasing funds for the development of an "Islamic bomb" in Pakistan. The Saudis contributed billions to fight the Taliban and al Qaeda operations while the United States matched much of it. There was so much money sloshing around with essentially no oversight or control from the donors it was easy to surreptitiously transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to the nuclear program. Well written and told by a real insider.

I saw this book reviewed on both a right-wing TV station (C-SPAN-2) and a left-wing TV station (GBS NEWSHOUR), and both were favorable reviews. So much for "working together". The author, Haqqani, was the ambassador of Pakistan to first Sri Lanka, later to the United States. After an argument with Musharaff after 9/11, he left his native land and is now a professor of Eastern Affairs at Boston College. Haqqani certainly has a professorial grasp of Pakistani politics, and his central message is that Pakistan and America have both been the victims of longstanding and serious misunderstandings. With over 180 million citizens, Pakistan is considerably more populous than Iran or Russia, both considered important in US foreign relations, while most of us Yankees barely know where Pakistan is. Pakistan (with its eastern half now called Bangladesh), began its existence when India ceased to be a British colony in 1947. India was Hindu, and Pakistan Moslem. The source of the basic misunderstanding is ignorance on the part of the US. (During the Eisenhower administration, an official said, "We need Pakistan and its Gurkha fighters to defend against the USSR, not realizing that Gurkhas are Nepali Hindus, not Pakistanis at all.) Beginning after founder Ali Jinnah's death, Pakistan became an "Islamic Republic", whose main reason for existence was to defend itself from the "Hindu Imperialism" of India. The main interest of the US was to make Pakistan an ally in our struggle against the communism of the USSR. Pakistani needed American money to arm itself for its many wars with India, and this need, combined with the personal friendship of

several US presidents with the respective military dictators of Pakistan, resulted in much money going to Pakistan, and the leaders of the latter stringing the Americans duplicitously along. Meanwhile, Pakistan has remained both poor and mired in Islamic struggles against Hindus, Sikhs, and Baluchi residents who tend to favor the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. Although many sage minds thought the foundation of an "Islamic" state in former India was a mistake, the misunderstandings continue until this day. Pakistan is presently in political turmoil which makes America's politics seem simple by comparison. But such a large and potentially rich country we ignore at our peril. A good start on our part would be to read this book!

Extremely well written, thought provoking piece of literature on the complex and fraught with difficulties relationship between the U.S. and relatively new nation of Pakistan. Reading this book at times leaves you feeling incredibly frustrated with many of the political figures involved on both sides as a sort of domino effect takes hold on the region and the world as violent events unfold. Especially prescient is the author's first hand knowledge of the relationship and insider information from meetings with top officials in the Pakistani government, military and intelligence services. One can see the trajectory and shaping of public opinion towards the U.S. as hatred boils over in the country and leaders make incendiary remarks and push conspiracy theories. Highly recommended book for all interested in the topic and especially those working between the two nations.

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