

“We have some critical national security interests, and you have to be respectful of those interests” – General Haq



LSE South Asia Centre and LSE SU Pakistan Development Society recently hosted Ehsan Ul Haq, retired four-star general of the Pakistan Army, for the event titled “[Can Intelligence Services Do Good?](#)”. **General Haq** briefly spoke to **Mahima A. Jain** after the event. Edited excerpts:

Mahima A. Jain (MJ): “For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror.” What is your comment on US President Trump’s stance on combating terrorism in South Asia with more help from India? Pakistan had been a key player in the war on terror, but do you think it’s being sidelined now?

Ehsan Ul Haq (EUH): This is not a recent shift. If you look at Barack Obama’s policy from 2009, what President Donald Trump is saying is exactly the same except for the Trump style of making it sound very aggressive. We have always disagreed with the US approach of de-hyphenating Pakistan and India, and then trying to foster a strategic partnership with India without regards to the strategic stability in South Asia. Particularly because Pakistan already has very significant differential in our conventional military capabilities. Nuclear is just a stabiliser. If they are going to arm India against China, it is going to impact extremely seriously on Pakistan’s security dynamics. So these our concerns with regards to the US policy towards South Asia.

With regards to Afghanistan, Pakistan has always been prepared to support. The only thing is we are saying, you want us to support in Afghanistan but we have some critical national security interests, you have to be respectful of those interests. You have to be mindful of those interests. That is all that we are asking and I think that is a fair thing to ask. I personally feel asking India to play a role over there. Then, the language that is used recently, “Giving one last chance to Pakistan”, as Defense Secretary Mattis said the other day. President Trump is making very sensitive remarks.

MJ: What is your view on the [Federally Administered Tribal Area \(FATA\) reforms](#) that were announced in March, and its merger with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)? What role do you think will it bring to counter-terrorism efforts and to bring peace in the region?

EUH: With regards to counter-terrorism and peace I think there has been tremendous improvement in FATA. These efforts of mainstreaming and integrating FATA into the KPK is primarily to first – there is that legacy of the British Governance system and law such as Frontier Crime Regulation — aimed at reforming that and bringing FATA’s governance and legal system to the same platform as the rest of Pakistan. And that in itself in the long term, we feel, will improve the quality of life of the tribal people and the governance, which is our strategic counter-terrorism efforts.

MJ: The coming together of South Asian nations to combat terrorism has been an ongoing effort for a long time. But nothing substantial has come out of it. Why is that?

EUH: Kashmir is the core issue. But India says terrorism is the core issue. But what I said was both are linked. I also said that Pakistan is prepared to talk on both and we are prepared to cooperate on both. But unless we find solutions. We need to have a forward-looking solution centric dialogue. Not just the kind of dialogue we have had for the last 70 years.

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You can watch the event “Can Intelligence Services Do Good?” [here](#).

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About the authors



Ehsan UI Haq served as the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee of the Pakistan Army until October 2007. He was the director General of Military Intelligence between 1999 and 2001. During this time he commanded the Army corps in the restive tribal region and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 2001, shortly after 9/11, he was appointed the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence.



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