CHATHAM HOUSE

Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE
T: +44 (0)20 7957 5700 E: contact@chathamhouse.org
F: +44 (0)20 7957 5710 www.chathamhouse.org
Charity Registration Number: 208223

Transcript Q&A

Pakistan in a Changing Regional and Global Environment

HE Hina Rabbani Khar

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

Chair: Dr Robin Niblett

Director, Chatham House

22 February 2012

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

Robin Niblett:

Thank you very much, Minister, for those comments and remarks and thank you also for leaving us a good amount of time to be able to have some discussion, some questions as well. I think that was a powerful statement, both your comment about being proud of your neighbourhood and the neighbours that you work with, obviously is something that is going to be at the core of this conversation that we'll have in the next 30 minutes or so.

And I think your role as foreign minister, being able to think about relationships with neighbours is vital. And you went quickly through India, Iran, China, and obviously focused the bulk of your remarks on Afghanistan. I suspect that we'll have a lot of questions on that issue coming up. So let me just pull back a little bit, if I may, and take you into this point you made earlier, the phrase that you borrowed I think, that you wanted an 'uninterrupted and uninterruptible' relationship with India.

Could you tell us a little bit more about where you see that today? One of your first visits that you took when you became foreign minister – the first woman Foreign Minister, one should note, one doesn't have to note these things but I think it is noticeable – your first visit you took was to India. And obviously you had meetings there as well with members of Kashmiri opposition groups. This is always a complicated discussion to undertake, but could you tell us just very briefly where you think that relationship is today. Because I think that's, as we look at this from the outside, the relationship that almost we feel ends up predicating just about all other aspects of security in the region.

Hina Rabbani Khar:

Absolutely. I could not agree with you more. And let me just start by saying that I think both these countries have invested a great deal of time, effort and money over the last 60 years in infesting the minds of average Pakistani and average Indian against each other. So we have invested in building hostility in the hearts and minds of an average Pakistani and an average Indian.

Now, what is at the root of that effort to try and build hostility in the hearts and minds of each other? At the root of that lies the problem, what we consider to be our core interests, what India considers to be its core interests. That is the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. And that is the problem which has to be recognised as a problem. We have fought three wars over it. If it was not a problem, we would not be fighting each other over it.

Now can we solve [the] Kashmir issue by fighting another three wars over it? Will we find a solution for that? I think the answer to that is a clear no. So how do we find a solution to this dispute that has festered our minds and our lives? We do it through the dialogue process.

And how do we get to the dialogue process or get through to the dialogue process at a level where we can actually be finding real solutions rather than working around them? For that we have to first decrease or eliminate completely the trust deficit that exists, that has bred between the two countries. And then start working on the trust, to be able to solve some of the serious problems that we have between ourselves.

Now, for that to happen, it is exceptionally important that the dialogue process itself continues. That it doesn't lose the momentum that it gains by being broken off every now and then. It is exceptionally accident prone. Most of our relationships in South Asia are exceptionally accident prone. So if that dialogue process were to continue and to be uninterrupted and uninterruptible by any event, by any accident, then there is a hope that you will be able to reach a stage where you start solving some real issues.

And we can start off, for instance, that's what Pakistan's suggestion is, by solving for instance the [inaudible] or the [inaudible] issue. So that we give our people collectively the conscience that we are able to do it through the negotiating table rather than through hostility.

Robin Niblett:

And the trade side? One of the questions I got in from a member outside was about the issue of the trade relationship, most favoured nation. Is this part of a kind of functional approach, to start with the economic... Can the economic lead to the security confidence? Is this part of the uninterrupted discussion? Or is this also interruptible?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

No, I don't think. As I said for Pakistan, it's not interruptible. For Pakistan this is not reversible. This is a decision that has been taken. This is a decision which has been taken at the highest level, and it's a decision which has been taken fully cognizant of the effects of this decision.

And what are we seeing over here? We're seeing that we have held onto views through a security lens for far too long. By both countries. I mean, this

is a major departure from a long held view for Pakistan and we hope that India will also make some major departures from some long held views, vis-a-vis its relations with Pakistan. Because if this region has to... by the way, I think it is by now well understood that there's no single island of prosperity that can emerge from an ocean of poverty and hunger and strife. Right? So be it India, be it Pakistan, be it Bangladesh, be it Maldives… no one pillar of strength in prosperity and growth can continue.

So the whole region, so if you start looking at these problems from a regional lens, then many of your preconceived notions start to crumble. And for Pakistan I think we feel that it is important to normalise trade relations with India so that this region is not, this whole region, the integration of the region, is not held back by these two fighting powers.

Question 1:

My first question is – the policy of strategic depth in the webinizing [sic] of proxies through Afghanistan. How does your government view that going forward?

And overtures have been made to Russia, your trip recently where you said you take pride in the re-establishment of that relationship, and also the President's speech on his trip where he said that we're going to have a new block in the region. And we don't want to be told not to trade with whoever we want to trade or have deals with. Could you elaborate how that will play out with your relationship with the United States? Thank you.

Hina Rabbani Khar:

On the question of strategic depth, first of all, you know the whole concept of strategic depth could only be looked as a flawed concept. And again, it's propped up to be something and let me just try and explain where it's coming from. So the proxy wars, or the militarisation or the propensity to encourage extremist elements, for instance, who was responsible for that? Was Pakistan the only country that was doing it? Where were the finances coming from? Who was funding all of this? Wasn't this an international effort, like the one that we're having in Afghanistan?

It was just that our space, our land was being used and therefore when the world turned away because it has achieved what it needed to achieve, it looked away, Pakistan was left with the arms and the ammunition and the armed people and the narcotics and everything else to live with for the next

20 years. And we are the ones who should be blaming the rest of the world for that. Because we did not have a Kalashnikov culture, or a drug culture in Pakistan. It was given to us, because of a completely international effort. I mean the Soviet Union is the only one not to be blamed. We all, everybody else has got their hands dirty.

So now, if we are looking for, for instance, the strategic depth that you're referring to, how do I achieve my depth? By having a sovereign country in Afghanistan that trusts me as a sovereign country. This is the only depth I can get. I cannot get any military depth. I cannot get any other proxy war oriented... there is no other depth. And all of that has never worked and it never will work.

So I am truly looking for that depth, but I am looking for that depth by reaching out. As I said, I quoted the president, I quoted the prime minister, they reach out. This is a serious national consensus in Pakistan. In treating Afghanistan as a sovereign nation that we have to respect... so we expect to give the Afghans the same respect as a sovereign nation that we expect from the US in return. Or any other country.

So when you asked that question about the US, I mean simply that any country would pursue its relations with another country from one primary focus; where are you going to derive the strength or weakness of pursuing a relationship with any other country? From your national interest. I have defined my national interest. From that lens, whatever fits into our national interest, we will pursue. New blocks, old blocks, same blocks, same strategic interests, different strategic interests. Whatever comes our way we will go.

Question 2:

Good afternoon. Two questions about Iran. There are reports today that the US is pressuring Pakistan to allow Washington to establish intelligence bases in Balochistan province in order to do some intelligence work on Iran. First of all, can you confirm this? And as you know, there is a bill introduced in the US Congress about the Balochistan province, recognising Balochis people to right of self-determination. Can this be used as a lever on Pakistan to allow intelligence bases inside the country?

And also, you mentioned that you wanted stability in Iran. As you know, there is a tug of war going on between Iran and the West. In the case of a war happening between Iran and the West, are you concerned that your country might be dragged into this militarily? And will you allow the use of your land or

space in any military conflict? And what did you tell Mr Sali last week about Pakistan's concerns?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

This will be longer than my speech if I start answering each one of them. But intelligence, I'm not going to comment on it, I know nothing about it. I think most of the reports we see in the press sometimes are very, very unsubstantiated.

On the bill, it's actually a resolution I believe, which was moved in the Congress. Now, a resolution has been moved in the National Assembly of Pakistan which represents 180 million people of Pakistan which says that Balochistan is a matter of concern to us as Pakistanis. It is an internal matter of Pakistan and we do not appreciate any Congressional hearing on a matter which is internal to Pakistan.

Now, this is not something that is Pakistan made. The UN Charter clearly talks about what any countries, where the national or the internal matter of a country starts and an international matter ends. So we have clearly articulated that this is extremely unhelpful to the course of action that we're trying to pursue with the United States. That is of having a relationship which is transparent. And I don't think there's anybody in this room who can advise us otherwise, that you should not have a relationship that is transparent.

We want a relationship which is predictable. And we want a relationship which is based on mutual interest and mutual respect. Because if the interests become unilateral, then the partnership cannot move ahead. Then the partnership is strained.

So this is extremely counterproductive at this point in time, and it will obviously not be very useful on how it is interpreted. It is very misinterpreted within Pakistan and I think it certainly does not have support of the administration. And we hope that they will be able to handle it better.

Stability in Iran: we have made it very clear that there is absolutely no room for more instability within the region. Pakistan is a country which has suffered because of that instability within the region, because of war in one particular country which is our neighbour. We feel this region certainly cannot afford it and it will have very, very dire consequences.

Robin Niblett:

If a war breaks out, from Pakistan's perspective, this is something you would want to remain as detached from as possible?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

We have said, we have no other options. If there's a premise of our foreign policy objective, it is to be able to pursue peace with all of our neighbours. And as I said, we are happy with our neighbours. So we will continue to pursue good relations, the best possible. I think the only example that we have is China, and we would like to have relationship as deep with each of our neighbours so we can live within this neighbourhood peacefully.

Question 3:

My question is regarding, has your government considered the ‘no war’ pact among your neighbours? Or if not, then why not? And what are the factors of actors which are preventing you to not have a no war pact with your neighbours?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

You see, this is good rhetoric, but what should precede a no war pact? There is a lot that has to precede a no war pact. We're trying to get there, as I explained. We are really trying to pursue... first you have to ensure that you stop looking at each other as enemies. A no war pact would be miles and miles away from that, right? So let's get out of that mindset of looking at each other as enemies. As harming each other's interests. And then the sky is the limit to the level of co-operation that we can achieve together.

Question 4:

Thank you very much, first of all, for the speech. The way I look at it, Pakistan has a very important role to play in the international community by especially what you just mentioned, that it tries to tackle and counter the extremist tendencies within Pakistan. But that is the international scenario. On the national scenario, apparently it looks like Pakistan actually back home, harbours the extremist radical tendencies of Islamisation.

The very constitution declaring some people to be non-Muslims is one example. And as a Pakistani living here in Britain, I feel ashamed when I see newspaper headings saying that the law bar association and university campuses have banned a certain food product only because it's manufactured by a minority. So I would like to ask you how you think the international community looks at that. Thank you.

Robin Niblett:

Yes this issue of harbouring extremist groups within Pakistan. How does that speak with the ethos that you've laid out in your speech and your remarks so far?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

No but I did categorically say that harbouring extremist groups is the narrative that I tried to show is not correct. I said that yes, there are extremist elements which are existing in all of this region, which are left over because of what we did. And therefore we have to be very careful in how we play out this war right now in Afghanistan because we do not want tools to be used in being able to find quick solutions which leave us with a lot to clean up, which then the world community moves onto the next theatre of war.

So this harbouring of extremist elements – if that was the case then who are we losing our 6,000 military men fighting against? I thought we were the ones who were harbouring them. So who are they losing their lives to? So the expectation from us is that we can do everything at the same time and the effects of years and years of conflict, of financing of terrorist organisations by many key players in the world should then be forgotten. We have to learn to live with those effects.

The other point that you made, this is clearly against the state policy, what you're mentioning. That there is in any way anything against minorities, right? However, there are laws in Pakistan which are implemented even in the worst way than the laws are. And maybe those laws eventually also need to be changed, but look at the state policy. Look at the fact that in the National Assembly, in the Senate, minorities have gained more and more representation and that will be different. You know that is probably more so than in many other countries.

But yes, it is a problem in Pakistan. And yes, it's a problem that we are very well aware of, that we have to tackle at different levels. But we have to find ways and means which are useful.

Robin Niblett:

Would it be fair to separate out... you talked about extremist groups being a hangover. And I think you were referring there to the Taliban or the interventions that took place externally in the 1980s and so on. Of course there's the other side of the extremist groups, which have more the focus towards Kashmir, which have a very different kind of root to them and I suppose one could not necessarily make the case that they're hangovers from external intervention.

So if one were to apply the comment about extremist groups – not let's say to the Taliban, hangover from that period in the 1980s – but to the groups focussed in the opposite direction to the other side of your neighbourhood, towards India and so on, what do you have to say about that particular issue? I think that is still very much a concern.

Hina Rabbani Khar:

There is absolutely no policy to support any groups against India. Or anyone else. This is not a tool which the state decides to use, and I'm being exceptionally categorical about that.

Question 5:

As a Pakistani, I guess it's my right to ask my foreign minister, why is Pakistan investing in Afghanistan when our own children are dying on a daily basis? The suicide rate is the highest right now in the history of Pakistan. The people living under the poverty line are the highest in the history of Pakistan. And people are actually questioning democracy, that the current People's Party government has failed to deliver to the people of Pakistan. So how would you respond to it?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

It's a good question, but it is because as I said, our future and our lives are interlinked and intertwined in ways where you cannot... you know that's a burden that you've been carrying, three million refugees for the last three

decades. And yes, I did not say it, but what you have said is clear because we do not have enough resources to be able to feed our own children, to be able to educate our own children. And that's exactly the point I was trying to make. Yet 40% of the Peshawar Medical Institute, for instance, is catering to Afghan nationals and not Pakistan, and yet Pakistan is seen to be not doing enough for Afghans.

So it's a valid point that you make, but it's also an even more valid point that because they are in need and because they are our neighbours and because we have a future which is interlinked, you cannot dispose of them. And the world needs to invest also in support pull factors within Afghanistan to have this refugee population go back to Afghanistan with dignity. We are trying to work on that, and 2012 happened to be the deadline. But we have been extending these deadlines for many decades now. And we hope that this deadline will indeed be met.

Robin Niblett:

The UK government has had its own challenges of balancing spending on aid and spending at home. It's a different scale of the suffering that has been taking place in Pakistan, but this is a perennial issue.

Question 6:

My question to you is that your government has always... I mean, the last year has been a diplomatic disaster for Pakistan. And your government has always taken the kind of, has always pointed towards the military during [inaudible] crises, but has taken the credit for warming relationships with Moscow, Iran and China, Beijing and Delhi.

My question is that... and as a Pakistani I also would like to ask this question, because this kind of mixed messages which Islamabad sends to various world centres is not only a cause of apprehension for the global centres, but also for the people of Pakistan. My question is, who is at the moment driving the foreign policy in Islamabad? Because of the kind of tension between the military and civilian relationship. Could you answer this question please?

Hina Rabbani Khar:

First of all, I wish Chatham House rules did apply. I completely disagree with what you just said. I completely disagree because I do not look at the last

year to be a diplomatic disaster. I look at it to be a diplomatic success of the sort that we haven't seen in many years. And here is a change of mindset that we, as Pakistanis, have to either adopt and start following or reject and start moaning about the disasters that we had.

I look at it as success because we have had a major recharge to our neighbours in the last year than ever before. We had a major recharge within this government to each one of our neighbours, and we have bent backwards to be able to extend to each of our immediate neighbours and extends neighbours. Because it is the region, and it is, as I mentioned... There's only one thing that will define what works in terms of a relationship and what doesn't. And that is your key national interests. What are your key national interests.

And if your key national interest is prosperity for an average Pakistani, then you have to ensure that you provide yourself with stability and with a stable and secure environment to be able to pursue that goal. If you're going to be picking fights on your right and on your left and your north and south, then where will you have the resources and the time and the money and the energy to be able to invest in your own people?

For 60 years, this country has invested far too much in looking... so if you think that because we've had our problems with the United States, it's a diplomatic disaster, you have a right to your opinion. But I feel that it is much more important to be able to pursue a foreign policy which is in sync with your national interests. And we are by no means looking for confrontation either with the United States.

But we are saying that as a sovereign country it is our right to be respected. And our red lines have to be respected. The Security Council resolution which limits the role of the NATO troops inside Afghan territory has to be respected. Unilateral action against Pakistan inside Pakistani territory is not acceptable by the people of Pakistan and we have made it clear. And if it will happen, we feel that this partnership is not working for us, that it is not in our national interest.

However, we are trying to now create ownership for this partnership. And we want it to be a transparent relationship. We do not want a different relationship in the dark of night and a different relationship in the light of day. It has to be the same. It has to be open to the people of Pakistan and accepted by the parliament of Pakistan.

Question 7:

I think everyone is agreed that the military option hasn't worked and the political solution/settlement is needed to bring the peace and stability in Afghanistan that you so much desire. Yet you made it clear at the end of your talk that Pakistan was not willing to take a lead in this, though that you would support any moves by the Afghan parties themselves.

But I wonder, given your need for peace and stability and given your influence in Kabul with the Karzai government, given your influence with the Taliban through the ISI, whether it's not in your interests, indeed your responsibility, to try to do something to promote a settlement rather than standing back, even if you tried to promote the settlement perhaps behind closed doors. Isn't this something that you need so badly that you should have a part in?

And having listened to your talk today, I think you would be an excellent person to chair those negotiations. Thank you.

Hina Rabbani Khar:

Thank you for that endorsement, but really... We need it very, very badly. I agree. We need it very badly. But what we need even more badly is Afghan trust so we can take the type of depth that somebody else referred to over here.

Now how do we take the Afghan trust? We take the Afghan trust if we decide... can we ever win Afghan trust if we are seen to be imposing solutions on Afghanistan and repeating the mistakes of history? So what are we saying? We are not saying we're going to sit on the sides and let things fail. We are not saying that we will not be proactively supportive. What we're saying is that there is an important prerequisite for all the 48 countries which are trying to support Afghanistan.

And that is that the Afghan people first decide for themselves how they want to take the reconciliation peace process. That they're the ones who lead so that there is one centre of gravity around which all of us, as Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, you know, other neighbours, the region, the world, can congregate again around that one central process or one central decision or one central mechanism.

So that we all push that one and support it fully. If it's the Qatar one and President Karzai supports that fully, we will be behind that. It's not a Pakistani choice. It's an Afghan choice, and I think it is exceptionally important in order to get real results, that that precondition or prerequisite is entirely met.

You know, when I was in Kabul recently, February 1, so as recently as maybe 20 days back, I felt that almost each one of the people that I met, each one of the leaders that I met, were rather unhappy about solutions being imposed on them by other capitals. And that might be a burden that London can learn to live with, or Washington can learn to live with, but us as neighbours who are going to co-exist and survive together hopefully through better times, we cannot take that burden of imposing solutions on Kabul.

So we are... please don't misinterpret what I'm saying, that we want to be on the side and watch the show. What we're saying is that, let the Afghans take the lead, a clear lead, a visible lead, so that tomorrow, God forbid something happens and if President Karzai sort of does not own up to what is happening, then where would that keep us? And that has happened with some processes. We've seen as recently as a few weeks back. So we as a neighbour cannot afford it. But we will be fully supportive of whatever the Afghans decide for themselves.

Question 8:

I'd be interested to know whether this new paradigm you speak about, about changing mindset and departing from long held views, also includes normalising diplomatic ties with Israel, which although is not a neighbour of Pakistan. It clearly matters for regional stability, particularly via the Iran channel. Thank you.

Question 9:

Thank you very much for your speech. What I wanted to know was, a lot of people or a lot of commentators or observers here in... well, around the world, are very sceptical about Pakistan's future given some of the challenges that you've mentioned. Now, how can you promote a more optimistic outlook regarding Pakistan? And where do you see Pakistan in the next five to ten years?

Question 10:

You mentioned that Pakistan is absolutely against harbouring terrorism, but at the end of the day, Osama bin Laden was found on Pakistani soil in Abbottabad, which is the heart of the military establishment in Pakistan. Shouldn't Pakistan own up to some of its own mistakes and be a bit more honest about the links between elements of its security and intelligence

agencies and their links to the Taliban and other insurgent groups in the country? I think if you do that, you'll promote stability not only in your own country, but in the region as well.

Question 11:

I'd be very interested for the overview it provides you, being foreign minister, how does being a recipient of large amounts of international development aid, how does that play into the image you want to promote of what Pakistan is and where it's going?

Robin Niblett:

That's a broad set of question. I think a core one there, because in a way it gets to my one, is the 'we'. I know it's difficult in a public discussion like this, but when you say... very interesting you said in your remarks earlier on about defining, at least how I heard it, the job of the military intelligence to tell us what the national security interests are, and then the economic interests, and then we put it together. In many cases, one thinks the job of the intelligence and the military service is to implement what the government determines to be the national interests. And I think there's maybe an element of that in the Abbottabad question. But obviously you'll answer that as well you can. I've got a little list of those questions as well if you want to come to it.

Hina Rabbani Khar:

Okay first of all, the last thing that you mentioned about... what I was saying was exactly this, that as far as the security interest of Pakistan is concerned, it is their job to define that. It is their job to define the security risk. And from there have to emerge the national interests which have to be defined by the parliament and the executive.

And it is… this relationship by the way has been working very well. And I think yes, there are a lot of hangovers of what we consider to be the military's role in the foreign policy in other areas and I think you were also referring to it. And that is simply because of the fact that 33 years of our 60 year-plus history, we've been governed by dictatorships where the military clearly has had a real role.

And then to get out of that system, to get back into that system, has been a bit of a roller coaster ride. But let me be clear, democracy in Pakistan is now

irreversible. And I think in the last four years, if there's anything that we've seen, we've seen this. Simply for the reason that the type of chaos that we've seen in Pakistan in terms of the institutional elbowing happening has been good for Pakistan and will continue to be an encouraging thing for Pakistan because here are now institutions which have typically not played any role which are playing now a very big role. Such as the Parliament, such as the judiciary.

Of course there's going to be elbowing, and of course what is going to emerge is everybody fitting into their own spheres of influence, their places as demarcated very clearly within the constitution of Pakistan. So this is a country which is in transition in some ways. And let's recognise and accept that.

Now, international development and international assistance. Thank you for asking that question. As somebody who has looked at, for six years, the incoming in-flows of international assistance in Pakistan, and not because I am on English soil, but DFID and of course for instance from China, the type of assistance that we receive is very transformational. It moves into high value infrastructure projects. Same is the case to some extent with the assistance that comes from Japan.

But a lot of the assistance that you hear about never makes it to the Pakistani people. It never makes it to the Pakistani government. It never makes it to the Pakistani system. With the US for instance, most of it is reimbursement for the costs of our operations or our work on the border areas. And if you look at the $1.5 billion a year in the Kerry-Lugar Bill, and look from within that what comes inside the Pakistani system, it's not more than $300 million.

So I think this is a relationship in terms of assistance which has not worked well for both sides. From the American side, it has not created goodwill for them in Pakistan, and they of course have every right to be upset about it. From the Pakistani side, because it is not the way we would ideally want it to be, and we have made it very clear that we would give up every billion dollars of assistance... I'm not saying every penny, I'm saying every billion dollars of assistance, for a penny of preferential market access. Because that is what is sustainable. That is what gives us real jobs. That is what gives people real opportunities.

And we have been shouting at the top of our lungs for the last three, four, five years now, saying that if Pakistan truly is in such a peculiar situation, going through such challenges, the frontline state, etc, then cannot the world make

this one thing that we ask of them? And the answer to that question has been no.

We've been given promises of many things, but it has never come through. The only thing that has come through, and I must recognise British and German leadership in that, is the EU special package for preferential market access for Pakistan which has now gone through the WTO waiver and hopefully will pass through the European Union Parliament.

On Osama bin Laden, should we not be more honest? We are being very honest. On Osama bin Laden, again because our word is not taken seriously, I think the fact that intelligence which was received not by our intelligence people but by other intelligence people from the compound of Osama bin Laden, confirms that there was no complicity by any Pakistani establishment at all.

Yes, it is a failure of the Pakistani Prime Minister game. The day after said, 'Yes, it is an intelligence failure. But it is not only our intelligence failure, is is everybody's intelligence failure.' And it is an intelligence failure. Of course it is an intelligence failure. But it seems like we were not – by we I don't mean Pakistan but the international community – clearly we were not looking hard enough. That he was sitting right in the centre of a town, unknown to all of us.

Pakistan's future, five to ten years, you know, not because I have the job that I have and I would not be doing it if I were not optimistic about Pakistan's future, but some structural changes have taken place in Pakistan, which are not visible to the eye.

The 18th Amendment... you say the Balochistan issue, and somebody asked about it. I wanted to add also that do we forget that Balochistan has an elected parliament? That Balochistan has a provincial assembly? So the aspirations of the Baloch people is being represented in that assembly. But if anybody has aspirations beyond that that they want to encourage, that's a different animal altogether.

So Pakistan's future cannot be anything but bright, for the reason that many of the structural changes that were impeding Pakistan, such as autonomy for the provinces, such as trying to increase the revenue base and therefore not be dependent on being given lectures on assistance. And there is no country in the world, so therefore our typical approach as Pakistanis is, what will somebody else do for us? And what will we do for ourselves?

So the approach has to change from what the US, UK, EU will do for us – other than market access which we still ask for – to what are we going to do

for ourselves. And I think you've seen this in Pakistan. You've seen this in the vibrancy in the media, you're seeing this in how democracy is taking root now.

But will start delivering because some of these structural changes, the 18th Amendment, the 19th Amendment, the 20th Amendment to the constitution, at a time where a government which is in power does not even have a simple majority... in the sense that one single party does not even have a single majority. And we've seen in Pakistan two thirds majority governments which made no constitutional changes. So these are good things for Pakistan. And they will hopefully have results.

And then there was a question about normalising diplomatic ties with Israel, I think that's a completely different context than the one that I was referring to. What I was referring to was our neighbours because that is important. Israel within the Muslim world has a completely different context and I will just want to keep it at that.

But as far as reaching out to our neighbours is concerned for that, all the preconceived notions, all the long held views about the type of relationship that we want to pursue. I think it's changing. It's changing within the Pakistani psyche. It's changing within the Pakistani society. It's also changing, I hope, within the region. And within our neighbours' psyche and society.

Robin Niblett:

Ms Khar, I think that Pakistan obviously is a country that, well it draws a crowd. [Laughter] But also it is an area of concern for many analysts and commentators around the world. I think the... I was trying to think how to finish this up. The parallel that's interesting is that right now, we are witnessing a sort of global political awakening. Certainly in the Middle East, a changing of the roles of different institutions.

But I think the talk you've given today, the role that you're playing, the role that the parliament is playing, what you said there about the institutional elbowing that's taking place, different voices, it sounds chaotic, it's worrying for some people who look at it from the outside. But it certainly seems to be a big improvement. In my sense, a potential optimistic scene for the future. And I think your remarks today and the candidness with which you gave them, even under a non-Chatham House Rule context, were very refreshing. And it was a pleasure to have you here. Thank you very much for joining us.