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Transcript

Pakistan and the Great Game: Have the Rules Changed?

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Owen Bennett-Jones:

Let me very briefly introduce myself. My name is Owen Bennett-Jones. I've worked for the BBC in Pakistan quite a lot. I don't need to give very much of an introduction about what is going on in Pakistan at the moment. It has been as ever a very traumatic period over the last few months: the assassinations of Bin Laden, Salmaan Taseer, Saleem Shahzad – the journalist who was killed and whom everyone suspects was with official involvement and so many other issues going on in Balochistan – Karachi, the madrasahs in Punjab, and the administration of justice… people are talking more and more about the failure to convict any of the militants that are actually caught. Behind all of that, the huge rift in my view between Pakistan and the United States is a really big development since the Bin Laden killing. The lack of trust is really changing everything in this key relationship. So there is a lot going on, always is.

We're going to be talking about the 'great game' – that's the tag put on it. But if you want to raise issues I know the speakers will be very glad to talk about anything, and there is so much going on. There will be lots of things to talk about I'm sure.

Let me introduce Mustafa Qadri, who is with Amnesty International, has been living in Pakistan as a journalist and then with Amnesty, and is now living here in London – but you're hoping to go back to Pakistan and visit Pakistan a lot. So you have worked as a journalist in Pakistan filing for…?

Mustafa Qadri:

I've worked as a freelance journalist: I've worked for *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom and mainly for Australian publications like *The Australian* newspaper, *The Age*, and The Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

This is Ali Chishti who is a very active journalist in Karachi. Writing on security issues a lot and writing on all the difficult things to write about in Pakistan. He writes about the involvement of the army – if there is any – in Pakistan, and on the involvement of the Taliban, the attitude of the state towards the different groups of militants, and so he is right in the heart of the key issues.

Ali, I think we'll start with you. If you could talk for ten minutes on this issue, basically the central issue of the war – there is a war in Pakistan now – and

the things you're writing about in your journalistic articles. If you just kick us off with some introductory remarks, then later on we'll have some questions and answers as well. So Ali Chishti why don't you kick us off...

Ali Chishti:

Thanks a lot. Hello ladies and gentlemen. I've prepared a couple of pages, that I would like to read out and I hope it is not too boring, to be honest. I'll be talking about the Afghan war, the intelligence agencies and the hard topic: their active support by certain members within the ISI.

So we all know that the Afghan war was not a war of Afghans against Afghans but a combination of superpowers in the region. There has been three phases that we all know. Let me take you to the first phase, which is the use of US and NATO allies and camps in Afghanistan which has been opposed by the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other non-state actors. The Pakistanis are playing a double-game strategy of being a US ally and as having some sort of secret relationship with anti-US forces. In this phase the US and its coalition allies have their own proxies [inaudible] while the Taliban and even members of the Afghanistan army have traditionally been Pakistani proxies. To take the Taliban or Al-Qaeda as isolated, acting as policy [inaudible] the US and its allies have applied long term strategic goals in Afghanistan.

Now, coming back to Pakistan, you have to understand that there are two forms of government working in Pakistan. There is a very vulnerable civilian government led by the PPP and its allies and then there is a military government. Military looks after the foreign policy and security policy. The word is that nobody in Pakistan wants a strong foreign minister, so the military, as such, controls most of the foreign policy in Pakistan, as well as the security. There is a doctrine of 'strategic depth' and the military distinguishes between the good and the bad Taliban, or the good and the bad jihadis. This is a major obstacle to national security, not just to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan but for Pakistan itself.

Another whole dimension that has not been reported as such is the difference between various intelligence agencies that have been working in Pakistan. The civilian intelligence agencies like IB, FIA or the CID who have been very active against the Taliban and there is obviously the ISI and the military intelligence. Interestingly, most intelligence officials I talk to, which are civilians, have been very disgusted by the fact that every time a civilian

intelligence agency captures a Taliban, an ISI or military official pops up and always says one of the Jihadis is a double agent.

There have been two recent examples. Last week two Jihadis who had been exporting a chemical called ammonium-nitrate, which has been used in IEDs in Afghanistan, which was being shipped in through transit rail… they were caught by an intelligence bureau in Karachi. Now these two people were actually [inaudible] Massouds living in Karachi. The ISI officials came down to the IB headquarters and took them away with the pretext that these people were working as double-agents. Similarly, only last year a couple of IB officials who were very active against [inaudible] and its members had been shot dead, apparently in Karachi again.

Obviously the military has its own mindset. Recently I was at the National Defence Academy in Islamabad to give a lecture on de-radicalisation and apparently it was to a lot of military officers. One of the major generals stood up and said, 'How could you use the word Taliban to me?' To him it was such a sacred word. As a military commander of troops in South Waziristan he put a ban on the word 'Taliban' when he was commanding a brigade in South Waziristan. It says a lot about how the military in Pakistan perceive a certain type of Taliban. Obviously this was after OBL's killing and how the military cloud treats the Afghani Taliban, Kashmiri Taliban and Punjabi Taliban who were the good guys and the PPP as agents of Zionists, the US or India.

There is something called the [inaudible] that I have always been reporting in my articles and have always classed them as a proxy because [inaudible] have always been a Karachi shoot off. There have been three out of six [inaudible] members who have been caught from Karachi and that includes [inaudible] who was caught at the [inaudible] Koran. It is a very hard-line religious seminary located just outside of Karachi and it apparently has huge influence with a local political party called Jamaat-e-Islami, which actively supports them. Apparently this party has been in the news for a long time. Obviously what I have found out through my reporting is that various safe-houses outside of Karachi which held three [inaudible] members caught in Karachi have all been FBI or CIA leads. So obviously it is not ISI or the military that has caught them except Mustafa Olber for obvious reasons because he was going 'freelance'.

There is something called the 'Karachi Project' which is basically another set of safe-houses created by the ISI. It originated from something called 'Forward Station 23', an ISI plan which closed in which certain members of ISI as a policy had given active support not just to the militants but also have given

safe-houses in the Pakistani side of Kashmir. It was closed but has been re-launched in Karachi. The Karachi branch of Pakistan's ISI directorate has become the hub for anti-India activities – obviously you have seen the 26/11, because all of these people came from Karachi. Then you have a very active Mujahidin in Jamaat-e-Islami and all of these Indian people who have been injured and drawn to seek active shelter in Karachi. In time [inaudible] his daughters were video conferencing in a place in Karachi, so of course everybody knows where he is.

In fact the first ever threat I received directly came from a story of ours on an Afghani when he was moved from North Waziristan to [inaudible] agency and ISI officials directly threatened me. Another friend of mine who was very close to my heart, called Saleem Shahzad, was killed. We often reported on radicalisation in the army. Another, [inaudible] had been reporting on the radicalisation in the army and how certain groups in the army were actively supporting certain militants due to ideological reasons. When [inaudible] was attacked in Karachi, Saleem was one of the reporters who reported it first. But again one of the investigating officers from the Pakistan Navy was actually shot and killed, who was the prime investigator from the navy.

Now this is the news that never comes up and reported. I try my best to publish those but they cannot get published in Pakistani newspapers. Obviously there have been 45 journalists who have been killed. Absolutely 100 percent of them had been reporting on political aims or the 'war against terror'. They were all in Pakistan – especially in Balochistan and in Quetta – where journalists have been kidnapped and killed. Last year I had been focusing on a Saudi diplomat who we followed throughout October 2010 and was eventually stopped because, according to official sources, they were in negotiations with Mullah Omar who was located about 25 miles away from Karachi.

So I think that will be it from my part. I would also like to advocate that this war in Pakistan and Afghanistan is more about economic reasons. Obviously it is run by greed. A lot of Pakistani military officials I talk to would actually want the Americans to stay in Afghanistan and be engaged, rather than leaving. I would like to advocate that the EU is making an aid package for Pakistan, since it is all about economics, I would want the EU to present something like the Kerry-Lugar Bill to Pakistan. The EU would ensure cooperation on the 'war against terror' and the war in Afghanistan and stabilising issues like human rights, blasphemy and the ongoing genocide in Balochistan, which is not reported.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Thank you Ali, I don't think the Europeans are going to be coming up with much money this week... We'll talk with Mustafa Qadri, before we come back with some questions on what you have been talking about. So let me throw that to you, on both those topics really, the relationships between the state and the Jihadis, the militants. The Jihadis are obviously very aware of the threats to the journalists who are writing about this sort of thing.

Mustafa Qadri:

Yes, there are a lot of really high-profile things happening in Pakistan. It makes for very good television as well but what it shows you is that when you have the main actors, be they militants, the military or civilians and when they act above the rule of law, it affects everyone. And like Ali was saying, one example of that is when you consider some extremists good – and others bad – you're creating a space where ordinary people can be affected. If you take, for example, journalists: many of the journalists that have been killed in Pakistan had been reporting on a Shia procession or something like that and then a suicide bombing goes off and they die. What we find is that every aspect of Pakistani society in some way or another is being affected.

This year what we have seen is incredible insecurity amongst decision makers in Pakistan. Obviously you hear about the array – the killing of Osama Bin Laden and the murder of Saleem Shahzad – but let's not forget about the murder of the governor of Pakistan, Salmon Tasir, in January, because that sent a shiver down everyone's spine. All of a sudden, even the basic idea that a law that was apparently about protecting Islam was being used by extremists. That there was no debate about it as a matter of the rule of law was beyond their power. No one could even talk about that.

Now more than ever the issues that Pakistan is facing are down to law and order and down to rule of law. Obviously when we talk about human rights, it's a very high-minded thing, it sounds very idealist. But if ever you need an example of a country where human rights is actually quite a practical thing: that country has to be Pakistan. Because if you cannot provide basic rule of law, if the judges or the police are too afraid of a political party or a religious group or the military to investigate their crimes, then what hope do ordinary citizens have. When I travel through Pakistan one thing that people often talk

about is justice: that basically there is a complete lack of justice. Those who have influence, have influence not because of some system of rule of law, but because they act above that.

Of course, tonight we will probably talk a lot about the ISI and the army and we have deep concerns with the way they act above the rule of law. But it is important to say that it is not just them. It's also the political parties, it is also the powerful and it is important to say that it also applies to the United States. Obviously, there is a war going on and we can recognise that, but there is absolutely no clarity of example of the drone strikes. We don't know what rules of engagement apply and we never get any information directly from the United States about who is being killed. That actually feeds into the cycle of violence and acting above the rule of law. There are so many sides to what is happening in Pakistan, and of course there are a lot of good things happening too, but they do fundamentally go back to this idea of justice.

If you look at a city like Karachi, when you have political parties completely just killing whoever they want. It just seems like there isn't anyone with the capacity to stop it. You have journalists who can't openly report on that, for fear of their lives. Ali is one of the few people who openly talks about the things he does but despite Pakistan having a relatively free media there are still issues that you simply cannot touch. That is a significant thing. We saw with the Osama raid and the murder of Saleem Shahzad, for a period of time there was a small window. For people who were cheerleaders of the well-worn narrative in Pakistan were starting to question what the security establishment was doing. Where all this money was being spent, yet the country doesn't seem to be able to protect itself. Despite that the threats remain.

One thing that we are particularly concerned about is to ensure journalists can work without that fear. For Pakistan's future it is really key that they have a free media. It really cuts across the issues that we're talking about tonight. We have already seen with the removal of the most recent military dictator, that the media played a critical role. I'll end it at that. That despite all of the problems there are possibilities for things to improve. Really, it needs the rule of law to be promoted.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Thank you very much for that. For what it's worth I have increasingly come to believe that the demand for most Pakistanis is the not for democracy, which they may be quite happy with, it is for the rule of law. That is the primary

demand of most Pakistani people who are trying to bring up a family, do some trading or run their business. It is absolutely lacking and that is probably their main concern.

Question 1:

Hilary Clinton visited Pakistan recently. She actually urged Pakistan to do more. That means the Pakistani army and the ISI altogether kills more Pakistanis, whether they are the Taliban, militants or suspected terrorists. Now she warned Pakistan that if Pakistan did not draw the line, then the US will do something and they will have to pay a heavy price. Now Ali Chishti could you please tell me what kind of heavy price Pakistan will have to pay if Pakistan does not draw the line? Because Pakistan has done enough: 35,000 Pakistanis have been killed fighting the United States' proxy war in Afghanistan.

The United States is shifting its burden to Pakistan. Pakistan has got enough. The United States has no right to go on regular visits; Hilary Clinton is a regular visitor there as well as General Mullen and General Petraeus and all of these people. Pakistan is an innocent party in this Afghan war. The only solution is that the United States of America withdraws its troops from Afghanistan and there will be no terrorism anywhere in the world, I can ensure you that.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali, let me put that to you in two bits. Is it a proxy war for the United States and what levers might the US use if it continues on its current path?

Ali Chishti:

Just to correct the figures, 30,000 people have died after 2,000 as per Pakistani officials. Obviously when we talk about 'strategic depth' and after 2000 about 30,000 people in Pakistan have died and because of the policy of the security doctrine of 'strategic depth', about [inaudible] civilians have died after 2001.

Who is to blame? Well everybody, to be honest, in this mess. The US because they left Afghanistan in 1988/89 [inaudible]. I think the Pakistani military or security doctrine has been the biggest national security threat to Pakistan because it does not differentiate between the good and bad Taliban.

If you see the TTP it was General Musharraf, or if you see the terrorism inside Pakistan and who is killing Pakistanis, it is obviously the TTP. This is the same group which General Musharraf and the Pakistani military made packs with in 2005/06 and because of that a lot of things have to be blamed on Pakistan's policies of double-game. So, while the United States take some blame, there needs to be some realisation within Pakistan that we should not be playing victims and that we are also to be blamed for this mess.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

And what about this point about US levers? If the US really did significantly reduce the money going to Pakistan, what difference would that make?

Ali Chishti:

Well it wouldn't make much of a difference. If the United States leaves Afghanistan right now, it would be in chaos because the Afghan national army – I think the Pakistani military has been raising this question to the US and to all of NATO – would completely disintegrate. There would be chaos. Nobody wants the US – not even the Pakistani generals – to leave.

Mustafa Qadri:

One think I'll add is that you have this horrible bind where the US, which everyone else pretty much follows in Afghanistan, has basically said, 'We have to leave. Let's get about 300,000 plus Afghan troops trained', but there is not a real long-term sustainable strategy. For those within the Pakistan security establishment who think of having a pliant Afghani regime and see the Islamists, i.e. the Taliban, which Al-Qaeda sees as the main vehicle for that regime – say, 'look they are leaving, just take your time'. The Taliban have said effectively the same thing but the issues will pretty much stay the same. In practical terms Pakistan's economy is such that without the aid that it is receiving, it would collapse. No one would seriously consider taking that money away because of that. However, the underlying issues are still there.

Ali mentioned 30 - 35,000 Pakistanis have died. According to the UN, half a million children died of diarrhoea last year. So terrorism is a significant problem in Pakistan but it has other problems. Those things are not addressed by a security paradigm which is basically looking at the next two or three years.

Question 2:

I have been very confused by what you have been telling us. It seems to me that on the one hand the Americans have greatly increased their drone attacks in Pakistan presumably with the consent of the Pakistan government. Does this mean that not only targeted assassinations are being carried out but also that lots of civilians are being killed? To what extent is this a counter-productive policy?

And secondly, is the Pakistani army divided along tribal lines? To what extent will they go into North Waziristan? The Haqqani Network is supposed to be allied with the army. It seems to be a very confused picture and not at all clear exactly who is running the country and to what extent it can be run?

Mustafa Qadri:

I'll take the first question. On the drone strikes, the problem we have got is that no one can say with confidence how many people are being killed and how many of those are civilians. The other problem is that if the laws of war apply, then in certain circumstances you can actually kills civilians. The problem comes with the fact that the United States acts in complete secrecy. They still do not admit that these drone strikes are actually happening. Of course it could not happen without Pakistan's acquiescence. At the moment there are probably more restrictions on it. Perhaps there are less drones being flown from bases within Pakistan, if any at all. Of course, for many years, there were drones being flown from bases in Balochistan and other areas in Pakistan.

This is the fundamental problem. And it's on that doubt that the different factors within society play on, the sense of suspicion that breeds against the Americans. If you see this as like some game of sport, it sort of makes sense to go and wipe out one commander or another. There is again that underlying issue but it is not a surprise or coincidence that many of these tribal areas have been a thorn in the side of many powers: the Pakistanis, the British, the Moghuls before them. The issues that are underlying have not been addressed.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

I don't know if the Pakistani state agrees with the number of drone strikes, maybe with acquiescence to the policy, but the number that is now happening is not particularly welcome.

Ali Chishti, are there any other tribal fissures in the army? Is that a factor in all of this?

Ali Chishti:

Of course not: it's a very disciplined army. There is a very good chain of command, very good command structures. It has been a well-trained army. There is a perception in the West that there is a rogue element within the army. Yes, there is radicalisation but as you have seen recently one of the brigadiers in the National Defence Academy was actually arrested for having views with Islamists and was accused of being part of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen which was actually banned in Pakistan but not in the US. It's not tribal, it's a very disciplined army.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

So really what you are saying is that if there is a relationship with the Haqqani Network, for example, it isn't a fissure, it is national policy?

Ali Chishti:

Of course it is policy, yes.

Question 3:

It seems that Hillary Clinton and even the UK government would try to paint the picture that the Afghan Taliban or the Haqqani Network are threats to Pakistan. And Pakistan clearly doesn't see it that way and that those groups don't pose a threat to Pakistan unless Pakistan was to actively work against them. If the military were to take that decision what do you think would happen to civilian security if the military were to go after some of those groups? If they would?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

What would happen if the military were to go after some of these groups that they are allied with?

Mustafa Qadri:

It's a good question. The most powerful warlords in Pakistan, whether they are the Afghan Taliban or the Pakistani Taliban, happen to be in North Waziristan and that's the one area that hasn't been targeted. When the army started seriously targeting the Taliban within Pakistan we saw a wave of suicide bombings. So it's a bit of a catch-22 situation.

Then there is something else to think about. When the Taliban controls Swath – the Pakistani government tried to do peace deals before that, tried to do peace deals in the tribal areas – it wasn't as if the Taliban just stopped. The issue is you have to still fundamentally stop this force. They are an existential threat so it is a hard one.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

And that's all happening in North Waziristan. Could you please give a brief description of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which is very relevant to your questions? What if the army were to confront Lashkar-e-Taiba?

Mustafa Qadri:

Lashkar-e-Taiba is a Punjab-based militant group; it has a welfare arm as well; it is more focussed on India; it had training camps in Afghanistan before September 11; it's one of a number of Punjab based extremist groups. We talk mainly about Taliban and in the north-west but the problem for Pakistan is also these other extremists in the heartland of Pakistan – Punjab is the heartland of Pakistan. The majority of recruits in the Pakistan army come from that region. So quite apart from dealing with the tribal areas, the other issue for Pakistan is how do we address this other group?

Now Ali talks about this and writes about this a lot: the idea of the good and the bad extremists? The problem you're always going to have is if you have someone that is killing and been killed in what they believe to be in the name of God, then they are not going to listen to you. It is a matter of time when the position is right when they will take matters into their own hands. I think with Lashkar-e-Taiba right now, they seem to be relatively more in the hands of the establishment or playing by their rules. But like other extremist groups it is really only a matter of time when you're dealing with that sort of an element.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali Chishti, what would you say about these issues?

Ali Chishti:

I don't think there would be any national security threat if the Pakistani army decided to go after the Haqqanis and Mullah Omar. Apparently you see the Pakistanis are going after the harder targets in the TTP and Al-Qaeda; there is obviously a reaction which you can see in the shape of suicide bombings in Pakistan.

The other point I would like to raise is that the Haqqanis themselves are split into two factions: one is pro-Pakistan and the other that is more inclined to Al-Qaeda. So if you see intercontinental attacks, probably the assassination of Rabbani in Afghanistan... If you see the style of how Rabbani was assassinated, it was similar to how Ahmad Massoud was killed. So you see the factor of how he was killed is a factor of the links between Afghanis and Al-Qaeda.

There are factions in it of course, part of it is hugely influenced by the ISI, and part of it is actually out of control. The Afghanis are actually the guarantors between the Pakistani establishment and what is called the 'shadow ISI', which is full of retired ISI officers like Colonel Imam, who was one of the people who was kidnapped and killed. The Haqqanis were the guys the TPP never listen to. That shows the Haqqanis have lost their credibility with the pro-establishment line with the TTP. So it's a very complex situation.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

It certainly is. Another question over there...

Question 4:

My question is about the comment that the military predominantly arranges foreign policy and security policy and that they don't want the civilian government to control that. In recent legal scholarship there has been the argument that if a state is simply unwilling or unable to deal with non-state actors themselves other states that have suffered attacks, such as the US in 2001, should be allowed to intervene in that state if that state is unable. So my question is do you think that Pakistan qualifies as such a state?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali Chishti, do you think that Pakistan has given up the right to sovereignty?

Ali Chishti:

I think it is something that the United States will have decided, but they should know that Pakistan has mastered the art of proxies by not wining any conventional wars with India, so I don't think it's a good idea at all to venture into Pakistan. After all, the Pakistanis have been very cooperative with the drone attacks and attacks within Pakistan.

Mustafa Qadri:

I think as a practical matter it would be a disaster for Pakistan and the world. Just the thought of it scares me. The other thing, like Ali is saying, is that it is a complex situation. We tend to see this as Pakistan playing a double game and therefore it's bad. And it is bad but it is also complex. The other thing is that in the last 25 years Pakistan has effectively been fighting a form of a civil war. I have distant family that are quite low ranking army officers and they told me about their experiences fighting against the Taliban in the north-west and how difficult it was for them personally when someone would recite the same verse of the Koran that you recite yourself; they look like you, are often very young and you have to go out and fight this person.

So for Pakistan it has been a huge challenge. There are certainly forces within the security establishment and within the civilian controlled intelligence agencies that generally want to crack down on the extremists. We saw one of the most senior counter terrorism police officers in Pakistan having his house completely destroyed in Karachi in a suicide bombing. Thankfully, he and his family survived but others didn't. It is an incredibly difficult situation. Practically speaking, it would be the wrong thing to do.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali, in Karachi particularly, just tell us a bit about the failure of the state to administer justice and convict people like that policeman you were talking about and them actually walking away from the court; it is an extraordinary situation. Could you please fill us in on why that is happening so much?

Ali Chishti:

Yes, the answer is very simple. There are no witness protection programmes in Pakistan. Secondly, the whole criminal justice system is rotten. There is something called the Terrorism Act 97. Up to 2005, there was somebody at the court who was actually convicted and the judge would just say Al-Qaeda is not one of the designated terrorist organisations in Pakistan after 2005. So this could be up to 2011. So the criminal justice system is rotten. There is absolute [inaudible] of state.

I will just give you an example: 6,000 people in Karachi had been killed in ethnic and political violence in the last four years. Not a single conviction of any political person in Karachi. That gives you a good idea that it is not just the Taliban who is escaping justice, it is everyone.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

That must be an issue for Amnesty...

Mustafa Qadri:

It is a severe concern. We had the case of a lynching in Sialkot in Punjab which was completely filmed. The culprits were about 22 people. A mob of people caught these two teenagers who they wrongly accused of being thieves and literally beat them to death and the whole thing was videotaped. Eventually the matter did go before the courts; the main people were sentenced to death or different life sentences. But even that took a very long time. The family had death threats. The police, indirectly, were involved in that lynching. One of them, the most senior police officer, has actually been given a promotion in Islamabad. That sends the worst kind of message. Like Ali was saying, the terrorists, political parties or even mobs, when they commit crimes they get away with it.

The killer of the most senior victim from the armed forces, General Mushtag Begg, the surgeon general of the army, has not been brought to justice because the army will not give the courts the relevant evidence to convict. You basically have a culture where those who have influence and have power are not used to being brought to justice; they're not used to using the rule of law. We had the Supreme Court sitting in Karachi because of the violence, this year has been particularly bad, and the police told them we have suffered many assassinations. In other words gangs linked to political parties have been targeting the police deliberately to stop the police investigating their

crimes. When you have that kind of situation how can you really deal with the terrorist threat?

The first step has to be that you improve the justice system. You improve the courts. One thing that we do is that we go to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. Disappearances have been a big problem in Pakistan ever since they joined the 'war on terror' in 2001. We have been really shocked at the complete absence of any kind of witness protection. We are having cases of people who claim the police have abducted their loved ones having to give evidence in front of the police, often to one tribunal member who is often a retired police officer.

So when you have that kind of situation it is not entirely surprising. It's really, in many ways, quite basic. It's not easy to do but it is really quite basic on one level.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

I might just relate to what happened in that surgeon general case. The boy who did it was 15 and had been trained in the tribal areas. He had been told to go to Rawalpindi to attack the army. He stayed in a madrassa over night; got up the next morning ready to do it but he had never been to the city before. He didn't really know where the army was. So he flagged down a car, and said, 'Can you take me to the army'. They got quite worried and kicked him out. So he was wondering around in the road and sees this car come up which is the surgeon general in his uniform in his car. And the boy does it.

It is an absolutely absurd situation for a 15 year old boy to find himself in; having to be trained up over a period of only a few weeks to do that. It is a particularly insane case.

Question 5:

The word 'great' and 'great game' has different significant differences when you're talking about nuclear weapons and strategic balances and of course what you are not talking about is why America is in a state of distress about the situation. David Kilcollen in this room said to me – at that time he had just been David Patraeus's advisor – he said to me that he lay awake at night having nightmares about Pakistan thinking about this particular issue. A nuclear state is a state within a state and is rarely talked about in these types of discussions. With North Korea, insanity is the thing you have to worry

about. With Pakistan there doesn't seem to be any particular kind of diplomacy, any clear objectives. Where are the missiles pointed; where are they located; who's in charge of them; what are they there for? In a state of near chaos, in what people say is a failed state, what is going to happen to those things?

This question is asked over and over again. I was wondering if you could elaborate on this issue to answer that?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali what is the purpose of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal?

Ali Chishti:

They have basically set up a something called the Nuclear Command and Control Authority and it is an extremely efficient machine. The Americans and the French have worked very closely with the Pakistanis after 2011 and have set up something called the National Command and Control Authority which I think is one of the best control systems in the world. They have got something called the National Security Consul which has actually been allowed to have access.

Obviously there are threats. Al-Qaeda has flown twice with Pakistani nuclear scientists to Saudi Arabia to find a weapon. In terms of its internal core, its threat to the military or from someone within the army, I don't think there is a chance of it. That is why I say it is a much disciplined organisation.

Mustafa Qadri:

I think that the fundamental issue with Pakistan is that it is about parity with India. From the very beginning Pakistan thought about having a nuclear weapon going right back to the seventies. Their leaders Zulfikar Ali Bhutto says 'We will eat grass, but we will get the bomb.' That has been one of the great obsessions Pakistan has when it comes to its security policy. It's all said that India is not belligerent, it is belligerent. That is something that is often not really spoken about much. The fact that the army chief of Hyderabad said, 'We could do the same thing if we had to.' That sort of thing doesn't help. In terms of the nuclear weapons, I personally think that it has made Pakistan less safe, not safer and the issue is always going to be; how are these weapons going to be used and whose hands will they get into?

They apparently have quite a sophisticated system in monitoring who's controlling the parts of the nuclear weapons. They're not kept in one location, but kept in many areas. There are apparently a lot of psychological tests done on the officers that are in charge of that. But the problem you have always got is that you cannot really predict what is going to happen.

And again there is actually a broader issue here and it goes beyond Pakistan. I remember when the Bush White House went to India and they talked quite openly about India's nuclear capability. There were rumours about Saudi Arabia possibly getting a nuclear weapon and there was no real public debate about that. Let's not forget that the main powers that have nuclear weapons themselves have an obligation: to get rid of them. That sends a very powerful message. If that is not happening, not just for Pakistan, but for many other nations who also think about having nuclear weapons and we need to think about that too...

Question 5 (continued):

The AQ Khan episode doesn't suggest that. It suggests a criminal organisation is in charge of the nuclear weapons. In 1996 Seymour Hersh reported it. We came very close to having a nuclear exchange. They had the F16s sitting with the engines revving and were threatening to take out either Bombay or New Delhi. Is that state of psychosis still present in Pakistan?

Mustafa Qadri:

If you mean, are they really thinking about bombing India, right now I don't think so. What the point is I think we can agree on is that nuclear weapons are an inherently dangerous technology and the threats are too. Not just from Pakistan's nuclear weapons but anyone who has nuclear weapons; the risk is that they will use them. Then there is of course also the risk that terrorists might get their hands on them.

Question 6:

Given that the title of the talk is about the 'great game' and we have also mentioned the breach between Pakistan and the US at the moment, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about Pakistan's relationship with other major powers – China in particular, but also Russia and, if you can count it, Britain?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali, is Pakistan looking beyond Washington now?

Ali Chishti:

There was a report the day before yesterday that Pakistanis have offered China to make a military base in a place called Gwadar but the Chinese are more interested in making a bid in the north. There is a serious Chinese concern that Islamist militants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are going through into one of the Chinese provinces. The have actually stopped British aid in Balochistan. So Pakistan's military is looking towards China as its new partner. If you look at the new military hardware that has been recently bought I think 80 percent of them has been bought by the Chinese. That actually shows that it is relying more and more on China.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

So you think that is a new thing, that there is a change in that relationship?

Ali Chishti:

Yes, if you talk with any Pakistani military general. I have been speaking with a lot of the full commanders privately and of course they have been saying they are more inclined towards China rather than the US or the west for obvious reasons. I will just give you an example of what one of the Chinese generals said in Pakistan recently. He has actually told one of the joint chiefs in a private meeting, and I'm putting that on record, that China would not tolerate Pakistan's double policies too. So Pakistan is actually stuck. Although Pakistan wants a closer relationship with China, China is too concerned about Pakistan's role.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

When Islamabad and the General's in Rawalpindi look at Europe what do they see? How do they view Europe?

Ali Chishti:

They see the EU as an emerging power of course. They obviously want a free-trade agreement with the EU just because India has one. But the EU is a somewhat unusual power; they want to have closer links with countries like France and Germany, with buying many things from most of their neighbours. They see France and Germany as allies, somewhat neutral, but they see the UK as more in the US camp.

Mustafa Qadri:

The only thing I'll add is that the 'elephant in the room' is Saudi Arabia. In fact, we don't hear about it much at all but it has a profound impact on and had a profound impact on the way Al-Qaeda was developing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and also the way Islam has changed in Pakistan. Ali has done investigations on mosques in Karachi supported by Saudi Arabia, which have been promoting death threats towards human rights activists like those who have been saying the blasphemy laws need to change and those sorts of issues. That's another country Pakistan looks to and even offers itself up as a client state. There have been quite reliable rumours about Pakistan and Saudi Arabia having a deal that if there were any 'Arab Spring' type events in Saudi Arabia then Pakistan would provide 20 – 25,000 troops to help them out. A lot of Pakistani army troops [inaudible] have been sent to Bahrain, particularly Baloch to crack down on the 'Arab Spring' or democracy movement there. So the Gulf area is another area that impacts on Pakistan's foreign policy.

Just on China, with respect, I slightly disagree with Ali. I don't think China is trying to massively change the game plan. I think often it tends to get exaggerated, it's influence and designs for Pakistan. We have been hearing for some time now that the port in Gwadar in Balochistan, which is basically in a very strategic location, is a transit point for trade and a place to have a major base; same with the Karakoram Highway up in the north on the border with China. These things are being developed but as a counter-balance to American power we haven't seen anything substantial yet.

Ali Chishti:

When I have talked to a lot of business people and foreign secretaries, the Saudi's are not too happy. Mustafa is absolutely right about the Saudis. They have been concerned with the rise of extremism in Pakistan. Obviously they

are blamed too for supporting a certain organisation but that was a thing of the past – things have changed now.

Just one thing I wanted to add is that at the last core commander's conference in Pakistan I have seen anger by most of the core commanders towards Haqqani. A lot of core commanders have been saying that Haqqani are pro-American and they're not happy with Basher and the first thing came on merit of course but the anger that they feel. Some generals that I see approaching media sources that they pay him [inaudible].

Question 7:

I just wanted to ask a question about this doctrine of 'strategic depth'. This has been one unchanging element of Pakistan's military relationships over the years and has led to fraught relationships with Afghanistan and Pakistan at least on a governmental level. Given the interference that Pakistan has undertaken in Afghanistan over the last 20-25 years, clearly now even the public in Afghanistan is largely against Pakistan. So what do we expect to get out of Pakistani interference in Afghanistan? If India were to attack Pakistan – let's assume that it happens – chances are that Afghanistan is not going to come to its help. I don't think the Afghani government is in a position to help Pakistan. I don't think the Pakistani population is going to migrate *en masse* to Afghanistan to wait for a better day. So what do we expect to come out of this doctrine?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali, can you explain 'strategic depth'?

Ali Chishti:

It is a policy where Pakistan basically wants a friendly government in Kabul. It has always been there since the Taliban was alive but has obviously failed. It is a throw off from the Pashtuns strategy when the Kashmiris supported the Pashtuns and they absolutely hate the Tajiks and the Uzbeks and even the Skardus. So that has been an issue, but I don't think the policy is going to be changed. Pakistan wants a friendly government in Kabul although I think it's a bad policy.

Question 8:

We talked about the chain of command in the army. Some cracks are appearing at the top right now. Then we give the point of someone in Waziristan, a simple army man. If someone is fighting someone who looks like them, same faith, same people in front of you and you have to shoot them. You do it once, you do it twice. When you start killing so many people won't those cracks start appearing within the lower ranks? Is the army afraid now, if they are given an order now in Waziristan to shoot, are they worried that they won't shoot?

Owen Bennett-Jones:

My impression is the number of defections has gone down.

Mustafa Qadri:

It has gone down. In my opinion, there is a deliberate policy of saying that it is actually India behind the violence, or America or possibly even Israel; it is often said because you have to unify your force. The idea of a Muslim killing another Muslim is a very hard thing to do and particularly when the army first began tackling the insurgency, there were a lot of defections. Not as many now, but critical to that is the idea of the insurgency being controlled by foreigners.

Ali Chishti:

I would be more specific in terms of the Pakistani army; since just before the Swath operation there was a de-radicalisation programme that has been going on in the lower ranks. They have actually hired a mullah who tries to de-radicalise the soldiers by saying that these are actually Indians or they are backed by Israel or America. They are not actually Muslims. I don't know about the de-radicalisation program in the army, whether it is right or wrong or if it is working but it is definitely there.

Owen Bennett-Jones:

Ali, thank you very much. You did very well from all that distance and very clear so thank you very much for doing it. Thank you also very much to Mustafa Qadri. I am sorry if we may have strayed from the 'great game' but it

is all connected and [these issues] wrap into each other. So thank you to our two speakers, very much indeed.