I’m looking for Rick Rossow. I mean, he was going to introduce the speaker. But I will do that. And I just want to say a word of welcome to all of you. Thank you for coming.

When we have public events, we always start with a little safety announcement. So Rick, if he doesn’t show up, I’m responsible for your safety. We’ll take care of you. If we hear a voice, it’ll tell you to exit. We’re going to go to these exits right behind me.

I’m not worried about the foreign minister. He’s got help, OK. But the rest of you are going to need me. So follow me. We’ll go through these doors closest to the street. We’re going to go down to the street, first level. We’ll take two right-hand turns and a left-hand turn. We’re going to go to National Geographic. And I’ll pay for everybody’s tickets. There’s a great show on right now. So nothing’s going to happen.

But I am delighted to have you here today, especially this opportunity to listen to a real visionary when working in Washington because, of course, he was the foreign minister here – he was the ambassador here in Washington, and we’re very fortunate that he has returned. He’s come back to be a voice to help us understand, you know, India’s trajectory and the very important message that India is bringing to the world right now. And we’re very fortunate. This is the only event that he agreed to do in a public format.

So I ask you all to be enthusiastic with your applause, and please welcome the foreign minister of India.

Dr. Hamre, dear friends, it’s good to be back and I’m delighted to see so many familiar faces in front of me.

The topic that I chose for my talk today was “Preparing for a Different Era,” because I’m sure all of you would agree that we are, if not in a different era, certainly moving towards one. And I thought I’d share with you both a sense of, you know, how we see the world and how we propose to engage that world which we see.

We do live in tumultuous times, and you would all agree that this is a far cry from the soothing mantras of globalization that we had just a few years ago. The primary characteristics of world politics today are the rebalancing of the global economy and polity, as well as the sharpening contradiction between the United States and China. Both powers are engaging the world in a manner very different from their past. Whatever the outcome of their current arguments, their behavior will impact the rest of the world very significantly. It will change our thinking and probably in time create new approaches to global affairs.

The trend till recently was firmly in the opposite direction. The world was not only more interlinked in its activities, but also in its thinking. Technology was supposed to be the great promise that we could see made us more connected with each passing day. The default solution to any
significant challenge – whether promoting trade, addressing climate change, or responding to terrorism – was through shared endeavors.

However, all that has started to change. It is not that the “me” did not exist before, but national and global interests were usually reconciled through a network of agreements, mechanisms, and practices. Between nation-states and the international community stood intermediaries, alliances, regional structures, or likeminded partners.

But this world, evolving steadily since 1945, stands eroded today by disenchantment with globalization, anger at mercantilism, and an inability to accept changes. Those three key principles that were taken for granted – access to global markets, value of global supply chains, and reliance on global skills mobility – are all under stress. Players are, moreover, multiplying, even as rules are weakening. The old order is visibly changing, but the new one is not yet in sight. Perhaps there will be none for quite some time. Getting used to operating in this indeterminate zone is probably the first challenge of contemporary diplomacy.

Now, the globalized world is multidimensional, and its different facets support each other. It builds on the constructs of earlier periods, be it the colonial era, or the Cold War, or even the unipolar world. Identifying common ground and nurturing transnational linkages, it is most vigorously expressed in economic activities – especially over recent decades. A vast range of understandings and regimes were created that covered most aspects of our lives. As technology and economics threw up new domains, we responded by fashioning rules for them too.

While the practical world of business provided the bedrock of independence – of interdependence, multilateral rules and institutions decided how these businesses actually ran. Between arbitrating competitive interests and overseeing global comments, they created the basis for reconciling national demands. However imperfect or even unfair it may be, multilateralism was, till recently, the best game in town. But then this too is enveloped in the tectonic shifts underway. Once globalization comes under attack all its facets are subject to pressures. Opposition to globalized business will naturally undermine its governing rules and affect the institutions that oversee it. A self-centered worldview does not have place for commitments that do not serve immediate goals.

The structural impact on the global order of these developments are likely to be visible over the next generation. And that would have many dimensions, each one of them itself a factor of disruption. The most obvious one is that the world will be increasingly multipolar as distribution of power broadens and alliance discipline dilutes. And India or a Brazil will demand a greater voice with a growing economy. But Germany and a Japan cannot be impervious to changes in America thinking.

Secondly, a more nationalistic approach to international relations will weaken multilateral rules in many domains. This will be particularly sharp
in respect of economic interests and sovereignty concerns. Developments pertaining to the WTO or the Law of Seas are not good signs. This prospect of stronger multi-polarity with weaker multilateralism clearly suggests a more volatile near term.

Third, such a world is also likely to fall back on balance of power as its operating principle rather than collective security or a broader consensus. History has demonstrated that this approach usually produces unstable equilibriums.

Fourth, world affairs will see a proliferation of frenemies. They will emerge in both categories: allies who publicly turn on each other or competitors who are compelled to make common cause on issues.

Fifth, a more transactional ethos will promote ad hoc groupings of disparate nations who have a shared interest on a particular issue. This could be supported by requirements of burden sharing and the need to reach out beyond alliance structures.

Finally, the combination of these developments will encourage more regional and local balances with less global influence on their working. Put together, it does appear that the world's creativity and diplomatic skills are really going to be tested.

Now, even if contradictions between China and the West sharpen, it is difficult to foresee a return to a bipolar world and the reason for that is that the landscape has now changed irreversibly. Other nations are independently on the move, including India. Half the 20 largest economies of the world are non-Western now. Diffusion of technology and demographic differentials will also contribute to the broader spread of influence.

We see forces at play that reflect the relative primacy of local questions when the global construct is less overbearing. The reality is that the space yielded by the West has been filled by many players, not just China. Furthermore, both the U.S. and China have a use for third parties and the politics of the day will drive multi-polarity even faster.

The beneficiaries will be the G-20 powers and those at that level. Powers who already have prior advantages, like Russia, France, and U.K., will probably get a fresh impetus. Some, like India, can aspire to an improved position. Others, like Germany, could increase their weight through collective endeavors. But this would also be a world of a Brazil or a Japan, of a Turkey or an Iran, a Saudi Arabia or an Australia, each having a greater say in their vicinity and, perhaps, even beyond.

The dilution of alliance discipline will only further facilitate this process. What will emerge is a more complex architecture, characterized by differing degrees of competition, convergence, and coordination. It will be like playing Chinese Checkers with many more participants but those who are still arguing over the rules.
A multi-polar world that is intensely competitive and driven by balance of power is not without its risks. Europe, with its world war experiences, is especially chatty. Even dominant powers favor such balancing only as a specific solution, not as a general approach. For that reason, international relations envisage collective security as a safety net.

Even if that did not always work, broader consensus through wider consultations functioned as a Plan B. Those most unsettled at the prospect of multi-polarity with weaker rules are nations that have long functioned in the comfort of an alliance construct. Unlike the historically independent players, it is understandably difficult for them to accept that the compulsions of interdependence are a good enough substitute. Others may contemplate this prospect with greater nervousness but in India, perhaps, with a sense of opportunity as well.

An individualistic world means that the entrenched order is more open to newer players. Longstanding group positions may become less rigid. That the format of play is also more bilateral strengthens the inclination to make accommodations. This has been more in evidence in the security domain, especially maritime cooperation, counterterrorism, or in export controls. Whether it is the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, the partnership in Afghanistan or the Malabar exercise, they reflect a departure from the old groupthink to more contemporary pragmatism. It could now extend to the economic domain as well.

Friends who differ or competitors who cooperate are a notable trait of this emerging world. Both express different aspects of constraints that limit freedom of choices in that interdependence. The rise of nationalism is largely responsible for the former group, while global threats bring the latter together. Thus, we have seen a United States differ with much of the Western world, especially Europe, on issues like climate change. The politics of trade and energy have also been very divisive.

But more than specific issues, frenemies have grown as mindsets have changed. The belief that alliances are burdensome is by itself a cause for friction. The momentum of the past, however, can still keep combinations alive of nations who may differ about the present. Despite such differences, traditions do continue as a basis for working together, even if sometimes unhappily.

A very different motivation is provided, however, by the compilations of common concerns. We have seen coalitions of convenience on global issues like counterterrorism, piracy, maritime security, nonproliferation, or even climate change. These are issue-based and can again be effective even when grudging.

If divisions within alliances was one evolution, reaching beyond them was another. As the world moved in the direction of greater pluralism, pragmatic, result-oriented cooperation has started to look attractive. They
could also be reconciled with contrary agendas. The growing imperative of burden sharing was combined with an appreciation of influences beyond formal structures. Asia has been a particular focus for such initiatives, as regional architecture is least developed there.

Obviously, the mirror image of this is the utility to independent powers of those who have now become more realistic and cooperative. India today has emerged as an industry leader on such plurilateral groups because it occupies both the hedging and the emerging space at the same time. An ability to reconcile its security interests with its political and developmental ones allows it great maneuvering space.

The different era is one of focused agreements, specific agendas, flexible arrangements and greater customization. Comfort is the new commitment.

A world of multiple choices is increasingly opening up at different levels. We surely see that at the big table, where larger powers are dealing more opportunistically with each other. Through their behavior, they encourage the rest of the world to also do so.

In the light of the global balance being so fluid, the shaping of the local one has become an exercise of its own. Multi-cornered competition has gained currency more than in the past. As they throw up issues, it is more effective for a country like India to respond with engagement rather than distancing. The skill that current diplomacy therefore values more is the ability to engage contesting parties at the same time with optimal results.

At a multilateral level, it makes abstention less viable as a default position and encourages more creative approaches. But there is a reason why going up the global hierarchy is judged by the ability to successfully manage conflicting priorities.

So in this different era, there will be convergence with many but congruence with none. Finding common points to engage with as many power centers will characterize diplomacy at its highest level. For this reason, India will find it perfectly natural to engage a Chinese leader at Wuhan, a Russian one at Sochi, and then go on to a two-plus-two meeting of foreign and defense ministers of the United States.

At the G-20 in Buenos Aires last year, it engaged back to back – in fact, this year as well – back to back in two trilaterals, U.S.-Japan-India as well as Russia-India-China. The country that fares best is the one which has the least problems with its peer group and the broadest acceptance beyond.

For a number of reasons, the game has now become one of positioning and optimizing. The reality is that India either reaches out to as many – in as many directions as possible as maximizes its gains or takes the more defensive approach of avoiding engagement. This is not just about greater ambition it is also about not living in yesterday. In this intensely competitive
world, India’s goal should be to move closer towards the strategic sweet spot.

But having said that, let me also caution that a world of all against all is neither desirable nor, indeed, probable. The weight of history and the compulsions of politics will make sure that convergences end up as some form of collectivism. Nor can our beliefs and values be divorced from the behavior of states. Thus, even as we look at the era of more dispersed power and sharper competition, the way forward is more likely to be new forms of accommodation rather than pure transactions. While nations will naturally each strive to advance their particular interests, similarities and affinities will always remain a factor. So while this is an exposition on changes in international affairs, I would emphasize that the direction is towards a new architecture rather than the absence of one.

Preparing for a more competitive and complex era will require obviously different mindsets. For a nation like India, this would be in addition to the changes induced by its climb up the global power hierarchy. As a broad approach, it’ll be reflected in the primacy of long-term thinking over short-term calculations. It would encourage undertaking deep structural change, and ambitious socioeconomic initiatives that can transform both habits and attitudes. In this world, what we have presumed to be intractable challenges will have to be addressed, not ducked.

An example to point is that of the recent change in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. For many years, India sought a solution while Pakistan was comfortable with continuing cross-border terrorism. The choice, as this government came back to power, was clear: Either we had more of past policies and the prospect of further radicalization, or we had a decisive change in the landscape and a change of direction towards deradicalization. The economic costs of the status quo were visible in the absence of entrepreneurship and shortage of job opportunities. The social costs were even starker, in discrimination against women, in lack of protection for juveniles, in the refusal to apply affirmative action, and to the denial of the right to information, education, and work.

All this added up to security costs as a resulting disaffection, separatism, and fueled our neighbor’s terrorism. At a broader level, these realities also contradicted our commitment that no region, no community, and no faith would be left behind. The legislative changes made this summer put India and the entire region on the road to long-term peace. That is the reality today in the making. And this is the India that will navigate the world which I have described just now. The different era which we have entered also calls for both India and the United States to press the refresh button of that relationship.

The really important relationships in the world are the less transactional ones. They are driven by global assessments and are based on strengthening each other. They visualize, even in the uncertainties of a more volatile era, new opportunities for cooperation. Recent events in our ties confirm that
John J. Hamre: Well, this hasn’t happened to me before, because all of the questions I prepared in advance are irrelevant given your speech. So I’m going to have to –

S. Jaishankar: Is that a compliment?

John J. Hamre: It is, because you’ve –

S. Jaishankar: I wasn’t entirely sure.

John J. Hamre: No, it was entirely a compliment, because you made me think. And I’m going to steal your speech from you and read it again and again. You were very thoughtful. You did trigger a very deeper kind of a conversation. And so I would like to take a few minutes to actually ask you to elaborate a bit. You know, all of the very complex problems in the world are horizontal and all the governments are vertical. And so the question in this modern age is, you know, how do we deal with it? You know, after 1945 and after we set up structures – like the United Nations, World Bank, and alliances. And you’ve suggested that those are eroding in their – in their vitality and maybe legitimacy.

And you used the term coalitions of convenience. You know, coalitions of the willing, you know, have really emerged as a new pattern. The problem coalitions of the willing or coalitions of convenience don’t have the normative qualities of institutions. Institutions are there, and then they train the succeeding generation what are our goals, aspirations, and constraints. So let me start by asking you, what do you think happens to the institutions of internationalism that we have today? You know, the World Bank, the IMF, the U.N.? Are they also going to be losing their vitality? And what does it mean to India?

S. Jaishankar: Well, you know, what we have seen – I think we don’t have to look too far into the future. We actually need to look back into the past. I mean, just look back in the last five years, 10 years, 15 years. What we have seen is that many institutions have come under stress because either, as you say, they’ve lost legitimacy, vitality, efficiency. You know, if countries don’t get their interests – significant countries don’t get their substantial interests sorted out they start looking elsewhere.

So I mean, if you look, say, at trade, the fact that today you have a proliferation of free trade agreements is because the feeling that the global trading arrangement was not going to happen. We see that often in security situations, where if you look at the last maybe decade or two in the Middle East you actually have coalitions of countries, partly because they are the only countries who have an interest or, in some cases, they could convince
other countries. Or in some cases, they went to the United Nations, didn’t get their way, and so decided they’d do something else.

So this is the reality. Now, I accept – I mean, it would not be my case that I would abandon an institution and say an ad hoc solution is preferable to an institution. Everybody’s first choice would be the normative choice. But what you have is the reality of a countries which look beyond or look around. So that’s one part of it. The other part of it is also that the institutions themselves – I mean, look at the United Nations. I mean, obviously we are biased. We believe we have a good case. But if you have – I mean, maybe in 15 years you would have a United Nations where the most populous country in the world with the third-largest economy is not in the decision-making of the United Nations.

Now, I grant you, it affects the country concerned, but I would also suggest it affects the United Nations credibility. And it’s not just the Security Council. I mean, if you look, say, at how peacekeeping operations are run, you know, who actually kind of dissent, you know, there are other angles. I mean, you could argue, OK, who gives the budget and therefore that should be a factor. That’s a reasonable proposition. But this is one of the key challenges facing the world today, which is all that we took as a given over the last 70 years – I’m not suggesting to you they’re going to disappear, or they’ll become irrelevant. But surely things are happening beyond that. And that is creating a new kind of international relations. And you know, it’s something which we all need to get real about.

John Hamre: Yes. That’s really – I mean, I thought it was a tragic thing that we didn’t find a way to amend the Security Council. I mean, you know, having it represent the power geometry of 1947 makes no sense today. You know, and it impedes the institution. It certainly looks hard to change it, although it should be a priority to try.

Again, it was such a fascinating speech you gave. The U.S. National Intelligence Council produces every four or five years a forecast looking into the future. And this last one was interesting, because they were looking out thirty years and saying: What’s going to be the nature of global governance?

To motivate that discussion, they used three metaphors – islands, orbits, and networks. Islands was shorthand for a return to nationalism – Brexit, you know, America first, whatever. Orbits was spheres of influence – China building its network immediately around it; Russia trying to reassemble, you know, pliant neighbor-states. And the third was networks, where it devolves into shifting channels, some at the national level – you referenced some; you talk about a free-trade zone, you know, in Southeast Asia – others at the subgovernment level, where you’re seeing California finding unique partnerships with countries.

What are your thoughts? Are we seeing a little bit of each of these three? What do you think is happening? You said that multipolarity is going to
grow; multilateralism will contract. So what's the structural governance you think that emerges?

S. Jaishankar: You know, again, it's in the nature of our business to generalize. But when you get serious, you can't generalize because you know, every island is a specific island.

John J. Hamre: A specific island.

S. Jaishankar: So even if you – you know, you would have – I mean, those countries who have become more insular in a way – and you can see a lot of that in Europe; Brexit is the classical case – but you also would have – India in many ways would be a very contrarian case, where I would argue that India is today both more nationalistic but also more internationalist at the same time. So I'm not sure that every part of the world nationalism means the same thing and leads to the same consequences. To some extent – I mean, there could be some other cases like that, where, you know, a country wants – you know, feels more confident about itself, but also feels that – even nationalism has different – you can have more confident nationalism. You can have more insecure nationalism.

But again, coming back to this triad of islands, orbits and networks, my sense is that we have to be connected. So, I mean, islands have their orbits too. And, you know, it isn't – the world is not just about politics. The world is also about business. It's about movement of people. So you can have the most – shall I say the same people who would have voted for Brexit would also go to Spain for their holiday. So now you've seen the network, in a sense, work contrary to the island. So it's a far more complicated reality.

John J. Hamre: You know, I'm going to cheat everybody if I keep this academic conversation going. But I want to come back to you another day and talk about it.

I do want to get to some specific issues, if I may. Since I had a chance to see you in New Delhi in August, the momentum towards a peace deal with the Taliban seems to have fallen back. I think that one of the conclusions I drew from my conversations in Delhi was that there was disappointment with the lack of consultation with India about the future of Afghanistan.

Can you share with us now your sense about – you know, what would you be telling us here? And I realize you're going to have private conversations with the government. But what are the things that we should be thinking about of how you look at the situation in Afghanistan?

S. Jaishankar: Well, I think from the time you came to India to now, which is three months, what perhaps has changed is we have much more consultations. In fact, even on this trip I met Ambassador Khalilzad in New York. Part of my discussion with Secretary Pompeo yesterday was devoted to Afghanistan. And we consult with other countries as well. We consulted with the Russians. We consulted with the Chinese.
So for us the challenge in Afghanistan is this. We see the American dilemma, and the American dilemma is of an 18-year troop commitment and a debate whether the situation is going to improve radically in the coming years. OK, so we understand that.

We also recognize the American achievement, which sometimes Americans themselves underplay, which is the enormous changes that they brought about in Afghanistan, at great cost to themselves. And we admire and appreciate that, that today those achievements, which really have changed the lives of a generation and a half in Afghanistan. And anybody who goes there could really sort of feel it palpably.

Those achievements are not small ones. And it’s important that even as the American dilemmas are being addressed, that those achievements are also protected. So how do you manage both of them at the same time? And again, in all – you know, I would caution against a tendency to say if we are going to change something in 2019, the fallback alternative is 1999. So we go back 20 years before we came.

I think so much has changed in those 20 years. But there are other alternative realities out there which have – there are today other political forces, other social forces, at work out there.

So I don’t see that so much – you know, so clearly as a binary choice between what it is today and what it used to be before the U.S. went in there in 2001. So my sense is you actually are going to see a fairly complex process, because it’s one thing to work out solutions on paper. Do bear in mind there are real people involved here, and real people often have minds of their own. And the minds of their own may not conform to what the paper says should be their fate.

So I predict something far more complex than where we are right now.

John J. Hamre: We started off by saying, well, we’ll negotiate directly with the Taliban and then we’ll just kind of insist they talk to the government. That seems to be dangerous. Do you have a view on how we should approach this next phase?

S. Jaishankar: You know, we are conservative with offering prescriptions, particularly publicly. But what I would say is, you know, there are people there. There’s a democratic process, however imperfect. The democratic process has thrown up representatives. So those are all factors and –

John J. Hamre: They are, yeah. Absolutely.

If I may, Foreign Minister, I know that you were in New York. You had a brief meeting of the so-called Quad. Yours has been kind of a shifting sort of – it’s kind of like a high-school dance. You keep looking across the room and say, do you want to dance? I mean, it’s not really come together yet, but there was a Quad meeting. And, you know, is there a – is there a second dance?
S. Jaishankar: Well, I don’t know the dance form when there are three men and one lady. I’m sure there must be – there must be one.

John J. Hamre: It’d be very strange.

S. Jaishankar: This one went well. But, look, I think what we saw at the Quad foreign ministers’ meeting was really – I mean, this has now, in its current form, been in evidence for about two years now. And it’s been worked at till now at kind of assistant-secretary level. So people have done a certain amount of work. So by the time the ministers came to the dance, somebody had warmed up the floor. So that was very helpful.

Today we have issues – the four countries – we have issues of common interest, common concern. You know, maritime security is one. Counterterrorism is one. Connectivity issues are one. And I would say, you know, the combination of these four ministers – I mean, frankly, I mean, we all got along with each other, I think, at a personal level. So we – I, frankly, found it a very comfortable, very productive meeting.

John J. Hamre: About three years ago I was in – when I was in Delhi, you gave me a very sharp lecture about us not paying attention to –

S. Jaishankar: Me?

John J. Hamre: Yes, sir. I remember it vividly.

S. Jaishankar: It must have been in a –

John J. Hamre: No, it was very well-pointed, and it was about America not paying enough attention to Chinese infrastructure building around the region and the geopolitical dimensions of that. Since that time, we’ve seen some countries push back, feeling that they are being abused in this Chinese One Belt One Road agenda. What’s your sense of it now?

S. Jaishankar: Look, I would rather speak about what I’m doing than what others are doing. OK.

John J. Hamre: OK.

S. Jaishankar: That’s what happens when you become a foreign minister. So but, you know, we have fairly clear principles of – on connectivity. I mean, we feel connectivities should be a sort of consultative process. They should be sort of a high viability in market economy terms – that they should be locally – there should be a sense of local ownership. They should respond to all of that, and, I mean, that’s our view. If others have different views, I mean, that’s their privilege.
So what we have done in the last many years is actually put that to work. Today, we would have a very large number of connectivity projects across South Asia. South Asia is our first sort of circle of priority –

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**John J. Hamre:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**S. Jaishankar:** – because we are very conscious it’s a very under integrated region. So what we have tried to do through soft loans, through grants, through encouraging business collaborations really look to see if we can get much greater common connectivity on power transmission, on data flows, on optical fiber networks, on roads, on waterways, on rail links.

So a very large part, actually, of the Foreign Ministry’s budget today is being devoted to these kinds of projects and they are – they are today very prevalent across South Asia, barring one country. No prizes for guessing that one. And we’ve taken that on to Africa as well. So even in Africa today we have a commitment. We have a soft loan commitment of about $10 billion over five years. We are on track. We are in the fourth year of that program and about $700 million in grants, and you will see across Africa today actually a lot of Indian connectivity projects as well.

So I’m using connectivity in a very broad sense and what happens in connectivity is, obviously, no country is big enough to build connectivity for the world. So it makes sense that you do your part and you kind of coordinate or juxtapose it with what other people are doing so that then it works better for everybody, and you are seeing a lot of that.

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**John J. Hamre:** Yes.

**S. Jaishankar:** And so there would be projects where we, you know, work closely with the Japanese or, to some extent, there are American connectivity projects involving organizations like the MCC. So these are all happening as we speak.

**John J. Hamre:** You know, I thought I saw your hand in the Osaka G-20 Summit, which really did highlight so much of what you just said, this need for high standards – objective standards – in connectivity projects throughout the region.

**S. Jaishankar:** Well, thank you. But, actually, a lot of that credit of – you know, in the period when I was not in the government, I actually attended some quality infrastructure events. So I think today the idea of building a connectivity which meets some kind of broad understanding of common good that’s there in Japan. It’s there in Europe a lot. I’ve been there and discussed it with a lot of people. So I think that’s gaining traction and that’s probably very good.

**John J. Hamre:** Yes, it’s a very good thing. One last thing and then I’ll turn – we’ve got a brief – briefly to the audience. Just to ask you about Kashmir. When I was in India was five days after the – you know, the legal and political resolution of a 70-year-long issue and I was impressed by the – you know, the solidarity of consensus in India about that.
And there’s been, you know, quite a bit of criticism outside of India associated with the – you know, with the lockdown, as it were, and the communications, and I understand the quite legitimate security issues that you had. But this also will engender, you know, resentments that could grow over time with beneficiaries in Islamabad and, frankly, in Beijing. So I’m just wondering how you’re thinking about, you know, bringing good to Kashmir, generally, or others to – you know, to try to minimize the – kind of the challenges that are emerging now during this transition.

S. Jaishankar: Mmm hmm. Well, look, you know, the quest for a more perfect union is not unique to India.

John J. Hamre: We’re still working on it.

S. Jaishankar: Yes. So in our case, I think Kashmir stood out. It stood out for exactly the reason I spelled out in my remarks, which is that it was intended originally that Kashmir would join India on the same terms of every other princely state, would have more time to align itself with the polity and entirety. But what was meant as a – as a sort of a provision to give space and time actually ended up as an arbitrage that people actually made gains out of what they made it – you know, they created a barrier out of that provision. And they had the keys to that particular door.

And the result of all of that was exactly what I said, which was you had less economic activity than the rest of India. You had a state which was socially increasingly less aligned with the rest of the country. I mean, pretty much every progressive legislator in the country over the last twenty years did not get to be enacted and applied in Kashmir. And all of this really contributed to our political security challenge.

Now, we took a long, hard look at it. I mean, we do understand that a decision of this magnitude was not one that was taken lightly. It was done because, frankly, there was no other way. I mean, the only other way was to do more of the same – more of the same and expect different results. And that was not going to happen. So now I take your point that there would be transitional risks when you change the status quo on anything in a very substantial way.

There would be reactions. And there are reactions out there. I mean, there are vested interests built over 70 years. There are local vested interests. There are vested interests across the border. But if we actually manage to get development going in Kashmir, do understand that the Pakistanis have planned for for the last 70 years comes to naught. And therefore, that’s not something they’re going to let happen easily. So our challenge today is actually to sort of ensure that this works on the ground. And to do that, the beginning is to prevent loss of life when the changes are made.

So many of the restrictions which had been imposed are precautions to ensure there aren’t loss of life. And these are common-sense precautions. I
mean, they’re not – there is a lot of experience which has gone into that precaution. If you look at events in 2016, for example. We saw how the internet and social media was used to radicalize and to mobilize. So obviously if you’re going to walk into this situation, you’re not going to let the internet be used by people whose intentions are malevolent.

So I’m not minimizing the challenges, but I think that the intent really is persevere and to make sure that there are enough changes on the ground so that peoples thinking also change accordingly. And I’m sure I do want to make one more point which is, you know, we are today focused on Jammu and Kashmir. And I grant you that’s a pretty unique situation. But India has experienced in its own northeast regions of also tackling very difficult challenges. And today if you see the northeast is largely peaceful. People are employed in gainful livelihood, not in throwing stones at security forces. And that the development card has actually worked in the northeast. It has worked even to a point of very strong political mainstream of the northeast, where actually national parties today have a lot of support.

John J. Hamre: Yeah. OK. Let me – we’ve got a brief amount of time. Yes, ma’am. I’m going to turn with the microphone – right down here in the second row. This lady on the end. Come, come, come, come, come. We’ve only got a short time. Thank you.

Rudra Kapila: Hello. Thank you. My name is Rudra Kapila. I’m a climate scientist.

And my question is about the future development of Kashmir. Does the Indian government have an ecological sustainability-based plan for developing Jammu and Kashmir, given that these regions are very sensitive to climate change going forward? And also given that the areas, the boundaries are politically not ecological. So do you envision a more regional cooperation in managing the ecology of that area? Thank you.

John J. Hamre: Climate change and –

S. Jaishankar: Yeah. No, I just want to make sure I understood you. You are asking me, do we have a plan as we address development in Jammu and Kashmir to look at the ecological aspects of that?

Rudra Kapila: Correct. So as – (off mic) –

S. Jaishankar: Ah, OK, OK. I get it.

John J. Hamre: Got it? OK. OK.

S. Jaishankar: Shall we take –

Mikhail Turgiv: Thank you. My name is Mikhail Turgiv. I am a journalist with the Russian News Agency RIA Novosti.

I would like to ask about S-400 issue. Not about the USA mediation – you answered this question already – but about the possible consequences of this purchase. So the U.S. has a law, CAATSA, which says that these sanctions be imposed on a country which purchases such an equipment. So the question is, are you ready to accept those consequences, or what other options are you ready for? Thank you.

S. Jaishankar: You’re supposed to be helping me get through this.

John J. Hamre: And then the third one is right down – right on – OK.

Questioner: Dr. Jaishankar, Your Honor, thanks for your sharing.

And I have a question. What’s your comment on yesterday’s China’s largest ever military parade celebrating its 70th birthday? And what’s your interpretation on Indian security and defense?

John J. Hamre: And then I will take right in front – we’ll go the second row, right in front of you. Thanks. And that’s the last one.

Sita Sonty: Your excellency, Sita Sonty with Sierra Nevada Corporation.

How are you balancing the relationship with the United States politically and in terms of energy dependence against the relationship with Iran? Is it a current inflection point? And do you see any changes coming in the future?

S. Jaishankar: OK. I think I – OK. It looks like I’m not addressing your question, the sound’s not so good. But I think I got your question. So let me – let me start with the Jammu and Kashmir issue. You know, it’s clearly – it’s the objective of the government as things settle down obviously to encourage investment – government investment but also private investment. And private investment has not really been that strong historically in Kashmir, for reasons that we all know. But, yes, I think it’s very much the fragility – the ecological fragility of that particular landscape would be very much in people’s minds.

And I would say this is a government which gives a lot of attention to those factors. I would look at both – you know, both its environmental sensitivity as well as its climate change awareness. Those have been very much sharper with this particular government. So I’m pretty sure that that is something which would be. In many cases you need – you have systems. There are sort of environment clearances for projects. It’s mandated. So it’s not that you’re going to have industry run rampant in a place.

On the – on the S-400 issue, you know, I’m not sure I like the way you posed the question. You know, we, India, has made a decision on the S-400. And we have discussed that with the U.S. government. And I’m reasonably convinced of the powers of my persuasion. So it would be my hope that
people understand, you know, why this particular transaction is important
for us. So I think the rest of your question to me is really hypothetical.

On the parade in China, 10 years ago I actually was there. I just arrived as
the ambassador. I saw the 60th anniversary parade. I'm a parade person.
You know, I watch parades all my life. And part of the reason was my father
had a job organizing parades, so I used to be the kid who would be – oh, all of
us, actually the four of us would be put out there in the front seat and left to
watch parades. And Chinese parades have always been very impressive. I
saw a little bit of it on the television. So if you asked me as a comparative
parade analysis, it was it ranked up there.

On the U.S.-Iran issue, look, you know, these are the kind of situations that I
speak about, that, you know, this will be a world of contradictions where you
have friends on both sides of the argument, where you have relationships to
keep, where you have interests to protect on either side. And you will never
get clean-cut solutions. So when people say what are you going to do, it can't
be I'll go here or I'll go there; you will have to sort of walk that space very,
very delicately and dexterously.

And I think that's – I mean, if you look today at the Gulf, you know, there are
so many contradictions at so many levels, you know – political
contradictions, issues of faith, issues of, you know, competitive business –
and they're all in play at the same time. Our concern there – we have two
sets of concerns when it comes to Iran directly.

Our concern is we are a big energy importing economy, and for us affordable,
predictable access to energy is very important. We have been repeatedly
assured that that would happen. So – excuse me. So for us, that would be the
sort of – the benchmark with which we would approach the region, that we
need solutions which will work for us.

But at the same time, we have a lot of other relationships with Iran as well. I
mean, we have a strong political relationship. We have a cultural
relationship. We work with them. I mean, we actually operate a port in that
country which services Afghanistan. So those are equities, obviously, which
we would protect.

And we have a larger Gulf concern, which is from the fact that we have a
large diaspora there. We have 9 million people. In terms of energy, in terms
of remittances, it's important. In terms of security and I would say when the
kind of radicalization challenges that that region can throw up, those are
important for us as well. So all of those kind of go into this mix.

But we'll have to, as I say, (manual there ?). We were very concerned when
there was an escalation of tensions. We have done some naval deployments
in the Straits of Hormuz. So those are to sort of take care of our interests and
those of the general shipping as well.
So this is, for me, a very good illustration of exactly the kind of worldview that I was laying out.

John J. Hamre: It is very unusual to have a foreign minister that can operate at the strategic level, the operational level, the tactical level. You do that with mastery. It's really been a splendid discussion. I've expended more time I've taken from you, Ambassador. We have to let the foreign minister leave. I'd ask you to please keep your seats so he and his delegation can get out of here, but please thank him with your applause.

(END)