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Pamela Constable
Foreign Correspondent, *The Washington Post*

Playing with Fire: Pakistan at War with Itself

Patricia Ellis: Good afternoon everyone and welcome. Thank you all for coming. We have a great crowd today, and you're really lucky because I have heard Pam speak about her book already, and it's really fascinating, and it's so timely. Every day in the news there is another story about Pakistan or Pakistan-US relations, etc., so we're just lucky to have Pam with us. Pam is and has been a foreign correspondent for *The Washington Post* and her latest book is called *Playing with Fire: Pakistan at War with Itself*. It's really a great book because it allows you to understand all the contradictions in Pakistani society and the fabric of society, and it's not just about yesterday or today. It really gives you the texture of things in a historical perspective, etc. So, it's great. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Patricia Ellis. I'm President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote women's leadership and women's voices on the pressing issues of the day, and Pakistan is certainly one of them. Our most recent event here in New York was another Author Series event, which was great. It was with Robin Wright on her new book about the Arab Spring and it was really terrific. We are working on a number of others. Our other popular activities are our Annual Celebration of Women Diplomats, and that's in the spring. And we always have programs either at or relating to the UN and our last big one was with Michelle Bachelet. That was really a fantastic program, so standby. We are lucky today that we happen to have a number of diplomatic friends with us, and so I just would like them to introduce themselves. [*The diplomats, including Marijan Gubic, the Consul General of Croatia, Ambassador Gréta Gunnarsdóttir, the Iceland Ambassador to the United Nations, and Raushan Yesbulatova, Consul General of Kazakhstan, introduce themselves.*]

It's now my privilege and pleasure to introduce our speaker who is an author and foreign correspondent, who is now covering immigration but basically has spent many years covering Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq—the whole region—and still goes back and forth frequently. Pam and I go way back, when I was teaching at American University, she used to come. She was a foreign correspondent for *The Boston Globe* and we would come and talk about news coverage of foreign affairs and it was always interesting because I remember what was different about Pam's approach was that it always included the human angle and human interest stories as a way to understand foreign policy, which was absolutely great. And the students loved it. Pam joined *The Washington Post* in 1994, and while at *The Washington Post*, she was deputy foreign editor, as well as being a correspondent. Before that, as I mentioned, she was at *The Boston Globe*. She was a foreign policy reporter and correspondent, and there she covered Latin America and particularly Central America and Haiti. She co-edited a book about Chile and she also wrote another book, which is about her personal experience about living in South Asia. She has won a number of prizes. One is called the Maria Moors Cabot prize and she was a fellow at the Alicia Patterson foundation and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Please join me in welcoming Pam Constable. Pam is going to speak, and as is our tradition, we always have plenty of time for questions and answers, and then she will be happy to sign her book, and I highly recommend it. So, thank you so much Pam.

Pamela Constable: Thanks, Pat. I am delighted to be here, and Pat didn't mention that we had a similar, very nice event at their Washington office recently in which we had a nice group to talk about the book. And, in keeping with the spirit of this group, I would like to, if nobody minds, just ask other

people, everyone else who is here, very, very quickly, just to say a word about themselves. This is a very, very old friend of mine, Gayle Gaston. We went to boarding school together and only see each other on special occasions, so I am very glad Gayle is here. We have heard from the ambassadors, but very quickly. [*Participants introduces themselves.*]

Ms. Constable: Great, well I am so glad you are all here. This is a wonderful, diverse group. I am sure we can all adjourn and have a wonderful conversation all afternoon about all sorts of things. Great diversity here. In honor of our two guests down on the right, I will open my talk on one of my very, very most important topics, to which I devote quite a bit of space in the book and that is the whole issue of blasphemy. I mean, it goes right to the heart of what my book is about. I am going to talk for a short time, which I would anyway, but Pat also particularly wanted this to be a short presentation, so that we can have lots of time for discussion afterwards. And my train is at 3:30, so I am happy to stay until 2:30 or however late anyone would want or until they kick us out of the room. What I try to do in this book—it is not a book about foreign policy, it's not really a book about international relations or the war on terror. This is a portrait of contemporary Pakistan, a place that I have been working off and on for the past, almost, 13 years. And as Pat mentioned recently and as some of you have read, I did a previous book about the region, but it was more of a personal memoir. This is an effort to really delve into Pakistani society, at a point in its history that I think is probably as perilous and as important as there's ever been. I will leave it to others to talk about Pakistan's relations with the world. I'm hoping that Western readers will come away from this book with what I hope is, a very good understanding of how the society works and unfortunately, why, in many cases, it doesn't.

Pakistan is an enormous country. I often say it has as much potential to be another Turkey, another Brazil, an Indonesia, a Mexico, even an India. But, unfortunately, it has been held back by a number of problems—the lack of maturing political institutions, continuing feudal mindset of much of the elite, obsession with the perceived hegemonic pretensions of India, and a number of other things that have really kept a country with incredible dynamic potential, very much stagnant. And what this means is that it's a country of 180 million people. That's a lot of people. It's probably the eighth most populous country in the world. It's this teeming hive of people who would love to be pushed into the modern world, but the great majority of them still live on the land and still work for landowners, which means they are essentially not going anywhere. At the same time, you have incredible urban crowding beginning to happen, especially in places like Karachi. One thing that I don't deal with a lot in this book, which is going to be the subject of lots of future study, is the fact that Pakistan is running out of water and electrical power, and it has a population growth rate that is far, far too high. Demographic disaster looms in Pakistan, but what I try to talk about more are two things: power and religion. I am going to read you one page from the introduction, so that if you don't read anything else in the book, at least you'll know where I am coming from and what I try to do. And you'll know how old I am because I have to take off my glasses to do this.

This book is an attempt to create a backdrop for a dangerous and fluid moment in the history of a troubled but important country, and to explain what is enduring and changing in its life as a nation. It's an attempt to explain such puzzles as why Pakistanis have a love-hate relationship with the West, why the coup-prone army remains its most respected institution, why the feudal mindset still dominates politics. It explores why a country with such enormous economic potential has failed to educate and employ a majority of its people, and why a nation founded with such high hopes as a modern Muslim democracy has struggled so painfully to live up to them.

In all of these issues lurks the same central question: why is Pakistan, with its huge military establishment, democratic form of government, and tradition of moderate Muslim culture, failing to curb both the growing violent threat and the popular appeal of radical Islam?

The most important thing I have learned in my travels is that many Pakistanis feel they have no power. They see the trappings of representative democracy around them but little tangible evidence of it in their own lives. They feel dependent on, and often at the mercy of, forces more powerful than they:

landlords, police, tribal councils, intelligence services, politicized courts, corrupt bureaucrats, and legislators tied to local power elites. People do not trust the system, so they feel they need a patron to get around it. This in turn makes everyone complicit in corruption, especially its victims.

This feeling of powerlessness and injustice, which people expressed everywhere I went in Pakistan, is perhaps the most significant factor in explaining the appeal of the Taliban and other religious extremists. They appear to offer justice in a society where that is hard to come by, even if people may not understand what their brand of justice would look like. They also offer an opportunity for those who feel excluded, especially the young and poor, to join a movement that has elements of a moral crusade or revolution, even if it seems like thuggery from the outside.

That in a nutshell is what I try to explain in this book. I also want to say right at the outset that this is not a book that is anti-Pakistan. It's not a book that is anti-Islam. It's a book that tries to take Pakistan as it is, to understand the dominant religion of that country as it always has been, traditionally, and to try and understand why it's becoming twisted and perverted into something much less moderate and much less tolerant. I want to start off with this issue of blasphemy because it's so central to what's happening in the country today. When I speak about this book, most people want to ask me about the killing of Osama bin Laden because it's big news in this country, and it was a big cathartic triumph for the United States and the West, but I like to start off talking about another death and that was the assassination of Salman Taseer, who was the appointed governor of Punjab, the largest, most powerful, most important province of the four of Pakistan's provinces.

He was a liberal—I don't like to use the word secular in Pakistan because it is a pejorative—but a liberal, modern, very outspoken politician from the ruling People's Party. He was the appointed head of Punjab, and he, as a liberal politician, had spoken out quite publicly, one of the very few politicians in Pakistan, who spoke out publicly against this incredibly draconian law they have against blasphemy. The one sentence version of what that's all about is that if you say or do anything that's perceived as offensive to Islam or to the prophet Mohammed, you can be thrown into jail, put on trial, and sentenced to death—even if you do something like scribble on a Koran, even if you do something like say “I don't like the prophet Mohammed” to the guy sitting next to you and someone overhears you. Now, very, very few times is the death sentence carried out, but people languish in prison for years on these charges. People are often killed outside prisons, even by guards, by mobs. It is seen as an excuse, or license, I should say. And, also perhaps more important, the blasphemy law is often used as a weapon of persecution, whether of a personal rival, very often of ethnic and religious minorities, such as Christians as well as Ahmadis, which is a Muslim sect that is officially shunned by the government. It's a very powerful and a very dangerous law, and he was speaking out against it.

In particular—and I am going into detail here because there is a larger point I am going to make in a minute—in particular, he had been speaking out against the case of a woman, a peasant woman, who had been working in a field. I believe it was a berry field, and she got into an argument with her fellow berry pickers, who were Muslims. We don't really know what the argument was about, but it accelerated into some sort of a religious argument. She was Christian, they were Muslim. So we don't really know what was said because we will never know really what was said, but the mob dragged her off to the local jail. She was put in jail. This is a middle aged woman with a number of children. She was sent before the local magistrate, she was tried in a district court with a very short trial with very little time to prepare. She was convicted and sentenced to death. And she is still in jail. The governor had been making several speeches in which he said, not that she was guilty or not guilty, but that really, this was an unfair treatment and that she needed—he was basically calling for compassion for her I would say. He had dinner at a restaurant in the capital, and when he came out of the restaurant, his personal, highly trained, police bodyguard shot him in the back 26 times and killed him. This was at the very beginning of this year. In fact, right after I finished the book, I had changed quite a bit of the book to incorporate what had happened.

Now, here's the story, the killer was utterly unrepentant, believed he had done a noble deed to defend his religion. He was welcomed as a hero by many, many people in Pakistan, including people who might well have been sitting around this table were they living in Pakistan, but mostly it was a mob reaction. When I went to his home, the place was surrounded by thousands of people throwing flowers, just praising him as a hero of Islam. I went to a giant march in the streets of Karachi where tens of thousands of people were praising him. This picture on the cover of the book is from that rally and it talks about the sacredness of Islam and people were chanting his name. And this is a little photo of him down there. Here is why it's more of a story: what did the government do? Nothing. Instead of taking the opportunity to make it a teachable moment of some sort and stand up and say, "civilian rulers, this is wrong, this is murder, religion is not an excuse for murder," they basically appeased the mob by saying, "OK, we will now not touch a hair on the blasphemy law and you can all go home and get back to your peaceful existences." That's what the government did.

Now, the chilling effect of this all, you can imagine, on the society, in terms of the small liberal elite and whether they're ever going to speak out again, although there is a very well-known woman in parliament who has still been speaking out, but she has received a number of death threats. The even larger point I want to make is this: I see the threat to Pakistan, in a country like Pakistan, not as coming from terrorist bombs, but from the emotions of the people. Pakistanis have suffered as much as any other country from terrorist attacks—much more than we have. Thousands of people have been killed in the past decade by Islamic terrorists. This is not a fault of the religion itself, but what's happening, and it's a lot to explain in a short time and if you read the book, hopefully you'll get a better sense of it, is that particularly since 9/11, but generally over the past couple of decades, there has been what I call this growing confluence of two things: one of which is hyper nationalism, this hyper defensiveness against India, against the United States, against the West. You have people stitching together this line that connects the dots between Kashmir and Kosovo and Palestine and Iraq and Afghanistan and telling Pakistani's "we're going to be the next victim of western aggression" That message has been going out very much from a lot of the elites over the past number of years.

At the same time, we are seeing what I call, and the Salman Taseer murder is a very good example of it, not radical ideological Saudi-style Islam, but very emotional, hysterical Islam—people becoming very emotionally attached to their religion and to feel that they need to defend it. This is something in the water. It's in the air. It is a kind of poison that is spreading across society, and when you add these two ingredients together, hyper-hawkish nationalism and extreme emotionalism about what is already a very emotionally powerful religion, you get people drifting towards, and sometimes actively embracing and much more easily falling into the clutches of the radicals who want to take over and make Pakistan into another Saudi Arabia. That's in a nutshell what's going on.

Now, I don't say it's going to happen tomorrow. I don't say that Pakistan is going to be lost like China. I say there's a drift. There's a drift that's happening and not enough is being done to counter it. Neither by the Pakistani authorities, who are essentially a weak civilian state, far less powerful in many ways than either the religious parties or the army, nor by the West which needs, in my opinion, to come up with a much better counter-narrative and a much better marketing plan to try and explain to people, and a country like Pakistan, that we don't hate them, that we don't wish them ill, that we're not against their religion, certainly, but that we want to support the more moderate, inclusive, less punitive aspects of Islam. We want to shore that up. In fact, when you talk of Pakistan, what you're talking of is shoring up the middle, shoring up the middle of what was always a very tolerant, very moderate, vision, or brand, if you will, of Islam in that society. With the Afghan war, there were many, many things that came along in the past few years to make that start to change, but the core is still there. The great majorities of Pakistanis still think that way, still feel that way. They don't like the Taliban, they don't like terrorist bombings, but because of this ultra nationalism that's going around, they're being persuaded by influential people, from television anchors, to senators, to religious leaders, that the damage is not coming from where it's truly coming from. And as I say in this book, I have been to the scenes or the sights of dozens of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. I was at the Marriott when it was bombed, I have been to markets, I have been to mosques, I have been to police and military facilities, I have been all over

that country as a journalist, and then as a book researcher, going to as many sights of terrorist attacks as I could and every time I would ask the same questions of the survivors, the witnesses, the people there, “Who could have done this?” And every time, I would get the same answer: “Well, it couldn’t have been a fellow Muslim and it couldn’t have been a fellow Pakistani because they would never do this. It must have been outsiders.” And when they say outsiders, what they mean is the United States, India, and Israel. There’s this giant conspiracy theory that has become very common currency in Pakistan and many other parts of the Muslim world that there is this evil axis that’s really out to get them. I am talking about real cynicism here, and it’s amazing how people are manipulated there.

You can’t see this picture, but this is Jamaat-e-Islami, which is sort of a Pakistani version of the Muslim Brotherhood, a very subtle, very strategic, very successful, religious party, which has been in existence for forty to fifty years and has always played a democratic political role, but truly strategically wants a sharia state. No question in my mind. I took this picture at a demonstration by Jamaat-e-Islami, the day after one of the worst suicide bombings in the history—sorry, it wasn’t suicide, it was a car bomb—one of the worst terrorist bombings I have ever seen in Pakistan, in which more than a hundred women, children, and others were killed, by a car bomb, in a market, in Pakistan. I was there the next day. And so here you have Jamaat-e-Islami, this religious party, holding a protest, and what was the protest against? CIA and Blackwater, which is a CIA subcontracting security agency, that’s what the protest was against. Not the Taliban. Not al-Qaeda. Not terrorism. Of course, the signs were all in English, by the way, because they wanted this to go out on the television cameras and be beamed to the world. They know better, they know better. This is utter cynicism. It is an effort to really manipulate the minds of the masses in a way that they will never blame themselves for anything. Pakistan has a million metaphors people use. Pakistan is a country that is always shooting itself in the foot. It is so self-destructive, what is going on.

The title of my book is *Playing with Fire: Pakistan at War with Itself*. Now, there are several reasons I use those phrases. When I say “playing with fire” I mean several things. Number one, these elites, these political leaders, these media and religious leaders somehow think, military most of all, somehow think that they can contain, control, manipulate, use, and not be hit in the face by, Islamic extremism. They have been playing with it for years. They, again, the Cold War, we were in part of it too. There is lots of blame to go around here, but at the time, people only cared about defeating the Soviet Union. So, back in the seventies and eighties, these religious extremist groups got fomented and helped by many people including Charlie Wilson and us to defeat the Soviets. Since the Soviets were defeated, you had thousands of these highly religiously motivated people running around with weapons. Well, they next sent them to Kashmir to fight the Indians and that’s still going on, but that’s metastasized too. Now, you have these groups, which were always considered on the fringe. I still, even today, when you interview members of the Pakistani elite, you say, “Well, what about Jaamaat-e-Islami? What about these radical religious groups? What about these al-Qaeda terrorists?” “Oh, don’t worry, they’ll never get any power. They’ll never get any seats in parliament. They’ll never take over.” To which I always say, “They don’t care about seats in parliament. They’re after something else. They’re after the hearts and minds of the people. And they are beginning to win them.” You have the situation where the elites are still, especially the military elites, still think that they can use radical Islam, but not be swallowed up by it. Well, it’s really beginning to go the other way.

The other reason I say *Playing with Fire: Pakistan at War with Itself* is this notion of feudalism. Now, most of you think of feudalism as equated with owning large tracts of land. There has been some limited land reform, two times in Pakistan, but nothing really major, nothing sweeping, nothing that would count as a major land revolution or any sort of redistribution of wealth. The elite in Pakistan is still largely feudal. Most people, for example, in parliament, still own lots of land. But, when I speak of feudalism, I’m talking about a state of mind. I’m talking about the fact that you have a tiny elite in that country, the great majority of members of which think that it is perfectly okay to let everybody else rot in the fields and that if you start educating and empowering the very poorest of the poor, somehow they think this is not going to come back to haunt them. I don’t think they’ve ever seen a pie. They don’t even know what growth is. They’re thinking “Okay, we’re going to hold onto our little piece of it, and we

don't really care what happens to the rest." Now, I'm exaggerating here for effect. Obviously, there are social programs, there are charitable programs, there are schools in many villages, but you try going to one of them and there are no teachers, there are no books. Nobody wants to teach there. Girls aren't allowed to go there because they're not allowed to mingle with boys. The literacy rate in Pakistan, alone, is condemning it to many, many more years of economic stagnation, not to mention corruption and terrorism, the two biggest reasons foreign investors don't go to a country. So you've got that on the outside and on the inside, you've got this enormous workforce. This is a stupid phrase, but they don't seem to know it there—investment in human capital—they don't seem to understand what that's all about. They still seem to think that they can live in their air conditioned houses with their bottled water coming from Switzerland and when Pakistan starts running out of water and electricity and food, the deluge is not going to come. Well, I think eventually it is going to and it's going to be over those issues and then you are going to have the Islamic radicals just waiting in the wings because they do it so well.

Watch what's going to happen in Egypt. Let's just see what's going to happen in those elections. I don't want to talk about the Arab Spring. It's other people's specialty, but still. My fears are not exactly amorphous, but they are more of various problems coming to a head gradually—huge, very frustrated youth population. Somebody said to me the other day when I was giving a speech, "Why are you being so critical and pessimistic? What about the youth? Aren't they an exciting and new hope for the future?" And I said, "Well, they may be, but I think they are up for grabs at this point." If you don't have enough jobs, if people don't graduate from high school in the year 2011, they are doomed, basically. They don't have enough kids even in elementary school, let alone high school. They don't have enough colleges. There's no tax collection of any size. All the money goes to the defense budget—in other words, "playing with fire." They're not really putting in place policies that would help develop their nation to a point where it can become a modern nation and can resist the true threat of these radical movements that are just waiting to pounce on people who have nothing.

The other thing people often ask me is, "What do you recommend?" And I guess, I mean, I have lots of recommendations, but I am not a policymaker and this is not a policy book. But, (A) anything that can be done to help strengthen moderate Islamic leaders, individuals, groups, schools, anything that can be done to sort of isolate the extremes, because obviously, you aren't going to kill them all with drones because that can make it even worse. That is another can or worms I talk about. I call the drone campaign a tactical brilliance and a strategic disaster in terms of winning hearts and minds; and then (B) doing things that will help reinforce and institutionalize and improve education. Now, that's complicated. Again, you've got security, you've got corruption, you've got family prohibitions, and you've got all these tribal and local customs.

I have a whole chapter on the repression of women in Pakistani society, mostly in rural traditional areas. I won't have enough time to talk about that in detail, although I can answer questions about it or talk about it later. But, in many cases, girls are simply not allowed to go to school. Period. Because the need to keep them from mingling with boys and the need to keep them pure to be engaged and married at the earliest possible age is a much more important priority for the clan and the tribal leaders than that they be educated. That's yet another thing that's holding back society. As all of you know, especially those of you who work in international aid, if there's one thing that propels a society in the future, it's educating girls and women. Family size is a huge problem in Pakistan.

And then, the other thing that I recommend—again, this sounds stupid, but boy does it make a difference: exchanges, exchanges. Every time a group of people—I talk to them all of the time, I never say no, I talk to every Pakistani group that comes over, so that I have a chance to introduce them to our way of journalism and other issues. You bring young Pakistani journalists, teachers, educators, moderate Muslim leaders, even ones that are too conservative for your taste, bring them over if they're considered to be a part of the moderate Muslim mainstream. Get them interchanged and get them to understand that we are not a monster here. I toured the flood zones, where Pakistan's horrible flooding happened in 2010. Everywhere I went, nobody knew a single thing about all the aid that had come from the United States and the European countries to help the flood victims. But every single person knew

that Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which is an arm of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which is a very pernicious, jihadi Islamic group, was there at every village, was there at every flooded place, handing out help. What else can you say? They have more influence than we do—with good reason. I am going to stop there, and I will talk about anything you want to talk about for as long as you can stay.

Ms. Ellis: I am going to lead off. I'd like you to reflect a little bit more. I am going to ask you just a couple of questions, and then raise your hand. I am going to keep a list and I will try to get to everybody. So, how do you break this vicious cycle? I mean, who is going to invest there? You say the education system is terrible, all this stuff. Why isn't it a failed state? You say you have all this potential, but I just read yesterday they have a huge suicide rate, which is increasing by the day because there is all this unemployment, no jobs, people can't provide for their families. That is the first question. On this whole anti-Americanism and mistrust, the United States is obsessed with getting the help of the Pakistanis with the Haqqani Network and helping with terrorism. Obviously the Pakistanis have other priorities, so it's coming from both sides, like ships in the night, and I am just wondering how you feel the drawdown, the pullout from Afghanistan, is going to have an impact on all these questions. And lastly, if you can talk a little more about women. Everyone is going to want to know—there will be more specific questions, but are women able to do anything? You talk about the elite women and a few members of Parliament, but on a daily basis, what is it like?

Ms. Constable: I will try to take this in order. My answer to the "T" of terrorism is the "T" of textiles. The industry with the most potential for export in Pakistan is textiles. Pakistani textiles cannot get into this country. Everything you're wearing here was made in India, Bangladesh, Mexico, Costa Rica, and a few other places. Why not Pakistan? Well, there are a whole lot of reasons for that. One of them is we are going back to repressed women, we are going back to the punitive sanctions because Pakistan developed a nuclear weapons industry, but I think we are way past that. Again, I am not a policymaker, and I have nothing to do with commerce. All I am saying is that instead of just telling them that they should do more, if we offer them a few more carrots. I mean, we give them lots of aid, but aid is never the solution. If we could stimulate Pakistan—Pakistan has wonderful cotton. Pakistan has wonderful mills. I have been in many of them. It has modern equipment from Germany and Italy. It is poised to become a major textile exporter—sheets, blankets, towels, all sorts of stuff. They have an apparel industry as well. This is all probably having a lot to do with commercial policy, but I also think that it has a lot to do with political policy. I think that if we were to help open up their potentially largest employer of high school graduates, which is really what the textile industry is, we would do a whole lot to help them, and they would probably actually appreciate it. That's one small example.

Another "T" is taxes. One of the great problems in Pakistan, again, in trying to develop the economy and the education system, is that—this goes back to the elite playing with fire—nobody pays taxes in Pakistan, and you're considered to be an idiot if you do. The culture is of an official scoff on taxes—not even evasion, just simple nonpayment of taxes, especially among the elites. Now, there are lots of places in the world, including this one, where people don't like to pay taxes, but we have very strong laws and very strong law enforcement. What's that guy's name from Sri Lanka who just got a \$58 billion fine? Just use a little bit of that—Bangladesh, I guess. So, if there were a way to help the Pakistanis collect more taxes now, I don't know how you go about doing that. I have met the chairman of the revenue commission, a very hardworking civil servant. I felt terribly sorry for him because he just was basically saying, "I just can't get people to pay." They need better law enforcement, but mostly they need to try and change the official mindset. Pakistan is this VIP culture that nobody treads on, and if you are a powerful person and you own a bunch of factories or a bunch of land, nothing's ever going to happen to you and nobody's going to make you pay taxes. If a way were to be found, maybe even carrots and stick, The World Bank, the IMF, there are lots of forces out there that can try to get a country with this huge foreign debt that it has to maybe make some really serious changes in its revenue system. Maybe that would help. I am just throwing out ideas that I have, none of which add up to anything.

Third thing, that's an "I" for India. If—and it is starting to happen a little bit just in the last couple of weeks with the new trade agreement—if the Pakistani military could be persuaded that India is not the enemy, and that India, far from wanting to bother with nuclear weapons or take its land away, is actually leaving it in the dust economically and what Pakistan needs to do is be more like India in terms of education and the training of young people. It's an incredible investment that India has made—unbelievable, talk about an investment in human capital, as has Bangladesh, by the way. If Pakistan, especially the military elite, were not so obsessed with this notion of India as the great enemy and begin to sort of pick up maybe some pointers from the way it has done things or even Bangladesh, which is a whole other can of worms that I won't get into, it could help a lot. Now, we are beginning to see a little bit of signs of that. There is some rapprochement going on in economics and trade, but unfortunately, the mindset, especially at the highest military levels, is still very much what they call India-centric, but it's really India-phobic. They really are still obsessed with this. What a waste of time, money, and lives. I mean the reason they're not fighting the terrorists from Afghanistan is that it has all of its troops on the border with India. It's really ridiculous, but to them it's this matter of national pride and defense and security. It's, as I said, it's a mindset, just like feudalism, that needs to change. Now, the United States, historically, has been reluctant to intervene in the Indo-Pak hostility, which has been going on for 60-odd years, but I still do think there is a role to play. I think diplomacy and multilateralism still have a role to play. You can always break off chunks. They don't have to solve Kashmir tomorrow, but there are other disputes. If you can take it piece by piece, I think there's a way to try to bring the two countries closer together. In fact, I am writing a story right now...it's all depressing because I happen to be writing a story right now about a Pakistani journalist who was hounded relentlessly by the intelligence services. He just received political asylum in this country, and I read his whole file this week. He was relentlessly hounded by the intelligence services who accused him of being an agent of Indian intelligence, because he went to a conference in New Delhi with a bunch of other Pakistani intellectuals, and said some critical things about Pakistan. It's like this broken record that they can't seem to get over, so that's another thing. Anything that can be done either by the United States, or multilaterally, or other ways to help Pakistan out of that obsession, I think, would help a lot.

Now, we come to Afghanistan. The spillover from Afghanistan has been going on for a very long time, really, since the early to the mid-1980's. That's a very long time. And the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been very complicated. Most Afghans see Pakistan as a source of religious extremism and very aggressive political design. Most Pakistanis see Afghanistan as a source of refugees, guns, drugs, and dirty people who want to do nothing but cause them problems. It's not a happy relationship because of having this very long border. The current war certainly hasn't helped. I've been in both countries very, very often for much of the time that this war has been going on, and my fear is that it has brought out the worst. The accusations and counteraccusations that have been flying back and forth between the two governments over these ten years have been very aggravating. The whole problem of cross border fighting and cross border terror attacks has really become untenable. The drone attacks, again, have made it more complicated. Now it's getting even more complicated because the Americans are more involved. The last six months have been really bad, and international relations is really a triangular relationship between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States. They have gotten really bogged down in incriminations, accusations—many things have gone wrong. The whole focus on the Haqqani Network again, Pakistanis don't see the Haqqani Network as a threat because they're not threatening them, they are only threatening Afghanistan, whereas the world sees the Haqqani Network as a threat, a lethal threat, that is getting worse and worse. I think that the United States is beginning to come around and even Afghanistan is beginning to come around to say that Pakistan can have an important role in the peace talks, but nobody here trusts each other. None of these parties trust each other. I don't have a lot of hope for what you might call good faith dealings between these two countries anytime in the near future.

And finally, the other mega topic that Pat wanted me to deal with quickly is women. Pakistan is one of the most diverse countries I have ever been in. It's had a woman as a Prime Minister. It has many women lawyers. It has many women doctors. It has many women in Parliament. It has many women in prominent roles, but they're almost all members of the elite. What it doesn't have is role models and

leaders and people from the working classes, the peasant classes, and the lower middle classes who are moving up in society. As I said in the beginning of this discussion or earlier in the discussion, 75% of the population of Pakistan lives on farms. And most women who live on farms are prisoners of very traditional, rural, tribal, and paternalistic culture. They really don't have the chance to get out of their boxes. And they don't have a chance to even know what their rights are, what their opportunities are to leave their own village, to find out anything. They are handed from father, to brother, to husband until they die and that's it. They're engaged at hopelessly young ages, even before they're born. They're simply trapped. In the cities, there is much more opportunity for young women. That is, of course, where the hope is, as well as the congestion and the traffic. There are much better opportunities for young women to be educated in the city, to get passed elementary school and actually go to high school, to actually begin to enter in the work force and have a meaningful role in society. Even then, you still have a lot of suppression in terms of male roles and family roles. There are a lot of limits on what women can do. The fact that you had role models like Benazir Bhutto in a very conservative society, and, in fact, seeing all her flaws was a formidable promoter of women's rights. Hat's off to her for that of course. She's gone and one of the great, great questions, along with what would have happened if Ahmed Shah Massoud would have lived, is what would have happened if Benazir Bhutto had lived? Would she have made a comeback? Would she have been able to truly modernize Pakistan society? Or would she have been, once more, swallowed up in the Afghan war? We really don't know. We don't know if the military would have allowed her to take power. We don't even know, actually, who killed her, and we probably never will. In any case, I would say that the lot of women in Pakistan and all over the map—it's not a hopeless cause. There are people like the women that I talk about. I have a whole chapter on women and women's rights in which I talk about several different incredibly courageous women who have raised and defied incredibly powerful male structures and laws and pressure to keep their rights, their personal rights, but they're very far and few between. Therefore, it remains a place where, not religion, but patriarchal, tribal customs keeps the great majority of women trapped.

Ms. Ellis: Let's take some questions. Raise your hand, and I am going to take three together.

Question: We at Human Rights First have done a lot of work on the blasphemy law, and I just want to thank you so much for bringing it to the forefront as well. We are very engaged in the issue. You refer to the next step for trying to figure out how we can truly make a difference. We can eliminate blasphemy abuses in Pakistan and other countries, but we are starting to feel like we really need to engage more with Pakistanis on the issue. You discuss how any change has to be organic. It must come from within Pakistani society. I'm wondering what you feel there is in terms of things for Americans to do to have an impact?

Ms. Constable: I would say the best way that American NGO's can help Pakistani women is to be extremely low profile but to help Pakistani women-led NGO's. I think anything we try to do with an American sign on it is going to backfire. There are women's organizations in Pakistan, some are better than others. Most of them tend to revolve around an individual, as all these things do. Some are better than others, but yes, that's what I would do. I would really focus on, again, identifying and supporting, but not promoting publicly the work of groups that seem to actually empower actual women at the grassroots, as opposed to giving speeches and going to conferences, which is a total waste of time, but if you can actually get in. Even look to Mukhtar Mai—start to get people like her—get a chain of women schools started in her name. You have to bring over here, or even some difficult place like Dubai, a lot of women in Pakistan who are doing grassroots work and not only ones who speak English, and not only ones who travel a lot. And there are lots and lots of people asking who are my heroes in Pakistan, and I always say they are these unsung people: teachers, elementary school teachers, lawyers, social workers, people who work in large towns and small cities all over the country who are actually working to help women. You find them. Help them. Find ways to help them. I think that is the best thing you can do.

Question: What about the blasphemy issue?

Ms. Constable: On blasphemy. There is nothing we can do about that. I mean, that is something that has to come from within Islam. It's something that has to come from moderate Islamic groups. It's a terribly long discussion, but there are moderate forces. At the moment, they don't have much force because the emotions are so high, but there are prominent religious leaders who have spoken not against the blasphemy law, but who are willing to accept some moderate changes and you have to start with practical steps. Sherry Rehman's proposals, for example, were to make more stringent the burden of truth. It is a great reform to that law and it's a very logical and acceptable reform to that law. If you start there, maybe you'll get somewhere, but at the moment, even mentioning the word, you get your head chopped off. It's very tough. Very tough.

Question: I have read that the media in Pakistan is extremely anti-American. I know, from personal experience that when the Pakistani curators came over to set up the recent Gandhara art exhibit on Asian society that they were here for a number of days and their whole opinion about America changed a great deal. I'm only wondering if the Internet will have a beneficial effect. What can we do to get some of their media to bring them over?

Ms. Constable: The Pakistani media is raw. It is untrained. It so new and so all they do is pander to the lowest common denominator. At least some of it is logistic. It's very hard to resist powerful messages when you don't have the equipment, when you're not educated, when you haven't been exposed to options, when you don't have access to other sources of news. I just contradicted myself in the sense of the Internet. Unfortunately, the Internet gets abused more than properly in a place like that. In Afghanistan, you walk into any Internet cafe and you look up the ten most recently looked at sites they're all pornographic. Internet cafes are all over Afghanistan and Pakistan and they're full of people watching things that don't make them happier about the West. In addition to which, they are also full of jihadi websites.

In my book, I talk about the case of Faisal Shahzad, the Pakistani Air Force Vice Chief's privileged, pampered son who was sent to the United States to study, got two college degrees, bought a house in Bridgeport, Connecticut and tried to blow up Times Square, and why did he try to blow up Times Square? Because they had gotten to him on the Internet. He started going on these jihadi websites and he got persuaded by whomever, that even though he had come to America with all these privileges that people would die for in all corners of the world, that America was a bad thing and that it was an evil demon. This all came out of this stuff. This has nothing, as I say in my book—he became the ardent, apocalyptic proponent of a philosophy that directly contradicted every experience that he had ever had. What do you do about that? This was all Internet. I don't think it's the Internet. I think there is nothing, nothing that changes people more and that is why I say I talk to journalists all of the time, you get them here, we bring them to the news room constantly. Get them *The New York Times*, get them to really understand what professional journalism is all about and it does make changes. I mean that is only one answer, but it's a good start.

Question: Thank you, I haven't read the book, but I have listened about the elite, the armed forces, being so horrible. If Pakistan is called a democracy, to what effect does it come down, or can a common person use democracy to make a difference?

Ms. Constable: That's a good question. I address it a little bit in my introduction. I try on the chapters on the judiciary and on politics to explain why the democratic system does not necessarily work. One of the big reasons is corruption and another is that people simply don't have—if you compare it, for example, to India, where I used to live, maybe some of you have been there as well—India is just as poor as Pakistan. There are hundreds of millions of very poor people in India, but there is a big difference. They know they have rights. They know they can throw the bums out. They know that the system protects and promotes liberty of the public and representation. Even in small villages, even people who are not educated at all, feel they have some sort of power because it's very much strongly promoted by the state. In Pakistan, again, as I said in my introduction, people don't feel they have

power. Why? Because what they see at the top are not successful people willing to give up power. No one ever gives up power in Pakistan. I even say in this book that if President Zardari, who is a mediocre President at best, could do the world an enormous favor, probably the best thing he could do to go down in history would be to turn over power peacefully to an elected successor. If he does that, hats off. He will have been the first one in 63 years. Every government in that country has been thrown out by one mean or another. Even Benazir Bhutto—three times, twice she gets picked up and the third time she is assassinated. She was, as I said in my obituary of her at the time, was the face of Pakistani democracy, and she was killed. I really think that a lot of this is top down. Unless and until you get leaders at the top of society who believe in democracy and who want to carry it out, it's not going to change.

One of the people I talked to a lot in this book and I talk about a lot in my political chapters, is this 85-year-old guy who was, as I say, one of the very few people left in Pakistan who was part of the young Turk who were with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, when he came into power, when they brought in this new bureaucratic administration. It was going to be justice, it was indigenous and it was going to be the new governance. And they were this generation of people, very idealistic who really believed in a Muslim homeland and who truly believed in a Muslim democracy, and he was part of that generation. He has written a number of books about it and I interviewed him repeatedly. It turns out that we were neighbors and I used to go over and have lunch with him and we would talk a lot and he came up to Pakistan's civil service and retired several years ago—utterly in despair, this man. He said, "I have watched this institution that I believed in so much been perverted and destroyed and sabotaged by greed and corruption until there is nothing left of it." A public administration that has served a country like India so well for the same amount of years has been turned into something else in a place like Pakistan because of corruption and self-interested leadership. There is a lack of patriots. There is a real lack of people who truly believe in democracy. Take Islamabad, one of the most beautiful buildings of any capital in the region. Everything is shiny and new, but if you don't believe in it, if you don't practice it—we didn't even talk enough about the military. The military wields the power in Pakistan. It is a subtle, nuanced, very light-handed, but very powerful national security state. The army really makes the rules. And the army really vetoes anybody and anything that they don't like. It is a vicious cycle. It's not that Pakistani leaders are naturally weak or venal or whatever. It's that they have pretty big competition as well.

Ms. Ellis: Well, this is a great place to end. I am afraid that we really have to end it now because Pam has generously agreed to stay a little longer, but I want you to get the chance to get your books, so Pam can sign it. This has been absolutely wonderful. I know that we all learned so much.

Ms. Constable: One more thing, as I alluded to briefly a few minutes ago, the passion of my life is running a veterinary clinic—a shelter and rescue program in Kabul—I brought one page brochures. You are all welcome to take one and it tells you exactly what we do and exactly how you can help. We are a 501(c)3 based in my house in Arlington, Virginia, and we accept all kinds of help, including bones and collars, so if you would like to find out more about it, I am going to leave these brochures on the table outside, or I can pass them around. It's called Tigger House. We are now celebrating, believe it or not, our seventh year. I have a full-time Afghan staff of ten and we have no signs in English. I don't even exist, I'm the fairy godmother who pays the salaries and gets the animals on the international flights. We will have to talk more about it, and we will have to have you take a brochure. [*Applause.*]

Patricia Ellis: Please be sure to get a copy of her book and fliers because Pamela will sit here and sign her books. Thank you all so much for coming and we will see you next time.