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THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you all very much for coming today. It's a great pleasure to have you all here. And please, feel free as we're doing the program to, you know, get and help yourself to more food or drink. That's totally fine.

We're very excited today to have with us Salman Ahmad, one of the stalwarts of the Arts and Culture Initiative here at Brookings, at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. He's been part of the group from the very first time when we convened in Doha in 2006. That was actually a very memorable meeting because there had been some communication about maybe Salman would perform at this policy forum not usually so used to having rock music at it, but we thought that'd be a good chance. There had been some communication, but it obviously wasn't very clear, for which I'm entirely responsible since it was my communication. And so when Salman arrived in Doha, I said, so, we're going to have a performance tomorrow night, just a couple of songs.

And Salman said, oh, but I didn't bring my

guitar.

And I said, okay, we'll figure that out. And sure enough, within a very short period of time, Junoon, which is the name of the rock band that Salman founded, a Junoon fan turned up at the hotel with his guitar to be signed by Salman, and to which we said thank you so much and Salman will sign and then he will take your guitar and use it to perform, which he did. And it was, of course, not nearly as, you know, the kind of sound he would have liked to have had from his own guitar, so he was a very, very good sport to perform under rather unfavorable conditions.

And it was really a fantastic introduction to that policy audience of the power of arts and culture and the civil society it represents in the political realm. And that's really going to be our topic today, looking with a particular lens on Pakistan. And what we're going to do is I'm going to ask each of the panelists one question and then give them a chance to jump on each other, and then we'll turn to you. So there's going to be not a whole lot of talking from us.

And in the midst of all that, we're also going to look at a music video which Salman did about a little over 10 years ago with the title "Accountability," but it still has a lot of resonance today.

So, Salman, from your perspective -- and I should say I'm going to ask Salman about his perspective as a musician, but understand that he is, as well, a physician and author. And I encourage you all -- I'm afraid Brookings does not do book events, but I encourage you all to get a copy of Salman's book, Rock & Roll Jihad, which he has just published with Simon & Schuster, which as his autobiography. I hope that didn't violate some Brookings rule. But anyway, you should do that. And so he's an author and also a filmmaker and has done a number of films with the BBC, including a fascinating film called The Rock Star and the Mullahs, which looks at the whole issue of music and Islam, for which he traveled through Northwestern Pakistan.

So, Salman, I'm going to ask you, from your perspective as a musician and a civil society activist

in both countries, what is your sense of how this strong civil society in Pakistan operates? What is the role of arts and culture in that civil society? And what are the implications then for the United States in terms of how we should then relate to Pakistan and work with Pakistan in a productive way?

MR. AHMAD: Thank you, Cynthia, for the introduction. And, you know, it's an honor to be here in front of all you. Well, you know, you talked about that Junoon fan in Doha, Qatar, you know, and ex-patriot Pakistani Junoonie. Yeah, Junoon means obsessive passion and the people who follow Junoon are known as "Junoonies," like almost like Deadheads. And they're all -- there's no place on Earth where you won't find a Junoonie with a guitar.

So, when I was 17, 18 years old, you know, I went to middle school and high school in the States, and I wanted to be a rock musician. And as you know, many of you who are here from India and Pakistan, the only two choices you get are doctor, engineer. And when my parents realized that I wasn't interested in going to

med school or becoming an engineer, they sent me back to Pakistan to study medicine.

And the country that I was born in -- you know, I was born in Lahore -- the country I was born in had transformed since I'd last seen it. It was like a completely different planet. It was a military dictatorship of General Zia. And he had tried to implant an extremist version of Islam, the Wahhabi, the Wahhabi version of Islam, in which now women -- there was gender segregation. Women no longer had choices to whether to wear the hijab or not. Television, you know, radio announcers, they were all gender segregated. On television a brother and a sister couldn't sing together anymore. It was almost as if General Zia had decided to scrub clean the culture of Pakistan and implant this foreign distorted version of Islam.

And so I was an 18-year-old who landed in the middle of that. I could no longer play guitar publicly. Nobody could sing on radio, especially not with a guitar, or be on television. And in those 11 years is -- General Zia's 11 years, is where the counterculture,

rock, and pop movement started, you know. It was a bunch of kids loose -- as I write in the book, a loose network of kids, just like this Junoon fan in Doha, who just love music. And they wanted to learn how to play guitar, play -- you know, sing.

And out of that counterculture movement came a song called, “Dil Dil Pakistan.” And “Dil Dil Pakistan,” my first band, Vital Signs, it was a song recorded on a four-track recorder at home without any sort of, you know, echo or reverb. In fact, the bathroom tiles were used to use for the vocal reverb.

But that one song which really said, look, we’re Pakistani and we’re modern, that we have nothing to do with General Zia’s version of Islam, and we want to live in the modern world. We want freedom and we love music.

That movement coincided with a political movement of Benazir Bhutto. And it’s interesting that in the 11 years of military dictatorship ended when General Zia’s plane crashed. And having complete control of the levers of power and the social agenda,

almost like having the Taliban in power, here's a country which went from military dictatorship to voting in a 35-year-old Harvard-graduated woman the first prime minister of a Muslim country. And it made possible me to, you know, follow my path of music.

So arts and culture is wedded to social change. It's wedded to -- it drives politics. Last year, when Pakistan -- you know, as you know that the suicide bomb blasts for the last -- since 2007, there was never a history of suicide bomb blasts happening in Pakistan. But what the terrorists had done was they had terrorized the artist community. You couldn't do concerts anymore.

And even the cricketers, the other alternative religion in Pakistan, as you know, is cricket. So one of the terrorist attacks were on the visiting Sri Lanka cricket team. And because of that, they were the only team who was willing to come to Pakistan to play cricket, and even, you know, after one of those -- one of their guys got shot, no other teams came to Pakistan. So, last summer, when the 2020 World

Cup took place, the national team had no exposure. They had sort of, you know, no international matches that they were playing, but, miraculously, they came and they won the 2020 World Cup. And the soundtrack to the 2020 World Cup win was “Dil Dil Pakistan” and just by Junoon.

So sports and culture, you know, extremely powerful forces for social change, and unifier far more than religion in Pakistan.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Now, the other -- and, you know, we can (inaudible) because in the United States, of course, we can -- sorry, in the United States, of course, we can relate to that as well. We have exactly the same sentiment around the Olympics or around the Super Bowl, and certainly with certain music and film. And yet, ironically, we, I think, often fail, even though our culture is so influential around the world, we often fail to take notice of that and integrate it into politics. And equally importantly, to take notice of the power of artists and culture figures who are not necessarily in the government, in the political sphere in changing society.

And one of the ways that you have done that is by embedding social messages into your music. So why don't we now take a look at your video done 1997, is it?

MR. AHMAD: This is in '97.

MS. SCHNEIDER: 1997, but which, sadly, is still very applicable today. And if we can have the lights down. I hope everybody can see this from one place or another, and this is a video entitled, "Accountability."

(Video clip played)

MS. SCHNEIDER: I think we can pick up the conversation there. And Salman, let me just turn to you for one more comment, telling us a little bit about what's going on there. Who are the people's faces who we see? Maybe not everybody knows. And what was the nature of the impact of that video and how others like it might work?

MR. AHMAD: Yeah. You know, so, there was great disillusionment among my generation, you know, who had thought that democracy would bring in the change that everybody wanted in Pakistan. You know, we had a

35-year-old woman, you know, Western educated, Benazir Bhutto, but from 1989 -- this was almost 10 years later, you know, you had Benazir Bhutto followed by Nawaz Sharif, both terms being aborted by a presidential -- you know, the president had the right to sort of dismiss the parliament based on corruption. And, you know, I'm sure there's vested interests, there was a tug of war happening, but the truth is there was hideous corruption going on.

And so, all of a sudden, this hope -- I mean, I was 22 years old when Benazir, you know, became prime minister the first time. And so the idealism of that time said that, you know, she's going to -- you know, we're moving towards a new path now. And so Benazir followed by Nawaz Sharif, then Benazir and she was again followed by Nawaz Sharif.

You read reports in the Washington Post, Newsweek, you know, New York Times of these palaces being built in Europe, you know, and these Swiss bank accounts, and then polo ponies as you saw in that video. Asif Ali Zardari, who's the, you know, president of

Pakistan right now, was a big fan of polo, so he bought hundreds and hundreds of, you know, very expensive polo ponies who he housed in air-conditioned stables. The polo ponies ate better than the people of Pakistan. And there was a general sort of a disillusionment.

And so I thought the best way to hold up a mirror to society is to do a music video because people don't read newspaper editorials and they don't have any impact. And so the moment that music video was made, I was -- you know, I got a call from one of the prime minister's aides who said, are you biting the hand that feeds you? You are destroying your career and we will destroy you. There was death threats. They banned the video. But just a month later, you know, even though the video never ran on TV, Benazir's government was dismissed by her own president, Farooq Leghari.

And so these are musical chairs that's happening in Pakistan, you know. And you can -- now it's the 21st century, 2010, same exact thing, you know.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you very much, I think. And our -- last night at Georgetown we had a wonderful

concert performance by Salman. And in the course of that conversation, I think one of the things you said holds so true for things like this: Video and then concerts and events that take place is that they don't alone solve the problem, but they provoke the conversation and they open the space so that people can really get the conversation going.

Now I'm going to turn to my colleague at Georgetown University, where I teach diplomacy and culture, Paula Newberg, who I'm very happy to say is the new director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown, which is the place that marries the practice of diplomacy by having resident fellows from all different professional fields of diplomacy with the academic side because they all participate in the academic life of the school. And Paula has spent many, many years in Pakistan working in various capacities for the U.N. and other aid organizations, and she's also had a life in academia teaching at Columbia and Rutgers and other institutions.

So, Paula, in the event, you've had a lot of

experience with the judicial system in Pakistan, so I'd like to ask you the same kind of question from your perspective. How do you see the strength of civil society in Pakistan? And what are the implications then for how the United States should relate to Pakistan and then leverage that strength?

MS. NEWBERG: Thank you. I first should tell you that I'm really thrilled to be here with Salman. I was living in Pakistan when he first started performing and it really was a galvanizing moment not only politically, but also generationally. And I think that's part of what this conversation is about.

I think it also might be useful just to point out that the word "Ehtesaab," which is the title of this video, actually means "accountability." And there was a period between political regimes when something called an Ehtesaab Bureau was created, ostensibly to review the crimes of previous political dispensation. It actually turned out to do, as Salman indicated, indirectly and very politically, it did exactly what everything like this usually does, and that was to go after your

political enemies rather than try to cleanse a system. And I think that's where Cynthia's question really comes in.

In a place like Pakistan, and by no means only in Pakistan, we have now tended to say that where you have a weak state, you may have the silver lining of a strong civil society. I mean, I would say it slightly differently, which is that actually the state in Pakistan is quite strong. It just happens not to necessarily act in the right ways. But it's the strength of the state that has provoked a necessary strength of civil society to kind of balance things out. And in a way, what you can do with your mind is try to divide what we think of a civil society here into two parts: there's civil society and there's political society.

Political society in Pakistan, sad to say, doesn't work the way it should. So you have what George Bush would call an accountability moment, which is an election day, but then things just proceed as before. And it's up to the civil society to hold society

accountable even if it can't hold the politicians accountable. So in that sense, it doesn't quite do what we normally think of it as doing here.

I think the second thing I would point out is that the generational shift that Salman was trying to provoke in the late '80s and early '90s really came to fruition in an unexpected way about two years ago. Many of you may have seen the headlines for over a year of a movement spurred on by disenchanted lawyers, who ostensibly were trying to replace -- or rather return the chief justice, who had been removed from his seat, to power. Actually the chief justice was really only the symbol of this. The real question was a highly corrupt and ineffective judicial system.

The real point of the movement to me was not the fact that ultimately the chief justice was returned to his seat along with a few others, or that he was removed from house arrest, or that many others who had been arrested were let go, but rather that the people who kept those lawyers on the street were the young lawyers. The older ones, the ones who were part of the

politics, the ones who make a lot of money, could have sustained this for a very long time and might not well have but for the fact that the younger generation had decided that it did not want to practice its profession under such corrupt circumstances.

And you need to understand that although every lawyer wears a black suit, most of the beginning ones are really not at all wealthy. It's not a profession you go into at the beginning in order to make money. So these were young men and women who sacrificed, in many case, over one year's income on behalf of their families, and potentially their careers had it all turned out the other way.

During that time, the coverage of the country was quite interesting. And at some point in the middle of this movement I got a call from a newspaper for which I occasionally write columns saying, so, our readers want to know why anybody would go to jail for a place like this. I mean, if the country is so corrupt and dangerous, and if policemen are shooting at civilians, why would people go to jail? And the reason they asked

is because, a few days earlier, quite a large number of people had been sent to jail for shorter and long term, and among them were musicians and writers and poets and so forth.

Curiously, the person who got the most attention, oddly enough, was a woman called Salima Hashmi, who used to be the president of the National College of Arts in Lahore, and has written extensively on the arts in Pakistan, the modern arts, which many people don't even believe or know exist. And the reason was because her father had been perhaps this continent's most famous poet, a man called Faiz Ahmed Faiz, whose work Salman has also put to music in a rather interesting way that perhaps Faiz might not have anticipated.

But the question was why should anyone go to jail for this? And the answer was that, probably, people go to jail for something they believe in, and many Pakistanis believe there is a future for their country even if the people they elect to office or who are imposed upon them do not have the same ambitions,

expectations.

So I say this mostly as a segue to Jonah because -- I'm not usually fond of quoting George Bush, but I'll do it twice in one five-minute segment. He spoke at one point in a completely different setting about the tyranny of low expectations. And I believe very firmly that the United States, in many, many ways, has imposed this kind of tyranny over many places, but among the worst or most egregious example has been Pakistan, where the society and potentially the country should be much more confident, much more secure, and much richer than it has been allowed to be.

So with that set-up, you can explain the rest.

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm going to actually save you from -- thank you so much having to quote George Bush on that. I use that all the time, but I attribute it to the person I know at least said it first, which is -- and I'm sure someone said it before him, but it is former Secretary of Education Dick Riley. And he used to always say that about the American educational

system, so you can attribute it to him in the future.

So now this is a perfect set-up because, of course, now, Jonah, this will be easy for you. Everyone in the room is now wondering, so what is the United States then doing with, you know, what does seem to be a new understanding of the power of non-governmental forces in Pakistan? And the most salient demonstration of that new understanding is something that you as the South Asia expert on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and someone who also has spent a lot of time in Pakistan and has a deep understanding of Pakistani society as well as politics, had a significant role in putting together. And that is the Kerry-Lugar Bill.

And so, I would love for you then to respond to that -- my question of so what is the impact then on the U.S. relationship with Pakistan? What did you have -- what was -- did you and your colleagues have in mind in putting together this bill? What would you consider a success from this bill and how best to achieve that?

MR. BLANK: Well, thank you very much, Cynthia, and it's a great honor to be here. I want to

echo not only what Paula said, which I'll talk about in a moment, but also what Salman said about the power of culture and of art to bring about change, but also to express what really is important in a society in order to, as Paula pointed, what's worth going to jail for. I think Salman's video expresses the need for accountability far better than 100 op-eds.

When I lived in Lahore, I -- my first experience with Pakistan was as an anthropologist doing fieldwork in the Lahore and in Karachi. And I happened to be living in Lahore at the time when an icon of Pakistan, I would say the greatest icon of Pakistan, passed away: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. And anyone who has heard his music probably has a little bit of tear in their eye just thinking about the fact that he was taken away so young.

But it's important for us to remember here in Washington and even in parts of Pakistan that when we talk about the soul of Pakistan, people sometimes think that the Taliban is actually expressing the true desires and wants and beliefs of most Pakistanis. I certainly

feel that's not the case. I feel that the soul of Pakistan is much more reflected by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who wrote and who sang not only Qawwali, religious songs, although -- but very much Sufi songs, but also Ghazal, also a different type of religious song; and Punjabi Geet; and collaborated with Western singers; was very open to influences everywhere. He just reveled in music, in culture, in what makes life worth living. And I think anyone who's lived in Lahore sort of has a sense of what makes life worth living as this is something that's worth going to jail for and this is, in my view at least, what so many of my Pakistani friend are fighting for and what I as a U.S. policymaker now would like to help facilitate.

So that's -- Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was taken too soon. We don't know who the new threat will be of the next generation, but perhaps he is sitting three chairs to my right. Anyway, that brings me to the matters of policy.

The Kerry-Lugar Bill I know something about in that its origin was first as the Biden-Lugar Bill and

then as the Biden Plan for Pakistan and then, before that, as a series of pestering interchanges between the then-foreign relations chairman and a staffer who kept on trying to get him to move to challenge the administration's attitude of simply shoveling money to the Pakistani military in hopes that that would achieve something good for the national interests of the United States or the people of Pakistan. And the then-chairman, now Vice President Biden said, okay, smart guy, you think you can do better? Come up with a plan. And that then became the Biden Plan for Pakistan, which then was put into legislative form as the Biden-Lugar legislation, and then was enacted as Kerry-Lugar, with changes each time and I hope improvements. And then became Kerry-Lugar-Berman to finally get passed. There are things I can say about that in the question and answers since the way that the final bill was portrayed had certain repercussions in Pakistan that I'm very happy to talk about during question-and-answer.

But to get back to Cynthia's question, what were we hoping to achieve with that? Well, I can say

what I was hoping to achieve. As someone who got started in not merely in government, but in the course of action I'm now in, through cultural interchange -- I was in Pakistan, I lived in Pakistan as a Fulbrighter, where the very essence of what I was there to was not merely to conduct research, but to enrich the interaction between our two countries by merely being there and being out in society, getting to know people, having people get to know me. So that for Pakistanis their image of America was not merely someone they saw on television, but their neighbor who flew the Pakistani flag outside his house and tried his best to speak only in Urdu and gave everyone a good laugh by his terrible pronunciation. This is, I think -- should be the essence of what we're trying to do, small and large, of not only people-to-people exchange, but genuinely listening to and understanding what the people of Pakistan want, what their goals are, what their expectations are.

And the goals and expectations won't always be in line with U.S. policy, but I believe that there is

enough of an overlap that we can craft policy that genuinely helps fulfill the goals and wants of the people of Pakistan and advances U.S. policy goals, and that that will be better for both countries and will create a firmer foundation for the hard-edged, national security, completely so-called realist school of approach than an alternative approach, which is simply shoveling money at elites whether they are civilian or military and hoping that it eventually translates to a firmer foundation.

I'll stop there and can elaborate more in question-and-answer.

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm going to turn -- thank you very much, Jonah. I'm going to let first the panelists follow up and see if you have some questions for each other, and then I will turn it over to the group here. But I have to say, I am thrilled to hear someone in your capacity talking the way you are about the soul of the country. I hope you are infectious on Capitol Hill.

So, I let you guys talk among each other. Do

you have questions for each other?

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

MS. SCHNEIDER: Oh, I'm so sorry. Oh, I'm so sorry. Thank you, Robin, for saying that.

I've asked the panelists first to ask each other questions and then we will turn to all of you.

MR. AHMAD: Well, one of the perspectives of this conversation, U.S.-Pakistan, is the role of India. And, you know, as an artist who's, you know -- my mother was born in Patiala and during partition she moved west to Lahore. My grandparents, as I tell in the book, never harbored any -- they were fiercely anti-colonial, but never anti-Indian.

So, when I started going to India as an artist and traveling the length and breadth of the country, I found out that young people in India really, you know, are curious about Pakistanis. The same way how Pakistanis are curious about India through Bollywood films, young people in India are curious about Pakistani culture through rock music and the musicians. And that's a conversation which has been happening for the

last 60 years. I mean, there's great love. There's love, passion for each other's arts and culture. Yet the two states who view each other as, you know, enemy states, you know, are a huge hindrance for this people-to-people exchange.

My band, Junoon, went and performed in Srinagar, in 2008, which is the first-ever rock concert ever held in the Valley. And before we even landed there, there were death threats by militants that if you land here, you know, you will be shot. The young people who were going to the show were prevented -- well, they were -- you know, they made these barriers, barbed wire barriers for young people, the college kids, not to go to the show. But all those kids, you know, braved the death threats, jumped over barbed wire to come to see a rock concert.

And when I met -- we were there for three -- my wife Samina, who's sitting over there, when we spoke to the kids, the people of Kashmir are done with the politics of violence, you know. And they say this, that we want to be part of the modern world. They get all of

our music through, you know -- you know, all the music and the movies through the Internet. They're very aware of what's happening. Yet it's this sort of football which keeps getting, you know, kicked back and forth without any forward movement.

So, the role of India people-to-people culture exchange has to also be promoted in a way that doesn't seem like, you know, meddling in, you know, domestic politics. But it is a huge -- I'll just share another current media storm that's happening.

The captain of the Pakistan cricket team, Shoaib Malik, the former captain, is marrying the Indian tennis star, Sania Mirza. And, you know, people are making a huge thing about this. But the thing is that if there was more people-to-people exchange, that's what would happen even more.

And so nationalism, sure, when we're watching a Pakistan-India match, I have a Pakistan flag going. But apart from that, there is great love between the two people.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you for bringing in

that as a very important component of the whole issue.

MS. NEWBERG: I'll ask you a question in a moment, but I think in that score, how many of you have ever watched Pakistan television?

How many of you have ever seen Pakistan television? So, here's my favorite show. I don't think it's on any longer, but PTV used to have a little five-minute segment at the end of the evening news, called "The Kashmir Question." And every evening after the Khabarnama, which very often was more like propaganda than news, they would bring out some schoolchildren and the schoolchildren would be asked the same question every night. And that was: If there were a solution to the problem of Kashmir, would there be peace in the subcontinent? And then there would be a break and a commercial, and then the end would come. And you'll never guess what the answer was: If there was a solution to Kashmir, then there would be peace in the subcontinent. They'd do this every single evening as if you hit people over the head with an iron skillet, they would understand. They never talked about what it was

that these governments were doing that made it almost impossible to create peace in Kashmir. And even more, to make it impossible for the people of Kashmir to create the conditions of peace for themselves.

So, I mean, I say let's hear it for any form of concert or anything that will get them out and get beyond the security barriers and the bombs.

That having been said, I have a question for you, and it's about the generations. As you were talking, I realized that I've actually witnessed Pakistan one way or the other for probably half of its life, which is very sobering if you don't think you're terribly old. What used to be said was that the younger generations could not move until the older generation had worked out how to talk about what had happened during partition. And this is something that has been interestingly silent to a large degree since 1947. So, where do you see this now? Have we gotten past the point where you need to solve our grandparents' problems and just move forward or is there something that has to be resolved in the history before that generation

completely dies off? Or is it a question of just having the generations replace themselves?

MR. AHMAD: Sure. So, you know, I think Jonah spoke about Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, right? And Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan comes from a generation of Qawwali singers, Sufi devotional singers, have a 700-year-old history of singing Qawwali in the subcontinent. And for them, the Sufis, you know -- nationalism is passé. They go anywhere to play their music and they have had this conversation going from the times of Amir Khusro in the 13th century, you know, where Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs when to the dargahs to listen to Qawwali music.

So, when you talk about that generation, partition -- look, partition happened -- I mean, there's a whole discussion why partition happened, but I think most Pakistanis, Indians, civil society have moved forward from there. It's the states which are stuck in this time warp. Why? Because they vested interests.

So, it's the -- you know, in 2004, I remember the Indian cricket team was visiting Pakistan after a long lapse because of the terrorism fears after 9-11.

And the entire tour of the Indian cricket team was proceeded by a media campaign in India that will our cricketers be safe in India? There was nothing about, you know, these great sportsmen playing together. It was all about security, security, security. Will our cricketers be safe in India?

And I got to tell you, the first game that they played in Karachi, 60,000 people came and it was one of the -- India won by three runs, you know. It's like, you know, the Yankees losing to the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium, right? Or the other way around. And yet the 60,000 people gave the Indian team a standing ovation because it was such an -- they came from behind to beat Pakistan.

And right across the country when they toured, Pakistani people were inviting Indian cricketers into their homes. They wouldn't charge them -- shopkeepers wouldn't charge them money. So, when you talk about civil society, they're way ahead of the governments. The military and the governments have to just get their act together.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Jonah, would you like to add one more comment either on that or if you want to talk more specifically about the bill and your aspirations for it? I'll give you a chance to respond and then we'll turn to the audience for your questions.

MR. BLANK: I'll just say quickly I agree that the people are leading and must lead, and it's the governments that have to follow. This is true not only on engagement about Kashmir, where I completely agree with what Salman and what Paula have said, that in both India and in Pakistan it's not as if passions don't run high about Kashmir, but it's that most Indians and Pakistanis that I know are quite willing to see Kashmir as one issue among a whole range of issues, some of them important, some of them less important, and none of them so much of an obstacle that they should derail the good relations between two peoples who have been one people throughout all their history.

The second point on people leading, it gets back to the issue of accountability. It has always been -- and I can talk about this more in relation to the

bill if people want to bring that up, but any idea that governments can oppose accountability on themselves I think is misguided. The only true accountability that there ever will be in Pakistan, in the United States, or anywhere is from the people.

MS. SCHNEIDER: And thank you very much. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to all of you.

And while you're thinking of your questions, I just do want to introduce and acknowledge Samina Ahmad, Salman's wife and partner in many endeavors, including the truly extraordinary event that they organized together at the U.N. General Assembly last September as a launch event for their NGO and to raise money for the refugees from the Swat Valley. And they had an incredible line-up of speakers and performers, including Salman, and packed the General Assembly. And at the end of the Saturday evening, September 11th, had the full General Assembly dancing in the aisles. I don't think that's something that is usually seen in that room. It was quite -- September 12th. On September 12th.

And actually the thing that showed the mood of that evening more than anything else is after everyone was dancing in the aisles, Samina asked for a moment of silence to commemorate the -- and to think of the refugees from the Swat Valley and to commemorate those who had been killed in the conflict. And I thought to myself this is the worst idea I've ever heard of. Everybody's all jumping up and down. They're never going to calm down. And somehow it was the mood of that evening that people were so moved by the message and the way people were talking about Pakistan and these people, they did. And after jumping in the aisles, there was complete silence. And we all left with an extraordinary combination of being both uplifted, but also really thinking very seriously. It was an amazing accomplishment.

MR. AHMAD: You know, we've experienced that at home as well. She can do that.

MS. SCHNEIDER: (inaudible) those of us, especially with teenagers, would love to learn about.

But now I'll turn to all of you. Please turn

on your thing and please, you know, ask a question, don't make a statement.

Please introduce yourself before you speak.

MS. WRIGHT: Robin Wright, the U.S. Institute of Peace.

In light of the failure of the United States to have much impact in promoting democracy, it's clear that it's going to depend increasingly on the people on the ground. In your statement about music being able to provoke a conversation, if not provide the answers, can you tell us a little bit more about the cause and effect? What effect do you feel it's having? What's the next step? As we all watch what you and other groups around the world -- the musicians, comedians, playwrights, and so forth -- what impact and how does this play out?

MR. AHMAD: Thanks, Robin. Well, Cynthia just spoke about this event that we did at the United Nations General Assembly Hall. That came about because of really a video. I'm sure many of you had seen, you know, the Taliban had circulated a video of a 17-year-

old Swati girl, who's being flogged. And 50 men, masked men, were standing in a circle watching her being flogged. Now, they thought that, you know, that's the way they recruit their people. That's the way they talk about their future vision of Islam in Pakistan.

Well, I was in Colorado, I remember, and a friend of mine from Pakistan sent me a -- e-mailed me that video. And I was -- when I saw it, I didn't have any words. The Swat Valley, when I was growing up as a child, was a place of fun, where, you know, families would go, sing songs, travel. There were movies made in the Swat Valley. A place of beauty, great beauty, and never a fear of, you know, religious extremism. And now what I was seeing in that Swat Valley was, you know, a helpless 17-year-old girl surrounded by 50 men being flogged and that being, you know, their calling card for the future of Islam in Pakistan.

That galvanized me to go back to Pakistan, right -- go right across the country speaking to writers, college students, military men, politicians, journalists. And I said, you know, is everybody okay

with it? What's happened to the country that we grew up in?

And right across the border, that one video appalled everyone. And, in fact, one of the TV channels, Geo News, satellite channels, took the, you know, the courageous step to put that on the evening news in rotation. And that one moment, I think, started this -- something clicked in the people of Pakistan that, you know what, all -- there might be politics everywhere, but that's not Pakistani culture. And it's only when news channels, artists, lawyers, you know, civil society feel empowered to speak out openly that change can occur. Because that mobilized all the Pakistani-American community here to help support the IDPs up there who were, up till then, saying, well, this is, you know, because there's a war going on and America's in Afghanistan. And it's the Taliban are just, you know, fighting for their rights over there.

But -- so I think a counter to that, a powerful counter to that, is strengthening independent news channels, strengthening artists' voices,

strengthening NGOs, people who are building girls' schools across the country. But also, at the same time -- and I think, Jonah, we spoke briefly about this outside -- that to have accountability over the people that, you know, the support is going to. Everything that has to do with promoting education and trade, I think, these are those times that that needs to be, you know, accelerated.

One small story. My mother, Shahine, when she was 18 years old, she went to a school in Lahore, which was built by the Ford Foundation. There were teachers from America who had spent two years. And she was so, you know -- I mean, she was just taken, you know, so impressed by the way Americans, you know, spoke with Pakistanis, this is now in early 1960s, that she told her parents that she wants to spend a year in high school in the States. And the program that did that was the AFS Program, American Field Services. So Shahine, 18-year-old, gets on train from Lahore; goes to Karachi; gets on a plane to Tehran; Tehran to London; gets on a boat from Southampton, a ship; comes to New York; goes

to Oakland; spends one year in high school: six months with a Protestant family, six months with a Catholic. Her entire outlook of life changed. She came and infected us with that enthusiasm.

So, it's people-to-people exchange, arts and culture. You know, she loved Chubby Checkers and Perry Mason and was also voted Homecoming Queen, but without a date because she was engaged to my father.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Yes, go ahead.

MR. MALIK: Irfan Malik with Pakistani-American Public Affairs Committee. My question is to Salman following up on this people leading the government.

What would you like to see the Pakistani-American community and the American citizens do to improve the plight of Pakistanis back home?

MR. AHMAD: That's a great question. I think often overlooked, the Pakistani-American community wields great power. They're in -- I think Newsweek magazine last year did a story on Muslim Americans in which American Muslims were in the top 15 percent of the

economic bracket and education. And similarly, the Pakistani-American community far more than the diaspora and the rest of the world is very empowered. They are the ones who are supporting girls' schools, like Dil is a great organization. They're the ones who are most -- I think who worry the most about Pakistan going down to extremism because they have a vested interest: Their families and relatives are there.

So, I think they can mobilize through their congressmen and senators and support the NGOs. Just like what we would like the state to do, I think the Pakistani-American community can do.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Actually, Jonah, let me just ask you or either of you if you have a question. Have you had interactions with the Pakistani-American community in putting together this bill?

MR. BLANK: Oh, often. I solicited input from all sources in putting together the bill and have had a lot of good input from the Pakistani-American community. In fact, part of the original Biden Plan for Pakistan, which couldn't really be put into legislation

-- it's the kind of thing that you can't really legislate, but we do have hortatory language to that effect -- is that a major part of U.S.-Pakistan interaction should be greater engagement not only with Pakistan and with Pakistanis, but also with Pakistani-Americans.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Madhulika, and I just want to say to everyone we are going to be so lucky because NPR, with Madhulika and her colleagues, are going to be putting together a fantastic new series on the Grand Trunk Railroad, so we will all be able to learn more about these issues.

MS. SIKKA: Thanks, Cynthia. I have two questions actually: one for Salman and one for Jonah.

For Salman, I was interested in your opening comments when you talked about Zia's period in power and when Benazir Bhutto came in you described yourself and your generation as -- you talked about the Islam that Zia followed and you talked about yourself as, hey, we're modern. And I'm just curious as to whether you think there's a conflict between modernity and Islam or

was it just the way that Zia sort of chose to interpret it.

And then for Jonah, I'm really interested in the money that is going to go to Pakistan. I mean, the United States has given Pakistan a lot of money over the years. And I'm interested in how the decisions are going to be made and where it's going. If we're here talking about the artistic community and the cultural community, are there -- how are you finding out about groups that should be followed? And on the issue of accountability for a government that has been notoriously corrupt, I'm not quite sure if the mechanisms that you are thinking about to follow the money, in essence, where it goes.

MR. BLANK: Sure. Thank you. Yes, we have to follow the money and we have to make sure it's accountable because this is a lot of money. This is $7-1/2 billion. This is $1.5 billion a year. And if this money just ends up in Swiss bank accounts, then not only will the American taxpayers reject the policy and cut it short, but the Pakistani people will, quite rightly,

feel as if this is just another example of the U.S. interacting with its elites and doing nothing for the people of the country.

So, do we need accountability? Most definitely. What measures are there in the bill? We have a complex set of monitoring and evaluation benchmarks, which are important and which are useful, but, to be honest, you can't legislate effectiveness. We can -- in Congress we can provide tools, and the administration can either use them well or use them poorly. We provided -- among these tools for accountability are up to $30 million for more inspectors general, people -- CPAs and bean counters to go out there and make sure that they actually can follow the money. But if the administration decides it just wants to take this money and plow it into the Pakistani government or into Pakistani NGOs that are fronts for dishonest people or American firms that are, say, contractors that have absurd overheads, Congress can't really prevent the administration from misusing the tools that we've given.

Now, we provide as much oversight as we can. We've been engaged in a long series of tortuous briefings with the administration. Anyone who wants to be truly despondent over the nature of government, come and attend one of our briefings. And not because people aren't doing their job; everybody's doing their job very well. It's just that this is very complex, difficult stuff. But the fact that it's complex and difficult doesn't mean that it is not 100 percent essential.

So, this is going on. It is really the administration that is providing the accountability right now. It's all through the SRAP shop, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. But ultimately, if they do not do a good job, if they end up funneling money to places where it doesn't reach the Pakistani people, then the American taxpayers won't support it, Congress will not authorize -- or will not appropriate the money in future years, and Pakistanis will once again feel betrayed.

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm just going to add a little clarification there because maybe everyone didn't

catch where the decisions are being made and where the research is being done is through -- as I understood you -- the Special Representative's Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan in the State Department, which is the office of Richard Holbrooke.

And so -- and I'm going to just go down the line. So Paula, you said you wanted to respond to Jonah? And then we'll go to Salman for modernity in Islam to end this.

MS. NEWBERG: It's less a response to Jonah than perhaps an underscoring of what he just said, but I'll say it a little bit less politically.

I can certainly understand why the American government felt that as of a vote of confidence in a way in Pakistan that it decided to authorize in the order of $7-1/2 billion for non-military assistance. And just so everybody's clear about this, the amount of money that's going to the military dwarfs that, probably, particularly over a longer period of time.

That notwithstanding, there are serious consequences to running all of your money through a

state apparatus. It is exactly the opposite of what Salman is talking about, in a sense. No, it is actually. The Congress may not have planned it that way, but the State Department is allowed to make it happen that way, and the current plans have that money going straight through.

So, in a sense, it reduces diplomacy to the provision of dollars without necessarily having the kind of substantive accountability that you need. Inspectors general and CPAs are not the same thing as political accountability.

Now, just as a counterpoint to that, I just came back from wandering around some of the rural areas in Pakistan. Each government has tried to change the structure of governance. And many of you may have seen headlines in the last few days saying that the president has now put forward about 100 different constitutional changes. But there's one change that he made not so long ago that is much more effective at quelling public opinion, and that is in our terms it would be called "firing all the mayors." But there was a level of

governance that was elected, whether well or not, it's hard to say, that has been turned into a bureaucratic level. So now you have elected people at the very, very bottom of the political ladder and then nothing again until a member of the Provincial Assembly.

So I just spent several days with the union councils in the rural area of Chakwal, where there is a terrible drought going on. And these mostly women have been elected to try to help their communities, and they have no one to talk to. So you can say to them, well, what you're supposed to do is canvass your constituency and then move up the ladder. But the only ladder they have to move up now is a bureaucratic one. And the chief minister can fire the bureaucrat rather than actually help them.

So, when we talk about this, there's a big difference between what it means to support a state and perhaps help -- have them help you support anti-terrorist activities, and actually making it work in a way that doesn't bring that state heavy down on the heads of the people who are there. So all a way of

saying this is a much longer and complicated process than some of our own political language makes available.

MR. AHMAD: So, Madhulika, it's more -- less a problem of modernity and tradition or Islam and secularism. It's more about the rule of law and civil rights. And I'll give you two examples.

The first is 11 years of military dictatorship, General Zia, which was a fascist Islam in Pakistan, right? But it was during that same time that Benazir Bhutto started a movement for democracy. And, you know, this whole pop culture movement started underneath the noses of the military dictatorship. And the moment that military dictatorship ended, people voted in Muslims. 99.9 percent or 99+ percent of the people are Muslims already in Pakistan. But they felt empowered to vote in a woman, the first woman to become prime minister. Right? So liberal -- very liberal Muslims.

Secondly, it's another thing that these prime ministers, you know, failed the people and didn't -- weren't able to stem corruption or establish a rule of

law. Another military experiment, and both supported by a Republican regime, U.S. regime, General Musharraf was a very liberal dictator. You know, he liked to see himself as a Democrat in the garb of, you know, a military man.

But the fact that -- and Paula spoke about this, the lawyers movement dealt -- you know, why did they come to the support of the chief justice was because they want the rule -- they want a balance of power. And that's what the people of Pakistan have been saying for 60 years: Give us a level playing field; give us the rule of law. I mean, it's a sign of an extremely sophisticated society which braves suicide bomb attacks, terrorism, to come out on the streets to support a lawyers movement. What are they saying? Rule of law.

And I'll go a little bit further. You know, Swat was ceded to the Taliban and Sharia Law was, you know, imposed there. Now, for the average man in Swat what does Sharia Law mean? Not a movement towards Islam, but maybe perhaps through Sharia Law they will

get justice. And so it's important to see that. They want better governance, rule of law, civil rights, education being number one on the top of that.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you very much, Salman.

MS. RAPHAEL: I'm Alexandra Raphael with Management Systems International. I had a sort of general question for anyone who can offer insight.

Given all of the new money from the Kerry-Lugar Bill, the new civilian money, as people with expertise in the country and have spent a lot of time in the country, can you think of any sort of specific measures that would be most useful for the money? I mean, what does that look like? Does it look like American-style schools? Does it look like, you know, supporting local NGOs? What's the most effective way to use this money?

MS. AHMAD: Hello, everybody. This is my first time at the Brookings.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Excuse me. Are you asking a question?

MS. AHMAD: No, I'm answering her. I think I

have something to add to what -- I mean, I think these are just some solutions that come to my mind. I lived for many years in that country as a medical doctor, doing social work since the age of 16, and have been managing Salman, something I'm not exempt from, being his wife. But it's wonderful to be here. Thank you, you know, Cynthia, for having us. And amazing conversation by Paula, Salman, and by Jonah.

I just wanted to sort of mention a couple of things which come in my mind when you say that. Lived in Pakistan for many years and saw a lot of corruption, dishonesty, injustice as well. There's a very famous saying: An idle mind is a devil's workshop. And I feel that something that is very relevant to what we all are talking about.

When you have a country of 170 million people where the population of -- out of all that population, 70 percent is youth who is 24 years old, it's important to understand what should be done about that youth. Because, like I said, an idle mind is a devil's workshop. If the youth is not engaged, they will be

misused. They are sort of -- there'll be other people around in a society who will take advantage of that. And I think in our case, those are the Talibans. For the sake of some bread, for the sake of some incentives they are brought into the madrassas and then they are brainwashed to do things which they might not have done had they had access to better education or to probably other incentives in life.

If a person where I come from in Pakistan is a sweeper or is throwing -- or is removing garbage, I feel there is no light at the end of the tunnel. He will always be throwing garbage or removing garbage. I don't see that in the American society because here I see even a cab driver has an opportunity to buy a house, to take care of their kids, and to also enjoy some great activities, like watching a movie, going out to dinner sometime. So there is a ray of light at the end of the tunnel kind of thing, which we don't have there. So, I think that is the problem, that the youth is not engaged in certain productive activities.

I have some ideas and solutions, I think, but

somehow in life I've always felt money is usually given to some people to spend who are either corrupt or who don't know how to spend it or who will just keep it and not do anything about it. Unfortunately, people who have amazing ideas and want to do things and all don't end up with that kind of money in the big chunk to make a difference, which, I don't know, maybe it's sometimes God playing a joke up there. But I just feel that there are some ideas.

We have a nonprofit, SSGWI, but since I mentioned, Salman and I have been doing a lot of social work since many years. One of the ideas that I thought of was that what if we had something like an American Idol that you have here and we had a program like that in Pakistan? And then -- formulated in a different way. Because this is an art and culture initiative, what if you engaged the people or the youth in different communities who are already active and made them into heroes?

Maybe somebody in their village has done something like maybe, you know, brought -- dug some

wells and brought water to the farmers, but he's an unknown entity. And if we investigated and find out and maybe discovered some 10 or 20 or 30 wonderful people who've done so much, and we gave them a platform to come on national television as heroes and we awarded them prizes or presents or, you know, big awards, like maybe scholarships to go and study in the United States at a wonderful college, I think it would incentivize the population over there and also make them feel good about something.

Because there's lack of leadership in Pakistan. Nobody really guides you that well. They don't really know what to do. So from that angle, you know, if you had such incentives there, it would make a lot of difference and you would see results. These people would become community leaders and would actually inspire other youth to do well. So, that's just an idea.

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm going to let the other -- Jonah, I think you can just -- you don't get off that easily. I think you have to give an answer, too.

MR. BLANK: Okay.

MS. SCHNEIDER: And we welcome specific ideas, too. And then I'll say something to close this out.

MR. BLANK: Well, briefly, actually, one thing I'd like to clarify is that the money that -- the money from the bill is not going through -- is not all going through the government. We don't know where the money is going yet. The way -- I can't really speak to what the State Department plans to do with the money. We've been briefed on it to some degree, but a lot of this is very much a work in progress. I can speak to what I would like to see the money going to.

I would like to see the money going to a mix of things: some going through Pakistani government institutions where -- in cases where they are accountable, where they're effective, where they actually are able to handle the money in a transparent way that produces good results; through Pakistani NGOs where they are, again capable, accountable, transparent; through American NGOs; and through American companies.

All of these -- and, of course, NGOs and companies from every country.

You know, so my sole criterion is what is going to deliver the goods to the Pakistani people and deliver the goods that the Pakistani people want? If it's Pakistani institutions, if it's French institutions, if it is the Aga Khan Foundation, whatever it is, I think that 1.5 billion should be a large enough figure to spread your bets pretty widely. And some of those bets will pay off better than others; some will pay off less well and then you readjust the next year.

If the administration does not go for that approach, if it tries simple to write a big check to the Pakistani government, first, I do not feel that's what the State Department is intending to do. But if they were to go that route, they would have considerable congressional back-push to it.

In terms of the actual things that are funded, I think actually the other members of the panel can speak better than I can about what the Pakistani people actually want. My feeling is that health care,

roads, schools, energy, these are some of the things I hear again and again and again. In any Pakistani city nowadays, you know, you have load shedding. That wasn't the case really when I lived in the -- well, it was the case when I lived in Lahore, but it wasn't as bad as it is now. It's gotten much worse.

You know, food security. I've been just a few years ago in Peshawar where people standing for two hours just to get, you know, a ration of grain. That is not something I had seen too often when I was living there.

There are so many needs, far more than our bill can fund. And our bill is intended merely to facilitate efforts of the Pakistanis themselves and as a pledge of good will. It's not meant to fulfill all the needs of the Pakistani people.

MS. SCHNEIDER: Would each of you like to comment on that or not? You don't have to, but, Salman, if you have any ideas of how this might (inaudible).

MS. NEWBERG: Alexandra, I don't know how you'd get American money to do this, but if I had one

small prescription for how to change things it would be to try to find a way actually to fulfill what the promise of the Constitution was to have been and make equality before the law something that is real and concrete.

MS. SCHNEIDER: You just need to speak more loudly. No one can hear you.

MS. NEWBERG: Can you hear that? If I had one --

MS. SCHNEIDER: (inaudible) said swallow the microphone.

MS. NEWBERG: If I had one suggestion, without knowing whether American monies could be used for this purpose, it would simply be to say that you could transform the political system if you could fulfill the promise of the original Constitution from 1973, and make equality before the law a principle of political society, which it is not today.

MR. AHMAD: Yeah, very quickly. You know, a stable, secure Pakistan is, you know, is important for the region, but also for the globe. It’s a nuclear-

armed state. And so, as Samina said, you know, more than 60 percent of the people of that country, more than 100 million people, are under the age of 24, young people. And the terrorists and the extremists are quite clear that that's their target market. They want to send them into the madrassas, they want to brainwash them. Even, you know, the suicide bomb blasts are not happening because they give them a vision of the afterlife. It's money. It's economics, plain and simple.

You know, one kid gets 8 lakh, which is $10,000, you know. Ten thousand dollars and he realizes he's never going to make -- see that much amount of money, his family's never going to see that much amount of money. So, yes, he will go sacrifice himself to support his brothers and sisters and his parents.

So, having said that, I also know that people are -- that they have dignity. And rather than being given handouts, it would be better if education and a trade, you know, to -- you know, promote trade between Pakistan and America, because the people are extremely

dynamic. They have great entrepreneurial skills. Pakistani-Americans here show that, you know, when they get a level playing field, they do incredibly well. There are CEOs here who are from Pakistan of corporations, teachers, doctors, you know, in all walks of life. So they are -- they show you the mirror of what Pakistani society can be provided that education, rule of law, and security really, yeah.

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm going to use the moderator's prerogative and close by adding one more element to that that was actually raised by Samina's comment about American Idol.

And I love to say this in a policy context because they think, well, you're talking about American Idol, are you kidding? But the very important element of the American Idol competitions all over the world, which I think is why they have such a profound impact everywhere -- I've written and talked about the impact in Afghanistan of Afghan Idol, which is huge -- is that it is an equal opportunity platform where it is a merit-based competition. And that is such a radical notion in

places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. And so it becomes -- and, of course, it's a very public -- the American Idol contests are a very public forum where, you know, in Afghanistan a third of the population watches the finals, you know. They don't all have TV sets, but they gather around the ones they can find.

It's also a platform for women. It's a platform for people from different ethnic groups. And it's a way, referring back to Salman's comments about cricket, it's a way that the country comes together and has a sense of national unity. That -- of course, the singing contests are not the answer to all the problems. But, you know, Samina has a very creative, interesting spin on that. But the underlying nature of those contests -- merit-based competition, equal opportunity, and, of course, bolstered by accountability and rule of law -- it seems to me those are the ingredients that begin to introduce change in society.

And I just would conclude by asking you all to imagine what things might look like. I don't think everything would have changed, but what kinds of things

might have been in motion if the U.S. Government in the post 9-11 era had taken those ideas -- equal opportunity, merit-based competition, justice, and rule of law -- as what were our things that we were hoping to help other countries establish as opposed to making it democracy and voting.

So thank you all very much for coming. Thank you so much, Salman and Paula and Jonah and Samina. I think it's been really a fantastic discussion. Thank you.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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