

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

JOURNEY INTO ISLAM:  
THE CRISIS OF GLOBALIZATION

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**Panelists:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GRAND: Welcome. My name is Steve Grand. I'm the Director of the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

We're delighted to have you all here today. On behalf of Brookings and our partners today, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and American University, we would like to offer a warm welcome to everyone.

Congressman Keith Ellison will be joining us shortly. His staff has sent his apologies. There are votes underway, and he should be arriving as soon as possible.

The book we will be discussing today, *Journey Into Islam*, grew out of an initiative jointly sponsored by Pew, American University and Brookings on Islam in the Age of Globalization.

Before we begin, I would like to recognize and thank two key partners in this important initiative. One is Luis Lugo, Director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Luis, thank you.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: The second is Dean Louis Goodman, the Dean of the School of International Service at American University.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: I would also like to mention at this moment, Peter Singer,

who is my predecessor as Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Muslim World, who I don't believe is here with us today but really was part of the inspiration and did a lot of the legwork behind this important initiative.

This joint project began with a question: Who speaks for Islam in an age of globalization?

It sought to examine the forces that are shaping how authority within Islam is legitimated in the modern Muslim World, how leaders establish their authority, especially in relation to the divine texts, and who the public see as role models today and whether and how they accord political leaders legitimacy, and what this means for politics and policy in the region. Such questions of legitimacy and authority, of course, are vital and bear heavily on important issues regarding the United States' relationship with Muslim states and communities throughout the world.

The lead investigator for this project, Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, and a team of young researchers, many of whom are with us today, set out to find answers to these questions through a trip to eight countries across the Muslim World with the generous financial support of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. They conducted a formal questionnaire, mostly of youth in the region, but also documented a range of conversations and personal experiences and observations during the course of their journey. They spoke to cab drivers and sheikhs, students and professors, men and women, princes and farmers and

asked them their thoughts and opinions of the world around them.

The final product of this wide-ranging inquiry is the book, *Journey Into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization*. Through the book, Ambassador Akbar Ahmed takes us on a fascinating and exceedingly educational tour of the Muslim World from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, exposing us all along the way to the authentic voices of the region. It is an unusual, compelling and exceedingly comprehensive book that, as Ambassador Ahmed himself has described it, has a number of levels to it.

It is, all at once, a field trip to the Muslim World by a professor from the region and a team of energetic young Americans, an anthropologist's case study of a traditional civilization undergoing change in an age of globalization, a Muslim scholar's attempt to understand his community with a view to helping it find its way in the modern world, a Pakistani's personal return home after several years in the West, and an optimist's attempt to promote dialogue and understanding between two increasingly hostile civilizations.

We are privileged to have with us today to discuss *Journey Into Islam*, the book's author, Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, and a very distinguished group of panelists. Ambassador Ahmed will give some opening remarks, and the panelists will then give their own commentary on this book, and I hope a lively discussion will then ensue that will include questions and answers from the audience.

Before turning it over to Ambassador Ahmed, let me begin by introducing a

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few of our esteemed panelists, and I will save the introduction of Congressman Ellison for his arrival.

First, I should say that Ambassador Akbar Ahmed is an internationally renowned expert on Islam and the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University and a nonresident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. He has taught at Princeton, Harvard and Cambridge as well as being a leader in promoting interfaith dialogue around the world. He has served as High Commissioner of Pakistan to Great Britain and has advised both Prince Charles and President George W. Bush on issues related to Islam. His many books include *After Terror: Promoting Dialogue Among Civilizations* with Brian Forst, and *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History in Society*. He received his Ph.D. from the University of London.

To his right is Ambassador Aziz Mekouar, the Ambassador of Morocco to the United States since June 19th, 2002. Prior to taking his current assignment, Ambassador Mekouar served as Ambassador to Italy. He was, prior to that, elected as the Independent Chairman of the Council of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, that in November in 2001 and he was reelected in 2003. He has previously served as Ambassador to Portugal and to Angola. He has also served as Minister Plenipotentiary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Morocco and Permanent Representative in Morocco to the International Bureau for Information Technology and First Counselor and Deputy

Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Morocco in Rome. He attended the French high school of Charles Lepierre in Lisbon, Portugal and obtained a graduate degree from the High School of Commerce in Paris, France.

To his right is another internationally renowned expert on South Asia and foreign policy more generally, Stephen Cohen, a colleague and senior fellow here in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution where he has served since 1998. He received his Bachelor's and his Master's degrees in political science from the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Wisconsin. In 2004, he was named as one of the 500 most influential people in the field of foreign policy by the World Affairs Council of America. Professor Cohen was a faculty member at the University of Illinois. He was also a scholar in residence at the Ford Foundation, New Delhi and from 1985 to 1987, he was a member of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State where he dealt with South Asia. He has taught at Andhra University in India, Keio University in Tokyo, Georgetown University and now teaches across the street in the South Asian program of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

A big thank you to all of our panelists and let me now turn the floor over to Ambassador Ahmed.

AMB. AHMED: Thank you, Steve. Thank you for that very warm and clear introduction of what we are going to be doing this evening.

For me, I would like to start by listing some thanks that are long overdue. Firstly, to my wife, the book is dedicated to my wife. She has been a rock throughout my career of support, of affection, of ideas. And, my family.

My team, the wonderful young Americans who traveled with me, and they are all here: Hadia Mubarek, Jonathan Hayden, Hailey Wodt, Frankie Martin. The entire team is here. These, really for me, became the best ambassadors of the United States in its attempts to understand the Muslim World. They were dedicated, they were committed, and nothing deterred them from seeking the truth in the field.

The senior members who advised me -- Dr. Lugo, Dean Goodman, Steve Cohen, Peter Singer, as you mentioned, Steve -- all of them for all their support and inspiration. And, of course, Dr. Tim Shaw is no longer with Dr. Lugo.

The excellent press, headed by the excellent Bob Faherty, each and every one of them has made the production of this book such a delight. I know how we constantly, my team and I, pester Susan Sullivan and she never says no to us at any odd time during the day. Susan, could you send a copy off to Bombay or Islamabad, and we immediately get a response from her.

Then, of course, the very distinguished panel that I am privileged to be part of.

We are here, of course, to launch this book, *Journey Into Islam*, but there are also two other launches taking place as a kind of bonus. There is a guide, a



six-week guide, to understanding the study of Islam through *Journey Into Islam*.

The Reverend Swadley from Richmond has sent, I believe his assistant, Ryan.

Jonathan, is he here?

I always turn to Jonathan whenever I am in trouble, and of course Jonathan looks blank at me. Where is he?

So the Reverend Swadley sent his excellent assistant to introduce the guide to the study of Journey Into Islam, a six-week guide, excellent teaching material.

Of course, a new CD and audio 12-lecture series called "Encountering Islam" just completed by Michael Bloom, also being introduced here this evening.

I am grateful to all of you for being here especially to those of you who have come from outside Washington, D.C. I know like Ryan from Richmond and my friend, Teddy Wodt from Dallas, all the way. Thank you, Teddy, for being with us this evening.

So, firstly, the why, what and how. The why: The why are we studying Islam was answered to you this morning on the news. The mosque at Samarra is blown up, one of the oldest structures in the Muslim World. It is not just a question of Shi'a mosque as the commentators often point out. A mosque is a mosque for every Muslim. As a Muslim, I am so shattered to see one of the architectural wonders, the theological wonders of the Muslim World just blown up. Whoever did this, and there are all kinds of theories circulating in the Muslim World.

Gaza in anarchy, explosions in Lebanon this morning, in Afghanistan, the Taliban resurgent and the news from Pakistan which has to be watched very closely, these are the whys we need to be looking at the world of Islam and looking at it closely. For me, as a social scientist, these events create issues around the concept of leadership, of change, of transformation, of the rapid processes of globalization that affect traditional societies which is what you are seeing happening in the Muslim World.

So, for me, sitting in Washington after 9/11 and commenting on Islam and its relations with the West, it became imperative to visit the Muslim World for a period of time to look at the Muslim World with some intensity. That is why I undertook this journey, and it became almost a kind of personal pilgrimage. I could not have performed it without this wonderful support structure that I have acknowledged.

Field trips are extremely important to anthropologists, and this was a kind of anthropological excursion. I was delighted because the team with me showed all the signs of budding young anthropologists. We went to the Middle East, to South Asia, to Far East Asia.

We met, as Steve pointed out, a whole range of Muslim leadership: presidents and princes and sheikhs. We talked to students, and we visited people's homes, the entire range. We conducted questionnaires, and we talked in depth to individuals. We met Sufi saints. We met the orthodox in their mosques

and the madrassahs, and we met those who would be modern, who would want to interact with the modern world, different kinds of Muslims.

Through our meetings, we explored and related our findings to some of the theoretical models. Ultimately, we are at one of the great think tanks of the world. We must be conscious of theory behind just conversation, commentary and talk. So we wanted to relate our findings to the theoretical frames within which we look at leadership, change, societies undergoing massive transformations. We came up again and again against the impossible problem and controversy and dilemma of defining Islam. How do you define Islam?

As a Muslim -- as a Muslim -- not so much as a social scientist, as a Muslim, I am intrigued. I am puzzled. Sometimes I despair, and I am sure my brother on my right will agree with this. When I hear words like Islamofascism because that in a broad sense labels every Muslim. However you phrase it, that Islamofascism, and well, all right, His Excellency, the Moroccan Ambassador is not one of those. Yet, the broad brush that is painted makes every Muslim uncomfortable. So how do you actually look at Muslim societies?

I believe that we have come up with the answer, and the answer is, of course, as one of my young team members would say, read the book. The answer really is in the book. We are giving you three models, three models that are in play, and they have been in play for the last two centuries. This is an ongoing dynamic, an ongoing dialectic within Muslim society. Since the first impact with

Western colonization in the middle of the 19th Century, and you are seeing, in a sense, the drama being played out right now. 9/11 was a catalyst. It escalates the drama, but it does not create the drama.

We also wanted to approach those who inspire the Muslim World. Who speaks for Islam? But knowing something of the Muslim World and having conducted this kind of questioning in the past, I knew the futility of asking the question, who speaks for Islam? You can't sit in Syria and ask someone, who do you think is the best spokesman for Islam, because the answer would be 100 percent President Assad of Syria because if you don't give that answer, you may be in trouble with the authorities.

So the way around it, of course, is to simply ask, who are your role models? That is an indirect way of answering the same questions.

Now, this question created some really very interesting responses. We had a whole set of responses for contemporary role models which were really intriguing and interesting and pointing to the fact that there is no one towering role model in the Muslim World. There is a whole range of role models reflecting the three distinct models that I have pointed out: the Mystic, the Literalist Orthodox and the Modernist. The role models will reflect these three models that we have identified.

The problem, of course, is compounded for us here in the West, and this is how. When we asked, who is the greatest number one role model from the past,

we found that whether Muslims were rich or poor, young or old, Turk or Pakistani or Bangladeshi or Moroccan, for the vast majority, the ultimate role model was the Prophet of Islam.

Now, if that is the case, and we here in Washington are determined to win hearts and minds as the State Department is determined to do, hearts and minds in the Muslim World, we need to know that for the vast majority of Muslims, the number one role model is the Prophet of Islam. When we abuse the Prophet of Islam, Muslims, whatever their persuasion -- orthodox, secular, atheist, whatever - - will be unhappy. They may be upset. They may be unhappy. They may be angry. Some may even be tempted to violence.

So these are some practical things that I think would benefit those who plan policy here in the United States when they look at our study.

We also asked people what was their number one concern. What was the number one problem that was agitating Muslims? We were surprised. We expected the traditional answers, Israel-Iraq. While Israel-Iraq formed part of the answer, the number one problem that Muslims saw facing them was the perception that Islam was being deliberately distorted or under attack in the West. So here you have a very important notion. Again, if you want foreign policy to take a certain direction to create friends, to win hearts and minds, you simply need to be aware what is actually happening in the Muslim World.

What you will find in the book is that you will be able to hear ordinary

Muslim voices. You will be able to feel their emotions, sometimes their anger, sometimes their sense of irrational responses, sometimes their wisdom, their compassion, but you will be able to actually feel this.

You will be able to hear and see in action this remarkable young group that traveled with me, young Americans interacting with Muslims across the world sometimes in very challenging situations, and that will give you hope. Here are young Americans playing the role of ambassadors where ambassadors who are often paid huge sums of money and are protected and have all the privileges may not be able to play as effectively, and maybe they have something to learn from these Americans.

Of course, you will also discover some strong, solid policy recommendations that we have at the end of the book. We are actually listing things that Americans need to be doing, policymakers, planners, administrators and Muslims need to be doing. It has to be a joint effort on both sides because we are constantly pointing to the interconnected nature of the world we live in. It is the age of globalization. Globalization, by definition, means interconnectedness.

We need to constantly remind ourselves why this is important: 1.4 billion Muslims, roughly. By the middle of this century, one out of four people on this planet will be Muslim. Fifty-seven nations, one nuclear for the time being. Maybe in the next decade or two, there may be more nuclear nations. Iran is aspiring to be nuclear but so is Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and so on.

I am not sure about Morocco, Excellency.

AMB. MEKOUAR: No, no.

AMB. AHMED: Apart from the theoretical issues, there is one point I want to urge you towards, one point, and that is this, apart from issues of globalization and leadership and change and transformation that will be discussed in the book. That is something more human, and that is the notion of compassion and hope and friendship. That is -- and Steve, I say this to you with great respect -- normally left out of the calculations of the thinkers and the analysts sitting in the think tanks because sometimes they assume that the people they are dealing with are not really human or at least they don't have a heart. But, ultimately, human beings do respond to emotion, to ideas of compassion, to ideas of friendship. SO, in that sense, I would urge you to look at the world through a slightly different lens.

Tomorrow, for example, we have another launch, another extraordinary event -- and I really am grateful to Brookings for organizing this wonderful evening -- and that is at the National Cathedral tomorrow with my great friends, the bishop, Bishop John Chane and Senior Rabbi Bruce Lustig. So once again, I am not just saying we are covering the bases, but I am saying we are there to talk to the spiritual side of our natures.

Today, I would appeal you to think in terms of foreign policy, realpolitik, international affairs but also to remember that we are dealing with this mass

civilization, this great civilization, this ancient civilization of Islam, but they are human. Muslims are as human as you and I. If we can reach out to them and create bridges of understanding, we will be able to change how people are living in the world today and therefore not only make ourselves feel more secure but make the world feel more secure. Maybe then the United States should be doing what it needs to be doing, which is taking the lead in the 21st Century on the great global issues facing us, on global warming, on the population explosion and the poverty issues that face all of us as a world civilization.

Let me conclude with a plea, with a request. Join us on this journey. Join us on this journey towards understanding, compassion and bridge-building.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Ambassador Ahmed. You quote the Prophet Muhammad in your book, saying, "The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr." I think both with your comments and the formidable book that you have written, you show why that is true.

AMB. AHMED: Thank you so much, Steve. Thank you.

MR. GRAND: Let me turn it over to Steve Cohen.

Steve?

MR. COHEN: Thank you. Thank you, Steve.

I guess I may be the person other than his wife who has known Akbar



longer than anybody else in this room because we were associated in a couple of projects in the 1970s when Akbar was still an administrator in the Government of Pakistan's service and also an aspiring, promising academic and one of the few people I have seen who have been able to manage two careers very successfully. Again, when after 9/11 and the Saban Center opened up for business, I think Akbar was one of the people we turned to right away to sort of educate us and bring us up to speed on the Islamic World.

I just have three large comments to make and then try and get out of the way so others can speak. Really, the first is that in a sense this is the ultimate journey or road book. There are a lot of books written about my travels here and there, but this one really penetrate to, I would say, not the heart but the core of the civilization, a very complex civilization. I think I draw a couple of conclusions from that aspect of this book.

There are major differences within Islam. These different models that Dr. Ahmed has described are really important to understand. But other cultures and civilizations have similar structures, debates between the ethereal, the analytic, the extremist and so forth. You find this popping up in Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism. In some ways, the linkage between the extremists and the moderates in different cultures are closer than those that they have within each culture. This point is made throughout the book. Of course, in Dr. Ahmed's dialogues, interfaith dialogues, it becomes even more apparent.

One of the great works that deals with this issue, Sam Huntington's book, *Clash of Civilizations*, I have regarded as profoundly misguided, and I told Dr. Huntington this. Really, the clash of civilizations is not between civilizations as much as within them, and I have told Huntington that. The line between the major cities of Pakistan -- Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi -- to the east and to the west is more of a dividing line than that between Pakistan as a whole and, say, India as a whole or between Pakistan and China.

A second point I would like to make is that pertaining to the way in which the book is written and the way in which it was researched. I would say that the skills of an anthropologist are more policy-relevant today than when Akbar Ahmed got his Ph.D. Not only does culture shape the behavior and perception of states, but individuals and groups now have their own foreign policies, their own armies. In fact, they are super empowered, and their actions are not mediated by any institutions. They are not mediated by anything. They flow directly from their perceptions of their own culture and their environment. I think it is important to understand this if you are going to understand the actions of smaller groups and even individuals who have profound influence on our lives.

A policy implication from this point is that we must become less obsessed with technology and more expert in culture and society. It turns out the U.S. Army is now going to dramatically increase its foreign affairs officer program. I think the U.S. Navy is going to have an FAO program. We have lacked this. We

have placed our faith in technology and through intelligence analysis. Clearly, technology lets us down when it comes to cultures which may be somewhat different than ours.

The greatest repository of America's regional expertise historically has been the State Department, but too often when you go around to embassies around the world, there is the U.S. Embassy locked behind essentially a fort. I was just in Islamabad, came back Sunday, and drove by the U.S. Embassy, and there is no sense in going there. There is no sense. They can't get out. People don't want to go there. It is really isolated from Pakistan. You know more about Pakistan perhaps and you meet more Pakistanis by living outside in Pakistan than being in the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad.

So, really, the State Department has its own problems in terms of access, besides being starved for funds over the years, as a country to develop understanding of Islam and other cultures and civilizations. We have got a bureaucratic problem. I think the military understands this because of their experience in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The third point I would like to make is that ideas do count, and this is something that the book is devoted to centrally. The strength of the United States, its practical approach to problem-solving, is also a weakness. We can't listen to others. We don't understand that they may see the world differently.

A wonderful euphemism that is circulating around Washington is kinetic

solution, that is, beating up somebody or shooting them. Kinetic solutions don't work. If you have to use a kinetic solution, that is, shoot them, you have already lost the war especially the war of ideas.

I think that America's great strength, its practical approach to problem-solving, has really become a weakness of ours. We don't take the time to listen, to understand, if not to respect, at least to understand other cultures and civilizations.

The policy implications here are really get out and talk, meet with people, reestablish the libraries around the world. We used to be culture centers for many countries. I know in Pakistan when I first went there I think there were eight different American centers. There are zero now. In Pakistan and other countries, the American center, the American library was often the cultural and intellectual center point of local and national dialogue about their states as well as relations with the U.S. These kinds of institutions have disappeared around the world. They are still relevant. They are still powerful. We really need to rebuild them to be able to compete in the world.

Finally, just one point about the book itself and your remarkable research team: Two weekends ago, I heard James Watson, the discoverer of DNA and author of *The Double Helix*, one of the great Nobel Prize winners. Watson addressed an audience, and he said he would like to stick with young people, not with old people. He being a very old person and me being not quite an old

person, but I still sympathize with you. He said young people are interested in the future.

At first, I was skeptical about the way in which you organized the project, bringing Hailey and others along with you. But as I talked to them as they came back and I read the book, I realized it was very insightful in a sense. You were able to reach down to a new generation of I won't say Muslims but Indians, Pakistanis and others who happen to be Muslims in a way that I could never have done. I think that is a major contribution to the book and also some of the contribution that your young researchers have written separately.

So I agree with Watson, that if you want to learn about the future, stick with the young because they are the future.

Those would be my comments.

AMB. AHMED: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Steve. I enjoy your emphasis on the cultural over the kinetic, and I think that comes out very, very clearly in Ambassador Ahmed's book as well.

We have the pleasure of being joined by Congressman Keith Ellison.

Congressman, if you allow me, I am going to give you a moment to catch your breath.

MR. ELLISON: I am ready to go.

MR. GRAND: I am going to turn to Ambassador Mekouar for a few short remarks, and then we will move to you.

Ambassador Mekouar?

AMB. MEKOUAR: Well, thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be with you and thank you for inviting me to be part of this panel. It is an honor to be sitting next to my good friend, Ambassador Akbar Ahmed. We have known each other for five years since I arrived here, and I immediately appealed to Professor Akbar's thoughts in what he writes. Thank you very much for allowing me to be with him.

I would like to bring three or four ideas. First of all, the book itself, I think it is a wonderful approach to go and ask Muslims what do they think about the world, what do they think, who they are. It is very interesting for me as a Muslim to know what the Muslims think because very often, as Professor Akbar has said, you have the seculars, you have the orthodox, and you have the Sufis. Usually, these three groups are completely isolated from each other, and they don't connect, and very often they don't like each other.

Maybe the Sufis are those whom everybody likes because they are the nicest, because they have an approach, a very wonderful approach to religion, and it is an easy approach to religion. It is not about being orthodox or to implement the rules of a religion by the book. It is more about love and love of God.

But, usually, all these people do not interact. Especially, the orthodox and

the seculars never interact, and they look at each other with a lot of diffidence. So it is very interesting to know and to see the study that Professor Akbar and his team did by traveling around the Muslim World, and it is wonderful for a Muslim to read that.

The second thing I wanted to cite and, by the way, one of the problems when we see people blowing themselves up or people being extremists, it is very hard to explain it. It is very hard to understand what is happening. For instance, let me give you the example of what happened in Morocco a few months ago. Two people blew themselves up. They captured their leader, and instead of leaving him with the police, they put him in the hands of psychiatrists and religious scholars to understand why, why is that happening.

So I think your approach, Professor Akbar, is the best approach to understand what people think and to understand what is happening.

From there, I think that we have some avenues. It is also very interesting to understand when you talk to Muslims. I am coming from, let us say, a secular group of Muslims, and I am coming from a country which is profoundly Muslim. You have some orthodox but very few, and people are pretty much open.

Nonetheless, what you say about the feeling of Islam being besieged or under siege is true. The people, I think, in the Muslim World, even the more westernized people have the impression that the West does not wish them well, and it is because of the way of how Islam is depicted in the press, in the media.

We have access. Everybody has access to media, international media. Everybody watches CNN. Everybody watches Fox and western media. It is the way and how Islam is depicted. What kind of Islam is shown in the western media gives the impression that there is something, a kind of conspiracy theory behind the way Islam is depicted.

Now, I would like to say something else about this trip that Professor Akbar and his team went on, especially Professor Akbar was saying that his American students were ambassadors of the United States. That is very important. Professor Akbar asked you to think that and to understand that Muslims are humans just like you, him and me. Well, we are Muslims, both of us.

But what I want to say is that it is very important that the Muslims understand that Americans are human, and we have this problem of perception of the two worlds. If you ask Muslims -- and I am sure you faced that -- while they think America is all about oil interests and capitalism, it is not about compassion and it is not about solidarity. One of the big qualities of America is compassion and solidarity that you find out as soon as you step on the soil of the United States

Another avenue that I think is important is that, Professor Akbar, you talked about building bridges. I think that the bridges are there, and I repeat it. It is just to cross the bridges. This is what we need. The bridges exist. We are on the same boat. Not everybody knows that we are on the same boat. Not everybody knows that the bridges are there. Just one thing to do is cross the bridges.



Those are a few ideas that I wanted to raise before giving the floor to the Congressman. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Ambassador Mekouar.

Congressman Ellison, we are very, very pleased to have you with us here today. For those who don't know, Congressman Keith Ellison is a member of the Democratic Farmer Labor Party, serving in his first term in the United States House of Representatives, representing the Fifth Congressional District which includes the City of Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs. When he was elected in 2006, Congressman Ellison made history by becoming the first member of the Muslim faith elected to Congress in the United States. In Congress, Congressman Ellison serves on the Financial Services Committee and also the Judiciary Committee.

We are delighted to have him with us today.

Thank you, Congressman.

MR. ELLISON: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. ELLISON: Well, I think it is only fitting to say peace be unto you, *As-Salaamu Alaykum*, to everyone here.

That greeting is an interesting way to start because I remember when we had a joint session of Congress and I had just gotten to Congress, a freshly minted

Congressman and was excited to be there, and the King of Jordan came and spoke. At the end of his remarks, he said, *As-Salaamu Alaykum*, and I just responsively said, oh, *Wa Alaykum Salaam*.

My fellow members of Congress came up to me and said, what exactly did you say? I said, peace. I could just look at the look on their faces and think, oh, they think we said some conspiratorial message or something, but it is just peace. And so, I think that is a good segue to the conversation we are having.

Ambassador Ahmed, thank you for your excellent book and your work to advance human knowledge and understanding, a very important, very timely work, and I applaud you for it.

I want to confess that I have only gotten halfway through your book, but I am going to be continuing to get through it. They have had me on a tough schedule recently, but I did enjoy the book so far, and I have a few ideas I would like to share.

First, I absolutely agree with the premise, that the Muslim World, I think if the American portion of it is any reflection, does feel a large degree of vulnerability, but at the same time the Muslim Americans feel very much American. If you believe the Pew research report recently, 71 percent of American Muslims believe that if you work hard, you can make it here.

In the United States, we have reports from time to time that some people who may happen to be Muslim are up to no good, but they are remarkable for the

fact that there are exceptions and don't reflect what the vast majority of American Muslims really feel.

In my own experience as I go around, my experience with American Muslims is that they are hopeful, they are eager, and they are real ready to jump into the deep water of American politics. Of course, in a post-9/11 world, many who have been before that sort of focused on their own community life, their own profession, their own business, their own education and have now understood that is a luxury that the Muslim community can really not afford. So the community understands a growing awareness of the importance of civic engagement, and I see that all around here every day and all the time.

As I read the book, a few thoughts kept striking me, and one was that the idea of Muslims feeling under siege can't really be separated from our colonial past. You have to understand that many of the parts of the world we are talking about were colonial possessions of European countries but before that had tremendously great civilization and history, innovation, culture that they are very proud.

As I think about today, Iran and some of the growing tension, escalating tension that seems to be happening between our country and theirs, I keep on thinking to myself, we better keep in mind that these folks are the Persians and that they ran this place for a while and that they feel pretty good about who they were, the history they have, and they are aware of it. So too is true for the

Muslim Arab World.

As the United States, which is a country that is a little more than 200 years old, interacts with the rest of the world, while our fortunes have been on the rise for a while and are doing pretty good now, I think it is very important that we have a certain sense of cultural humility as we approach the rest of the world, understanding that the Muslim World is the world that gave us algebra, gave us nautical sciences, gave us so many important things that we just absolutely take for granted today. The fact that we go back to these places and can dominate doesn't mean that these are not proud, noble, great, highly intelligent, very sensitive people. I think some of our approach suggests otherwise.

I think that it is critically important that the United States continues to build its capacity to reach out culturally, socially, linguistically to not just the Muslim World but the rest of the world.

The term, kinetic solution, was used earlier, and it is funny because just this morning I heard the phrase. The point that the person I was talking to was making was that about 20 percent of the problem is kinetic. Twenty percent of the problem is bombs, guns, stuff like that. Eighty percent of the problem is building cultural bridges. Yet, we put, I guess, 80 percent of our energy into that 20 percent and 20 percent of our energy into the 80 percent. Maybe it is not even that charitable. Maybe I am giving us more credit than we should get.

Now, there are good reasons for it. We are coming up out of our own Cold

War legacy. So we think of warfare in terms of territory and two sides squaring off and there is a line and we are going to fight them and take some territory. That is kind of how we understand warfare even though we do not live in an era in which warfare is played out that way.

We need to really reconceive of how we deal with an opponent who is not so much fighting over territory as they are over imposing a world view. So it really is much more a fight about hearts and minds than it ever was. Yet, our “weaponry” to win hearts and minds is, I think, behind what is needed for the time we live in.

I think that I would be very much in favor of having young people come from various countries in the Middle East to come see the United States, to see what it really is all about, to see that it is much more than just a TV pop commercial culture, that it is diverse.

In many ways, America is an ideal place for Muslims. Let me tell you why. The Qur’an tells us we don’t play games of chance or drink. What else don’t we do, guys? We have got a list.

MR. GRAND: Eat certain foods.

MR. ELLISON: Eat pork, thank you.

But in America, if you are Muslim, you can really do all those things if that is what you want to do. Isn’t that true? Your faith is on the honor system in America, and it really allows you to practice your faith in a whole new way. It

has to mean something to you. Nobody with prayer beads is going to hit you on the ankles because they are showing, which happens some places on the globe. The effect is that it allows for a whole new way to embrace your faith.

If you are wearing a hijab, you are going to want to wear one. In France, you can't wear one if you go into the public school, which is interesting because I think in some ways we think of Europe as more liberal and enlightened than we are, but I think the United States has something to teach the rest of the world about religious tolerance. That is something for a left-oriented liberal to say, by the way, but I really believe we have some things to teach the rest of the world about religious tolerance.

Just as I pull my remarks together and try to wind up, my own experience as the first person of the Muslim faith in Congress has been interesting in many ways. Let me just tell you, I almost never bring it up. Somebody always brings it up for me. But I will say that I have been extremely well treated.

People always ask me, wow, how did you deal with those people criticizing you and the letters and wasn't it awful when Glenn Beck said what he said to you? The fact is that those are very minor, isolated incidents compared to the greater part of my experience in the first six months of my congressional service. Overwhelmingly, people in Congress are curious and want to know. That goes both sides of the aisle. I have had meetings with Republicans and Democrats.

In fact, and I hope it doesn't make my Democratic friends feel

uncomfortable, but it seems like in some ways some Republican members are a little more curious about what Islam is, how we can have a better, more proper understanding of it, and it seems like they are a little bit more interested. Maybe they take me for granted because I am on their side already, but the fact is I have had excellent treatment so far.

I have been, I think, well received even when I express views that I think are contrary to what people thought already such as, for example, somebody said to me, oh, you are a moderate Muslim.

I said, I am not a moderate Muslim. Islam is moderate. Islam is moderation. Islam is balance. So to call me a moderate Muslim is like calling me a moderate, moderate person. Islam is about balance.

Another example, well, people like you should say more against those jihadis.

I said, I hate to tell you this, but jihad is a good thing in Islam. I actually explained to somebody that Martin Luther King was on a jihad when he was fighting against segregation. Struggle in the way of Allah is the internal struggle to master yourself and the external struggle to try to establish something good and right.

Neither Muslims nor non-Muslims should allow people to cover their wicked deeds with the legitimacy of Islam. They should have that veneer stripped off of them and be called what they are, which is the misguided.

I am about to stop talking now, really.

I just thought that it was interesting about how the Saudis approach this issue. The Saudis do something similar to what was already mentioned about reeducation for some of these individuals who engage in these desperate acts. They don't call these folks, jihadis. They call them the misguided.

In Islam, to call someone misguided, for those of you who are not Muslim, there is a lot more weight on that phrase that you might know because we believe that if Allah guides you, then you cannot be guided wrong and if Allah does not guide you, you cannot be guided right. So to say that you are misguided is to say that you are without the sanction, the support of the Divine, which is to say quite a bit in the Muslim mind.

The thing is that I think they have gotten the language down. I think we should listen to what they have to tell us about how to deal with extremism.

I think the book is a tremendously helpful step forward in this conversation, and I just want to thank you for allowing me to participate.

I do apologize for being late. I do have an excuse, but I will save it for later.

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Congressman.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: Thank you for sharing those very personal observations with us.



Ambassador Ahmed, do you want to respond to the comments?

AMB. AHMED: Just briefly, Steve, thank you.

Congressman, I hope you continue reading the book because by the time you come to the second half, you will come across the anecdote which we mention in the book where you are being interviewed on television after your historical victory and you are asked, are you with us or with the terrorists, because it is assumed that any Muslim automatically would be with the terrorists. That is exactly what we are up against in a sense. It is not a question of prejudice against a race or a people or a religion. It is really ignorance and stereotyping and prejudices deep inside ourselves. It really is a fundamental challenge to all of us.

I completely agree with the Congressman. America is an ideal place for Muslims. We mustn't forget that some of the greatest heroic figures in the World of Islam are Americans. Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali are known throughout the Muslim World. These are huge names in the Muslim World.

Steve Cohen had pointed out, and again I think it is relevant to underline, that in the Muslim World, while the diplomats may have a problem of engaging with the ordinary people, no Muslim fails to respond to the ideas and the ideals of the great founding fathers of this great country. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, those ideas that they had in mind for this nation called the United States of America are ideas that are deeply Islamic in the Muslim World and immediately create a positive response in the Muslim World.

This is important to hold onto.

Therefore, the assumption that we talk to certain people and don't talk to certain people, I believe, is flawed strategy. It simply is flawed because the emotions right now in the Muslim World, as you see in the book, are so that almost the graph is touching the ceiling right now, the anti-Americanism, the anti-Semitism, the sense of irrational anger almost, and it can be challenged. It can be challenged as we have shown on this journey that we undertook.

I will conclude by pointing out, and His Excellency, the Moroccan Ambassador reflected this, not only in one part of the Muslim World, but these are feelings that are global. These are feelings that exist throughout the Muslim World.

On this journey, which became an important journey for us, I had two of my students with me, Hailey Wodt and Frankie Martin, and we were visiting the most orthodox Islamic center in South Asia, Deoband. It is so famous that the name is equated to the Wahhabi movement in the Middle East. That is how famous it has become. We were being escorted by Ijaz who was one of their chief ideologues, chief writer, chief web site editor who was extremely hostile to the idea of Americans, Israelis and so on and a lot of the stereotypes that Congressman pointed out we need to be conscious of on both sides.

But by the end of the journey, and this was the first time he had probably ever encountered Americans, these two young Americans. By the end of the

journey, after we went to mosques and to the classes and these students actually sat facing an audience like you, perhaps not as clean-shaven as you but certainly a huge audience of three, four, five hundred people, young men. At the end of it, these students were able to convey the idea of friendship and dialogue.

They wrote on the blackboard. They were asked to write a message. They wrote a message of peace which immediately touched them. Hailey wrote: *As-Salaamu Alaykum*. You imagine these orthodox young men in Deoband who had never met an American to suddenly see a young American writing *As-Salaamu Alaykum*, reaching out in culture. They immediately responded to that.

Frankly, we have pictures in the book where he is actually mobbed. They put their arms around him. Of course, when you see bearded young men with their arms around an American, we all get a bit nervous, but these are all beaming, young faces. They are saying, when are you coming back and we would love to be in touch with you.

By the end of the journey, the same young man, Ijaz (ph), asked me, can I translate your book, *Islam Under Siege*, into Urdu? Now, this book is dedicated to Professor Lawrence Rosen at Princeton, a Jewish professor and a very old friend of mine, a very distinguished anthropologist, one of the first MacArthur Award nominees, a very distinguished anthropologist at Princeton. So this book is based on the notion of the need for dialogue and friendship and understanding.

Now, just think of the sea change, the oil tanker in the ocean turning

direction of Ijaz who starts this conversation by talking about his book called *Jihad and Terrorism* in which he talks about American barbarism and Israeli Barbarism and almost justifies the killing of innocent women and children in the cause of Islam because Islam is under attack. By the end of the journey, a week down the road, he shifts his position and now is committed to dialogue, to understanding, to bridge-building.

I think this is the change we need to be moving towards beyond our normal lives as scholars and academics and policy planners, to really be aware that we are living in an interconnected world and everything we do does make an impact.

If Keith Ellison is having this conversation with some TV host, it is not only Americans watching this; the whole world is watching this. The Muslim World is watching this, and Muslims are judging us as we are judging them.

When we see the murder and mayhem in the Muslim World, we say, they are all anarchic. They are all terrorists.

Well, when the Muslim World watches us and they see the first Muslim Congressman being treated like this, they are shocked and appalled and they say, you see, this is what you are doing to your own native Muslim. He is not an immigrant. He is not coming from the Middle East or South Asia. He is from this soil, and yet he is being treated like this simply because he is a Muslim.

That is why I go back to the founding fathers, to the challenge Americans face in the 21st Century for Americans to be really more American, to be more

conscious of where they are coming from, this great vision of the founding fathers, of Jefferson and Franklin and Washington. If America can revive that dream, then the world will respond to America. The world will love America.

But if America does not, then I am afraid we are seeing the situation in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and we will be seeing it unfortunately in many, many other places.

So with that, with that plea once again for dialogue, friendship, understanding, Steve, back to you.

MR. GRAND: Thank you.

Congressman Ellison, wanted to add something.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, thank you. I will try to be brief.

I want to agree about that dialogue I had with Glenn Beck. I laugh about it now, but it is serious, and it was highly insulting and offensive to a lot of people. I dealt with it because I just thought it was an absurd, ridiculous thing that he did.

Of course, he does speak for a number of people, but he doesn't speak for everybody, for example, if you saw how he was lampooned on Jon Stewart. Did anybody see that? I mean he was essentially ridiculed for what he had to say. Keith Olbermann on CNN called him the worst person ever that very night.

I guess my point -- as I shared this point with the professor and I think he and I agree on this -- is that the world sees what Glenn Beck says and does and did, but it is also important that the world know that there are large swaths of

Americans of all faiths, colors and cultures who reject what he did. That part needs to be known by the world too. I think that it is important that the United States project its diversity of view and that the rest of the world know there are those of us who would look and just laugh or cry at somebody like that who would say something such as what he said.

MR. GRAND: I think one of the great powers of the book that you have written, Ambassador Ahmed, is that it defies the stereotypes that many Americans have of some distant, foreign, maybe inhuman, homogenous religion that they don't understand. The book shows in a very compelling way the great richness, the great diversity, the great debates within Islam today.

Before I open it up to questions from the audience, I just want to ask if any of our other panelists wanted to chime in at this point.

AMB. MEKOUAR: I would have one question for Ambassador Ahmed afterward about the globalization.

MR. GRAND: Why don't we take questions from the audience then.

QUESTIONER: I am Colin Bradford from the Brookings Institution. Akbar, I have only read half of your book as well.

AMB. AHMED: Well, then I am not happy with this tendency of the Congressman. What is happening? No one is finishing my book.

MR. GRAND: Did you buy it?

QUESTIONER: I am just trying to sell your book.

I would like to ask maybe all of you but especially you. You have outlined well the approaches, the spirit in which cooperation and reaching out needs to take place. It is helpful in thinking about the next era, the next 50 years, and how we can bring the world to a better place 50 years from now to ground truth in these approaches in terms of specific global issues. You mentioned some in the book.

But I was wondering from a Muslim point of view, not from a western point of view, are there two or three issues in the world that you think are particularly appropriate from a Muslim point of view which would enhance the understanding, the compassion and cooperation between the West and the Muslim World?

AMB. AHMED: Thank you, Colin, a very important question, and I would certainly like these two other very distinguished Muslims on the panel to also respond to this.

I would say that according to our own findings on this trip, not surprisingly, the number one issue is the issue of the feeling in the Muslim World that Islam is under attack, a very broad emotion. This is largely emotion, but there are substantial issues. We cannot avoid them.

There is the issue of Palestine and Israel. That problem has to be solved. We all pray that that problem is solved because this constant killing and now you are seeing the anarchy within Palestinian society. This needs to be resolved

because Muslims see this across the world and they say, for half a century, Palestine is not solved. Kashmir is not solved. The Chechen problem is not solved. The Balkans was in flame for a decade. Eighty percent of the refugee population in the world is coming from the Muslim World.

So these are problems, Colin, that actually exist. These are substantial issues. We can't simply say, let us have dialogue, we are all friends, and the issues will go away. Unless you begin to say, all right, let us try to solve the core issues, we can't solve them sitting over here.

Muslim leaders have to be involved in this dialogue. Therefore, I would point the blame largely at Muslim leaders themselves. Very often, they are more interested in clinging to power, to using all kinds of tricks to just stay on and hang on to power rather than solving their own issues. You see the gap between the rich and the poor is just growing in the Muslim World, corruption growing in the Muslim World, populations exploding in the Muslim World, organization, the imbalance between the rural and the urban, all these issues facing the Muslim World. It is, in some senses, an alarming figure, an alarming trend in the Muslim World.

So, yes, these are issues that the leaders who have dialogue, friendship and traction with the Muslim World need to be concerned with and certainly Muslim leaders themselves.

Perhaps, Excellency, you want to comment on this from a Muslim point of



view.

AMB. MEKOUAR: Well, as I said, the biggest feeling around the Muslim World is feeling to be under siege, even for those who don't have any many problems.

But I would like to ask you a question about this globalization issue. I have a sense because of what you said about the gap between the rich and the poor or between the cities and rural areas. My sense is that the problem that is happening today in the Muslim World is that you have groups of people who are feeling that the train of globalization is leaving the station, and they are not prepared or trained to being on the train, and they are scared to be left in the station and are trying to keep the train in the station. This is one of the ideas, and I would like to understand if you found that during your journey.

The second thing is that everybody says that in the Muslim World, you have problems. You have terrorism. By the way, terrorism is happening in the Muslim World much more than in the western world. This is something that everybody says, but we have to stress it all the time.

At the same time, we have the economies doing very well in most of the Muslim Arab World, and that is very interesting. It is strange to see that you have this phenomenon of violence at the same time as you have a stronger economy. But if you look back at what happened in Europe in the sixties and the seventies, for instance, you had almost the same problem. The societies were becoming

richer, but at the same time you had the Red Brigades, et cetera. Do you feel the same thing?

AMB. AHMED: Very interesting question, Excellency, thank you.

The issue of globalization: Globalization, of course, is not something which we can dismiss or engage with simplistically. For Tom Friedman, the world is flat. We found that the world is not flat for people. There are ravines and mountains and valleys because there are tribes and their cultures who want to actually hold onto their own traditions.

We found that a lot of people, exactly as you say, are feeling that this train of globalization is moving out of the station and they may not be on it. We talked to many young men and women in the Muslim World who actually said this. They said, we are educated. We work hard. We can't get jobs. Sometimes they say, we can't get a job just because of our name, our Muslim name.

Again, this feeds into the sense of perhaps we are being discriminated against because of our faith, because of our religion.

Globalization itself is complex because while it may have many of the problems associated with it, particularly this division of the few very rich and the mass very poor, at the same time we saw that after the tsunami in Indonesia or the earthquake in Pakistan how very quickly the United States could spearhead massive relief, medical relief, turn out their helicopters and all kinds of support systems which immediately created tremendous good will in the people for the

United States. So globalization does have that capacity also, the minus and the plus.

Right now, I would say that many parts of Africa and Asia, the mass of the people, not certainly the elite. You pointed out the elite. The mass of the people are feeling that they may be left out of the process, in short, not be able to join the train.

MR. GRAND: There was question from the gentleman in the tie, if I am not mistaken, the red tie.

QUESTIONER: Shawn Davis.

I wonder if you would just say a little bit more about authority and legitimization of authority in the Muslim World.

AMB. AHMED: The whole question of authority and legitimacy is related to who speaks for Islam, and it is something I have been fascinated with since my days on campus as a student during a B.A. graduation, because I very much grew up in the Max Weberian tradition of looking at authority and the three kinds of authority.

What you are seeing really is a constant internal debate about who represents legitimate authority. Now, what is happening in the Muslim World is that because of the colonial era, you have a break in the system from a purely Islamic history as it were, a historical narrative which changes with the colonial era.

Into the 20th Century, many of the nationalist leaders were both tradition leaders like the King of Morocco who was both a tradition leader based in lineage but also emerged as a great nationalist leader combining the two roles. But in many other societies, a new kind of leader emerged. Some in the Middle East, for example, you had so-called “socialist” leaders emerging, Saddam Hussein or Assad of Syria. These are new kinds of leaders emerging. Then, of course, you have traditional clerics, the imams, the mullahs and so on in Muslim societies.

What you are seeing in the Muslim World is really the constant interaction between these ideologies claiming legitimacy. It gets complicated with globalization because with globalization, for the first time ever, the ordinary Muslim has access to the sources of legitimacy in Islam. He can go onto his web site, onto his computer and type in and look up the actual Qur’anic verses or the Qur’anic chapters for a particular issue. This, he did not have access to 20 or 30 years ago. He had to go to a religious authority. He also has access to the politics of that region. He also has access to information about these religious or political figures.

What you are really seeing is the dynamic of what I had pointed out, a crisis in contemporary role models and a constant yearning for the ideal, a yearning to go back to the time of the Prophet. Therefore, we go back to the notion of the Prophet who becomes so important for Muslims as a kind of anchor, a kind of mooring, because he is to Muslims simply the role model, the ultimate role model

as father, as son, as husband and so on, as scholar, as a leader in prayer, a leader in army on the battlefield.

If we need to then begin to understand Islam, we need to really begin to understand this early ideal model type that exists in Muslim society. It is not just simply a question of looking at role models today, looking at a president or a king, but looking at them in the context of Muslim history, in the context of Muslim cultural and social frameworks.

AMB. AHMED: I see a lot of hands. The gentleman about eight rows back on the aisle, I think, has had his hand up for a while.

QUESTIONER: Yes, I am Talib Kareem (ph). I am a civil rights attorney here in Washington, and I am grateful for the conversation. I had a question.

I think Congressman Ellison mentioned some of the early technological contributions that the Muslim World gave to humanity, and I think that more recently a lot of the policy discussions are talking about policies in the Middle East or in Africa and other places in the Islamic World, that those populations need to borrow from the United States. I had a question with your panel about what policies do you think exist within the Islamic World could be of benefit to the American World?

I know one of the amazing things that I saw over in a Muslim country was the amount of empathy and respect for the elders. I once had a funny occasion where I was standing outside of a hospital, and I saw everybody lining up outside

of this hospital. I thought that they were all going to give blood and get money. I never knew that in fact the people were lining up because it was the day and time for visitation. Whereas here in the United States, people line up like that to go to a night club, well, there they were lining up to visit not only their family members but also their neighbors.

Some of those things I wanted to find out whether the Congressman or any of you, all particularly the Ambassador, has in terms of suggestions that this country might gain by borrowing in terms of policy from the Muslim World.

MR. ELLISON: Well, I actually would rather hear from our esteemed guests than myself on this one, but I think it is a great question. Is it all one way? I mean does the Muslim World have everything to learn from the West or is there some interchange that we can do?

I agree with you, Talib. In my brief travels in the Middle East, and they have been brief, like one time, I was very positively impressed by social interaction, how people seem to care for each other, how hospitable people are, how people who are even pressed to the wall economically were willing to share. Now, that just be the people who I encountered, but I don't think so.

I do think that we have got to think in terms of an exchange. We have got to think in terms of what the Muslim World has to offer. Of course, we know here in America the Muslim World has offered a whole lot of nurses and doctors and high tech professionals and things like that just in terms of immigration. But

from a cultural standpoint, I think it is also very important to raise that question and to actually think about that.

So thank you for raising the question. I wish I had a more definitive answer for you, but that is my experience.

AMB. AHMED: Yes, Kareem, I do want to respond to your question, a very important question.

I would say that in spite of all the problems, and you are right. Now the Muslim World is going through a period of some turmoil. We found on the journey that Muslims were so incredibly hospitable. This was amazing throughout the Middle East, the Arab World, South Asia, Far East Asia, wherever we went, people wanted to give us dinner, lunch. They may not have agreed with what we were saying.

Sometimes when I was asked to speak, I would give examples of my Jewish friends, my Christian friends. This was probably the first time they were hearing the chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, Sir Jonathan Sacks, who I admire immensely, being quoted to Muslim audiences. Yet, with great respect, they would listen. I would introduce my American team. They would respond to them, and they would insist on showing us that same classic hospitality.

In Pakistan, of course, at one point, at a high point I would say, we were driven from the airport. We were flying from Islamabad to Delhi, and we literally an hour and a half or so. The former prime minister of Pakistan said, you must

have lunch with me at the chief minister's residence.

My team started getting very nervous. In fact, Hadia said, if I remember. Hadia said, I am not even going to risk this because you just can't make it physically. She was right. You can't come from the airport, to the chief minister's residence, have lunch, come back, take your international flight. Of course, I shouldn't be mentioning but young Frankie Martin had lost his ticket.

Frankie, you will now want to tell how you got on that plane without a ticket. So Pakistanis are capable of being very effective when they want to be.

What I want to point out is that here we are en route to Delhi, an international flight, and the chief minister's protocol officers are waiting for us to put us in cars with police escorts to take us straight through the traffic of Lahore. We have a grand lunch in a room with these Mogul paintings around us, a grand lunch, one to one. You can imagine these young American students. Hailey has the prime minister on her right, chief minister on her left. This is where they were sitting, two hours, just chatting with them.

I was getting nervous about the flight. I said, Prime Minister, what do you think?

He said, no, no, that plane can't take off. It can't just take off. Forget it.

Hadia would be saying this couldn't happen in America.

Then once we left, the prime minister gave each member of the team a carpet as a gesture of that hospitality of Pakistanis.



Once again, Kareem, this is important, the point I made, that you are dealing with human beings. Those little things made a tremendous impact on the team, that we are encountering ordinary human beings. We may be different to them. We may not agree with them in terms of their politics. We may have some of our own views, but ultimately we are all sharing this planet. That comes through in the sense of what we saw in the Muslim World, the vitality, the hospitality, the sense of engagement.

MR. GRAND: Steve, you wanted to comment.

MR. COHEN: Let me enter if not a dissenting at least an alternative explanation because I think there is some confusion in terminology.

Akbar, you made your trip to the Islamic World, a term which I still don't understand but countries which happen to be Muslim or most of the population Muslim. But I think had you gone to, say, the Latin American World or the Indian World or the Chinese World, essentially a peasant society or traditional society, you would have gotten much of the same response. So I think you have to distinguish going between Islam or Muslims and a modern or traditional society.

Now what most Islamic societies have are very strong family units, tribal units, very strong cultural units. What we have in America is very powerful support for the individual. There is a real clash between American individualism, which is built into our Constitution deeply and into our way of life, and a

traditional way of organizing the society where the group has rights. Here, groups have rights, but individuals have more powerful rights.

I think that is one of the fundamental clashes between America and the so-called Islamic World but also between America and traditional societies everywhere. Traditional societies can't figure out how to deal with a country which allows so much individual expression and individual freedom. They think it is lascivious. It is extreme. It is unbridled individualism. I do too at times. Clearly, obviously, we go over the line.

We look at traditional societies and say, you have conformity. You have group think. Individuals don't have freedom to do this or to do that. In a sense, that is a deep cultural debate not necessarily between America and Islam but between America and traditional societies. When individuals of other societies come here, non-Muslims societies come here, they have the same problem that Muslims do.

AMB. AHMED: Yes, I want to respond to Steve.

Steve, you are absolutely right. In fact, using words like Islam and the West is something that makes me very uncomfortable, and I have said this in the beginning, in the introduction, that for lack of a better alternative I am using these words. It really is meaningless almost when you say the world of Islam or journey into Islam, but sometimes it is just a catch phrase. It is a catch-all. It is an expression of something that you want to convey, and you hope the reader will

pick up.

But your point about other traditional societies responding in certain ways is absolutely correct, and you are absolutely correct. When we went to India, for example, we were with Hindus, with Sikhs who are not Muslim, and their hospitality and their warmth was almost, if not, better than many of our Muslim hosts because that is traditional culture.

We were received at the airport in Delhi inside the immigration, right inside by Thedi Singh's mother, one of my former students from American University who Dean Goodman knows very well. Thedi Singh had become our research assistant in India so we he was with us throughout the trip, and his mother looked after us again like family. We were with them. She took the girls shopping from time to time and accompanied us to questionnaires, to campuses, arranged for our trips. The family then, I think the last night gave us a very warm sendoff at home by giving us traditional Indian food in their own home.

Yes, Steve, you are absolutely right. Perhaps we have less time in these modern post-industrial societies. Perhaps the social contract changes completely. But we really saw a side of the world which I certainly personally value a great deal and respect.

MR. GRAND: Maybe as an example of that because we are running out of time, I am not going to be able to show our audience the hospitality I would like to. We have just a few moments left. What I would like to do is there are a few

people who have had their hands up for a while, so maybe if we could take three questions and then give it back to the panel just to finish up. One is this gentleman that is right here.

QUESTIONER: My name is Frank Dowel (ph). I am from George Washington University. I am an educator, an international educator. I just finished many years of work in the Middle East on Middle Eastern educational systems.

I think the crux of the matter if we are moving into what the heart of this book seems to suggest, which is a cultural dialogue and the need for cultural dialogue, is the need also for educational reform. If I look at all the Middle Eastern educational systems as I did for seven years for UNICEF, I find basically a misfit between what Islamic tradition wants in education and what Muslims feel they need for the modernization aspect of change in the world. We seem to miss within Islamic education, certainly formal public education, that element which would bring understanding and help the dialogue that future generations need to enter into if we want this world, of course, to work a lot better or in a more harmonious kind of way.

What I am trying to suggest is are Arabs and are Islamic countries ready for a real educational reform and for a radical look at educational systems or is this something that nobody really wants to touch?

I think the heart of the future of all of this is how children learn, what they

learn and how they learn to understand the differences that we are talking about. For instance, nowhere in Islamic education that I am know, and I have been to schools in 22 Arab and non-Arab countries, do I see an attempt to teach about another religion other Islam if Islam is taught at all.

AMB. AHMED: Thank you for your question.

QUESTIONER: That being said, I would also like to say that we don't do that here in the U.S. either because we don't teach religions in schools. But comparative religion from an historical perspective might help us in this whole path that we are going to be treading in the future. Thank you.

AMB. AHMED: The gentleman right behind him.

QUESTIONER: My name Ali Abzakuk (ph), and I would like to ask Professor Ahmed.

When you were asking the people about their role models in the modern ones, not the historic ones, what kind of an eye opener did you discover, especially in that some of them do live in oppressive regimes and democracy and freedom of expression is not that prevalent in many of these countries?

AMB. AHMED: Then there was a woman with her hand up right there. I apologize to the others.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

First, Professor Ahmed, I was a student, as you know. I actually have a three-part combination question. Even if you don't get to answer it, I need you to

think about this because of the work that I am currently doing.

First of all, the Congressman and Professor Ahmed both mentioned the difficulty with language. If the Brookings Institution is not already addressing it, I would suggest that we desperately, desperately need a lexicon of how words should be used, how they are interpreted in the Muslim World and a way forward for our State Department and our military so that we have a clear, unified understanding.

The second is for Cohen Dr. Ahmed both and the Congressman regarding AFRICOM. It is a way forward. It is currently under creation. I am wondering what your involvement is and if you are not involved, you should be because the approach is non-kinetic.

Then a follow-on for you, Congressman, is I want to know what the support is for reappropriation of money away from kinetic solutions into security cooperation and programs like humanitarian ODACA (ph), that type of stuff.

Thank you very much.

MR. GRAND: Professor Ahmed, do you want to start us?

AMB. AHMED: Yes, again, very briefly because I know, Steve, being a hospitable host, you want to give everyone some tea and drinks and things.

Yes, Frank, there is, of course, the debate about Islam. It isn't that the Muslims are fast asleep. If you read the book, we have some very detailed interviews about education because education, as Steve pointed out, is at the core

of the Islamic vision.

Here is the great paradox. Every Muslim is aware how important *ilim* or knowledge is in Islam. The saying of the Prophet that the ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr is so significant that it could change the course of Muslim history today if Muslims practiced it, if the West understood that this is what Muslims need to be reminded about, not throwing bombs on them but reminding them what Islam wants for itself.

We have a very detailed interview with President Musharraf on reform of the madrassahs, which is really an eye-opener. His dilemma, and I think it is a genuine dilemma, is this: He said that, look, I am under pressure from the Americans. The Americans just won't understand what a madrassah is. To them, it is a nursery for terrorists. So they say close them, close them.

If I close the madrassahs, I will have millions of young boys out on the streets and in the hills, in the mountains, and most of them will go off wandering into different directions. Some of them may end up being violent, defeating the purpose of why you are closing them in the first place. So he said, I am trying to reform them.

Now, whether he has time, whether he can do it is a separate issue, but this is what he is concerned with as are Muslims throughout the Muslim World because what Muslim parents want above all is normal education for their children. It is a Qur'anic duty. You must understand. It is not just a civic duty.

For a Muslim to educate their children is a Qur'anic duty, and they are aware that their societies in the present condition are not allowing them to fulfill that particular duty.

The awkward question, the second question, I want to refer to my assistant, Jonathan Hayden, who has visited Indonesia to a campus, to an Islamic university where we came across from very interesting responses that he elicited from the respondents where he asked these young, mainly girls, who incidentally mobbed him later on and asked him if he is married or not because he is a handsome young man from Alabama. They asked him questions about whether he is married.

He asked them, who do you look up to as a role model? What surprised him and surprised us was the fact that Osama bin Laden now reemerged. Please note, this is Jakarta, not the passions of the Middle East. This is thousands of miles away from the Middle East, and Osama has reemerged in Indonesia. Indonesia is traditionally very much dominated by a more pacifist, a more mystic, a more scholarly kind of Islam. Islam was brought to Indonesia not by warriors but by scholars and mystics.

So the impression we got was that again the percentage was quite a substantial number. I don't know. What was it, Jonathan, 40, 50, 60 percent?

MR. HAYDEN: Yes, 60 percent.

AMB. AHMED: Sixty percent of the students actually said Osama bin



Laden was number one as their role model. We felt that here is a sleeping giant, the largest Muslim nation on Earth, and it is stirring, and we need to be aware of this.

Lisa asked two or three interesting questions about the need to redefine things, the lexicon. I completely agree that we really need to come to terms with this because it will not do for the Nation's Capital, the greatest power on Earth, the superpower of the Earth, to be so sloppy in terms of defining one of the world's great religion and a religion with which the United States has to simply as an imperative to be interacting with. It just won't do to be calling them Islamofascism or some new term that has been invented by some analyst sitting in some little office in some think tank.

MR. GRAND: Not this one.

AMB. AHMED: Apologies, that wasn't a Freudian intention.

As far as my being invited to join this very distinguished group of people, Lisa, I have to say with great regret so far I haven't. I am not sure about Steve. He is, of course, one of the 500 most influential people. I am not. So I am sure that he may have been invited.

With that, Steve, let me hand it back to you.

MR. GRAND: Congressman Ellison, on the question of redirecting some funds towards more humanitarian and cultural missions, anything you want to say on that?

MR. ELLISON: Well, you know what, it seems like politicians are always a little slow on the draw, but I tell you that it is something that I am absolutely for and am speaking up for on a regular and consistent basis. I think that you are going to find more and more legislators open to the conversation. But, of course, we need the help of institutions like Brookings to help these folks see that what we really need is to put more energy into cooperation, dialogue, language, things like that.

Again, I think it definitely has some good prospects. I think if you look at this last DoD appropriation and you look at the ones that are coming up this summer, I would bet that we are still doing things the way we were doing them years ago, and we are relying on people like yourself to help turn us around.

MR. GRAND: So a great engagement with the Muslim World.

MR. ELLISON: Yes, yes.

MR. GRAND: If we can coin a phrase.

MR. ELLISON: A great engagement but also American citizens engaging their Congress, saying, look, pulling together missile systems that are designed to fight the Soviets is not what we need in the modern era. We need a new kind of way of doing business. Now, you are talking jobs. Now, you are talking communities. Now, you are talking military bases and everything.

It is not easy. Just to make that last point, the reason that this big ocean liner is hard to turn is that the old way of doing things is deeply integrated into

our economy and communities, some of whom depend upon this weapons manufacturer to make that Soviet-style defense system. But we have got to make the change. I think our security depends upon it and our relationship with the rest of the world.

MR. GRAND: Ambassador Mekouar, any final remarks?

AMB. MEKOUAR: Just one remark, I have sent to Morocco, religious people, American religious people from the Christian community, evangelicals. They were quite reluctant in the beginning -- I am talking about a few years ago -- in going to the Muslim World. They went there, and they came back, and they said, those are the real Christians.

I had some Muslim scholars coming here. They met with Christians, and they came to me, and they told me, those are the real Muslims.

MR. GRAND: Steve?

MR. COHEN: I like the idea of a lexicon. I am involved in a National Academy of Science project which is translating Chinese and American terms on nuclear war. I think an Arabic or Urdu language web-based reference where scholars get together and agree on the one or multiple definitions of a particular in either language would be a very useful thing to have. Obviously, Brookings would be delighted if you would give us the money.

As for the Congressman's remark about reprogramming things, actually, after the Cold War, there were some minor efforts made. I know one of my sons

got a Ph.D. basically studying foreign languages and is now an Islamist scholar at an American university. So a little bit was done but not nearly enough.

The liner moved one degree over, but it really has to have a major, major change of course, and I don't think we have that kind of expertise. When you look at the State Department and other American institutions that deal with foreign policy, they really have a shortage of highly trained people.

MR. GRAND: Great. Thank you, Steve.

In closing, I would like to ask four people to stand up, and those are the young researchers who accompanied Ambassador Ahmed on his trip because I think everyone is curious.

(Applause)

MR. GRAND: Hadia Mubarek, Hailey Wodt, Frankie Martin, and Jonathan Hayden who accompanied on part of the trip.

AMB. AHMED: The best ambassadors for America, well done.

MR. GRAND: On behalf of the Brookings Institution, let me thank the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and American University for their partnership in this important endeavor.

I would like to thank Ambassador Akbar Ahmed for his leadership on this important project and the product that came out of it, this important book which is available outside on sale for those who are interested.

Thank you to Congressman Keith Ellison for joining us today, Ambassador

Mekouar for joining us today and Steve Cohen as well.

Thank you to all of you for coming out this afternoon to hear our panel.

(Applause)

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