Harry Kreisler: Welcome to a "Conversation With History." I'm Harry Kreisler of the Institute of International Studies. Our guest today is Pamela Constable who is a foreign correspondent for The Washington Post. Her book is Fragments of Grace. Pamela, welcome back to Berkeley.

Pamela Constable: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

HK: You're a rare breed, the breed we call foreign correspondents. What is distinctive about that vocation?

PC: I would say to be a foreign correspondent you have to pretty tough and intrepid. You have to be willing to go lots of difficult places very quickly, sometimes not knowing enough, you have to be willing to go for a long time without a hot shower or a good meal, you have to have lots of initiative and lots of willingness to plunge yourself into something new, new cultures, new religions, new societies, places where you may not know anyone at all, and do your best, sort of bring them alive to readers back home. You have to be sort of a salesperson all the time, constantly projecting yourself into new worlds and trying to be like a – have many antenna, at the same time, and just grasp as much as you can. It's a true multitasking profession, I would say.

HK: What is the best way to prepare for a particular assignment? Do you take a load of books in your backpack, assuming you've not been there before?

PC: Absolutely. Books, articles, of course more and more you go on the internet and find out everything you can. Sometimes you don't have the opportunity, sometimes you have a situation that happens so fast that you really literally don't have time to find out much in advance. Other times, if you know you're going with a few weeks to spare, you can actually learn quite a lot in that time. So, it really depends on the circumstance. But really, the essence of being a foreign correspondent is that even if you have no preparation at all for that particular circumstance, you have a broader kind of preparation with dealing with new circumstances that enables you to say, "Okay, what do I do when I land in this brand new place with mayhem breaking loose?" You know, you have instincts that you've developed about what's the best thing to do.

HK: And then once you're there, I guess you must have an eye and an ear for the subtlety and complexity of what's going on, because as an American journalist you're based in Washington, when you are based in Washington, and are flying abroad. You come with preconceptions that may be wrong, that is, policy preconceptions that you're hearing in Washington.

PC: Yes. I would say that one thing that's very important is that you have to rely on those around you. When you land somewhere, especially if it's a place where you don't speak the language, hopefully you'll be getting help from people who are there. Often it's other journalists. You can obviously hire people to help you with language but you sort of develop a cohort group of people, people you interview as sources, local academics, diplomats, varieties of people who are in the places that know a lot more than you do and can help you get started. But really, when you're out in the field, and you're in villages and towns, and small places, and you don't know who is who and what is what, you really have to rely a lot on the people who are helping you interpret, being your eyes and ears, and really helping you to interpret things like what's happening in a crowd around you, what're the people saying, what's the mood. It's not just, "Hello, how are you?, my name is so-and-so," but you're really trying to get a sense of something, and that is very difficult to do sometimes.

HK: Has the post 9/11 world created an environment which is more dangerous for a foreign correspondent, or was the level of danger always very high?

PC: I would say that it's increased it greatly, and it's also changed it greatly. One of the ways it's changed it, obviously for journalists as well as soldiers and others, is become there're so many bombings now. Whether it's a roadside device or a suicide bombing in places like Iraq or Afghanistan, you never know where the danger is going to occur next or how, and it's not aimed at you, it's just that you happen to make the wrong turn, or you happen to be in one place instead of another. So, it's this random kind of violence, true terrorist violence in which civilian safety is of no concern, that has really changed the nature – I mean, before – I remember being in riots in third world countries. It's a different kind of fear or problem that's created, but I would say that in the past several years this problem of bombings has just exponentially increased the danger for everybody who's out there, including journalists.

HK: What was your reaction to the case of Danny Pearl? Because this was a case where a reporter was actually targeted as somebody to be killed.

PC: I would say that that was a very unusual situation because it was the opposite of a random act. As you said, it was something that grew out of a relationship, actually over the internet, that he thought he had with a source or somebody who was going to help him get to a source, and he thought that he'd sort of arranged something that he thought was going to happen a certain way. Well, in fact, it was a setup for something that was going to happen a completely different way, which tragically ended in his death. So, I don't think of that as a typical circumstance at all. I think of it as a cautionary tale but also one that is not representative of the usual kind of situation that people get into, in those countries.

HK: And so, in that particular case there was a breakdown in the network, basically, of people you learn to relate to…?

PC: I think that's right. From what I recall, there were certain people that were going to take him someplace, and they took him someplace else, or they said at the last minute, "So-and-so can't come and we're going to meet somebody else." So, there were certain moments in that trail of events in which things kept changing, and he didn't, or couldn't, back off or pull out. But he, in the end, was alone with people he didn't know at all.

HK: It sounds to me, as you describe this work, that courage is really important. Is that the word I want to use, and if so, where did you acquire that? Did you just acquire it over time? Do you become such a professional that you don't think in those terms, that it's really courage, it's really just doing the job?

PC: I don't think of myself as being especially courageous. I think that, for example, if you're a camera person and you have a video camera and you've got to be right in the middle of where people are shooting each other, that takes enormous courage. If you're a writer, you're able to be a bit more on the fringes of where bad things are happening, literally. You can be on the edge of a crowd instead of the middle, you can be on the top of a building looking down instead of underneath, you can absent yourself slightly from the worst potential danger, except again, in a situation of bombings. What you do need though, and this is something I think I do have, is just the ability to withstand hardship. I mean, you get a lot of hardship in this kind of work, but that's very different than danger. Hardship is simply just doing without, or making do, or just being miserable sometimes, but hat goes with the territory and it's something you just, as you say, learn to live with.

HK: You mention writing, and because as you're doing all that you've already described, then you have to put it down on paper. So, talk a little about that, because students, for example, would think of writing – well, you go to your room and you're up late and night, and so on, but you're actually maybe on a battlefield, or someplace that's very dangerous, and you have to take these impressions that you gather, your sense of the complexity, and put it down on paper.

PC: Although parenthetically, I think the last time I actually wrote a story on paper was during the earthquake in Aminabad, in India, in I guess it was 2000 or 2001, when there was no power, no electricity in the entire city, and I actually wrote my story on a pad of paper with a candle and dictated it over a phone which had very little power left in it. I remember that. I still have the piece of paper. You know, it's years of training, it's having been in many, many circumstances that were complicated, and fluid, and evolving, and taking copious notes, and then the moment comes when you are back in your hotel room, or in an office, or someplace, and then you get that moment that is sort of the true essence of your profession, which is, okay, I have all this stuff out there, what do I do with it. Now I would say that any good journalist knows a lead when he or she sees it, and so you often have the lead in your mind already, sort of mentally forming as you're seeing events around

you. When once you've got your lead, whether it's an anecdote, or a phrase, or something that's really become gripping and compelling to you during that day or period of time, then you start to mentally organize the themes that you want to organize the story around. It depends, of course – if it's a daily story, you just sit down and write, you just do it pyramid style, essentially. But if it's a feature, if you have a few days, if it's a little bit longer and more elaborate, it's a different mental process because you're thinking in terms of more cyclical – sort of here's the beginning of the story, and then it's going to broaden, and then it's going to come and have a tail. So, it's just something you learn to do over the years.

HK: Now you've just given us a feel for what foreign correspondents do, and how important they are, but the fact of the matter is, and you've written about this, the great newspapers are going down a different road, abolishing their foreign bureaus. Talk a little about that and what the consequences of that will be.

PC: Yeah, it's something that – it's unfortunate and it's worrisome, and I've worked overseas for much of my career – right now, I'm again based in Washington, working on other subjects, but I still travel a great deal, and I really feel as if, as you said in the very beginning, we are sort of a different breed, and I worry that the ability to be out there, to immerse ourselves in foreign situations and cultures and bring them alive to our readers, and make our readers or viewers care about them – it takes more than brief visits, it takes more than a quick hit. You really need to devote the time and the resources to being in a place, in order to cover it, really, with perception, with depth, with comprehensiveness. And as newspapers, and as well, magazines and others, begin to cut back their foreign coverage or their traditional style of foreign coverage, which is to have people based in different regions and stay there for periods of years, they're trying to find ways to substitute, Whether it's with stringers, or part-time people, or moving people around, I think everyone's trying to find ways to do the best journalism they can under circumstances in which there are fewer readers every day, for a variety of reasons we can discuss if you want to, in which our entire medium is changing so quickly, and we're all trying to adjust. Now my own newspaper, The Washington Post, has a very strong commitment to foreign coverage and to maintaining its foreign coverage, but The Post is also changing its way of doing foreign coverage, and it's beginning to do things like have roving correspondents more, people that don't necessarily have a big, fancy office in Paris, or a big, fancy office in Cairo, but instead they're more mobile, and they're less expensive. But you know, now that we have the internet, we're able to be more mobile now, we don't have to rely as much on clerks, and people who're going to clip the papers for us back in our bureaus. I don't think we need bureaus per se as much. We need more mobility, we need more ability to be much more flexible. Now this means though that foreign corresponcing [sic], or C), even more than ever is going to become something that you can't do with a family, and that's another problem because except for covering a war in which no one expects a family to be with you, it used to be that you could be in, let's say, New Delhi for five years with your family, or you could be in Buenos Aires for five years with your family. I don't think that is going to be the case anymore, even for the really big newspapers, and others. I think that's changing.

HK: But in the case where, let's say hypothetically The Post has a bureau in New Delhi, basically that correspondent immerses himself there, there's a semi-permanency to his being there, and then he goes out to places like Afghanistan or Pakistan. And you've already said that a foreign correspondent goes into a place and gets a feel for a place, but you're losing an element there, although it may be expensive, something is getting lost.

PC: Yes. I mean, that's what really worries me, and that's why I wrote that essay in The Post last year, because I feel as if – even someone like me realizes how little I know about the world, even in a place that I have been for five years. In fact, the longer you spend in a country, the more you realize you're just really getting at the tip of the iceberg, just peeling away those superficial layers. If I even feel that way, just think how much more difficult it would be for someone who only can be in a place for a few days at a time and only for a couple of visits in a year, and very often only during a crisis when nobody's going to have the time to sit around and tell you about the history of that tribe, or that village, or whatever it is. So, I worry that because of the pressures on our profession to cut costs, to do things more quickly and more cheaply all the time, that we will inevitably, in spite of our best efforts, lose that special perspective and that special niche that we occupy between the instant news and the scholarly tome, which is where I like to think that journalism has its value.

HK: Now this is happening and I would imagine that it's the bottom line, but it strikes me as being a reflection of, on the one hand, the decline of American influence, in a way, in the sense that we're able to write off the knowledge we need to essentially think about the world as we're involved in the world. And it also then plays in, because of all the great powers, the United States must be the most provincial, basically, and most in need of having this sense of complexity and nuance that the foreign correspondent is bringing.

PC: Well, especially when we have thousands and thousands of troops abroad fighting, I would say more than ever do we need to have the best understanding we possibly can of the places that they are, the forces at play there, and the influence, and the circumstances, and the reasons that we're fighting in those countries. And then the other thing, of course, is as the world becomes more globally interconnected, virtually and also financially, it behooves us, again, more than ever to understand what's going on. If a Chinese bank is going to buy the Brooklyn Bridge tomorrow, I think we really need to know a lot more about China.

HK: Now let me be the devil's advocate and say here, well, you're overstating the importance of this role and when you look at all the new technologies, the new media that are available, blogs, people who are blogging from Pakistan, or from Iraq, that this is just an inevitable transition.

PC: I think that in theory it could be the wave of the future in the sense of just a new way of getting information out, and it's inevitable that someday there will no actual newspapers with paper, and it's inevitable that eventually everything we are doing will be via electronic means. But what worries me is the content, and the problem with blogs, and things like blogs, is that they tend to be either highly emotional or highly political. They tend to be impulsive expressions of strong feeling or strong

views, which is fine, and it's very democratic, and in many cases, as others have been writing recently, it's a very healthy form – you know, a democratic kind of challenge to powers that be and conventional wisdom of many kinds, but it's not a substitute for reasoned perspective. It's not a substitute for sitting back and trying to take a calmer look at things and what they really mean. It's not a substitute for fact checking. And the problem with a strong opinion or feeling is that once it's out, it's very hard to get it back, and that worries me a great deal. I think there's nothing wrong with it per se, but I worry that just in terms of the amount of time and space that people have to spend learning something, I worry that that's going to become increasingly a substitute for what I would like to have out there that people are consuming.

HK: As a reporter you probably are sensitized to the way the new technology has changed the nature of the public discourse. Is it debasing the public discourse or is it elevating it by providing more information?

PC: I think it's a mixed picture. I think maybe I would say it slightly differently. It's widening access to all kinds of information. Many, many more people are involved in the exchange of information through the internet, and through other means, and so more ideas are getting out there, more opinions are getting out there. In some ways it's healthier, it's a healthier and more immediate exchange. But on the other hand, it's another kind of narrowing. If you are narrowing your own choices of information you seek to Blog X that's written by a friend of yours, or Blog Y that's written by a group that you belong to, or this internet site that is from an organization that reflects what you already think, or your views, then where are you going to go for that wonderful, random, serendipitous kind of knowledge that you only get by accident, that you only get by being open to unexpected information that you get in magazines and newspapers, and other places. If you narrow yourself, because you're so bombarded, so barraged, with information, inevitably people narrow themselves to their favorites, their pre-selected things they like to know about, or that they already agree with, and they, in some ways, get less access to contradictory views, or other ways of looking at things. I think it's a mixed picture.

HK: Let's talk now about Pakistan and Afghanistan, which are places you know well, and talk about – first of all, explain to us how many times you've been there and how you've developed a feel for the area over the years.

PC: I first went to South Asia and Afghanistan about ten years ago, and I lived in the region for a number of years full-time, and then about two years ago moved back to Washington, but I still visit the region regularly and I still write about, and from, that region often. So, it's been a number of years, so again, I'd never say that I have a great depth of knowledge but I've certainly spent a lot of time focused on those countries.

HK: There're a number of forces that are changing that region, in addition to terrorism, and I know your work, and I know your book, and you have a remarkable capacity to give us a feel through your articles of a place. So, what I would like to do with you now is to talk about big issues, but then I

want you to tell me some stories that you've written recently about – let's talk about the media and the way it's changing a place, for example, like Pakistan.

PC: That's very interesting. I would say that the media is becoming extremely important in Pakistan, and this is really just in the past several years. It's the advent of private television stations in Pakistan that have really made a huge difference, and in some ways almost forced democracy to come back. There was, for a long time – there've always been newspapers that have been somewhat independent, and columnists that have been independent, but that was really for a small elite. It's a country in which many people cannot read, or afford to buy a newspaper, or even watch a television, so it was really a tiny elite that had access to the kind of news and opinion that we're accustomed to. But with the advent of private television, especially two or three stations, that began to – I shouldn't say imitate, but have the same kind of what we'd call political talk shows and discussion shows that we have here on Sunday mornings, that really opened up the society to all kinds of ideas and opinions. It really was quite a watershed, and then what happened was last November, when the military led government tried to shut down those media because it realized that they were really having such an incredible impact on public opinion, and some of the most famous talk shows literally took their shows to the streets, and they set up their studios like this, or their sets, on the streets. They even had the water glasses, and little bouquets of flowers, and they had the microphones, and they had all the politicians sitting around, right in the middle of a dirt street. And it was fabulous. Of course, it wasn't seen by millions of people but symbolically it was really important, and I think the government realized very quickly that it could no longer achieve the kind of control that it had previously, because you really couldn't stop this new force in the society.

HK: And does this then interface with events – and what I have in mind here is the revolt of the lawyers, when the judge was removed. For us, seeing these lawyers marching in the street with their suits – was the television on at that time, so people in the country could see it? It obviously had an impact abroad, but was it having an impact there, even though people might not have been at the demonstrations?

PC: Yes, although in some cases the television stations, for periods, were either being shut down or they were being prohibited from showing certain things on the air. But yes, I mean, the news was getting out, also, by other means, by radio, by other communication. We are essentially talking about a phenomenon that was in the cities, I mean, they were not lawyers in villages doing their activities. So, it was essentially that the political actors and the establishment, so to speak, became involved, what they called the civil society there – excuse me, not just the lawyers but the civil society and the professional class, and the political class, that essentially had, in the past, either stayed out of politics or had been involved with one party or another, but this was something completely new, to see people out there in the streets, as you say, the men in the black suits having tear gas canisters thrown at them. It was quite a jolt, I think, to the system there, and it also made a huge difference.

HK: Another issue that is very important for both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the region generally, is the extent to which modernization is elevating the status of women, on the one hand, but on the other hand, the mobilization of religious Islamic fundamentalism, on the other, wants to put women back in their places. Does a story come to mind that you've done that sort of captures a sense of that, or gives us a feel for that conflict and how things are changing, and how they're not changing?

PC: It's a very delicate issue and a very complicated issue, and I would say that it's having different ramifications in each country. I mean, a place like Turkey is having its own battles with that issue, and even in France, for example, where you had the head scarf issue. I would say – I mean, in Afghanistan there are a number of examples that come to mind. One was the effort to open a women's gym, which had never happened before, and that was very controversial. But the way that it's played out most publicly in Afghanistan has been, again, on television, new, private television channels, and even state television, showing, for example, women as newscasters and women as entertainment figures, and hosts or hostesses on shows, and the issue of A) should they be there at all, B) what should they wear, how much should they cover their heads or their bodies. And so, there's been a lot of controversy and there's been a lot of – I mean, I would say it's a clash of civilization happening within the society in which you have the older, traditional, and religious leaders saying, "This is not acceptable, this is not our culture, it's wrong," and you have a younger generation that reads the internet and watches TV, and is more familiar with international ways of doing things, saying, "No, no, no, we have to change, we have to catch up with the world." So, you're seeing this clash happening over and over in Afghanistan, and it's certainly not resolved, it's going to continue.

HK: And a third item that I thought we might touch on, and I read one of your stories on it, and that is the way, say for example, in Afghanistan people are being affected by these wars, by the destabilization of the situation, having to move from one place to another, the loss of family members in a terrorist attack, and so on, and the efforts of non-government organizations to provide aide. I mean, there must be a really terrible human cost that we're not realizing when we see just aggregate figures, and so on.

PC: I would say displacement and flight have been facts of life in that area now for a long time because there's been so much conflict. It's not a pleasant phenomenon but it's not a new one. The aspect that worries me even more than that is what I call the breakdown in the social compact, the breakdown of ways of life, the breakdown of relations among neighbors, for example. In the neighborhoods, for example, in Baghdad that once had Sunni, and Shia, and Christians, and all kinds of people, and now that's gone completely. Now that sense of civic commonality is gone and it's being replaced more and more by real serious sectarian divisions in which people don't dare interact, even, anymore. In Afghanistan to a lesser extent but the same thing happened. There was a long period of time in which there was a real danger of terrible ethnic strife and a lot of real brutality, especially during the civil war. Much of it was based on ethnicity, and fortunately in the past few years there's been a calming down of that issue and essentially the government has tried to

sort of buy off different groups to get them to, more or less, be inside the tent rather than outside the tent. But Afghanistan, too, has also lost a lot of what you call – I mean, sort of the handshake culture, the sense of you have relationships built on trust, whether it's the family, or the group, or the village, or the tribe, or the region. A lot of that is gone, and it's very sad to see because what happens when a society that was built on relationships, when that vanishes, and when you have weak government, and when you have lots of corruption and influence of things like drug trafficking, and then you have insurgents, you have all these areas in which there's really no one in control. And so, who fills the void? It's always the bad guys. So, when the fabric of society breaks down because of conflict, because of displacement, because of all these different reasons, then I really worry.

HK: And it strikes me that that is a perfect example of what you were saying earlier, that this is the kind of thing that a foreign correspondent could capture, that it's a big picture item that you might lose a sense of unless you wait for an academic to write a book in ten years and say that this has happened.

PC: I think that's true, and I have to say again how little I know, but for example, I've got friends in Pakistan who've been covering these issues for many, many years and they know which sub-tribe has a relationship with other sub-tribes, and if there's a battle what it means, and they're not academics, these are not people hiding in ivory towers, but they're just people who've been there observing things for a long time. It's really important to know who is related to whom in societies and to understand why things happen, and again, I always rely on people like that. I don't just make guesses. I try very hard to keep up with people who really do know, but I just worry that, as you were saying in one of your questions a few minutes ago – I don't think we should settle for superficiality. Even if we're busy with our lives and we don't have really a lot of time to devote to learning about the world, we need to get quality information. We need to get something, some window into what's happening, and hopefully it'll be compelling enough that we'll want to take an interest and we'll have more empathy. And I just worry that – you know, I don't watch television news very much but whenever I do , I feel like I'm being bombarded with things that don't mean very much, and I get sort of bewildered and confused, and I feel like I'm going from one talking head to the next, and it doesn't make me think, and I don't feel like I've learned. Now it's probably just because I'm old and I'm used to other ways of getting my information [laughs]…

HK: No, I don't think that's what it is. I watch the news, so I can validate what you just said. Okay, so let's talk, first, a little bit about Afghanistan. How have things changed there, just big picture? You've gone back recently. Have we accomplished anything there?

PC: A lot has been accomplished. I would say a great deal has been accomplished. When I first went there, ten years ago, there wasn't a telephone in the whole country, there were very few children in school, you couldn't drive on any roads because they were so full of bomb craters. It was basically a destroyed country. Now it's a rebuilding country. It's still extremely poor but it's a rebuilding country. There are now schools all over the country, elementary schools – UNICEF, with lots of help from various countries, and including the United States and Japan, has built

hundreds of schools all over the country. Some of them are in tents still, but they're schools. Same with clinics. There're now clinics all over the country. A lot of them don't have tons of medicine but they're there. You have a functioning parliament, which is sort of a rogues' gallery of all sorts of people of all kinds, but it's there. The best thing about the Afghan parliament is that it exists, and it has lots of debates and has done lots of good and bad things. You have an elected government, an elected president – comes under a lot of criticism, it's a weak government, it doesn't reach into many of the provinces, but it's there. You have huge international presence of aid, diplomacy, military support. All those things are there. The sad part is that because the violent insurgency has made a comeback over the past two years there's been a lot of slippage in those accomplishments, a lot of – for example, you were asking about women. There's a huge accomplishment in getting girls' schools opened and getting girls access to education in Afghanistan. Well, a number of those schools have been attacked by the insurgents. And so, of course, people keep their daughters home. Especially across the south. where the Taliban insurgency has been very active, a lot of schools have closed. So, you see this the beginning of closing of the political space and the space for the kinds of accomplishments. A lot of the aid organizations have had to pull out of different places because of security problems. So, hopefully, that will not go on forever. If it does, then you're going to see serious backsliding, but I like to look at the positive side of things, so hopefully, in a year or two, if that insurgency is able to be contained, then hopefully the country can get back on that path of rebuilding that was going pretty well until about two years ago.

HK: Pakistan's recent election seems to have turned out better than one would have expected. The image of Pakistan has become the most dangerous place in the world, al-Qaeda occupying and emerging again in some of the territories, Musharraf holding on and really being increasingly incapable of governing, but the election went the other way. In what way, and why do you think that happened?

PC: It was a very impressive election. I was there, and many of my colleagues, and we went to many polling stations and we saw very little signs of difficulties. Everyone thought that there was going to be massive government fraud and that therefore there was going to be riots in the streets afterwards, and none of that happened, and the election went very smoothly. As you know, the so-called more secular parties did very well and the religious parties did not do very well, which is really an important point. It's really interesting – I've actually heard it said and it's interesting to think about – the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, which occurred not long before the election. I believe it was December 27th, something like that. The election was – I've forgotten – February 18th, or something – cast a pall over the country but also, I think, made everybody sit up and say, "Uh-oh, we're about to lose everything here." I think it really made the entire country want the elections to work. Now that's just something I think. There's no way to really know it, but it's a feeling that I had when I was there for the elections, that everyone was so shocked by this, whether they liked her or not. It was such a shocking event, and she was essentially the best known Pakistani in the west, and it really was a stunning blow. The abysmal showing of the Islamic parties in Pakistan was a very interesting development, and I think it's important to say what it meant and what it didn't mean. It definitely didn't mean that Pakistanis were rejecting their religion, far from it. Pakistanis are

Muslim. There are some Christians but it's a very small group. Benazir Bhutto, in her book which she wrote just before she died, said, "Islam is my religion." She speaks English, she went to Oxford, she went to Harvard – "I'm a Muslim and this is my religion. The problem is that its true values and principles have been hijacked by people who are evil and destructive. Let's bring it back to what it really ought to be." In the northwest, where the Muslim parties lost very badly, it seems that they lost, again, not because of their religion but because they were not able to govern well, because they were not able to deliver what people needed. So, I think it's really important to remember that this is a society that has certain beliefs, its people strongly hold those beliefs, but they still want good governance, they still want freedom, and they still want true representation in their leadership. They were tired of military rule and they were tired of things being the way they were, so they voted hopefully for change.

HK: And I gather that the coalition that has now been formed in this new government raises the possibility of representing different regions and different ethnic groups, and working on the issues that you just said, namely delivering services and delivering security.

PC: It seems to be at the lower house because the upper house is slightly different, but the lower house seems to be quite representative, and it seems to be that they're sort of building this in a way that, as you say, can be more democratic. Traditionally there's really been almost a stranglehold on politics by certain feudal families, and certain industrial families, and certain tribal leaders. I do think that now the fabric is becoming – the power is spreading out more widely. But you know, it's important – in spite of all his many flaws, this is one of the things that Musharraf also set out to try and do, was to spread power around, and to devolve power more to the grassroots. And many people made fun of this, and it wasn't that successful, but when he started – because I was there and I remember – when he started he had a list of ideas and they were good ideas, and that was one of them. The story that followed was one of frustrations and missteps, and listening to bad advice, and becoming too thin skinned and defensive, and all the things that happen when you have too much power for too long, but in the beginning, if you look back, that was one of his goals, and I think it was a good one.

HK: Now the new head of the military, General Kayani, seems to be signaling that he wants to go back to the barracks, although obviously the military will remain an important, a very important, institutional force that owns a lot of property and businesses. But from what I read, there is a recognition on his part that terrorism may be a bigger problem than India, in terms of the long-term strategic goals of his country.

PC: I think that's definitely true, and I think perhaps even more importantly, right now, is that every signal he has given is that he does not want the army involved in politics, and I think that's the key. And I think the key message of the election, aside from the issue of the Islamic parties, was that the populace did not want the army involved in politics, and I think he got that message very strongly, and I think, from everything I've read and heard about him, he epitomizes the professional soldier who really does want to get back to the traditional professional mission of the army. That's

number one. Number two is this whole issue of conventional worried about India nuclear, versus unconventional fighting terrorism, counterinsurgency, what do you do about the Islamic militants up in the hills, two very different kinds of challenges for Pakistan. And I think it's like any other – you know, it's like the Titanic. It's very hard to turn an institution that's been thinking one way for a very long time. Children are taught in school, in Pakistan, that India is this looming enemy over the horizon. The army has not been equipped an insurgency, the army has not been asking for, or getting, assistance to fight an insurgency, and yet it has this incredible issue of national pride and sovereignty, and not wanting foreign troops to come in. So, there is a kind of a conundrum there. It doesn't really have what it takes to fight the bad guys, mentally it's still changing from its idea of fighting the other guys, and it also doesn't want foreigners to come in and do the job for them. So, it's at a very critical juncture right now, a hopeful one but one that really hasn't been resolved.

HK: Now then there is the ISI, the intelligence services that in its institutional history was in bed with the terrorists at various times because they…

PC: As were we. [laughs]

HK: Well, right. Yes, we're going to get to the U.S. in a minute. Is that evolving, do you think, or is that just something that somebody within the country is going to have to clean up at some point?

PC: I would say that it's an evolving situation. We're talking about a military institution, and although it's often been described as a state within a state, or a rogue agency, it is, in fact, a military institution, it's part of a military institution. So, if the new military leaders in Pakistan are serious about what they say, I think that they are going to be much more – what's the word I'm looking for? I think they're going to keep the intelligence services out of politics, which is a very good thing, and hopefully use them much more in the way they need to be used, in terms of looking at the true enemies of peace and stability in the region. There are elements of the intelligence agencies that have sympathies toward the insurgency, but I think that the government, the state, and the institution realizes that number one, there've been a lot of attacks now on Pakistani institutions – there, in fact, was a suicide bombing outside an intelligence agency facility not long ago, there have been suicide bombings, and bombings, of other government military facilities, even the general headquarters, even in Lahore. So, I think that the writing is on the wall now, and I think it's very clear to everyone in Pakistan, and the leadership, that it's important to see who the enemy really is and to really focus on it.

HK: Let's talk about the U.S. role, because our footprint has been very heavy, it's often, as you've suggested, been on the wrong side. This goes back to our support for the Mujahideen and the use of Pakistan to facilitate the arming of the Mujahideen, and so on. How have we failed in moving Pakistan in the right direction, and in what ways have we been helpful? Is this a case where our role there has been mixed in its consequences?

PC: Yes. I would definitely say mixed. I think the intentions have been good. I think that what happened was that – you know, 9/11 was such a shock to the system, and required such swift reconfiguring of thinking about everything, that I think what happened in both Pakistan and Afghanistan was that the focus of the United States and the west became almost exclusively on stop the terrorism, go after al-Qaeda, go after Osama bin Laden, and I think what suffered in the balance, or the victim or the casualties of this single-mindedness – there were many casualties of it, one of which was that not enough attention was paid to the growing drug trafficking, which is a very corrosive and poisonous source in a poor society. And I think that – again, with good intentions a lot of things got ignored and a lot of other things were gotten away with, got under the radar screen, a lot of corruption, a lot of – in the case of Afghanistan, people getting jobs they shouldn't have gotten, deals made with bad guys that shouldn't have been made, lots of compromises being made that shouldn't have been made but were because there seemed to be bigger fish to fry. I'm being very simplistic here but I think everybody now recognizes that that was a huge problem.

HK: I guess what's going to be on the agenda for the United States is what does one do about the re-emergence of al-Qaeda in some of the territories that border Afghanistan and Pakistan. And there's a suggestion that because of this election, and because of the possibility of changing the political balance of power within these places, that the best position may be for us to back away and hope that political resolution in these places will lead to a diminishing of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. On the other hand, we're seeing in the presidential election, and recent actions by the administration, a need to target principals from al-Qaeda in these regions, which I guess is an affront to Pakistani sovereignty – it is and it should be. How do you see that working its way out? Because this is going to be the next challenge for how we respond when we get a new president.

PC: Well, I think you've described it very well, better than I can, but this is really the nerve center right now. I think the issue for Pakistan, and for that region, is can this sea change, this political sea change, work to the betterment of the situation, can it, in and of itself, be enough to reduce the influence of violent militant groups. The leadership in Pakistan today believes that by having a more democratic government that uses diplomacy and negotiation, and has more credibility with the public, that that will be the key to reducing the influence, and the fire power, and the destructiveness of these Islamic militant groups. I think that in the west there is concern that that's not going to be enough, and that these people are really beyond talking to, and that they really need to be eliminated one way or another. So, we're at a kind of loggerheads right now, we don't know where it's going to go. My best guess is that some combination of these various approaches – there has to be wheat from chaff. It's like President Karzai always says, in Afghanistan, "If you're a local homegrown Taliban who picked up a gun because all your buddies were or because you got conscripted or because you believe in Islam, you're welcome back, you're welcome home. Go to your village, we'll help you. If you're a bloodthirsty leader ideologue who's got blood on your hands and you're still in the mountains hiding out and being destructive, something has to happen." There can't just be, I think, one answer. I think there have to be many answers to the problem there. But you know, the Musharraf government did try to negotiate with these people and failed, but what the new leaders

are saying is, "Give us a chance. We have legitimacy, we have credibility that a military government can never have. Let us try." So, let's see.

HK: So, we're going to have to be very – we're going to have to have the subtlety and sense of complexity of the foreign correspondent in our policy makers as they navigate this dilemma in American foreign policy, which is to push for democratization, to see positive change through elections, but on the other hand…

PC: Respect what comes of it.

HK: Yeah, respect what comes of it, but also keep the powder dry, so to speak, but not be too quick to use the gun.

PC: Right. What the Pakistanis are asking now is, like I said, "Give us a chance and back off. Don't be so heavy handed, don't come in there pushing for us to do things we're not ready to do or we want to do in our own way." Pakistan's a country where there's a lot of love/hate for the United States, and I often say that in the old days, before they put a lot of barricades around it, the visa line outside the U.S. embassy in Islamabad was very, very, very long. But if you went down the line and talked to the people, you'd get an awful lot of very deep bitterness about the United States and its policies, or its believed policies, in the Middle East and towards Islam. So, both elements are very much there.

HK: Pamela, I want to thank you for taking the time to be with us today. Let me show your book again, which I think captures, in a very nice way, the work of being a foreign correspondent, and the complexities of the societies that you've been to in South Asia. Thanks very much for joining us.

PC: You're very welcome.

HK: And thank you very much for joining us for this "Conversation With History."

[End of Interview]