

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MODERATE ISLAMISTS AND THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL REFORM
IN THE ARAB WORLD

Washington, D.C.

Monday, September 8, 2008

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. WITTES: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. Welcome to all of you, and thank you for coming to kick off the first of our fall season policy luncheons, and we hope that we'll see you repeatedly over the course of the fall. I'm Tamara Wittes. I direct the Middle East Democracy and Development Project here in the Saban Center at Brookings.

And we have really been delighted over the last four months to have the privilege of having Khalil Al-Anani with us as a visiting fellow, as the 2008 Patkin Visiting Fellow in Arab Reform at the Saban Center.

Khalil hails from Cairo, and works there in the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, an institution with which many of you, I'm sure, are familiar. He is the deputy editor of Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya, international politics, one of the first phrases I learned in Arabic. And I still can't pronounce.

And he is also a regular columnist, for those of you who read the Egyptian press or the Arabic press in Al-Hayat and the Egypt Daily Star, where you

can read his commentary on politics and international relations across the Arab world and U.S. policy on questions of political reform in the Middle East.

Khalil has brought to us over the course of the summer really precisely what we look for in our Patkin Fellows -- real expertise from the ground, from the field, in the region. Khalil is an expert on the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist politics. He's done extensive survey research, especially looking at attitudes and values among the younger generation of the Brotherhood in Egypt, and examining the debates within Islamist movements and especially within the Brotherhood in different countries regarding the value of political participation under current rules, regarding democratic values and how they accord with the ideology of Islamism embraced by these various groups.

And it has been a very interesting time in which to watch these debates evolve and to watch these struggles within these movements take place.

Now, here, in Washington, our debate over the role of Islam in democratic politics in the Arab world has gotten a bit stuck, mainly as a result of

the election of Hamas to the Palestinian Legislative Council majority in 2006.

And since then, we've mainly been talking about the risks of inclusion of Islamist movements in Arab politics, in competitive Arab politics.

So what we asked Khalil to do over the course of the summer and a task that he has fulfilled par excellence is really to look at the interaction between our debate in Washington and the debates taking place within these Islamist movements in the region.

How do American attitudes and American policies toward Islamist inclusion or exclusion affect the debates that Islamist movements are having over the benefits and costs of political participation?

And Khalil has just finished a wonderful first draft of a paper for us, which will be out in a matter of months here from the Saban Center, and he's going to give you his summary of that argument today. And I hope we'll have a very robust and enriching discussion.

So thank you all for coming. By the way, two quick announcements. I know there are number of

people who are with us for the first time today. If you don't normally get our announcements directly, and especially if you have recently changed positions in a U.S. government agency, please be sure to leave us your business card in the basket outside so that we can get you updated in our database.

Secondly, for those of you who are observing the fast today, Ramadan Karim, and please just let our wait staff know, and they'll clear your plates.

Khalil, with that, the floor is yours.

MR. AL-ANANI: Thank you. Thank you.

I would like to thank all of you for coming and sharing with us this discussion.

As you may know from the invitation that you have got that I'm going to talk today about the excluding of moderate Islamists in the Middle East. But, before I start my talking, I'd like very quickly to explain two things. The first is why I'm using the word 'myth,' and second point what I mean by the word, or the term, 'moderate Islamists.'

For the first thing, actually, since I came here four months ago, I met a lot of people, some of them officials, some of them academics, some of them

intellectuals, NGOs, so I found that the main point from all of these meetings that there's a huge confusion and misperceptions toward understanding the political Islam in the Middle East.

And actually I found a myth that some of them think that the United States can promote democracy in the Middle East without engaging or including moderate Islamists.

And actually, the same myth that when American -- some of the American people know that I am from Egypt. Some of them asked me do you have cars in Egypt? So the answer is, we do have cars in Egypt. So there is a lot of myths actually about the political Islam in the Middle East such as there is some myths actually toward the social and intellectual life in the Arab world.

So some of them are suffering from lack of information toward Islamists in general. Some of them have some kind of biased situation or previous judgments toward Islamists, and some of them actually don't want to know about Islamists in the Middle East. So actually I suffered a little bit from this situation.

So the second thing that the word "moderate" Islamists, because I know this is very controversial and very relevant -- relative actually concept, and some people would argue that what do you mean by moderation, because some people may have their own explanation for -- or their own understanding for moderation. But, actually, for my own perspective, I think for any Islamist movements want to be described as a moderate Islamist is they should have or they should meet with three conditions.

The first one is that they should play politically in a very peaceful way. The second condition, or second point, that they should accept the democracy values, such as diversity, plurality, tolerance, and, of course, equality. And the third condition that they should accept the principle of rotation of power by elections.

So if we are going to apply these conditions on the Arab Islamists, I think that we can find a variety among Arab Islamists toward understanding all of these conditions. Some of them stand on the first level that they just play politically in a peaceful way, such as the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan,

although they're trying to improve their political and (inaudible) discourse to meet with the second level, which is democracy values. And some of them actually stand on the first and second levels, such as PJD in Morocco and (inaudible) Party in Tunisia. And, of course, we didn't reach yet to the third stage that none of Islamists actually with power in the Arab world, and, of course, some people would argue that Hamas did, but there is another story. We'll talk about it through my talk.

So very quickly, I'm interested to fill out my talk today and actually out in three parts. The first part: what is the current status of Islamists or Islamist politics in the Middle East? The second point, or the second part, will be about the -- what are the common methods here in Washington toward dealing with moderate Islamists? And the third part will be what should the United States do to deal with moderate Islamists?

For the first part, I can say that we are witnessing right now in the Middle East a lot of developments and the changes in the map of political

Islam. And I can summarize all of these changes and developments into three ones.

The first one that there is a changes in the map of Islamists, and, of course, we -- in the last three decades, we had experienced just two types of Islamists or political Islam movements. The first one is the violent Islamists, such as the jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda and its daughters. The second part is the nonviolent Islamists, and, of course, we are talking here about the moderate Islamists, which different -- I mean with the previous different conditions or different levels.

So, here, I'm talking about the second type of course, the moderate Islamists, who accept to play from inside the regimes, who accept to play in peaceful way, who accept some of democracy values, and who accept actually to the principle of rotation of power.

I think in the last three -- or in the last five years, we witnessed it in the Middle East a lot of changes toward the influence of the moderate Islamists. From 2002 until 2005, there was some kind of uprising in the curve of moderate Islamists, such

as what happened in Morocco, 2002; in the elections, such as what happened in Jordan, 2003; what happened in Bahrain and Iraq and in Algeria and last in Egypt.

There was some kind of uprising and moderate Islamists. What happened actually in during the last years, the last three years, from 2006, 2007, and right now that there is declining in the influence of the moderate Islamists, such as what happened in Egypt, in Jordan, in Algeria, and in Morocco and lately in Kuwait. So now we can know that the map still such as was before five or six years.

The most important thing here that there is uprising, a new trend in the Islamist politics in the Middle East, which is I'm calling the political (inaudible) in the Middle East. And to be specific in this regard, I can say that what I mean by political (inaudible) that they are the combination of two things actually.

The first component of this new phenomenon is that they have the same old and closed interpretation for Islamic (inaudible), such as the (inaudible), of course.

And the second component that -- and which is new -- we have some kind of political ideology, we have a political platform in order to apply on reality, so they are maybe a mixture of traditional Salafism and the Brotherhood. I mean they take from Salafism their understanding of religion, and they take from Brotherhood their peaceful way for change. But unfortunately, they don't have the flexibility to change or to accept the democracy values, such as the Brotherhood do.

So now there is an uprising in this phenomenon. And they -- they actually demonstrate right now in the Arab streets. You can find them right now. I mean, they won in the last elections which took place in Kuwait last May. They are now the main opposition force in the Kuwaiti parliament. They are calling for the establishment of a political party in Yemen. They -- after they got involved in politics in Egypt, such as the ex-violent Islamists that they actually interact with all of public (inaudible) in Egypt right now, and also they have a huge influence in Jordan and Algeria and Morocco.

So -- and the -- I think the question that we should raise right now why this happened, why moderate Islamists lose -- lost their influence, and why political Salafism is growing up right now.

I think the question that what are the costs of excluding moderate Islamists from political game in the Middle East.

The second type of change actually which took place right now in the Middle East that unfortunately the moderate Islamists, such as the Brotherhood in Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria and such as PJD in Morocco, they are not right now the only player on the Islamists and on the Islamist landscape right now. As I said before, there is new players.

And, for example, Egypt, the Brotherhood they are facing a lot of problems that come from outside environment. First of all, there is a lot of charity NGOs which try to compete with the Brotherhood and getting public appeal, but, moreover, that they don't ask for political gain, actually. They just helped people without any political goal or political purposes.

The second that, for example, the Brotherhood in Egypt they are suffering from, of course, the crackdown from the Egyptian regime since 2006 right now -- I mean, in the last three years.

The third thing that they are, of course, they are the -- they have been competing by the political Salafism in Egypt right now. And the fourth one, they don't have any other support from the outside, so their situation is very critical right now and actually I'm afraid that at some point we will regret that we cannot include Brotherhood in the political game in Egypt, comparing, of course, the worst option, which will be political Salafism.

The third change in the Islamist politics in the Middle East I think is the internal dynamics, or the internal changes, inside the moderate Islamists, and we cannot ignore what happened in the last three years. I mean, we can find a lot of internal -- not only internal debate, but also internal conflict between the conservatives and the reformists inside Islamists, and, moreover, we find some kind of conflict and wide gap between the first line

generation and the youth generation side Islamist movement, specifically in Egypt.

So unfortunately, most observers here and officials don't look at these internal dynamics, although it's very important to know that as much as the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world crackdown on moderate Islamists, as much as the strengthening -- actually the conservatives and the strengthening of the hard-liners inside these movements. And this, of course, will be on the interests of reformists and the real moderates inside these movements.

So this is the first part. The second part actually is about the methods of excluding moderate Islamists that I actually found not only in the United States, but I can find them also outside the United States. So here I can summarize some of these myths actually in five.

The first myth about including moderate Islamists is that the myth of one man, one vote, one time, which actually it didn't happen -- it never happened before. I mean, some people or some observers would argue that what happened in Iran in 1979, what happened in Sudan in 1989, and what

happened in Afghanistan in the second half of '90 that Islamists got power and they didn't give up. They keep it forever, and they said that stop this game and we will keep power forever.

Actually what happened in these three cases that first of all in the case of Iran, it was some kind of revolution, not some kind of democratic way to get power. The second case, which is Sudan, they got power through coup, not through elections, and, of course, in Afghanistan, it was through some kind of civil war.

So actually it never happened before that Islamists or moderate Islamists got power through a democratic way, and they keep it forever. Actually, the opposite happened that authoritarian regimes in the Arab world they got power since half a century, and they said that's enough. So this is the -- actually some people would argue that Hamas did that. I can say that we should differentiate between two types or two kinds of Hamas -- Hamas before what happened in mid of June of 2006 and Hamas what happened in 2007 and Hamas that got the power through elections. Of course, I agree that what happened in

June 2007 that it was some kind of coup, such as what happened exactly in Sudan and don't (inaudible) that any regime came to power through a revolution and coup will be a democratic one. Of course, it will be some kind of authoritarian one, such as happened in Iran or in Sudan or even right now in Gaza.

So this is the first myth. The second myth that I think it's very important that the myth of exclusion versus moderation. Some observers here argue that inclusion of Islamists that doesn't lead to some kind of moderation. And actually, I don't see any experiment in the Arab world that would prove this argument. Actually, the opposite is right. I mean, what happened in Morocco, for example, is that when PJD get inside the game and tried to play the -- by the rules of the game, actually they became more moderate. And what happened actually in Algeria that after the bloodshed decade during '90 that the (inaudible) Movement for Peace, which is they call it HEMS , now they participated -- in the last 10 years, they participated in government. They had seven posts in the government, in the cabinet actually.

And they still have right now three posts in the cabinet, so they are -- I mean, they tried to be more modernized and more moderated. The -- the -- also this happened actually in Yemen. After the elections in 1993, the Shehad d'el Akmar , he was the head of the Yemenian parliament, and although he was a member of the Brotherhood. And also that happened in Jordan in the beginning of '90 that when the Brotherhood got the post of the head of the parliament. So -- and also in the late of '90s actually they got -- they participated in the election -- participated in the government. So it didn't happen before that Islamists when they participated or when they play through the rules of the game that they will be more radicalized or more hard-liners. Actually, the opposite happened; that they were being more moderated and more modernized.

So this is the second. The third myth is that some people here argue that supporting authoritarianism and despotism in the Arab world will keep stability in the region, which actually I should refer here to the phrase that took place by Ms. Rice in Cairo, for example, when she said in her speech in

the American University in Cairo in June 2005, she said that we supported the authoritarian regimes in this region for six decades, and we are now ready to deal with any other alternative, even Islamists. And what she said after the winning of Hamas, she said that we can't wait for generation to have democracy in this region.

So some people think that supporting authoritarianism in the Arab world will keep stability and will keep the American interests in the region, which is untrue, of course. This is untrue for different reasons; first of all of that, no doubt, the Middle East right now is suffering from instability, and this instability comes for many reasons. First of all, that as the indicator of failed states, which are issued by the Foreign Policy magazine in this year, that we can find that seven of the first 40 states or countries of failed states they are in the Middle East. They are Somalia, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, and in the 40 is Egypt unfortunately.

The second thing that the region right now has vulnerability to be unstable for socioeconomic conditions, for political stagnation actually. And

third thing that there is the demographic factor that we have some kind of youth culture right now in the Middle East, and this new force actually such as it's very obvious in Egypt that they don't ask only for some kind of economic needs or jobs or education. They ask for political participation. And they ask for new channels and new ways for (inaudible). So unfortunately they don't have it a reality, so they have it on Internet, which I'm calling it some kind of virtual democracy.

So some people when they talk about stability actually they are talking about some kind of fake stability, not real stability, or some kind of fragile stability, not real stability in the Middle East.

The fourth myth that some people argue that democracy promotion in the Middle East will empower Islamists suddenly, which is I can accept this argument partially, or I mean, it's not -- I mean, fully documented, because -- and even if this happened, actually it happens because the Arab societies don't have any other alternatives except the authoritarian regimes and the corrupted ones in the

uncorrupted and partially authoritarian Islamists. So they don't have other -- the third choice or the third alternative, so they have to deal with one of both of these alternatives.

The second thing actually from the experiments in Egypt and in Morocco and Kuwait, for example, what happened in Egypt in 2005, and have now one of the candidates of the parliament, Dr. Mona Makram Ebeid, so she can give a lot (inaudible) of what which -- what happened actually in this elections, but we should say that won the majority in the Egyptian elections wasn't the Brotherhood, neither the NDP. Actually, who won the independent candidates. They ran as independents. Of course, they splitted from the NDP, the National Democratic Party. And they rejoined it, but the they run as independents. And, of course, we should know that a considerable amount of what the Brotherhood got in elections was some kind of resistance against the NDP or against the corrupted candidates.

So it didn't happen actually. Of course, they got some kind of surprising results by -- I mean, in the last half century they had the Brotherhood --

this is the only -- this is the first actually opposition force to get these seats, 88 seats in the Egyptian parliament. And Morocco either they didn't get the majority in the last parliamentary elections which took place in last September, in September 2007, although the expectation which took place by the NDI and the IRRI and other NGOs they said that the PJD Party of (inaudible) Development will get the majority. And unfortunately that didn't happen. And moreover than this that the political participation in the Moroccan collections was very low, although the procedures of fairness and frequent petition and international monitoring. So I think this is related to some kind of the political culture in the Arab world, though our people think that there is a relationship between democracy and their basic needs or not. Do they believe that democracy will improve their lives or not? And this is another (inaudible), of course.

So the five myths, or the fifth myth actually here that some people are dealing with democracy as a national security issue, and actually I am conscious toward this argument. Why? Because we

are in the Middle East deserve democracy because we are human beings, and we deserve this, not because it's some kind of strategic interest of the United States. But even if it is some kind of national interest and it is related to the war on terrorism, no one of the 9/11 attackers was a member in a Brotherhood or was a member and moderate Islamist movement. Or even one of them played politically during his life.

Vice versa, most of them were Western educated, and they used to live in Western countries, and they shifted suddenly from peaceful men to very extremist and even terrorist men. So why? Because they didn't have the chance to express themselves in their own societies or in their home societies.

So and it is funny actually to listen to what Ms. Rice said three days ago when she was in Libya. She said that Libya is playing a better rule in counter-terrorism, which I cannot believe this actually. And she didn't say a word about human rights in Libya or about human rights in Tunisia. So actually I can understand the complexity of the U.S. foreign policy or the U.S. interests in the Middle

East, but I think there is some kind of confusion between the cause and results. I mean, the United States is dealing with the -- how -- I mean, they think toward how they can fight terrorism, but they don't look at why terrorism comes out. What are the roots of this terrorism? They should try to deal with these roots, not try to deal with the results of these roots.

Now, I will talk about the third part, which is the role of the United States. And I can divide this part to two points. The first is that does the United States have to deal with moderate Islamists or not, because if they don't have, let's finish this discussion and go home. But if they have, let's discuss.

I think that dealing with moderate Islamists is not an option right now. It is a necessity for the United States for many reasons.

First of all, that we have -- I don't know if this is fortunately or unfortunately that we have what I'm calling it in the Arab world that we have religious capital in the Arab world. I mean all the time we will have Islamists. All the time we'll have

people who will try to use religion for their political goals. But the question is, I think the question is not how can we exclude them. The question is, how can we include them. How can we make them more progressive, more modernizing in their understanding for religion?

So I think that it's a reality in the Middle East that we will have this religious capital. And it is not strange to find different types of Islamists who are trying to use this religious capital. You can find traditional solafism. You can find the Brotherhood, and you can find the new preachers such as (inaudible) and other guys. So all of them are trying to benefit from this religious capital. And, for example, just three weeks ago, the Gallup Center they made a survey in the Middle East or actually in the Muslim world about the idea of applying sha'ria. And one of the significant results of that more than 90 percent of Egyptians want to apply sha'ria. So, I mean, this may prove that how much the influence of religion in politics in the Middle East.

The second point that does the United States should deal with events or not, the second thing that

-- actually, the moderate Islamists they are the only alternative. I mean, if something happens suddenly, and we have this situation right now in Egypt, for example, that there is a confusion in power transition. No one knows what will happen in the future, but just imagine if something happened in Egypt that I am sure that Islamists--that the Brotherhood will not get power, but they still -- the potential alternative for the current regimes not only in Egypt, but in the region in general.

So the United States has to deal with them, has to understand them.

The third point that if the United States trying to improve their image in the Middle East, I think it will be easily to do it through the Islamists, because they are not only religious groups; they are social groups. And actually they can effect on the public attitudes towards the United States more than any other actors.

The fourth benefit from dealing with moderate Islamists is that they playing actually a very (inaudible) role in fighting and confronting the extremists and the jihadists in the Middle East. So

why not the United States and towards moderate Islamists as a partner in their war on terrorism, not the opposite?

So now, how can the United States deal with moderate Islamists. What is the strategies or what is the tools?

First of all, I think that, as I said before, that we should start from rethinking toward moderate Islamists. They should take it seriously. They should have some kind of grand strategy for first of all understanding moderate Islamists, for understanding what they expect from the United States as a global power, because most Islamists actually accused the United States that they have some kind of hypocrisy in the issue of democracy, and actually this is very obvious, just as what I said before about the situation of Rice in Libya and in Tunisia.

Okay. So I think that the first step in this regard that the United States should rethink toward moderate Islamists, they should rethink what the Islamists expect from them as a global power, and they should actually understand the different

distinctions among Islamists, not try to put all of them in one basket.

The third point that the United States should create a common interest with the moderate Islamists, and, as I said before, that why not the United States try to deal with moderate Islamists as a partner, not as a threat actually in their war on terrorism. And this point that creating common interests with the moderate Islamists that the second point that the, as I said before, that if the United States actually wants to promote democracy, they can do it very easily through moderate Islamists, through including them, because it will not happen that Islamists will be very moderated and very modernizing without inclusion -- the opposite. And we know, it's very obvious that -- it's -- I mean, there is -- very obvious rule that despotism leads to extremism, not the opposite.

The third point here that the United States should realize the internal dynamics of moderate Islamists. As I said before that there is a variety inside moderate Islamists. You can find conservatives. You can find hard-liners. You can

find reformists, and you can find -- I mean, distinction between first-line generations and youth generation. I mean, there is a variety inside Islamists. They are not one color. So they should understand what is the real internal dynamics inside Islamists before they deal with them because I think in most people, I'm sure, that they think that what happened in 9/11 that the United States didn't deal with different types of Islamists very seriously. They didn't differentiate between different types of violent Islamists and moderate Islamists.

The fourth point or the fourth step that the United States should capitalize in the new generation of Islamists and just to be honest with you, I met a lot of youth, for example, in Egypt from the Brotherhood. And I can say that most of them -- first of all, most of them really open-minded, and they do accept the democracy values. The second thing they don't have this ideological situation were ideological values toward dealing with the United States were dealing with the Western civilization. The third thing that they are well politicized more than any other youth in Egypt. So I think they should

capitalize in them through different approaches, one of them actually -- why not United States and think tanks here, and I'm sure that there is some think tanks right now thinking about engaging young youth of Islamists with them and make some kind of dialogue among them.

Right now, I can say that in Egypt the gap between the youth from Islamists and liberal and leftists is very narrow, more than it is between the first-line leaders. So we can (inaudible) on this potential coalition to push for democracy promotion in the Middle East and specifically in countries like such as Egypt and Jordan.

So the fifth step I think that United States should open a direct dialogue with the moderate Islamists, and we should have the courage to recognize that moderate Islamists is a reality, and they have to deal with them. So it will be very useful to deal with them through direct way, and even some of them will try to say that, for example, we cannot deal with illegal groups such as in Egypt. So the point is how can we make this group legal as much as they accept and they respect the rules of the game, not the

opposite. So one of the things that the United States to build trust with the Brotherhood in Egypt, for example, they should ask for establishing some kind of legitimate organization whatever NGO or political party as much as they are moderate and they are peaceful. And we can do it actually. We can deal with Islamists through third part on the first step, o on the first level, and second level we can deal with them directly. They can do it through their good relationship with, for example, for AK Party in Turkey, which has a good relationship with most of the Middle East countries right now, and they play a vital role in different issues, they can deal with them through a third part. They can deal with Islamists through a third part such as the Islamists leaders in Europe such as Rachid al Ghanoushi or el-Bayanoni or (inaudible) or any other moderate and modernized Islamist leader. And thank you.

DR. WITTES: Okay. Khalil, thank you very much for that presentation and for your time here. I think that over the course of your four months in Washington, you've had a chance to meet with and dialogue with a number of --

MR. AL-ANANI: And be shocked by.

DR. WITTES: -- policy groups. And be shocked by a number of policymakers, academics, think tankers working on these issues, and I think that we have learned a lot from you and I hope that you had the chance to learn from us as well. I would like to open this up for discussion, and I already have a few people who have signaled to me that they have questions or comments. If you want to join the discussion, just raise your hand and I will keep the list here. We have about 40 minutes and -- thank you -- and I'll just ask you number one to keep your comments brief so that we can get everybody in, and number two, wherever possible, actually to have a particular question, one question or point to make.

And I'll start off with Ken Pollack.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Tammy. Thank you, Khalil. It has been a great pleasure having you here with us at the Saban Center, and I'm not certain which of us benefited more, but I'm delighted that you benefited. I'm thrilled how much we've benefited. There was one point that you made in the course of your presentation that I wanted to kind of try to

tease out a little bit more and ask you to elaborate on. And that was this issue -- you mentioned that most of the people in Egypt would like to see sha'ria as part of the legal system there. And I don't know whether you're even aware of it; there's no reason that you should be. But there's a debate that has kind of broken out among Middle East experts here in the United States with a number of people -- John Esposito , Dalia Mugahed , Jenny Abdo, most recently Noah Feldman -- making the case that the desire for sha'ria is born at least in part of the desire for rule of law; that sha'ria represents a compact between the governed and the governing, and that this is one of the reasons why people want it; others disagreeing for a variety of reasons.

I wanted to get your sense of that. Do you think that that is accurate -- that is -- first, if you think it's an accurate representation of what sha'ria represents and second, do you think that is why people are looking for it?

MR. AL-ANANI: As I said before that we have in the Arab world what I'm calling religious capital, and I think that unfortunately this from this ideology

in the Middle East is the Islamic one. So you can find this ideology even within unpoliticized people that they think that the main goal for their countries that they have or they apply sha'ria. They don't have any other political ideology that can compete with this point, but the thing which is -- I mean, the good thing that if we try to compare between the countries that pretend that they are applying sha'ria (inaudible) as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and Iran. Unfortunately, they don't have any kind of justice or freedom, so I think it's some kind of, I mean, ideal and ideological thinking towards sha'ria, but when sha'ria comes to be on confront with justice and the (inaudible), I think that people will prefer -- I mean, if you ask anyone what do you prefer to have Islamic sha'ria or to have justice -- I mean, to have Islamic states with applying sha'ria or to have just states, I think that we will accept, and they will agree that they should have just state or just country or just regime more than Islamic regime. So, I mean, as much as we don't have any other alternative or any other channels for separation you will find people who think that sha'ria is the best way of life. They

think sha'ria can resolve all of their problems. And this is some kind of metaphysic thinking that they don't want to be involved with in politics on public issues. They think that they should concentrate on their next life, because they don't have any hopes actually in reality because of these social and economic and political conditions.

So they are very -- I mean, the sha'ria has this appeal because it didn't have any other ideologies except the Islamic one.

DR. WITTES: You know, I think there's a follow-up question here about what it is Islamist movements mean when they talk about things like implementing sha'ria, because there's what the public wants, which we can debate, but there's also a lot of lack of clarity from these movements. And you would acknowledge this upfront saying that, you know, if we look at the Islamist movements that exist in the region today, very few of them, if any, actually reach the threshold of what you would call acceptance of democratic values. So, and I know this is something that we've talked about and something that you will be addressing in the paper, but you didn't have a chance

to put it into your presentation today. And so I want to ask you can you talk a little bit about what Islamist movements and Islamist parties need to do in order to, if the U.S. or other Western countries are, you know, are to be persuaded to change their approach. What do Islamist parties need to do in order to change their approach and establish their bona fides so to speak with Western interlocutors?

MR. AL-ANANI: Yeah. Thank you for -- I mean, reminding me by this point. I think it's a very important point. I think Islamists and specifically moderate Islamists they have to convince us in the Middle East before convincing the United States that they actually accept democracy values. And, as I said in the beginning of my talk that there is different levels of Islamists in the Middle East right now toward -- to be a moderate. I mean, the first level that they play politically in a very peaceful way. The second level that they accept democracy values. Some of them actually they do, but we cannot ignore the effect of the atmosphere on the political and religious discourse of moderate Islamists.

For example, why the Islamists or specifically the moderate Islamists, PJD, in Morocco is more progressive than the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan. Why? Because I think the political atmosphere -- it is not an ideal, of course, in Morocco, but at least it is better more than it in Egypt and Jordan.

So what the Islamists should do? First of all, toward the United States, of course, first of all, they should don't think or don't try to deal with the United States as imperial power and which is a very ideological discourse that they still think -- and, by the way, this is not only the discourse of the current Brotherhood, it was the discourse of Hassan al-Banna, when he established or when he founded the Brotherhood. Actually, he was looking at the British occupation as some kind of colonialism or imperialism.

So now, they are dealing with United States, and also it is not only Islamists who think that the United States is an imperial power. But, I mean, most of the Arab street thinks the same thing. So they should be more pragmatist -- pragmatic in their thinking towards the United States. Second thing,

they should, without any doubt, they should try to improve their political and religious discourse. But the point is who is really ready to do this. Who is - - I mean, which part? The conservatives or the reformists?

Unfortunately, by the separation from the regimes and by the (inaudible) of the United States toward the (inaudible) of democracy, this strategy actually led to strengthening the conservatives and weakening the moderates and the reformists. So, from what we may expect, the change will come. Of course, it should come from reformists, but we don't give them the chance to improve their ideas.

For example, what happened in Egypt in the last three years that the Brotherhood issued their political platform in August 2007, and although it's regressive in some points, and I'm sure that all of us agree that it's regressive toward the equality principle and the -- and unfortunately, they discriminate or differentiate between people on their religion or on their ethnic or on their gender, although all of these regressive ideas, but we cannot ignore that this is the first time in the last two

decades that the Brotherhood issued a political platform, which is an evolution. We should deal with that from a very idealistic approach, because -- and I think why did they issue this platform, because they just felt that this is the time that we should open our windows and doors for people to judge us than to think realistically about us.

So I think there is a lot of job that they should do, but now -- I am talk -- and also I am doing this all the time when I am in Egypt. But right now, I'm in the United States, so I'm trying to give what should the United States do with moderate Islamists.

I am sure that both parties should do a lot of things or should do some steps to reengage or to engage with each other.

DR. WITTES: Thank you, Khalil. We are fortunate to have visiting Mona Makram Ebeid today, and, Mona, you had a question?

MS. MAKRAM EBEID: First of all, thank you very much for having me with you and for listening to my colleague who gave a very interesting and insightful overview of what is happening, except that he's trying also to make us believe that the

moderates, the so-called moderate Islamists, are more angelical than we think and that we should look into it a bit more.

So let me go over a few things that you said. One of them is sha'ria, of course. And I don't believe at all that 90 percent want sha'ria, certainly not and certainly not the majority of secular Muslims, let alone, of course, the Christians and the minorities and the women.

The second thing is that I want to answer is I want to answer, Tamara. Now, what is it that the Islamists are transferring? What is their message? If they do want to be on the scene and to have either powers engage with them or secular parties engage with them, there are two things they must do.

One is to give up advocacy. Either choose advocacy or you choose politics. Advocacy than keep to charitable organizations, and this is where you have your clout. Political party, respect the rules of the game. What are the rules of the game? Tell us today. The platform that they presented was to keep out any idea of a woman coming to power or a non-Muslim.

So these are starting points for backtracking and which caused all this. What you said about the decline is true, but it is true because of many of such statements today, which are controversial and which don't stand.

Now my last little point is that we do have a beginning, as you said, of a new generation of new thinking among them, and I'm, as you know very well, I'm among the first ones who encouraged their inclusion in every of my articles, in every of my talks, although I'm not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. But there is one thing that I don't understand the government in, and this is the Wasat Party, who presents, you know, more or less everything you've said, which is inclusion, which is not exclusivity of Muslims to be there who are much more modern. It's a new generation. The head of it is about in his 50's and so on. Thank you very much.

DR. WITTES: When the Muslim Brotherhood accepts you as a member, Mona, then we'll know they've changed. All right. Did you want to respond?

MR. AL-ANANI: Yeah. I mean, I agree with.

DR. WITTES: Okay. Thank you. Martin? No, I'm sorry. Gary.

MR. MITCHELL: Khalil, thank you. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. I want to say -- I want to preface this by saying that one of the things that I've appreciated about your four months here is that you and I have seen each other at a number of different tanks around town, and I've been intrigued with your questions. And I am headed somewhere with that.

Your reference earlier -- and you've been asked about it by Ken -- is the importance of our ability to understand the sort of segmentation that exists within the moderate Islamist movement; that they don't -- they're not all of one piece or one way of thinking, that there are various different segments. I'm interested to know whether your four-month visit here led you to take an optimistic or pessimistic view about the potential for opening the dialogue that you've talked about. And what I'm particularly interested in knowing is with whom or where in the U.S. should that dialogue began. In other words, who should be talking to whom?

MR. AL-ANANI: For the first point that I can say that -- I mean, I am by nature optimistic actually, so I'm optimistic that the United States at some point will have to deal with Islamists. So unfortunately, what I found here that most people think under their feet. I mean, they don't have some kind of long-term thinking. They think that they can, as I said on another issue, that they think that they can keep stability right now, and that's true, through supporting (inaudible) regimes. They can have stability for while.

But, as I said, there's is a lot of reason that the region has vulnerability to be unstable for different reasons, of course.

So at some point, they will have to deal with Islamists. The point is when they reach this point, what type of Islamists they will have. Will it be the political Salafism, which will be inflexible to change their ideas, and even they are not flexible to deal with the United States as a (inaudible) power, even as an enemy. Or they will deal with moderate Islamists, the Brotherhood and other (inaudible).

So I think they -- at some point, they will have to deal with Islamists, and they should -- at some point, they will choose.

The second point that whom or who should deal with whom. I think that two levels to deal with Islamists. The first level is that the unofficial level. I think that some of think tanks here and (inaudible) are doing this actually, but it is not that enough. I mean, it's not by such power to deal with Islamists. I mean, and they still dealing with Islamists from some kind of political perspective, not from a cultural and social perspective.

The second level is the official level, and I think that they should -- it's very difficult actually for the United States from the official level to deal with Islamists without solving the problem of promoting democracy. I mean, how can United States -- or what -- or what exactly United States think about democracy? Do they think -- I'm talking about the official level -- you think that it's a strategic interest or not? Until they solve the problem or until they decide if it is a strategic point or not, they will have to deal with the current situation.

So if they decide that it's a strategic interest such as stability, such as oil and other strategic interests, they should try to start from now. As I said that we have potential in different levels for democracy promotion in the Middle East right now. What happened, as I'm always saying, is that the United States pushed for democracy and suddenly they stopped. But everything is still moving right now in the Middle East.

So they should rethink toward democracy promotion before thinking toward engaging Islamists before, because if they're going to deal with democracy, they should deal with it regardless of the outputs actually.

So I think that the -- in both levels -- the unofficial level and the official level they should deal with moderate Islamists.

DR. WITTES: Thank you. Shibley. You're next up.

MR. TELHANI: Khalil, it was good to have you around town, and I look forward to seeing you again. It was a very good talk and enlightening. And I'm sympathetic to the notion that we have to have a

different policy toward the Islamists. But I'm not sure I follow the central argument, and let me tell you how, you know -- just to line it up in three different ways.

You can make an argument that the U.S. should engage Islamists for three reasons. One is that you can argue that essentially, you know, if they take over, they'll be like any realpolitik country. They're still going to do what they have to do, and you can still deal with them. At least, they'll bring stability -- like we deal with authoritarian leaders today, the same kind of argument. So you can argue that one can be comfortable.

You can make an argument that, well, we should encourage them being incorporated into democracy because if the more democracy there is, the more incorporated they are, the less likely they are to win. And I think that's maybe sort of the arguments that we've had, the liberal argument that we've had about, you know, third way, and then opening up, incorporating them, having a third way. The public isn't with them necessarily. They probably

wouldn't win if you have -- you can make that kind of argument; therefore, you should engage them.

But the third argument is the one that you actually choose to make, which is that you disagree with the notion, you know, of one man, one election, one time. And you gave examples as to why you don't think those examples work well or are representative of the Islamic movement.

From where I'm looking at it, I actually think the first two are more likely than a third; that is, that I -- I'm, you know, I think all of these arguments have problems, but the last one I think has the most problems, and there -- you know, I just want to draw you on this a little bit more.

If you look at the examples of -- you know, you say that the examples that we've talked about of people who are coming either revolution or by power coup, not through democratic means.

Well, realistically, we haven't had democracy in the Middle East, so even if you have one, if we have Islamists come through the first democratic experiment that we're going to have, we still don't

have a democratic culture. There is no evidence of it.

And so in principle it may be true, but I think the reality of it is we have no democratic culture in the Middle East.

The only example of anything like that is Turkey, and Turkey has had democracy for decades, and even now, people are debating whether or not this is going to withstand the pressure of the Islamist forces.

And so in the Arab world, it's hard to imagine why, you know, one wouldn't expect an Islamist group coming to power, finding a way to keep itself in power, especially given the traditions that are there. Maybe 20, 30, 40 years down the road, it might not be possible.

And with that, I would say that the sha'ria issue is, you know, is part of this democracy argument. It's not a separate issue. It's not really so much what the public wants, whether public opinion in Egypt or elsewhere wants to see sha'ria law imposed or not. All Islamist groups believe in the sha'ria law.

If you ask me on what issue are they likely to change their behavior. Well, even Hamas, if you ask me -- can you envision them stopping using terrorism. I say yes. Can you envision them changing the foreign policy? I say yes. Can you envision them giving up on sha'ria as the law of the land? I would say no. And I would say that if there's a group, an Islamist group in charge in any part of the Arab world, it's very hard to see that they can resist the temptation of the forces, even if they're not representing a majority, of imposing Islamic law.

And so where is the example to the contrary? I mean, you can go back and forth. Where is the example to the contrary that you can actually envision an Islamist group taking over and be comfortable that they're not going to do that?

MR. AL-ANANI: Thank you. A lot of arguments. But I think for the first argument that I'm sure that most of these arguments we discussed before, I mean in private talks or in public talks, but for the first one that from the realpolitik, as you said that, I just wanted to give you one example of that. What would the part who was really

sponsoring the negotiation between Israel and Syria, it is Turkey, not just Turkey. It is AKP, which is AK Party, which is the Islamist party. I'm sure that there is a huge difference between Islamists in Turkey and Islamists in the Middle East.

But what I want to say is that actually when the discourse of Islamists during or while they are in opposition is totally different from if they got power. They will be more realistic. And, for example, in this regard I can remember when the Jordanian king signed the agreement, the peace agreement with Israel, and he tried to get agreement or tried to get the opinion of the parliament, I can remember that the parties who rejected this peace agreement wasn't the Brotherhood. They were nationalists and leftists. And the Islamists actually supported the peace agreement, because they were very realistic. And they have an interest with the Jordanian regime at this time.

For your third, because I forgot your second point, for your third point that the democratic culture. Of course, it's very important for the United States that before that I am not defending

Islamists. I am defending all political actors in the Middle East that they wanted to play politically very peacefully, and they wanted to have some kind of political change through peaceful way.

And as I said that we still suffering from lack of democracy values, such as tolerance, equality, freedom at all levels, not only among Islamists. Don't think that -- and this is may make Dr. Mona angry that don't think that our liberals is a real liberals such as liberals outside Egypt. I mean, we have our own version of liberalism, not such liberalism outside Egypt.

So I think the point of the sha'ria it's very critical in Islamists. Of course, that's right. But why? Because they think it's a source for legitimacy. It's a source for them to, I mean, to cheat people actually, but suddenly when they got power and tried to deal with real problems, they will forget everything about sha'ria, because first of all, we don't have something or a book called sha'ria. It's just some -- it's a way of thinking toward the texts of the religion.

The point is that how can we make this understanding of sha'ria very progressive, because the difference between the Al Qaeda, for example, and the Brotherhood that they have their own interpretation for sha'ria. So the point is not about sha'ria itself. It's about how can -- how we understand sha'ria.

So and it's very difficult to have a very progressive understanding for sha'ria without a very progressive democratic atmosphere actually.

So I agree with you on all of these things, but I argue that all of these points actually related that the point is what is the relationship between democracy promotion in general and engaging Islamists?

DR. WITTES: Thank you, Khalil. We have five more people on our list, and less than 15 minutes, so I'm going to group together and ask you to be disciplined and brief.

First, we'll take Michelle, Aisha, and the gentleman next to Mona, whose name I don't know. You can introduce yourself. And then in the second group, we'll take Sam Lewis and Martin Indyk. Michelle, go ahead.

SPEAKER: Thanks. Thanks, Khalil. Great presentation. I wanted to draw you out on this question of inclusion. And you made it very clear, straightforward argument that inclusion of Islamists brings about moderation and greater pragmatism in their political positions.

Some other people who have studied this -- I'm thinking of Carrie Wickham and others -- have said that they actually think it's sort of a combination of inclusion but with limits, not absolutely unfettered (inaudible) inclusion, but having some limits within the system and that this sort of subtle balance between inclusion and limits is what can bring about greater pragmatism. So I'd like your comments on that.

Clearly, some of the other governments in the region -- you mentioned Morocco and there are other examples -- have tried to do this. And since you're coming from Egypt, I wanted to ask you why the Egyptian regime has not seen it in its interest to do this, to try to bring about any -- I mean, you know, bring about some sort of -- break up the Islamists so

to speak into groups and let some of them be more moderate and so forth.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Tamara. First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Khalil for his very informative talk. For me, it's more a comment than a question.

When he was talking about the -- I mean, the Moroccan PJD and using the concept of Brotherhood, I would like to emphasize that in Morocco we don't have any Brotherhood. We have PJD. But the concept of Brotherhood is not used in Morocco. And this is very important. The PJD in Morocco as a political group, is different from Brotherhood in the -- I mean, in Egypt.

My second part -- the second part of my comment is we were talking about this Brotherhood here and there. But I think there are other Arab countries. What is their situation? Like, for instance, we have examples of Egypt only and Jordan and maybe Kuwait and the Mahgreb, when we're talking about Tunisia and Morocco. It's in the Mahgreb. What about other countries in the Middle East, such as -- I

mean, the Middle East as a whole. Can we elaborate on that if it's possible? And thank you.

DR. WITTES: Thank you. And finally, sir.

MR. LILY: My name is Marshall Lily with the State Department.

I just wanted to get your take on what type of future you see political Islamists as having in Iraq, and what type of role the U.S. can play with them?

MR. AL-ANANI: For Michelle, I think you are an expert in Egypt more than me, so I think you know the answer of the question why the Egyptian regime don't want to include the Brotherhood.

I think the problem of the Egyptian regime is not with the Brotherhood itself. It's actually with any alternative has some kind of power and can make a threat for the survival of the regime. So as we just have the Brotherhood as the only force or the only power or the only alternative that may threaten the regime, they don't want to include them.

So it's very obvious that the regime tries to deal with them through different approaches -- one of them -- or, I mean, it depends on the time. I

mean, when Mubarak got power or received power in 1981, he started to -- he tried to build some kind of legitimacy for himself so he opened everything toward all types of political parties, such as the (inaudible) party, the (inaudible) party, el-(inaudible) party, (inaudible), all of these parties to just to get legitimacy. And just once he has power and he thinks that he is strong, he doesn't need their help, he started to go backward, and we witnessed it in the middle of the '90s that the first military court against the Brotherhood since the '60s and the '50s actually.

So after what happened in the last elections, the Egyptian regime actually he trying to revenge not only from the Brotherhood, but trying to revenge it from all other types of opposition, such as Ayman Nour and other liberals or any other social movements.

So it's a strategy of the Egyptian regime toward the opposition, not specifically the Brotherhood, but because they are the strongest power.

The first point that about the limits of inclusion, I think this is an approach to include

Islamists. I mean, just don't open the door suddenly, just open to them very small gap and they can widen it with time.

But unfortunately that approach doesn't work right now, and, for example, in Morocco, because now the Islamists in Morocco rethink toward what is against the political participation -- and such as in Jordan, of course. They don't -- they think that there is no gains from political participation. They participate just to cover or to give legitimacy for the regime to stay in power.

So they think seriously toward their political participation.

For Aisha, yeah, you are totally -- I agree with you that PJD is totally different from the Brotherhood, and I said that -- when I said that -- when I'm talking about moderate Islamists, there is different types of moderate Islamists. There is a Brotherhood in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, and there is PJD in Morocco. So I said that there is a different type, but we cannot ignore that they have some kind of common understanding of Islam, which is

moderate Islam and peaceful Islam, and not as a violent (inaudible) such as other jihadists.

The second thing -- this is a legitimate question that who speaks for the Brotherhood. We should differentiate between two organizational levels. We are talking about the groups of the Brotherhood in each country, and there is some kind of international umbrella of Brotherhood. But we don't have actually in the Middle East from -- I mean, if you are asking about the different types of moderate Islamists, we just have Brotherhood and have the PJD in Morocco. These are the main types of moderate Islamists.

But all of them, I think, they have roots with the same discourse of the Brotherhood toward understanding the religion.

For Marshall, yeah, the Islamic Party in Iraq, they are a part of a brotherhood, but you know that during the Saddam era, they didn't have the ability to work, I mean, not only them but any other political parties, so they are a part of the Brotherhood.

And this is actually a very controversial point that some people argue that although the anti-Americanism discourse in Egypt from the Brotherhood, of course, and in Jordan, there is some kind of cooperation between the Brotherhood in Iraq and the United States. And this is giving you an indicator that they are very realistic. I mean, the Brotherhood in Egypt cannot give directions or orders for the Brotherhood outside. I mean, each version of the Brotherhood, they have their own foreign policy. They have their own strategies that it's difficult to find some kind of overlapping. Such as, for example, the Brotherhood or the Islamists in Kuwait, they are dealing with United States. They don't have the same barrier with the United States such as the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan.

DR. WITTES: We will turn last to Sam Lewis and Martin Indyk, and then come back to Khalil for some closing comments.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you. I was going to ask a different question, but I would like to take off from your last one and revise it, if I might.

Hamas was founded actually by the Jordanian Brotherhood, unless I'm mistaken, and retains close ties and ties to the Brotherhood in Egypt. And surely the Egyptian attitude toward Hamas, ambiguous as it has been at times, reflects its concerns about the Brotherhood in Egypt.

How -- where you put Hamas in the Brotherhood spectrum of local parties let's say. And how does it connect with the strong Iranian influences, which are reasonably well documented today?

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Khalil. And it's been a real pleasure for us to have you here. And as I think everybody can see your intellectual contribution has been very useful for us. I'm grateful to you for all that you've done.

I want to see whether you can draw a useful distinction here between intentions and capabilities. I mean, you're focused on intentions, basically arguing that there's moderate Islamists who have moderate intentions. But there's also the question of capabilities, and it comes up in two respects.

One is that you have Islamists groups that have the capability to use force. I know you're only talking about Sunni Islamists here, and obviously that applies to Hamas. But it applies in the Shia case to Hezbollah and also to Muqtadar al-Sadr and his capabilities in Iraq.

And on the other hand, you have regimes that are weak or strong, so, in the case of the Turkish example that you point to, you have an AK Party, that's a political party, that plays within the rules of the game. But the broader context is one in which the Turkish military, you know, holds the ring. It obviously plays a very important role in constraining and limiting these kind of external limits on what the AK Party can do.

In the case of the Palestinian Authority, the Lebanese government, and the Iraqi government, they didn't have the means. They were weak governments, and you had the situation in which parties with capabilities -- military capabilities were able to take advantage of that weakness so that when they took government or when they moved into the political system, they were able to basically use

their military capabilities in a way that really raised question marks about this one vote, one time.

And on the other hand, in Egypt, where you have a strong military, with a very strong sense of responsibility for the state and you have a Muslim Brotherhood that doesn't have military capabilities anymore, as far as I know, you could make the argument, it seems to me, that that's where you should engage in the kind of experimentation that you're talking about, with all of its dangers.

Whereas, in places like Palestine or Lebanon, this is dangerous business here, because of the weakness of the state and the military capabilities of the Islamist parties.

MR. AL-ANANI: Thank you.

DR. WITTES: In three minutes.

MR. AL-ANANI: I just wanted to -- yeah, for the gentlemen here that you're talking about the -- if I didn't forget -- that the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood in Egypt.

It's very controversial, of course. And, you know, your second point the Hamas and Iran, of course. The first part of your question about the

relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood in Egypt, it's a very controversial point actually, but from an organizational level, I cannot say that they have any kind of organizational or even they have the same strategic or the same plans to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian issue or deal with the Egyptian regime. I think the Egyptian regime is dealing with Hamas not as the Brotherhood, but as may be a threat for our national security.

So they actually know the difference between dealing with Hamas as an arm or as a branch for the Brotherhood in Egypt and dealing with them as a threat for our national security; that actually they're involved in a strategic dialogue with Hamas over the strategic interests of Egypt, not over some kind of political participation.

But from my -- I think -- I mean, from my information, I didn't see any sign that there is organizational -- there is some kind of sympathy or emotional relationship between the Brotherhood in Egypt. Some people are talking about some kind of financial, but I doubt this, because we have a very strong security forces that cannot allow any kind of

financial operation between the Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas.

The second point that the relationship between and Iran, I think it is not some kind of religious relationship, of course. I mean if you were talking about the difference between Shia and Sunnis, there is -- I mean, there is a huge difference between them and even there is some kind of sectarian feelings among -- between both of them. But I think they are dealing with each other from a strategic vision, not from a religious one.

So they have -- they are dealing with Iran as a strategic power, as a regional power that as much as you isolate Hamas, they will try to find who will help them.

So I think this is another issue we should talk about.

For the point that addressed by Martin, I think that when I started my talk and I said that I'm not going to talk about, first of all, the violent Islamists, and I forgot to say that I'm also not going to talk about the Islamists who have some kind of

military arm, because I'm actually outside my category.

Now I'm working on the moderate Islamists that don't have any military arm. They work peacefully, and they accept the other points that I said.

But actually, it's very dangerous actually to have in the Middle East a religious actor and a military one. I mean, it's very dangerous, because unfortunately unlike the other, any other political actor, Islamists or specifically the closed-minded Islamists, if they have a military arm, it will be a disaster actually, such as we are seeing right now in Iraq or in Lebanon or even in Hamas.

And actually if we are trying to separate between Hamas and the Islamist movement as an insurgency or as a resistance group, I think that from my expertise here that the discourse of Hamas is really -- is not that moderate that we may think it will find them actually -- and maybe in the first level that they accept, I mean, just to work through inside -- from inside the regime. But they have their own goals.

So I find it's very difficult to judge or make judgments and on Hamas with the other types of moderate Islamists.

DR. WITTES: Do you have --

MR. AL-ANANI: I don't have comments, but I just wanted to -- I mean, to say a few words. I just wanted to thank some people here actually. I mean, I almost finished my fellowship year and I supposed to leave the country after one week from now, so I think that I should thank all people here at the Brookings Institution for hosting me for four months, and specifically the people in the Saban Center, and more specifically actually, I'd like to thank Martin Indyk, the Director of the Saban Center, for his, I mean, insightful help. Actually, I really learned from his experience and his thoughts and ideas toward, I mean, the Middle East in general. I would like to thank also Tammy that actually I cannot find words actually to express my thanks to her, but she was very supportive and she was very helpful and outstanding actually partner for me here.

Also, I'd like to thank my sincere friend Andy Masloski that who really I am sure that I tired

him and I bothered him by my naïve questions and needs here, but he actually didn't complain ever.

Actually, I'd like to thank the man who gave me the chance to be here actually, and the man who really funded my fellowship. His name is Tod Patkin. Actually, he tried to be with us today, but unfortunately he couldn't. I'd like also to thank one of my best Egyptian friends here -- unfortunately, he is not here right now -- his name is Mohamed Elmenshawy, but actually he was my family here.

And finally, I'd like to thank my family in Cairo, that my wife and my little boys Mohamed and Ali that they really suffered without me in the last four months, and I hope to see them very soon next week. And I'd like to thank you for your patience.

MR. INDYK: Thank you.

DR. WITTES: Thank you. And although, Khalil wore it very well, he suffered without them also. I know.

We are soliciting applications for the 2009 Todd Patkin Fellowship in Arab Reform. The announcement is on our website, and I want to encourage all of you, if you have any candidates,

please encourage them to apply. All of the information is on the web. Thank you all for coming, and I hope we'll see you again soon.

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