THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

THE LINKS BETWEEN RELIGION, RADICALISM AND VIOLENCE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GRAND: Let me welcome everyone here. My name is Steve Grand, and I'm the Director of the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World which is housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

Thank you to all of you for joining us today. Please feel free to eat as we go through the program.

We are very pleased to have with us today, Dalia Mogahed, who is the Executive Director of The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. You, hopefully, as you came in or on your chair, had a more detailed bio of her. Also, to my left is Tom Pyszczynski who is a Professor of Psychology and Director of Human Factors Research at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

Together with terrorism expert, Jessica Stern, they have written a paper that looks to reexamine linkages between religion, radicalism and violence, using a multidisciplinary approach, Tom's

psychological experiments on terror management theory, Dalia's public opinion research at Gallup and Jessica's actual interviews with terrorists, and the result of that paper is going to be a chapter in the Oxford Handbook series, the Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity. Coming out?

MS. MOGAHED: Next year.

MR. GRAND: Next year at some point.

The program for today is quite simple. Tom and then Dalia will then present their research, and then we will open it up to questions and answers.

Tom?

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Thank you.

Well, it's great to be here. Thanks a lot for inviting us.

For starters, the ongoing, seemingly endless conflict between Islamic fundamentalists and Western powers raises some very interesting, maybe even mind-boggling, paradoxes. The idea of killing in the name of a god, who is fervently believed to be loving and merciful and who explicitly teaches compassion and

tolerance, is hard for a lot of us to fathom. So is the idea of a country that prides itself on freedom, liberty and basic human rights fighting terrorists by subjecting countries that are believed to harbor terrorists to military actions that produced hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties and subjecting people suspected of links to terrorist groups to detainment without trial, intentional humiliation and torture doesn't fit very well with some very core, basic values.

What I want to focus on today is some common forces that seem to be fueling support for violence on all sides of this conflict.

For starters, both terrorist and counterterrorist movements are deeply social and collective in nature. People are fighting not for themselves but for their people. Violence by both terrorists and counterterrorists becomes an altruistic act courageous heroism for the good of one's people, and specific instances in which one's people are attacked or humiliated are viewed as an attack on

one's own group. So when an individual is attacked or humiliated, this tends to be perceived as an attack on one's whole group.

It goes beyond one's whole group. It's one's whole culture that is often seen as under siege. It's not just the people but the beliefs and values and everything that gives life meaning within the culture is viewed as under attack. So, for example, bin Laden talks about the United States and the West as being involved in a crusaders' war on Islam, and Bush talks about the terrorists as attacking the entire civilized world, all democracies, because they hate freedom.

What's sad and tragic about this is that the approach that both sides are taking to help their people doesn't seem to be working. We're not any safer than we were before the War on Terror, and the people in the Muslim World are really not any better off.

Terrorist violence seems to work by creating a vicious cycle where terrorist attacks lead to more

aggressive counterterrorist attacks and military actions, which seem to justify the terrorists' beliefs about the Western powers who seem themselves as defending themselves, leading to more support for the terrorist acts, more of a sense of humiliation and injustice, and an ongoing cycle where each side's violent activities lead to further violent activities and confirm the worst beliefs we have about each other.

This tendency of violence to lead to violence or aggression to lead to aggression is something that social psychologists have been studying for the last 40 or 50 years with extremely well documented findings.

What I want to do today is deal with the question of what it is about groups and cultures, religions and nations, and the identity and self-esteem they provide that is so vital and worth fighting and dying for. To do that, we need a theory to organize our thinking, and I want to talk about some of the ideas that my colleagues and I have been

working on for the last 20 or so years.

Back in the mid-eighties, Jeff Greenberg and Sheldon Solomon and I developed a set of ideas that we called terror management theory. This is not a theory at all about terrorism. It's a theory that we developed to explain why people need many of the psychological entities that seem to drive their behavior. So when we got started, we were interested in understanding why people need self-esteem, why people need to believe that out of all the different ways of understanding the world, the thousands of different belief systems, theirs happens to be the one that's correct, and we wanted to understand how the need for self-esteem related to this need to be right and how these two needs related to the difficulties people have in getting along with each other.

Again, we chose the term, terror management theory, for reasons I think will be obvious in a minute, but I want you to, at the outset, realize that we weren't thinking about terrorism.

Basically, we started out with a

consideration of how humans are both similar to and different from other animals, and we though that, like all living things, humans want to stay alive. We're driven to preserve our lives, to keep going. This is a basic evolutionary adaptation that helped us survive long enough to reproduce. But we, of course, evolved a lot of other capacities, some of which are rather unique and different from other animals, most basic of these being our intelligence.

We can do things with our minds that no other animals can do. Our sophisticated intelligence presumably evolved because it gave us flexibility. It allowed us to survive and prosper in a wide range of environments and respond in a variety of ways to the challenges we encountered.

The downside of our intelligence, though, is it forced us to become aware that we're going to die someday, that death is absolutely inevitable, inescapable and could happen at any time for any number of reasons, none of which are particularly pleasant. So the idea really is that our desire for

life clashed with our knowledge of the inevitability of death to create the potential for overwhelming terror. We argue that unless humankind did something to deal with this problem of terror, fear of death, we wouldn't have been very successful.

Terror management suggests that humankind dealt with the problem of terror by using the same intellectual abilities that created the problem to solve it. We used it by recruiting our cultures, our belief systems, our understandings of reality to detoxify death and give life meanings that would make death less of a problem. What the theory suggests is that as our intelligence was evolving and as we were becoming aware that we had to die, the terror that this awareness created put a press on the belief systems, the ideas that we used to understand the world, such that any set of ideas of cultural world views that was going to be surviving and be accepted by the masses had to help us manage that terror.

Cultures do this in a variety of important ways. First of all, cultural world views provide a

basic theory of reality, an explanation for how the world works, how we got here, what we're here for, what's going to happen after we die.

Cultural world views also provide a set of standards of value that tell us what's good and bad. Once we have those standards of value, it becomes possible for human beings to be good people or bad people.

Cultures also provide us with some hope of immortality, either in a literal sense in the form of afterlife beliefs like heaven or reincarnation or nirvana, beliefs that tell us that death is only a stepping stone to something greater that happens after we die, or a symbolic sense of immortality that allows us to feel part of something bigger and greater and longer lasting than ourselves, so that by being an American, a Christian, a Muslim, a scientist, a member of the Brookings Institution, we become part of something that's bigger, more significant than ourselves that's going to live longer than us and persist long after we're gone.

The theory suggests that in order to get that protection, what we need to do is live up to the standards of value that are part of the culture, and that's what self-esteem is. Self-esteem is what we get when we believe in our cultural world view and believe that we're living up to the standards that are part of it.

The theory simply claims that the way we protect ourselves from the fear that is inherent in being human is believing in a cultural world view and believing that we're living up to the standards of value. That makes us a valuable participant in a meaningful world, and that quells our fears. That enables us to act in the world, in a world of uncertainty about everything except death in a way that gives us some hope.

Now the catch is that our world view, our beliefs and values and our sense of personal value are just ideas, and we have no way of knowing if they are really right. But for them to operate and protect us from the things we're afraid of, we have to believe

that they're actually true, that they're actually correct.

So what we do is we rely on other people's agreement. We depend on social consensus that when other people share our beliefs and agree with us, it makes us believe that we're correct. When other people see the world differently, it raises the possibility that we might not be correct and challenges the effectiveness of those structures for protecting us.

For example, I would very much like to believe that I'm making sense today. If people nod their heads and smile, I feel like I'm making sense, and I can go on with equanimity and not being afraid. But, on the other hand, if people are shaking their heads or throwing their food down or doing worse, it challenges my ability to believe that I'm making sense and leaves me quaking with fear. So please don't do that, all right?

Now the rub is that the mere existence of people with world views different from our own raises

the possibility that our world view might not be correct and threatens the ability of our world view to protect us. This is especially true when these others are powerful, when they're able to exert power over us and put us down and humiliate us and challenge our value. So they not only raise the possibility that our belief system is wrong, but they raise the possibility that we're not right. There's something wrong with us.

What people have done over the course of history when they've encountered people who are different is they've tried to convert them. They've tried to persuade them to join up, to join their world view. If they don't want to join, we put them down and view them as ignorant savages, nonbelievers, infidels, evil ones. If the threat is sufficiently strong enough, we'll go to war and we'll try and kill them to eliminate the threat that they pose.

As I said at the outset, this isn't a theory of terrorism. This is a theory about how cultural belief systems function in everyday life and how self-

esteem flows out of these belief systems and how self-esteem and cultural world views combine to quell our anxiety and fear.

After the September 11th attacks, we became aware that these ideas really did tell us some things about the crisis the world was facing. We began noticing that Americans seem to be behaving very much like research participants in our experiments, who are reminded of death and have their culture threatened.

We viewed 9/11 as a very powerful, double-barreled threat to American security. On the one hand, the terrorist attacks confronted us with vivid, powerful images of death as we imagined the plight of the people in those towers. We saw the films of people jumping to their deaths. We heard the sad stories of people who lost loved ones.

At the same time, we saw these attacks were aimed at major symbols of American military power, the Pentagon, American economic power, the World Trade Center. They were taken on by people who thought they were acting for the good of their people in the name

of their god, challenging our sense of moral superiority, and they shattered the illusion that horrible things like this can't happen here to people like us.

After the attacks, a lot of psychologists began talking about the 9/11 responses in terms of our theory, and the American Psychological Association asked us to write a book about this, which we did. It's called *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror*, where we lay out these ideas. Ever since then, I've been very involved in conducting research to assess some of these ideas.

Whereas the United States is facing a sort of acute cultural trauma, we think that people in the Middle East are facing a more chronic, long-term, slow, insidious form of culture trauma where their world view and sense of personal value is threatened, again in a context that's filled with death and destruction that creates the need for greater protection.

So we began doing experiments to test some

of these ideas. One of the first things we wanted to establish is that thoughts of terrorism activate thoughts of death. We found, for example, that you can present the letters, WTC, for World Trade Center or the numbers, 911, for 1/20th of a second, far too fast for people to perceive, and when you do that, death-related thoughts come closer to consciousness.

Not to get into the details but, for example, what we would ask people to do to measure the accessibility of death thoughts is we'd give them a word stem like COFF, blank, blank. How would you finish that?

COFFEE? Yes, but you might also come up with COFFIN, right?

When you see WTC or 911 outside of awareness, you get a lot more coffins, and we do this with a large number of words and a large number of distractors.

Studies in Britain show that newspaper reports about 9/11 or the July 7th terrorist attacks also increase death thought accessibility. Studies in

the Netherlands show the same things.

I was going to talk about the broad range of research that supports the basic ideas of the theory. In the interest of time, I'm going to skip over that, but let me just say that to date there have been over 350 studies in 16 different countries, including the United States, most of Europe, Israel, Iran, Turkey, Japan, China, Hong Kong and studies done with Australian aborigines, that support these basic ideas in a variety of ways that I think they are interesting. I want to just skip over that for now.

Let's look at some of the studies that we've done that have looked specifically at how this plays out in the context of the current conflict. One of the first things we notice was that shortly after the terrorist attacks, President Bush's popularity ratings practically doubled. In late October, early November of 2001, over 90 percent, some surveys suggested as much as 95 percent of Americans approved of him, which we thought was kind of interesting. We thought that might have something to do with his role as leader, as

a protective figure who was promoting the United States as an innocent victim being attacked by evil forces.

So we did some studies in which we assessed the popularity of President Bush, but before that we randomly assigned people to answer some controlled innocuous questions about going to the dentist, which is unpleasant but not going to kill you, about your own death or about the terrorist attack. What we find is that when people are reminded of either death or the terrorist attack, support for President Bush increased dramatically.

Interestingly, the effects of thinking about death are the same as the effects of thinking about a terrorist attack which suggests that that increase in popularity is not solely a rational response to a time of crisis. It’s partly driven by the fear activated by the problem of death.

We did a follow-up study in which we assessed the impact of reminders of death or the terrorist attacks on support for the use of extreme

military force in the War on Terror. By extreme military force, we mean very extreme military force including using nuclear weapons, using chemical weapons, preemptive wars against any country who we thought might threaten us in the future, accepting the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians in order to kill bin Laden.

What you see is when we remind people of death, conservatives respond with a very strong and significant increase in support for these extreme military measures, and reminders of terrorism do exactly the same thing. The difference between thoughts of death and terrorism don't exist. Liberals were unaffected here. Liberals don't seem to change their responses. I think that has to do with the differences in world views, a difference in ideologies that conservatives and liberals adopt.

Now around this time, I was contacted by an Iranian psychologist named Abdul Abdullah, who was interested in terror management theory for purely theoretical reasons. He was interested in whether

these ideas about the fear of death motivating political behavior would hold up in a culture where death is embraced. He said that when he asked people about dying, the typical response was I hope I die today so I can get to paradise sooner.

After exchanging emails, we realized that we had a lot of common, so we began doing studies assessing the effects of reminders of death on Iranian support for martyrdom missions to fight Americans. We did this study somewhat indirectly as we usually do. Basically, his research participants were randomly assigned to answer questions about either death or dental pain. Then they read an interview with a student at their university who either spoke out in favor of martyrdom missions, saying that it was a duty of all good Muslims to kill Americans, that Americans were the Great Satan, we were the evil ones and Allah wants us to destroy them or who spoke out in favor of peace, arguing that Islam is a peaceful religion, Americans have created problems for many people in the Middle East but we need to deal with them with

compassion and justice, and that killing is never justified.

Here are some pictures that Abdul sent me, which I thought are really interesting. These are pictures taken in Tehran of people signing up to become suicide bombers to fight Americans in Iraq. This is back a number of years ago, but we thought this was really strikingly because, at that time, there was really no country that was less popular in Iran than Iraq. Yet, once the United States attacked, many Iranians were signing up to get involved in suicide attacks to fight the Americans.

Here's what we found in the study. First of all, look at the blue bars. What you see is that in the absence of a death reminder in the control condition, people preferred the student who spoke against martyrdom in favor of peace. That is an encouraging message. This was about four years ago.

However, when reminded of death, support for the martyrdom position increased and support for the pacifist position decreased so that now there was a

clear and strong preference for someone who favored violent attacks against the United Stats. So the same induction, thinking simply about your own death, that led Americans to support extreme military tactics against the Middle East led Iranians to support martyrdom missions against the United States.

At the same time, an Israeli psychologist named Gilad Hirschberger was doing some studies in Israel based on the same ideas, and he was doing these studies in the months before the Gaza Strip was turned over to the Palestinians. He started with a measure of whether people believed this would really happen. Some people denied the possibility. They said this could never happen. Gaza is part of Israel. It always will be, always must be. There were other people who said, yes, that's likely. It was probably strongly associated with political orientation.

Participants were reminded of death, and their belief in the justification of using military force against the Palestinians was assessed. Here's what Hirschberger found: Among the low denial

participants, the people who said, yes, we're going to give Gaza over and that's okay, the death reminder doesn't do anything. But among the high deniers, being reminded of death led to a large increase in support for violent resistance against the Palestinians.

Since then, he's done a parallel study looking at support for preemptive nuclear attacks on Iran, and when Israelis are reminded of death and also reminded of some of the Iranian President's fiery rhetoric against Israel, support for preemptive nuclear attacks increases.

Now what we're finding then is that the United States and Iran and Israel thinking about death or death-related topics, such as terrorism and war, increases support for violent solutions to the struggle. The fact that thoughts of one's own death do the same thing as thoughts of terrorism, and the fact that thoughts of terrorism make death-related thoughts come closer to consciousness suggests that a lot of this response is driven by the fear that death

creates. This sits very well with the terror management theory idea that defending one's culture is what we do when we need protection from the fear of death.

We think there is some amazing consistency here, but this is a sort of dark message. We're showing ways to increase support for war.

The question arises whether war and violence is an inevitable response to fear. Terror management theory says it's not necessary the case. The idea is that people from different cultures threaten our faith in the validity of our own world view, and that pushes us to want to fight against them, but almost all cultures also have values that emphasize the goodness of compassion and tolerance and peace.

We wanted to look to see what would happen if you remind people of those values. So we looked at a series of ways of trying to reverse this tendency of people to respond to fear with support for violence. The first thing we looked at is the impact of compassionate religious values.

The first study was done here in the United States with my graduate student, Zachary Rothchild. We looked at Christian compassionate values, and we did a study looking at the effects of death reminders on support for extreme military violence. One of the first things we found is that religious fundamentalism is strongly associated with support for violence. The more fundamentalist a person is in the United States, the more they tend to support war and the more willing they are to accept many, many civilian casualties on the other side.

But there is an exception to this general rule, and that is if you remind these fundamentalist Christians of the core teachings of their religion, if you first expose them to quotes from the New Testament where Jesus talked about turning the other cheek and let he who is without sin cast the first stone and loving your enemy. When you prime these compassionate values and remind people of death, you find something very different.

First of all, if you look over on the right-

hand side, the high fundamentalists, you'll see stronger support for war. In the neutral value condition, when fundamentalists are reminded of death, their support for war increases.

The really interesting exception to that general trend, though, is if you look at the far left among the high fundamentalists who are reminded of compassionate Christian values, the death reminder decreases their support for war. This is because what people need to do to protect themselves is both convince themselves that their values are right and live up to the standards that are part of those values.

Here, we're finding that although high fundamentalists typically support more aggressive stances than low fundamentalists in the United States, when high fundamentalists are reminded of the compassionate teachings of their religion and death, it shifts them away from support for war.

Our next step was to see if this would also hold true in Iran, so we did a follow-up study in Iran

where we presented parallel compassionate values that were taken from the Quran. We presented these values either as Quranic verses just as they were or we paraphrased them as non-religious values that some people support.

Participants were randomly assigned to read one set of values or the other. They fill out a questionnaire that asks them about death or pain, and then their support for extreme policies against the West and anti-Western attitudes was assessed.

What you see is that when the values are presented in a non-religious context, death reminders increase the support for anti-Western attitudes and support for violence against the West. However, that effect is completely reversed when those values are presented in a religious context. Reminding Iranian Shiite Muslims of death and compassionate Islamic values leads to less anti-Western values and attitudes and less support for hostility against the West.

We next looked at the possible impact of another value that’s inherent in most religions, a

sense that we're all human beings, that we're all children of the same god, that we're all part of a grander, larger human family. We tried to activate a sense of shared humanity, and we did this in our first study by simply showing pictures of families from around the world. All the pictures, well, in the first group, the common humanity group, we showed pictures of families from diverse nations, not including the Middle East. We also showed a control group, pictures of American families or neutral pictures of just people in groups.

These people were reminded of death, and then we assessed anti-Arab prejudice with a rather sophisticated measure of unconscious attitudes. It has to do with how easy it is to associate the concept Arab with positive and negative words. It's called the Implicit Associations Test. I could talk about how it works for about an hour, but let's not do that. I'll just show you what we found.

In the neutral and American family conditions, reminders of death increase anti-Arab

prejudice. When reminded of common humanity, reminders of death decrease anti-Arab prejudice.

We followed this study up with a replication in which we created a sense of common humanity in a different way. We asked people to read about favorite childhood memories of either Americans or people from around the world: thinking about going to the beach with grandpa, going to the store with my mom, and things like that. If it was presented as coming from people from diverse cultures, it had the same effect. Activating a sense of common humanity led people to respond to fear with less support for violence.

Let me wrap things up. Just to conclude, what terror management theory suggests is that a lot of human conflict is rooted in the threats to our cultural world view and self-esteem that are opposed by people who are different. We need these psychological structures to protect us from fears that are very basic to being human. War and terrorism are very powerful reminders of death. So it’s very much to expected that when war and terrorism are in the

media and in the air, people are going to need this protection, cling more to their world views and be more hostile towards people who are different.

Our research in the United States, Israel and Iran suggests that many of the same psychological forces that lead us to support war, lead people on the other side to support terrorism. Although the forces are manifested in different ways and although the cultures are threatened from different perspectives, the underlying dynamic of fear leading to clinging to the culture, leading to hostility towards those who are different is very similar.

But, luckily, what we know about the way these cultural systems work is that in order to feel secure, we also need to live up to the values of our culture. All cultures have values of peace and compassion and tolerance. Our research shows that when people are reminded of these values in our laboratory studies, it reverses the way people react to fear.

So the challenge now is to develop ways of

bringing these values to the forefront. Obviously, we cannot, as Americans, broadcast messages of peace and tolerance to people in the Middle East and expect them to listen. These are the kinds of messages that are going to be followed when they come from people on the inside.

But at least what we're finding is that the violence promoting consequences of fear are not inevitable, and there is hope for reversing them with compassionate religious values, construing people as sharing a common humanity, being part of the same species, the same group and also studies that I didn't talk about but reminding people of close relationships with families, which I think are related to both of those.

Let me stop now and either turn it over for questions or turn it over to Dalia.

MS. MOGAHED: Okay. It's really great being here, and I'm very happy I was able to go second because I get to build on some of what we just heard. I'm going to just talk from my notes. I won't use

another PowerPoint.

What I want to talk to you about today is research that The Gallup Organization has done around the world. We are in more than 30 majority Muslim countries. Actually, we're in almost 140 countries globally. My focus is majority Muslim countries as well as Muslim populations in the West at the Center for Muslim Studies.

What I wanted to do is to share with you some of the analysis we did in trying to build a theory from the ground up of what leads to public support or public sympathy for terrorism. As an initial analysis, we sought to find differences between those who condone terrorist acts and the vast majority who condemn them. There are essentially two questions. We asked about 9/11 and whether or not it was morally justified on a five-point scale, and we also looked at anti-American sentiment.

So we labeled this group, simply, the High Conflict Group. They are about 7 percent globally that believe 9/11 was completely justified and also

have unfavorable views of the United States. Now it's important to note that we are not saying the 7 percent are radical or are, in fact, themselves, terrorists, but this is just where we find public support for or public sympathy for terrorism. It's important to see what differentiated them from the majority who thought 9/11 was not justified.

I'm just going to explain highlights from our research so that we can have a lot of time for questions and answers, and I'm going to start with what the High Conflict Group actually had in common with the rest of the populations. First, this question of the hatred of freedom, no, the High Conflict Group did not hate freedom. In fact, they were slightly more likely to say that democracy will help Muslims' progress.

So, some examples of respondents talking about what they admired most about the West, and this was across the board: A respondent from Saudi Arabia said that what he admired most was freedom of the press, opinion and expression, also scientific

advancement.

In Iran, a respondent talked about social justice and having access to nuclear power was what he admired most about the West as well as real democracy.

In Pakistan, someone talked about law is above all and everyone observes the law.

You notice no one is actually using the word, democracy, but in many ways explaining the fundamentals of the idea.

Finally, in Morocco, liberty and freedom and being open-minded with each other was what this woman from Morocco admired most about the West.

Secondly, we looked at joblessness, and this was again not a differentiator. So the High Conflict Group and the majority were as likely to be employed.

We looked at optimism, hopelessness for the future, again, not a differentiator. In fact, the High Conflict Group was slightly more likely to be optimistic than the general population. They were also as likely to say that better relations with the West was a personal concern.

Unfortunately, everyone was as likely to have a sense of humiliation. So this was actually not a differentiator. There was a widespread sense that Islam is disrespected and degraded by the West and that Muslims are seen as inferior.

So, some verbatim responses: “A whole lobby of the West is working against Muslims and damaging our image. They should stop and respect Islamic values.”

“The West has to change and moderate their attitudes toward Muslims. They have to not look down on our people.” This was a response from someone in Morocco.

In Lebanon, someone said, “Don’t classify all Arabs as terrorists. Protest against any defiling of the Quran and punish those who do so like those in Guantanamo jail.”

Some others, very quickly, from Lebanon: “They should consider us as humans and should end war and be at peace with the Muslim World.”

These kinds of responses were very common, a

deep sense of being looked down upon and a sense of humiliation.

Finally, another aspect that was, in fact, not a differentiator -- this is something that the two groups had in common -- was a high degree of religiosity. The High Conflict Group was no more likely to be religious than the general population. Both groups were very religious. So, for example, when asked, what do you admire most about the Muslim World, Muslim respondents would talk about Islamic values, people's beliefs, traditions, the Quran and its teachings, that there's no racial attitudes of Islamic people. These are verbatim responses. Then they also talked about family values.

But religion is what across the board people felt Islam was their society's greatest asset. It was their adherence to their spiritual and moral values is crucial to their progress. This statement was the most frequently associated statement with the Muslim World, even higher than moving toward greater democracy. Over and over, people expressed that not

only was Islam important to them personally as a spiritual force in their lives, but that it was essential for their society to adhere to its principles in order to progress.

Now what was actually different about the High Conflict Group? This is where our research and the research that Tom just spoke about really has some striking similarities. A sense of threat, the High Conflict Group was more likely to feel threatened by the West, in general, but really by the United States, in particular.

For example, we asked people what their greatest fear was for their country. In the general population, the majority talked about issues of personal concern like inflation, joblessness, economic problems. The High Conflict Group, their most frequent response, not that they weren't worried about inflation and other things, but it just didn't come up as frequently as U.S. domination or U.S. occupation in places like Morocco where there's essentially almost no threat of U.S. occupation.

They have a sense of being dominated, being under siege, a lack of autonomy, so they're much more likely to disagree that the United States will allow people in the region to form their own political future. Not that the general population necessarily is in strong agreement that the U.S. will allow them, it's only that it's more intense among the High Conflict Group.

They also have a lack of faith in the good will of the West. So while they are as likely to say that better relations with the West is a personal concern, they are less likely to believe that the West cares or is committed to better relations with them.

They also have a lack of faith that a time will ever come when things will be better. They not only believe that the West doesn't care, but they have a sense of skepticism and hopelessness not in their own personal life but in the relationship with the West ever improving.

Now as far as their demographics, interestingly, they were slightly more likely to be

educated and affluent than the general population, but yet their concerns were what we might call meta-concerns. They were concerns on behalf of their people, this idea of an altruistic fight not for yourself but for a greater identity, a meta-identity. When we see this data that they're more likely to be educated and affluent, it doesn't necessarily discount the possibility that they are still angered by socioeconomic problems within their own country.

Other research, Mark Kessler, for example, found that the two things that differentiated the High Conflict Group, which confirmed some of what we found, was their perception of U.S. foreign policy and their perception of their own domestic policy or the corruption of their own regimes.

Basically, they think of themselves as acting on behalf of others who are less fortunate perhaps. One interesting finding is that they were actually more likely to be supervisors at their work, similar to this idea of acting on behalf of others in a sort of meta type context.

Now I can stop here if we can just open the floor.

Basically, to sum up, the High Conflict Group is not so much motivated by religious beliefs as they are by the perception of being under threat. So, in some select countries, we asked a follow-up question after the 9/11 question, where we simply asked everyone, why do you say that? Just curious, why do you say that?

What we found, for example in Indonesia, is that those who said that 9/11 was not justified gave both humanitarian, very similar to this idea of compassion, humanitarian or religious justifications for why it was wrong. So they talked about the death of innocents. They talked about the loss of human life, and they also religious verses, verses from the Quran that talk about the death of one person is as if you've killed all of humanity. They cited religious teachings that teach compassion or are against murder or that kind of violence.

Whereas the High Conflict Group, when asked

the same question, why do you say that, only cited basically their own perceptions of geopolitical dynamics. They talked about the United States as an imperialist power. They talked about the United States as trying to control and colonize the world. Not a single respondent in Indonesia actually cited religious teachings at all in their justification for why 9/11 was completely justified.

In summation, our data indicates that what really is driving sympathy for terrorist acts is neither personal situations of poverty or piety but rather a perception of politics.

MR. GRAND: Thank you both, Dalia and Tom, for some very interesting and thought-provoking presentations.

If I may, I want to start with a question for both of you. It seems to me that we're not just talking about one world view but really world views and how people with particular world views react to threats in one way or another.

Tom, in some of your data, I'm struck by the

difference between liberals and conservatives or, in the Iranian case, the difference between those that were pro-martyrdom and those that were anti-martyrdom. There was sort of a split in how they reacted that suggests that both in the United States and in Iran there might be not one world view but two world views that led to very different consequences when these people felt to be under threat.

In the case of your data on the Muslim World, it maybe breaks down a little bit differently, maybe more along socioeconomic lines. I don't know if there's one world view or several world views, but certainly one could argue that this High Conflict Group has a world view that they hold much more strongly than the rest and a certain socioeconomic status that's sort of in between that's neither the elite but neither the poor. It's a political response of a middle class.

As I've been thinking about this relationship between the U.S. and Muslim World, I have gone back to Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style*

of American Politics and Seymour Martin Lipset's *The Politics of Unreason*, which is some ways, I think, relate back to your work. I've been reading a little bit of Barrington Moore, thinking about how people respond to injustice and when people disobey and when people revolt. That certainly holds up in your research.

I wonder if either of you want to respond to that.

MS. MOGAHED: I can start. It's interesting that you do mention Barrington Moore because I think that some of his work can very easily be applied to the data that we're finding. Essentially, what he says is that the perception of injustice will make people revolt only when they believe that that injustice is not inevitable. So, essentially, there has to be a certain level of self-esteem to revolt.

That's exactly what we're finding, that those who are in this High Conflict Group are more likely to be supervisors, are more likely to be educated, and so the perception of injustice is

perceived as not inevitable.

Tying into Tom's research about this idea of self-esteem, self-esteem is a double-edged sort as I'm understanding it. In some cases, you're pushed to justify violence to protect your self-esteem, but at the same time you can actually use that same self-esteem belief to live up to standards of compassion. Right now, what is dominating among this group is that self-esteem is pushing them toward this idea of revolt because they do not believe it's what they deserve.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Yes, I agree completely. From very early on, we've realized that each individual has their own version of the cultural world view that is a distillation or integration of all the ideas and experiences they've had over the course of their lives. So, within any culture, there are a variety of world views that people are exposed to, and each individual develops their own which becomes their basis of security.

What we're realizing more now is how complex individual world views are, that world views contain

many, many elements, some that might point in one way, some that might point in another. For example, we might believe that it's important to be strong and protect ourselves when attacked, but we simultaneously believe in tolerance and compassion.

I think what our research is showing now is that it depends on which aspect of a world view is brought to the forefront, which part of the world view is activated or primed or put online when the person is going to behave. People will typically respond with hostility when they're afraid towards people who are different because that difference reminds them of the possibility that their world view might not be the right one, not at a conscious level, but it's sort of gut thing that when we see someone who disagrees with us, it opens the door to realizing there are other possibilities that we typically shun by viewing them as bad or evil or stupid.

At the same time, world views that are rooted in long cultural histories and religions typically involve values of compassion and tolerance

and peace in both Islam and Christianity and all religions, I believe. When those values are activated, those will come to the fore.

So the question, I guess, becomes which elements of the world view become the central focus for getting security?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Is it okay to ask a short question for each? Okay, thanks.

For Professor Pyszczynski, one of the interesting data points in your presentation was the photograph of people signing to be suicide bombers, to go from Iran into Iraq to become suicide bombers. So that raises the question in my mind, is it possible that in some cases the reaction of fear and hostility is motivated not by an assault against one's cultural values or self-esteem but because somebody is trying to kill you?

And for Dalia, I wanted to ask if you could just talk for a moment about the practical conditions of doing polling in Muslim countries today, issues of government control or social control or courtesy bias

or things like that. Are people telling you what they really think? Can you operate freely? Does that differ greatly from one country to another and how do you get around those difficulties? Thank you.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. I was thinking when Tom was talking, you've demonstrated that it works with people but the real question is will it work with rats?

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: No, it won't.

QUESTIONER: What I was thinking about, I was trying to simplify a lot of data and new terms, et cetera, et cetera, and here's what I did. I'm going to pose it as what I took away. I don't mean the only thing but really to see if I got it or if I missed it.

That is if I had to go outside and say to some people, I just listened to this psychologist talk about this subject matter, and here's what he said. How we talk about these things matters.

The second thing that I thought about, and it's certainly not a new idea but the difference between Franklin Roosevelt after Pearl Harbor and

George Bush after 9/11, that rhetoric matters, that how you talk about these things matters.

Beyond that, just listening to both of you, it occurred to me. I don't mean this. I sort of want to put politics aside. But I've been thinking isn't it interesting, maybe wrong, but isn't it interesting that one could arguably describe in our world, not the world that Dalia was talking about, not the sample that Dalia was talking about, that George Bush is sort of an American version of the High Conflict Group, and that says a lot about the way he and, therefore, his administration has responded to terror.

I'll stop by saying, and I find it really interesting that among the first things that Admiral Mullen has done, becoming the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is to dictate to the J-5 and everybody else the term, Global War on Terror, is no longer to be used.

QUESTIONER: When 9/11 happened, I was living in Syria, so I was in the Islamic World. One of the initial reactions I found both interesting and

troubling, which was Muslims couldn't have done it or Arabs couldn't have done it because we don't have that level of sophistication to pull off such a thing, which would seem to reflect, besides denial, a lot of low self-esteem.

But here we are, six years on. Bin Laden -- I'm sorry -- the Egyptian deputy of bin Laden, they've basically taken credit for it, and there still seems to be a tremendous amount of denial about these things. Is there anything in your research that casts light on why this is?

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: I'm not sure what you mean by denial.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible) unless you don't believe that Arab Muslims were the guys that carried out the hijacking of the planes that crashed into the Pentagon or into the World Trade Center, you're denying that basically your culture, people from your culture, people from your religious group were the actual perpetrators of these acts. I'm trying to understand why to this day.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Yes, the idea that the Mossad did it or that Bush had something to do with it and the conspiracy theorists.

QUESTIONER: But it's very widespread at this point.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Okay, so going back to the beginning, yes, definitely I emphasize the impact that threats to culture and meaning systems and value and self-esteem have and the role that those things play in protecting us from death. Of course, it's also true that we need to protect ourselves from death in a direct way, so that if we feel that we are going to be killed only to fight as well.

The interesting thing about those Iranian pictures, though, is those were taken in early 2002. Those were taken before there was any really strong talk about the United States coming against Iran. We were talking about going into Afghanistan, and there were the beginnings of the talk about Iraq. That was all happening before the United States was, well, you could argue about whether we were a direct threat to

Iran back then, but those weren't recent photos.

I like showing those just because it showed how really early on. I don't know about the majority of Iranians. No one really knows because polling doesn't happen there.

MS. MOGAHED: We do have data on Iran.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: You do have data? Okay.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: What I just wanted to say was this was really to make the point that, here, people were responding, were ready to take up arms and fight side by side with their enemies. The Iranians were one of the groups that Saddam actually did gas. Okay, so that was really the point of that.

But I certainly agree that actual threat is part of it too. What I'm arguing is that there's more to it. Certainly, American support for harsh tactics in the War on Terror is partly motivated by thinking that that's a correct and useful and efficacious response to the threat, but what our data suggests is that there's more to it than that. Just bringing up

death outside of awareness will produce similar shifts in that direction.

Going back to the question about rhetoric and how we talk about it matters, I think that's a very nice summary or implication to draw from these ideas, that a lot of this is a war of ideas, a war of meanings.

There were some studies done in Israel recently not looking at anything particularly subtle but showing that thinking about death leads to increased support for preemptive nuclear attack on Iran when people are reminded of the president's comments about the Holocaust being a hoax and decreased support for war against Iran and preemptive nuclear attacks when the leader's rhetoric is focused on there's room for all of us here in the Middle East. Occasionally, the Iranian Government has made those statements.

One of the things that's especially complicated about the Iranian Government is they've said so many things over the years, and that's

certainly true of probably all governments, talking about hopes for peace while at the same time rattling sabers. But these Israeli studies show that fear directs people towards supporting war or supporting peace depending on which elements of the leader's rhetoric are activated.

We've done studies in the United States, looking at the impact of rhetoric about good and evil, about a war on freedom. Of course, those things too, the way the problem is framed by leaders makes tremendous difference in the way the populace responds.

Dalia, do you want to take a few and I'll come back?

MS. MOGAHED: Sure, first to talk about the practical conditions of polling in countries that have authoritarian governments such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt or Iran. Now we haven't been able to go into Syria. Hopefully, that's something we can do in the near future. But we have gone into places like the countries I just listed as well as Tunisia-Algeria

which actually cut the most questions of any country, which was very interesting, as well as Yemen and some other countries, Pakistan, that would be considered hard to work in.

The science of polling, I'll just start with our methodology of how we select our respondents. All our interviews are in-home and face to face. They're not in coffee shops. They're not outside which is supposed to, studies show, lessen the possibility of people answering out of fear, answering out of social pressure. So there is that. They're not over the phones, so they're not worried about phone-tappings and those kinds of things. That should help.

We also have same gender interviewers. There's always a team of a man and a woman. If the woman is randomly selected from the household, then she talks to the woman interviewer and so on.

We go to great lengths to make sure that no one is excluded because of, say, literacy. Our interviews are not administered on paper. They're all interviewing verbally. If there is ever something

like a one to five scale, there's a numeric as well as a picture type indicator of what that means.

All our samples are nationwide representative. We have urban as well as rural sampling. Most of our costs, in fact, go into transportation to go out to rural and hard-to-get-to places to make sure everyone has a chance at being interviewed or has a greater than zero chance of being selected in our sample. So I feel good about our sample rigor.

Now what about questions that are sensitive? Well, there are a couple of ways that we can try to get a reality check on whether or not we're really getting something close to an honest response. We have something we just simply call a corruption index in our core questionnaire, and that is some questions on people's perception of corruption, corruption in government, corruption in business. The question is simply: Is corruption widespread in government, yes or no; is corruption widespread in business, yes or no; and some other corruption indicators.

Basically, our corruption index is about perception, and we compare that to Transparency International's Corruption Index. There is about a correlation of like .7 to .8 which is really very high for public perception versus hard measures. That gives me, at least, some assurance that people are being somewhat honest even about something that might be seen as politically sensitive such as talking about their perception of corruption.

The other thing we try to do to get at people's perception is to ask questions in a somewhat indirect way, but also we don't start with the really hard questions. There's a process of building rapport and trust with the respondent, where we're asking about very kind of boring things in the beginning and then we build up to some of the more politically sensitive issues.

The other thing that's interesting is that other polling firms who have gone into the same countries with a different sampling frame have come back with very similar results. So there is a

reliability in the results. For example, Egypt, we asked about democracy. We've got 80 percent of Egyptians saying moving toward greater democracy will help Muslims' progress.

PIPA or GlobeScan went in and talked about is democracy something that can work here, and they've got 80 percent that said so, or 81. I mean a very similar percentage even though the question was slightly different and the sampling frame was different. So there are several different factors that help us to have a degree of confidence in our data.

Now the other thing that is important to understand is that we actually have to work with the security officials to get the questionnaire approved and so, in some cases, there are questions that are cut from our questionnaires. For example, in Egypt, we were not allowed to ask about whether or not people would favor the right of free assembly if they were going to draft their own constitution for a new country. We were allowed to ask about the right of

free speech and the right of freedom of religion but not the right of freedom or assembly or freedom of association. That's just one example of something that was cut.

But so far, we've been able to get enough in and have developed a methodology where we feel that our data is sound.

The second issue is the denial of 9/11. You're absolutely right; there is high degree of people who do not believe the official story. Now we actually asked that question. Gallup went into nine predominantly Muslim countries in 2001, almost in November, and asked the official stories that 19 Arab hijackers attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, do you believe this, and the vast majority said no.

We asked them a follow-up question where we asked, well, who do you think did it, and what actually gets missed is that the bulk of the responses were I don't know. Certainly, people talked about the Mossad and the U.S. Government themselves did it, but

that was actually not the majority. For that follow-up question, the greatest number of people actually said the plurality was that they simply didn't know.

Then some people, strangely enough, said al-Qaeda in the follow-up question which was kind of strange in that they thought it wasn't these 19 guys, but it was really al-Qaeda in some other indirect way. I don't get it, but essentially it's not that everyone thinks that it was the Jews did it and so forth. Certainly, some people do, but the majority simply doesn't know.

The second piece of that is, yes, the continued denial is interesting, but anyone who has been to the Middle East and has spent some time there knows that people just do not have faith in official stories of any kind about anything, and this was an official story. It was a government story. That's all it was. It was the U.S. Government said this is who did it, and no one has ever been able to independently verify it except for bin Laden admitting it, which could have been fabricated. I mean these

videos can be made on computers. People have stories about everything.

The issue is that people have so little faith in anything that looks like an official story about anything, especially a government source.

Then the other piece is, yes, they do not believe that Muslims could have pulled it off, and it is a sense of complete low self-esteem. When we ask people what do you admire most about the Muslim World, they talk about Islam and its teachings. When we ask them what do you admire least about the Muslim World, and it was things like the lack of economic and technological development, political corruption and so forth.

So there is this sense of how could people from our part of the world have done this to powerful America, and then there's also the sense of America is this almost omnipotent. It's almost, I won't say godlike but all-powerful, that couldn't have had something like that done to it by Muslims.

That's the data that we have on the denial

of 9/11. I think I answered the questions I got.

QUESTIONER: Actually, Ted preempted my question, but I'll do it as a follow-up. If indeed, as you suggest, a majority of Muslims do not believe that Muslims actually did it, al-Qaeda did it, and many believe that Mossad did it, then how does it affect the question, was it justified?

Obviously, anything the Mossad did could not have been justified, so how does it affect the research?

MS. MOGAHED: That's a good question.

MR. GRAND: Let's collect a couple of questions because we're running short on time. Mike Kager was next and then Adam.

QUESTIONER: It seems to me the great hope of these two presentations is that there is a message that can be utilized (Inaudible.)

Why have those voices been muted over the past few years and what would it take to get those voices in an ascendant position?

QUESTIONER: Well, let me just assume that

the data is right even though I'm skeptical of lots of survey techniques that I haven't been privy to the details of.

That said, in the first presentation, one of the things that struck me as you were talking is that your research focuses on sort of mass reactions, the reaction of the average person to questions, and that's valuable. When political leaders make decisions, on the other hand, one hopes that they don't make them off the top of their heads, that they think through rather than just think about or flash on a subject.

So I'm wondering what the relevance might be, what you think the relevance might be of your methodology, not for determining general attitudes about subjects but for determining what leadership may think. It being understood, I think, from all the literature on political psychology that there are different personality types in the world, and the people who tend to become political leaders are a special group, to put it mildly.

That leads, in a way, to the question that I want to ask to Ms. Mogahed. I was fascinated by your description of which variables seemed to explain the variance of the 7 percent and which do not, a fascinating, fascinating list. But what you've done, obviously, and what you do is you've established correlations, but correlations are obviously not causes.

I'm wondering if you have thought through or have at least a tentative sense of what the causal narrative might be that explains your data on those points.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible) and cultures, but yet the violence and certain types of violence, suicide bombing, for instance, is concentrated in some very specific populations. I was wondering if you're not missing something important.

MR. GRAND: Last question.

QUESTIONER: Dr. Pyszczynski, I hope I pronounced that correctly. In your talk, you were talking about the fact that shared values do exist

across cultures which is a good starting point really. So my question is: Are there any solutions? I mean what measures should be taken perhaps maybe by the West, specifically the U.S., to try and end the cycle of violence and try and move forward as one humanity, one shared world? Thank you.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Well, let me leave that. That's a great concluding question. So let's hopefully come back to that towards the end.

The question about studying average persons' reactions, our thinking there is that, yes, we're not studying terrorists and we're not studying world leaders, but terrorist organizations and politicians depend on public opinion for support.

On the terrorist side of things, many people have argued that one of the problems with the U.S. policies in the Middle East right now is that for every terrorist that gets killed a thousand more are created. We can't win and defeat this problem simply by killing all the terrorists because by going in and killing terrorists, we also kill innocent people which

radicalizes other people to become terrorists. On the one hand, the masses, understanding the opinions of the masses, we think is very important.

I would never argue that it's not also important to understand terrorists' personality, dynamics and the organizational factors so those can be fought, but that approaching this problem without considering the impact of our policy on the average people in the countries we are dealing with is a horrible mistake in the sense that I agree with the many people who have argued that our policies have played into al-Qaeda's hands and done a wonderful job in radicalizing people.

I think this is also true in the West, that although to some extent, once selected, political leaders can do what they do, and there is much more to be known about guiding, understanding political leaders' decision-making. Appealing to the masses and staying in power is important to them. So we'd argue that's part of the story at least.

Going to the question of -- this is one that

was really directed towards Dalia -- causes and correlations, I would just add that I think that one of the things that's lacking and I think that when Dalia and I collaborate with Jessica Stern, what we're trying to do is we're bring diverse methods together to attack the same problem.

One of the advantages of Dalia's approach is that she's assessing representative samples of big groups of people and is therefore able to make statements, make reasonable estimates about what people in those regions believe and value, but causal inference is not a strength of that approach. Causal inference is a strength of the experimental approach, but we have the complementary problem of generality. So we're hoping that by working together, we can bring the strengths of the various methods together. I'm pretty sure any scientist would agree that no single method is going to answer a problem, that what you need is people approaching problems from diverse perspectives.

Do you want to take a couple and we'll come

back?

MS. MOGAHED: Let me answer the question about the fact that if you believe that either you don't know who committed the acts of 9/11 or you might even the Mossad did it, that of course anything the Mossad would do would be morally unacceptable. Let me explain in what context the question was put and then hopefully that will help answer the question about this issue.

We had a long list of different issues. The introduction stem was there are different aspects that people have different opinions on, their moral acceptability. Here's a list of things, and please let us know what you think in terms of their moral acceptability.

So we start out like divorce and not living in harmony with people who differ from your beliefs and enforcing your opinion on your children, sort of neutral type things. Then we ask about dying, sacrificing your life for a cause you believe in. Then we ask about the attacks of 9/11 on the World

Trade Center and the Pentagon. We don't say by anyone, just the fact that they were attacks. After that, we actually ask about attacks in which civilians are targets.

Now what's interesting is that the attacks of 9/11 have more support than attacks on civilians in general, which would lead one to conclude, I think, that in general attacks on civilians are not accepted. In fact, Muslims are more likely to say attacks on civilians in general are wrong in some countries more likely than the American public is to condemn that, but then you've got 7 percent who say the 9/11 attacks are justified, just slightly more support.

I think that would indicate that people are looking at that in terms of an attack on the United States. If people were saying that it wasn't okay simply because they believe the Mossad did it, then it would seem that you would have more support for the general attacks on civilians than the 9/11 attacks. That's one thing to keep in mind.

There were several questions about why are

moderate voices being muted, and I think we have to always ask the question, who is muting them or in which way are they being muted? I think I would use the example of one of the most famous religious teachers in the Arab World, Amr Khaled.

Amr Khaled, he has a new show broadcast on four satellite called Call to Coexistence, which is talking about the tradition of compassion in the Islamic world view, and he has 40 million viewers. So his voice is not muted, and he is in fact extremely popular. His web site exceeded Oprah.com as the number one personal web site in the world, not the Arab World but the world. It's the number one site.

Someone who is explicitly saying suicide bombings are wrong and explicitly saying that it's about we have to work towards coexistence in general as a global human family and especially addressing Muslim Arabs is actually being heard. He was actually recognized by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

I think when we talk about voices being

muted, we have to ask which media outlets aren't hearing some of these voices.

Now the issue about causal and correlation, you're absolutely right. With statistical data to actually claim causality, what you need to do is have a control and you have to change the conditions and see if things change. All we can do is say all else being equal, here are the things that correlate, and that's what we've done. So those correlations are the things that I indicated, and so Tom's work can help push that to the next level.

MR. PYSZCZYNSKI: Let me just add a couple thoughts about conspiracies. Just extrapolating a little bit from what social psychologists have studied, people tend to be more accepting of mysterious and supernatural answers when they are either frightened as in the case when reminders of death increase people's belief in a variety of paranormal experiences, not only religious ones, just things that are sort of beyond the ordinary. Other research in other areas shows that when people feel

helpless, out of control and like there's nothing they can do, powerless, they again will look to other authorities.

I think one of the things that you see in both Middle East and the Western World is tremendous distrust of leaders. There's a long history of American politicians telling us things that were not true. In recent years, we've seen many, many statements by our leaders being directly contradicted by later evidence, by later indisputable things when it was clear the leaders knew otherwise.

MR. GRAND: Sorry to cut you off there, but we should wrap up.

Let me just thank Dalia and Tom for their contributions today and to thank everyone for joining us for what I thought was an interesting discussion.

(Applause)

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