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PROJECT ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH  
THE ISLAMIC WORLD

*ANCIENT RELIGIONS, MODERN POLITICS:*  
A COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION OF ISLAMIC  
TRADITION AND REVIVALISM

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

MR. McCANTS: Okay, everyone. We'll go ahead and get started. Welcome. I have the great pleasure today to introduce Professor Michael Cook, a Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

Aside from his career highlights of being my Dissertation Advisor, and sharing a faculty lounge with Mike Doran, Professor Cook is this year's recipient of the prestigious Holberg Prize, which is a major academic prize given out by the Norwegian Parliament. And he's the past recipient of the Andrew Mellon Foundation's Distinguished Achievement Award.

I've asked Professor Cook to come and speak with us today about his new book, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics*, in which he argues that the Medieval Islamic heritage shapes modern Muslim politics in some unique ways.

Professor Cook will speak for about 10 to 15 minutes, and then Michael Doran, who is Robert Hertog Senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, will act

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as discussant, and then we'll open it up to questions and answers. Please join me in welcoming Professor Michael Cook. (Applause)

MR. COOK: Thank you very much for being here. I know what it -- I don't know what it's like in Washington, I just assumed it's a whole lot busier than being in Princeton, so I really appreciate the fact that you've come.

The book that I'm going to say a few words about, actually, sort of, has its origin in a course that Mike and I taught at Princeton, back in 2002, and we gave it the name, something like, *The Historical Roots of the Bin Laden Phenomenon*, does that sound right, Michael?

MR. DORAN: Yeah.

MR. COOK: And we divided things up, and I was basically responsible for the heritage, and he was responsible for the current events. And at a certain point, I gave a -- I attempted to give a comparative lecture, in which I ran the Islamists against the Hindu Nationalists, and the Latin American

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Liberationists, you know, to see if I could come up with anything of interest or significance. And I would hate to think that any of the students who heard that lecture remembered any of it. And I think I would find it extremely embarrassing if they did.

But nevertheless, I got sufficiently interested in that comparative venture, that I had one of those thoughts that academics often have that, you know, this could be an interesting book, but I'm also, as well as being an academic, I'm a realist. And I therefore said to myself, but not in this life. But then something unexpected happened, I got that Mellon Award, and the freed up a lot of research time for me, unexpected research time, and that's how I came to be able to write that book in this life, and finally, there it is.

Okay. In kind of introducing the book, and I don't want to try and give you a summary of a sort of -- a summary of the outlines, because I think that would be, sort of, kind of, boring. What I want to do, rather, is pull out some bits of it, and highlight

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them. And I'm going to start by going to the conclusion, and I think it's a conclusion, where I have a kind of anatomy of the Islamic revival, and all that goes with it.

And basically what I do there is to say that you can think of the Islamic revival as a kind of a pyramid. I mean, at the bottom of the pyramid, where it involves the largest number of people, and what you have is, by all accounts, a tremendous increase in party and observance over the last few decades. Then in the middle of the pyramid, you have Islamist politics of one kind or another, and there's at least three major kinds, I would say, and there's Muslim identity politics, where, what you're trying to do is to persuade Muslims to identify politically as Muslims.

There is the politics of Islamic values, where, what you're trying to do is to use the state apparatus, if you can get a hold of it, in order to establish some kind of moral policing. And, thirdly, there's the politics of the Islamic State, which, in

its most obvious form, seeks a restoration of the Caliphate, and those are three very different political registers.

And then, finally at top of the pyramid, we have of course, and this is where, relatively speaking, the smallest number of people are involved; we have the Jihadis. So I mean, that's the pyramid; and if you take that, sort of, rather crude pyramid, you know, one obvious question you might want to ask is, is this pyramid something distinctively, uniquely Islamic? Or is it something that is part of the course, all over the world, in this day and age?

And my answer to that is basically, sort of in two parts: the first part says that each component of the pyramid, each element in the pyramid that I've identified, you can find a parallel to somewhere else. I mean like in this rise of party and observance, well that could easily remind you of rise of Pentecostalism in Latin America, and the sort of politics of Muslim identity, well that could very easily remind you of the politics of Hindu identity in India.

The politics of Islamic values, well that certainly reminds me coming from the old world, from Western Europe of the Christian right in this country and, you know, there's the same aspiration to get a hold of the state apparatus; you do that a bit -- that a bit differently here than, you know, you may do it in the Middle East, and to get a hold of the state apparatus and use it to enforce Christian norms on a society that may not -- that might not otherwise be very enthusiastic about them.

And then, finally, the politics of the Islamic State, well there it -- and what I mean by that is establishing a specifically Islamic State, a State that is sort of -- Islamic from the ground up. Finding a parallel to that is not particularly easy, but I do have one, mainly if we stay in the Christian right in this country, and we go to the sort of far fringes of this -- of the Christian Right. We have the Christian Reconstructionist, and they have very much a conception of what the Christian state has to look like, how it would be built.

And then finally, with the Jihadis and when I'm thinking about when I -- and when I talk about Jihadis, it's not simply the fact that they are violent that interests me, it's the fact that the violence -- and it's not simply the fact that the violence is on behalf of a religion, pursuing the interest of a religious community -- it's the fact that is the enactment of a religious duty. If you're looking for a parallel to that in the modern world, I guess -- well one I can -- we can quite easily find is the militancy of the Sikhs in India. Not right now, but a generation ago, it was very pronounced and it has been pronounced also in the past.

So, I mean, every single component of this pyramid, you can parallel somewhere else; but on the other hand, if you want the pyramid as a whole that, as far as I can see, is unique in the world today. I mean I really had to run around the globe putting those parallels together. And I think in this -- you know, the situation I described, fits fairly well with, certainly, my intuitive sense of the present

state of the world with regard to religion and politics.

That is to say that you have a spectrum, and at one end of the spectrum, you've got Western Europe which is where religion has as little to do with politics as it does anywhere. And at the other end of the spectrum you have the Islamic world, and the rest of the world, by and large, is somewhere in between. And so my real question then is, why should the Islamic world be the outlier in this respect?

And what I want to suggest, what I suggest in -- what I argue in the book, well first of all, you know, the obvious common-sense assumption would be that this -- if there is something distinctive about the Islamic world, it must have something to do with Islam. That's not necessarily true, but it's an obvious assumption. But the question then is, just what does it have to do with Islam?

And the fundamental argument that I'm pushing in the book is really a very simple one, it's that if you take the Islamic heritage, it has more

resources for people who are active in modern politics, in the politics of the modern world, than other heritages do. I mean, you are simply getting a better bouquet of resources in the Islamic case, than you are getting, say, in the Hindu case, or you're getting, say, you know, in the Catholic case in Latin America.

And what I want to do now, is just to pull out a couple of examples of this, so that you get a sense of, you know, what I'm driving at. And let me start with identity politics -- and let's start with identity politics in the Hindu Nationalist style, and as I'm sure you know, the Hindu Nationalist Project is to get all Hindus to identify, politically, as Hindus, and not least, to vote accordingly for the BJP.

And there are two basic problems with this project, and one of them maybe is -- you know, they are both basic, the first problem is that the Hindu heritage has no conception of a Hindu identity, there is no conception of a Hindu identity, identity that you can pull out, that you can invoke, that you can

use in Hindu nationalist politics. In fact, I mean, the very word Hindu, is a lone word in India. They got it from Iran, where it was brought to them by the Muslims from Iran.

What they do is a -- what the heritage does have is a conception of Arian identity, but unfortunately Arian identity extends only to the Twice Born who are obviously a minority in the Indian context. It excludes the bulk of the population. So that's not really a very good start, and then the other problem -- or the other, sort of, set of problems has to do with the Indian caste system, and I'm not sure -- I certainly don't fully understand this, but I mean basically, what it comes down to, is that the caste in the middle of Hindu society are just not particularly interested in identifying, politically, as Hindu. They have other agendas.

And the castes down at the bottom are somewhat reluctant to identify as Hindu at all. And of course this may sound like an odd thing for me to be saying in the days after an election, where, for

the first time, the BJP has secured a majority in the Indian Parliament. But I mean, what I would want to say about that is that what we've just seen is not a testimony to the success of Hindu nationalist identity politics, it's a testimony to the success of Mr. Modi's appeal to free market economics.

Now free market economics has no intrinsic conception -- sorry -- intrinsic connection to Hindu nationalism, it's not -- I mean back, say, in the early 1970s, the Hindu nationalists were kind of socialists, I mean -- you know, basically their evolution in terms of economic thought is completely opportunistic, it's not part of their core message at all, and yet that is what has got them this extraordinary position of actually having a majority in the Indian Parliament.

That's one example, and then I'll just give you one more example, and here I'm taking the polity, and again, I'll make it an -- a sort of Hindu-Islamic comparison. Whereas the Hindu heritage has basically nothing to say about Hindu identity, it has a lot to

say to say about the Hindu polity. The trouble is, it's all about Hindu monarchy, and it's about Hindu monarchy in a style that simply doesn't resonate with modern values in the world today.

And the result of that is that the Hindu nationalists simply don't appeal to that part of the Hindu heritage, they are not interested in what the Hindu heritage has to say about the polity. Instead, they are entirely comfortable with the Indian Republic that we have at the present day as a result of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century events. All they want to do is to inject a stiff dose of Hindu identity into that Republic, but the Republic itself, they have no problem with. And there's nothing they can do with the Hindu heritage in that context.

By contrast, if we go to the Islamic case, well, there of course, we are talking about -- so -- if you really want to push it we are talking about restoration of the Caliphate, and that might sound like a kind of archaic and irrelevant idea in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but do note two things about the

idea of the Caliphate. First of all, you know, since the Caliphate is, in principle, a state that includes the entire Muslim community, it speaks to a sense of geopolitical disadvantage which is very contemporary. It has a very strong geopolitical resonance that is not particularly -- in the least -- Medieval.

Secondly, and this is maybe more important, the Caliphate, not the Caliphate down the centuries, but the early Caliphate. The Caliphate of, you know, the first decades after the life of Prophet, is associated in the early sources with what you might call some proto-Republican values. Let's say you go back to the early Caliphate, you will not find democracy, or you have to work very hard to pretend that there's democracy there.

But what you will find is a very vivid rejection of despotism and patrimonialism, and that of course resonates tremendously well with modern political values, and not surprisingly, Islamists are appealing to that all the time. I mean, if you take -  
- if when President Morsi was installed as President

of Egypt, he made a speech in which he virtually quoted what the Caliph Abu Bakr had said when he became Caliph in 632, which is all about, "if I do right, sort of encourage me, and if I do wrong, then make sure you correct me."

In conclusion, let me just say a word about what I'm not saying. One thing that I'm not saying is that simply being a believing Muslim does not constrain you to adopt a certain kind of politics. It doesn't constrain you to construct your politics out of your religion, some Muslims do that, some Muslims don't. You know, if you look at, say, the political history of the Middle East in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, you will see a lot of politics going on, which in inspiration, is just like politics elsewhere in the world.

It's liberal or it's fascist, or it's leftist, and above all, it's nationalist, all very familiar categories from elsewhere in the world; it's just that in addition, we have this Islamist politics, but there's nothing that constrains Muslims to go one

way or the other.

And then the other thing I want to say here, about what I'm not saying, if you are a believing Muslim, and you have decided to construe your politics out of your religious heritage, that doesn't, in itself, determine the character of your politics. And this is a very familiar point, but you know, Islamist politics comes to us in very different flavors at the present day.

You know, it goes all the way from the, so to speak, ex-Muslim Brothers, the very moderate ex-Muslim Brothers, very democratic in Egypt to have not been particularly successful, but then -- I mean, the people who broke off from the main Movement a few years ago; goes all the way from that to Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. So I'm not arguing for any kind -- for, so to speak, the heritage constraining the kind of politics that people adopt. What I am saying, and this is the basic message of the book, is that you get a set of resources in this heritage that you can, if that's what you want to do, use quite effectively, in

politics in the modern world.

I think that's probably plenty from me at this point.

MR. DORAN: Well, thanks for that. What an honor and a pleasure it is to be back actually to 2002 when we did that course. Let me just take -- take up where you left off here, and just talk a little bit more about what you're saying and what you're not saying, and let's map you in the crude politics of our contemporary debate.

So, on one end we have the kind of people that make it embarrassing for me to be a Republican, who say that Sharia -- that we have this conspiracy, the Sharia conspiracy against America, and that basically Bin Laden is the truest representative of the Islamic heritage.

And then, on the other hand, on the other hand, we have the post-modernist in the academy who say, there's no such thing as tradition, right, you can -- everybody can make whatever they want, we all sort of recreate ourselves. I don't know from moment

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to moment, I don't exactly understand how they think, but anyway, that's completely unacceptable. And you are -- you are somewhere in the middle here.

MR. COOK: Yeah.

MR. DORAN: Yeah? And perhaps you could just talk a little bit more; you basically have said it though, about the resources, but a little bit more about how you think about these things. Obviously, heritage does matter to a certain extent you are saying?

MR. COOK: Yeah. Right. I mean -- I think, you know, we know all the time in real life or in whatever studies and research we do, and we are talking about situations where an idea comes into a context, and in common-sense terms I think we all recognize that the contexts are important and the ideas are important, you know, for what comes out of that, for the outcome.

And obviously, you know, differences in context make a lot of difference to the outcome, differences in the ideas make a lot of differences --

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make a difference for the outcome. Now it seems to me that most people in the academy are very comfortable talking about the variation in context, but not very comfortable talking about the variation in the ideas. And this suits me just fine, because it means that -- it seems to me that, you know, that the ideas is a matter -- it's common sense, so to speak.

MR. DORAN: Right. Right.

MR. COOK: And I wouldn't know how to defend it philosophically, but it is common sense.

MR. DORAN: Right.

MR. COOK: And the fact that people are a little, sort of, scared of it, it means that there's a nice space that I've been able to fill, which otherwise -- you know, I mean simply bringing common sense to bear on something doesn't usually get you any very, sort of, striking rewards, yes. Right, in this case, there's more mileage I can get out of applying common sense than is usually the case.

MR. DORAN: Actually, I think -- wasn't it Mark Twain who said the amazing thing about common

sense, is it's not very common. If I was to make the post-modern argument, which I don't usually make, but let me just take a stab at it and see how you'd respond.

And I would say, well, okay, you and your book, you use the metaphor of the menu, the tradition offers people in the modern era a menu and they can pick different items. So there's an -- there's an element of choice involved, and obviously, too, the tradition changes, nobody today, aside from a few in Bureta don't -- believe in Muslims today for the most part don't think that their religion allows them to have slaves, right?

MR. COOK: Yeah.

MR. DORAN: So they dropped, at some point, that part --

MR. COOK: And Boko Haram, of course.

MR. DORAN: Yeah. So they do exist, but for the majority of people that bit of the tradition fell by the wayside. So, how is it then, that these things, obviously, there is some kind of way in which

they get shaped and reshaped.

MR. COOK: (off mic)

MR. DORAN: Both by -- over time, historical change over time, and choices that people make in the modern era. So how would you respond to that if I try to put -- I haven't done the greatest job, but as I said, I think you've over-weighted the importance of ideas in this mix.

MR. COOK: Right. I think I'd probably make maybe a number of points there and -- now there's a point that was just in my head, and I wanted to make it, and now it's gone. Okay. Let me --

MR. DORAN: You were going to say, Doran you just bested me.

MR. COOK: No. I'm not. I do not want to say that.

MR. DORAN: Oh. Oh. Sorry.

MR. COOK: Yeah. Here is one thing I wanted to say, which is that there is -- how can I put it -- yes, traditions do change but there is very considerable inertia there that don't change at the

flick of a wrist, they change slowly, with pushing and shoving, and you know, at a certain -- a change that may seem completely legitimate in 20 years might not seem the least legitimate in just two or three years.

I mean -- yeah, I think that the people that you are trying to simulate, greatly exaggerate the plasticity of traditions.

MR. DORAN: Right,

MR. COOK: I mean, it's like, there's somebody I quote, I think in my preface about identities, it says, they are elastic, but they are not, sort of, infinitely elastic, I forget the exact words, and I think the same thing applies with traditions. I mean, you know, you pull at an elastic band and it pulls back.

MR. DORAN: Right.

MR. COOK: And if you snap it, that's not good. So that, I think, is one important part of it. It's the other part that I'm -- yeah, ask me something else, and it will occur to me, and I'll come back to it.

MR. DORAN: So let me just ask you to -- if you could run through for the audience, in just almost listing them off, those elements that you believe -- those resources that the tradition does offer somebody who has a fundamentalist inclination -- actually, now that I've said that -- why don't I ask you, first of all to -- you go into great detail in the book defining fundamentalist --

MR. COOK: Yeah.

MR. DORAN: -- so that you can do the -- so that you can do the comparison across traditions.

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: Perhaps, you should just quickly talk about your upstream-downstream concept of fundamentalism, and then -- so we have a baseline for the whole discussion, and then I'll ask you my next question.

MR. COOK: Right. Okay. And what I'm basically saying there is fundamentalism is a term that's kind of up for grabs and, you know, different people sort of push it and pull in different

directions. And so one major thing that people try to do is to, as it were, produce a sort of elaborate identity version of fundamentalism, and that seems to me to be a mistake. It's not a mistake that I particularly object to, but it's not one that I'm going to adopt myself.

So, what I use the term for is just one particular feature of a -- and religious attitude which is wanting to go back to the original form of your religion, and being kind of serious about it. And what I'm doing there then is contrasting my three traditions in terms of what happens if you try to do that; what works for you and what doesn't work for you.

You know, so that basically in the Hindu case it doesn't work at all. In the Catholic case it works in one respect for the liberationist but not in most others. Whereas in the Islamic context I think it works in several respects.

MR. DORAN: Right. And so then my question

--

MR. COOK: And that links to the question, yes.

MR. DORAN: Right. That's my question then. So if you've got that inclination, if you have that mindset --

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: -- and you are working within the Islamic tradition, what are those elements that the tradition offers you?

MR. COOK: Right. And I think, you know, the first one is this very clear-cut conception that being a Muslim is a political identity. I mean, it's not something that can, obviously, all Muslims have had down the centuries, but it's something that you can access very easily, if you go back to the beginnings, you know, to the sort of earliest form of the tradition that we have.

Secondly, I would say in terms of social values, something that has been very important for Islamist's politics in the modern world is egalitarianism. And of course it's not -- it's

egalitarianism for free male Muslims, it's not quite a, sort of, a Western egalitarianism, it's a long way from the Western egalitarianism. But I mean, it is a genuine egalitarianism, and as such it resonates very strongly with modern values, and I think that makes it a very attractive of the heritage, and it gets trotted out repeatedly.

And I would say in -- then the political values that I referred to as sort of Proto-Republican, again, I think are pretty important here. That's what enables you to -- I mean one, to reject centuries of - - not to use a particular old-fashioned term -- oriental despotism, despotism in the Islamic world, but also, two, to in a sense, have some key Western values without having to acknowledge having gotten them from the West.

MR. DORAN: I see.

MR. COOK: And those would be the three biggest things that I would put there.

MR. DORAN: What's striking to me, that you -- that you didn't compare Judaism.

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: And you have a good explanation as to why you didn't, but it was one that I wanted as a reader.

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: And so, I wonder if I could put on you on the spot, and ask you, off the top of your head, to give us the comparison. I mean, that's the one that seems to me to be the most similar to the Islamic tradition. And so, how would you compare and contrast those, in terms of the resources that Judaism hands someone who would want to have --

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: -- who would want to fundamentalize their identity?

MR. COOK: Right. Okay, let's -- yeah, let's take it first in terms of fundamentalizing. Judaism is a bit awkward in that respect. I mean if you want to produce a Protestant form of Judaism, what you've produced Catharism, which is that early medieval heresy, which rejected the rabbinic tradition

and said, we've got the Bible, that's it.

And I mean, there have been people, I can think of at least one early Zionist named, Lillian Bloom, reinvented Catharism for himself in an Odessa, I think, and you know, also on the way to the land.

MR. DORAN: You are stuck with the rabbis, in other words?

MR. COOK: Right, I mean, If you are going to reject the rabbis you are really breaking with Judaism as we know it, and if you are going to, sort of, stay with the rabbis, you can't do that kind of fundamentalism.

MR. DORAN: Mm-hmm.

MR. COOK: And you know, since we have a very, sort of powerful, and sort of clerical establishment in Israel, and I mean they are not even going to let you say, "I'm rejecting all the later rabbis and going back to the missioner," or something like that. So I think, I mean, Judaism is a very tough nut to crack if you want to produce a fundamentalism in my sense. Now if what you want to

produce is a kind of, you know, pretty muscular religion, I guess, right, let's think.

I mean, this is where I found the Secondary Literature in English, just not particularly helpful. But if we go back to my pyramid and we pull out the model of policing, there are very obvious -- there is a very obvious parallel to that in Israel. And there's a whole scene of Haredi extremists who seek to impose, you know, their conception of Jewish values on others. You know, that's definitely there.

Identity politics, well, the whole Zionist Movement is a piece of identity politics. You know, something I heard recently, is that if you looked at the books on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's bookshelf, books about the Jewish question mount very large indeed.

MR. DORAN: Uh-huh. Right.

MR. COOK: And I think it's not accidental, and he was an intelligent and insightful man, and he knew what he was he was thinking about there, even if he didn't talk about it much. You know, which is that the -- I mean, with both the Zionist and the sort of

Pakistan Movement, what you've got is basically a bunch of people who very much aware of being Muslims, but have very little commitment to Muslim beliefs or, sort of, observances.

And it's the same in the sort of classic Zionist case and, you know, you are very committed to being Jewish, but you basically don't care about anything the rabbis care about. So, there's a real sort of analogy there.

MR. DORAN: I remember -- I can't remember the context -- but I was reading about some early Zionists who had a parade to the Western Wall, and at the end of the parade they ate ham sandwiches, which is (laughter) -- so just if I can follow up on the Jewish question. So we've got -- we lose the -- Islamic politics are tied together from the beginning, or in the Golden Age, it gets complicated with the Jews because they lose their state and the rabbis are -- this is my interpretation of history, you can take issue with it if it's too crude.

The rabbis take over for the state, but now

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we've got a state, and we also have a group people who are religious and supportive of the state, so not the -- not the muscular religious Haredi types, but the national religious settler types. So what about them? If we just were to analyze them with your framework, the Hilltop Youth, the Price Tag Movement, and so on, are they -- what kind of resources does the tradition give them?

MR. COOK: Right.

MR. DORAN: In this context.

MR. COOK: And what resources does it not give them? And I think one -- let me start with what it doesn't give them. I think that it doesn't really give them any conception of what an intrinsically Jewish state should like. That's to say, you know, you go over the heritage and, you know, you have Moses, you have the -- that's one model if you like, you have the judges, that's another model. You have the monarchy, that's another model.

I mean, there are simply -- you know, whereas in the Islamic case and, let's say, we are

among Sunnis, and you ask what would an intrinsically Islamic State be, the Caliphate is a straightforward answer. I don't see that there is a straightforward answer in the Jewish case, partly because of all these different memories.

MR. DORAN: Right.

MR. COOK: But also because, as you say, they lost their state, and having lost, they adapted to having lost their state. So they are sort of -- the baggage of having spent the millennia as a diaspora, also there. So really I would say it's quite a mess.

MR. DORAN: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. COOK: It's not obvious what you pull out of that and say, this is what the Jewish State should be.

MR. DORAN: You know, one of the things that I most -- I find very enlightening about your argument, was at the end, when you ran through, you talked conservative politics, conservative modernists and fundamentalists, and you talked about the

resonance, sort of the echo of Islamic fundamentalism with the modernist -- with modernism and with conservatives.

MR. COOK: Yes.

MR. DORAN: That's really striking, I think, because I don't know that that's the case in any of the -- or I don't think it is in any case that I can think of. It's basically what you said about the pyramid. Have I got that right?

MR. COOK: Yeah. I think that's right. And again, if we were take the Hindu case, conservatism, religious conservatism in the Hindu context means keeping things as they have been in recent centuries, and just about everything about Hinduism in recent centuries disappears if you insist on being a fundamentalist, and throwing out everything since the Vedas. Whereas it's not like that in the Islamic case, and there's a much tighter relationship there I think.

MR. DORAN: I think the most surprising one though is where you say that it resonates with

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modernism -- that fundamentalism and modernism kind of are not as antagonistic as one might have expected.

MR. COOK: Right. And there's something, I think, very interesting here that I don't think I fully understand, but it -- I'm sure it has something to do with Islam taking shape in a tribal environment, against the background of tribal politics. As, I mean, tribal politics are very different from what we have at the present date, but there are some common features, namely, the sort of high valuation of independence. You know, the sort of strongly anti-despotic sentiment and, you know, the hold tribal rejection of kingship, and that kind of thing. You know, there is a kind of resonance there.

MR. DORAN: Plus the egalitarianism --

MR. COOK: Yes. Exactly.

MR. DORAN: Can I ask you to make another comparison that you didn't make. You show how the Catholic heritage can contort itself and give you liberation theology but it's really a contortion. And you didn't really go deeply into the American

Protestant case which gave us the term "fundamentalist." So why do we have such a powerful - - especially, you know, when you compare it to Europe; why is it so powerful here in the United States, and what resources are they drawing from?

MR. COOK: Yes. And there, I really ought to have brushed up on my American history, or rather -- or more than brushed I'm afraid to say, but I guess that this has quite a lot to do with the fact that -- what was it -- and there was a well-known historian of -- a sort of colonial America, at Harvard, a generation or two ago, who wrote a book called *Errand in the Wilderness*, and I think -- I mean that kind of gets the way in which a crucial element in the formation of this country, was people who were religiously very zealous, and who wanted to take their zeal somewhere where they could act it out.

You know, with less sort of obstruction than then could back home in the old world. And then that surely has given, you know, this country a different religious profile from what we have in Europe. But as

regards -- you know, in some ways I find it very hard to see just why the Christian heritage gives so much encouragement to the fundamentalists in this country. In that, I mean from their point of view, family values are absolutely the bedrock, aren't they?

And you know, you read the gospels and family values are definitely getting a knock, you know, you've been told to follow Jesus, and hate your father and mother, and that kind of thing, you know. I mean, there's a real sort of mismatch there.

MR. DORAN: Well it is a menu as you say, right?

MR. COOK: Yeah. And I mean, if I was to try to understand, you know, fundamentalists in this country better, I would try and hone in on that and see if I could sort of get my mind around what's happening there, but it's also surely got them -- no, I think that's about as much as I can give you at this point.

MR. DORAN: Well I was going -- I thought you were going to say that like with Judaism, and

there's no -- what a Christian State looks like is a real -- is a real problem, right, you're not going to --

MR. COOK: Yeah, but -- exactly.

MR. DORAN: You can do the values politics, but when it comes down to having a picture of what the polity should be, it just sort of falls apart.

MR. COOK: Yeah. Thank you, for that prompt. Yes, right. And that's where -- and one of the things that really strikes me -- is the absence of -- I mean, the Christian right as far as I can see, almost all of it, is perfectly comfortable with the existing Republic. It simply wants to get different political outcomes out of the existing Republic, and overwhelmingly their on board with the American Constitution. And, you know, they will say that the American Constitution is much misunderstood, and it's not really a secular document really, it's a Christian document, but I mean, they are not breaking with it, and it's only those Christian Reconstructionists that I mentioned who have--

MR. DORAN: who are way on the fringe

MR. COOK: -- and they are way on the fringe, right.

MR. DORAN: All right. That's great. Why don't we open it up now to the crowd, and there is Bridge.

MR. BRIDGE: Thank you, Professor Cook. Fascinating, and I took -- I'm going to take my good friend Will's admonition, to be a little controversial, and make a couple of comments, and a question, I mean. Just on this point, the whole thing is first -- and I apologize -- I haven't read your book, but I'm looking forward to it, and I will buy it.

It's, you know, your definition of fundamentalists describes to me, simply any religious revival. Under the definition as you've described it here, which is attempt to recapture the past or return to some kind of purity of the original, you know, religious phenomenon, that would describe Martin Luther, the recent Movement of the - which produced

John Paul II, Annette XVI, in the Catholic Church, you know.

Describes any attempt to return, particularly for religions that do depend on this crucial initiating figure like, obviously, Jesus Christ or Mohammed, and so, you know, to me how that -- the question is how it's -- that's an invariable part of any religious provider, and (inaudible) in classification of a religious phenomenon.

The question is how is that manifested, you know, Luther takes it in one direction, and the Liberation theologians are emphasizing that, you know, common ownership, goods, you know, I think the story of -- you know, even though Annette XVI and John Paul II, were considered conservatives in the context, when they were younger they were actually quite reformists, because they were -- they were actually trying to get past the (inaudible) and so forth.

So I think -- I just think that that definition of fundamentalism is a little bit -- it doesn't strike me as ringing very true, and on the

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point about the sort of -- the fundamentalists here, I agree with your point, except that the problem in your analysis is that New England was this place of, you know, religious fanaticism earlier on, but fundamentalism as we know it, exists in the South and West, and I think there's a disconnect there, because actually it's more secular in Europeans, like parts of the country, or actually the ones that were settled by the religious fanatics at the time.

And so, to me, something has to do with also the absence of the State Church is a big part of it, so that people could tie down, and obviously U.S. history is sort of modulation. So, forgive me for going on for a little bit, but it was just a couple of comments.

You know, I'm interested in -- you know, as I said, I mean this joke is the Bible says a lot of things, right, that -- on the question of Christianity going back, and it's political coloration, I mean, it seems like Will and I talked about this a lot of years. There is a sort of content, I mean, I would --

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obviously the most in that, somewhere in the middle of that space, but to me I tend to emphasize against the correspondence that there is a sort of reality and, you know, Jesus Christ is a figure who, for instance, he's somebody who doesn't attempt to establish a foot (inaudible), he said, render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. And on that I know relatively little about Islam, but one of the things that I find interesting discussing with various people over the years, is for instance it's, well; Islam needs a reformation, Islam needs a -- you know, it needs -- what Christianity went through, and I always recoil about it because it seems to me to be very (inaudible), that Islam's, you know, essential message is something of content.

I would just be interested in your comments -- sorry it's a longwinded question -- but your comments on how does somebody -- you know, what is -- is there genuine good-faith space, and I think you were suggesting it, but is there a genuine good-faith space for somebody who is a very committed Muslim can go back and say -- and attempt to reconcile, you know,

a genuine faith with what we understand to be Mark  
McBurney and in political McBurneyism broadly  
construed. Obviously their thing is not going to be  
compatible but, you know, if you look, Islam does  
appear to have a much stronger, political coloration.  
You know, Mohammed behaves in certain ways that are  
very political -- its (inaudible) political  
establishment. How does -- how is that going to turn  
and how would it -- how would somebody wrestle with  
that?

MR. COOK: Right. Okay. Let me start then  
by going back to what you said about, you know, the  
disconnect between the Northeast in this country and  
the Bible Belt. Yeah, that's certainly the case, and  
surely, what that has a lot to do with, is that this  
kind of American fundamentalism doesn't work well in  
big, cosmopolitan cities. You know, there is  
something about, you know, the sort of relative  
isolation of that environment down there that is much  
more, sort of, favorable to it.

Yeah, I don't think there is anything more

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that I could usefully say about that, and -- I'm trying to read my own writing... Yeah. Okay. I would see a difference between my own definition of fundamentalism and where you went with it, in there -- I mean, it seems to me that where you went with it, it's by lumping together what I would call fundamentalists with conservatives. And you know -- and from the point of view of, you know, your sort of committed secular liberal, there may be very similar species, but I mean they are at least conceptually different, and their main practice will be very different.

So, Mike mentioned my kind of upstream-downstream thing, and you know, when I talk about fundamentalism I really want to refer to people who want to go back to the beginning, and take it from there, and disallow, you know, just about everything that has happened since. Which is very different from conservatism, which says, you know, the way it came down to my dad was just right, and I want to keep it that way, or get it back to being that way, and it

seems to me that, you know, Martin Luther, and American fundamentalism, I mean, these are very good examples of fundamentalism in my sense, and what you do is, you go back to the New Testament.

Whereas by contrast when we are talking about recent Popes, they definitely did not want to go back to the New Testament and just the New Testament, and the throw out the entire development of ecclesiastical authority since then. I mean, they are, in my terminology, conservatives and not fundamentalists.

Good-faith space, I think -- I mean, one, in terms of what's actually sort of in the heritage, there are certainly things that you can comfortably latch on to for that kind of effort that you described, and people do latch on to them, and they will latch on to them. I think, in practice, a lot is going to depend on the general -- the more general atmosphere. I mean, it's one of the -- I don't think what I've said about heritage determines things.

Let me sort of repeat that here. At present

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we have a situation -- yeah, there's an interesting article that was written by -- I can't remember his name -- but he's a philosopher of South Asian background at, I think, Columbia, and he wrote a piece about Muslim identity, in which -- now this is sort of my spin on it -- but to my mind what it amounted to is something like this; that in the old days when we were leftists, we could be very dismissive about the contents of the heritage, without feeling that we were cow-towing to the West.

But since the demise of leftism, this is no longer the case. That is to say for a Muslim to be very dismissive of the contents of the heritage gets perilously close to being a kind of cultural traitor, or something like that. And that, very definitely, was not the case in the old days, when leftism was very strong. And I think, I mean, how those kinds of pressures develop, which is not something, you know, that my book is about, is going to be pretty important, in the answer to your question.

MR. DORAN: Khaled?

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SPEAKER: Thank you. First of all, my name is Khaled Elgindy, I'm a Fellow at the Saban Center here. And I haven't read your book either, but I look forward to it as well. I was wondering if you could clarify exactly, just so that I understand what, I guess, your central piece is here, if you could maybe sort of restate it. Where I record is (inaudible) said that there is a clear-cut sense of being Muslim was apparently political -- I forget the exact language, but something essentially political, which distinguishes it from the other religions.

And then before that, let me make clear that among the things that you are not saying is that being a believing Muslim, necessarily, I suppose, constrains or predetermines the political, I forget again your exact words, but essentially, it doesn't make one necessarily constrained to Islamite's politics, per se. So I'm trying to reconcile those two. And maybe if you could just, maybe unpack that statement on the full sense of being Muslim-- obviously, you know where your own thoughts of that. If you could restate it --

MR. COOK: Yeah.

SPEAKER: -- and sort of unpack it for us, I'd appreciate it.

MR. COOK: Okay. Right. It's really -- and I think the distinction I want to make here is about what I'm talking about. First if we take the values that you can find enshrined in the heritage, and the values that if you are of a sort of fundamentalist disposition you were particularly focused on, then I think there's not the slightest question that being a Muslim is a political identity.

I mean it's being a member -- I mean, once the Prophet leaves Mecca and goes to Medina, if you are a Muslim, you are a member of a political community in Medina, and it's then an expanding political community that, you know, that becomes an empire. So I think -- I mean, as a fact about the values and the heritage, I think what I said is, straightforwardly right.

But the other question you could be asking is: if we take the average Muslim, or the average

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Muslim in any century, or Muslims up and down the centuries, is Islam a political identity for them? That's a different question, and it's a question which would not be answered by looking at the heritage in the way I've done. It's a question that you would answer if you would answer it at all in modern times, my public opinion -- contemporary terms, by public opinion surveys in terms of the past by squeezing historical sources for what you can find.

And I mean, I think what I would tend to say there is that, as an empirical matter, it is quite easy for Muslim identity to be politicized in the modern world. Now, we've seen it done quite a few times, and this, no doubt, has something to do with -- but I mean, what I'm not saying is that we are starting with Muslims, with a politicized identity. What I'm saying, is that it is politicizable under modern conditions, and that this politicizability has something, not everything, to do with the fact that the value is there in the heritage.

But I mean, let me say something, sort of --

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you know, by way of pouring a certain amount of cold water here, the guy who has written on Islamism in Morocco, who makes what, to my mind, is a very nice point. He says that Islamists go on and on about how Islam and politics are joined at the hip. They don't go on and on about how heaven is a reality, and Mohammed was a Prophet.

In other words, they don't have to go on and on about Mohammed being a Prophet and the reality of heaven, because those are things that people genuinely take for granted. There's obviously a lot of people out there that these Islamists are talking to, don't take it for granted that Islam and politics are joined at the hip, if they did the Islamists wouldn't have to keep talking about it all the time. And I think that's a very real point.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. So if there are more resources in the Islamic heritage to -- Muslims find, I guess, political outlets in their definitions. Does that mean that there are also, more resources for Muslims to expand the notion of Muslim

identity politics? I mean, there is couple of faiths, (inaudible) for this -- I mean -- because if you look at it from that one hand and say, wow, so there's a good chance that we could see a polity.

If they have more resources to be able to justify the Caliphate, the totally Islamic political system, then you could bring that to its conclusion, and say that, well there's probably a good chance that we may see it here again. But you could also say that (inaudible) more ways to define a Muslim political system.

MR. COOK: More ways to define...?

SPEAKER: A Muslim political system. Could you expand it beyond just the notion of campaign? Do you see what I'm saying?

MR. COOK: Yes. Right. And I think -- there's a difference there between -- and if you take the set of people who are really serious about restoring the caliphate, I think that is a significantly smaller set of people, than the set of people who want to make the values of the early

Islamic to recover the values of the early Islamic polity, but not necessarily within the frame work, the institutional framework of the caliphate.

So that if you like, there's, so to speak, a strong version and a weaker version, and I mean, it's perfectly possible for, you know, and the argument for the weaker version would be, if nothing else, saying, look, you know, this caliphate may be a very evocative idea, but it's totally unrealistic in terms of the geopolitics of the world as it is, it's not going to happen. And you know, and if you read Zawahiri's account of how he wants it to happen, it's really a very, very long shot there.

So that, you know, for many -- the Muslim Brothers in Egypt were not talking about restoring the caliphate, but nevertheless they were talking about these, what I call proto-Republican values. So I think I'm -- yeah the -- there's a distinction there, and some people will pursue sort of the full version and some people will pursue a not so full version, and maybe get further with it.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible) from Brookings as well, I work on Islam.

MR. COOK: Okay.

SPEAKER: It's a comment and a question. On the Jewish fundamentalism, I think it's an interesting distinction between what Mike was raising, which is religious nationalists, many of whom are messianic, or have a messianic version of Zionism. I don't mean messianic -- necessarily, but rather a vision of divine future of a divine future, and these new Hill Top youths who are, in a sense, revolting against their rabbis. Not just against their rabbis, not just against the old ultra-orthodox rabbis, it's modern orthodox rabbis, and there, there is fundamentalism, there they certainly talked about the Temple Mount, and going up there to pray, because they want to go back to the Old Testament, the way it as.

It's very -- and much less emphasized in the Talmud, much less emphasis on Zionism, certainly on the State of Israel that has betrayed them, but rather going back to the roots of the Old Testament, and be

considering something there, which the rabbis don't even know what that is.

But in that context, I want to ask a question about the above -- above the choice fundamentalism as the core. Why should we care politically -- (inaudible), but why should we care politically to distinguish between fundamentalism, that's necessarily going back to an invented past, versus messianism of various kinds, so just going towards an invented future? In a sense, why, why should we care about the Sunni fundamentalists, but distinguish them completely from Shia -- I don't know what the word to use -- but a sort of Shia'ism, extreme Shia'ism that looks -- not necessarily concerned about the past but maybe to the future of fundamentalism issues.

And in this case Jewish messianism that is not fundamentalist would still be able to understand the political context. Catholic, maybe not, perhaps a Protestant can -- in other words, from a phenomenological point of view why is messianism so different from

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fundamentalism?

MR. DORAN: Can I just restate his question, and if it -- or ask another one that is related. I may -- I don't know if I'm asking the same question, so it may be -- it may be a restatement of it, but you can either both of them if it's a different statement. But if I put it in the most provocative antagonistic way, aren't you guilty of having -- of having created a definition of fundamentalism that privileges your argument? So you've sort of define fundamentalism and as we find it among the Muslims, I mean, therefore we don't find it elsewhere. Whereas, we define these other forms that would -- like messianism, that would fit the bill.

SPEAKER: That's good.

MR. COOK: Yeah?

MR. DORAN: Okay. So, same question.

MR. COOK: Okay. Let me sort of start from you and then can sort of move to you. Right. One thing is, I'm actually very tepid in talking about Muslim fundamentalism in the book, and in it what I

say is, I mean, having defined it my way, I don't then say, "and these Islamists are obviously 100 percent fundamentalists." I say, simply, that there is a kind of fundamentalist streak or strain in them.

But I mean, they don't strike me as out and out fundamentalists, and that I think came from that point of view, and, you know, the term is definitely misleading. I mean, for example, the Hindu fundamentalist I talk about, Dian and he may be an imperfect fundamentalist, but I think he's a more solid case of a fundamentalist in my sense than, say, Mawdudi or Sayyid Qutb.

So what I'm -- I'm not defining it in order to "pin it on the Muslims," so to speak.

MR. DORAN: Right. Right.

MR. COOK: I'm defining it simply in order to detect something that's strained among the Muslims. Now, but with regard to messianism, it seems to be that there's -- I mean, it's an interesting fact about modern Islamic politics, both Sunni and Shiite that they are not messianic in any sort of technical sense.

I mean, there isn't a Messiah figure there, you know, and the Sunnis have their Mahdi, you know, he's there in the heritage, not in the Koran, but he's elsewhere in it. But you know, the Islamists of our times are not interested in the Mahdi, and they don't, as far as I know, talk about him.

In the same way with the Shiites, I mean, they have their Twelfth Imam, who is to return as the Mahdi. And, yeah, sure there must be -- there are a few crazy people in Iran, who think that might happen sometime soon, but the whole Islamic Republic is not constructed on the premise that the Mahdi is about to arrive. It's constructed on the premise that we are doing something in the meantime, right?

MR. DORAN: Yeah.

MR. COOK: And it seems to me that this is not trivial, in the sense that there is an inherent instability about Mahdism -- well, messianism. That's to say that if you pin your hopes on a figure who is to come and who is to be, sort of -- I won't say supernatural -- but you know, a sort of -- completely

discontinuous from previous history. You then get into a bit of a bind, because either you have to keep explaining the fact that he hasn't arrived, or you have to identify somebody as the Messiah, and then he turns out to be a flop, you know.

I mean, there's a sort of instability there, which we don't have on the Muslim side, and I would tend to suspect that one of the reasons why this messianism has become prominent in the Jewish case, I mean, in sort of people like my namesake, Ralph Cook, and it's precisely that short of the coming of the Messiah, there isn't a clear-cut conception of what the Jewish State should be in the heritage.

The Messiah comes, then it's all going to be plain, no problem. But it's a very risky sort of advent to bet on, and I think the Islamists are quite sensible in not having gone that way.

SPEAKER: I'm Rafik Damsiker, and a consultant way back, but many -- too many decades ago, a Fellow Princetonian with a (inaudible), and I haven't had the privilege to read your book either,

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but you've probably discussed it to some length, but it seems that the obvious difference between, on one hand, Sunni Islam, and Shiite Islam, and the (inaudible) is the Christ, the martyrdom of Christ is still a symbol.

And Shia, it's the -- say, the martyrdom of Sayyid, but in Sunni Islam, it's Muhammad the Conqueror, and his successor the King of Conquerors until this day, of course, the Saudi flag has the swords on it. So is this something you are dealing with in your book? This kind of Islam as a conqueror religion, unlike the special (inaudible), in some way you could see it, being different from Muslim Islam?

MR. COOK: Yeah. I mean it's certainly there, and including the Sunni-Shi'ite contrast, which I think is quite real, and quite important, in that it's the, you know, the Sunni sort of cult of -- sorry -- the Shi'ite cult of martyrdom that has made possible the kind of emotionality and political theater of Shiite Islamism, which the Sunni Islamists really haven't been able to match. I mean it made for

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a very -- whether it matters, so to speak, for the character of the Islamic Republic now, as opposed to the character of any given, sort of, Sunni setup, I don't know.

But certainly, for the character of the revolution, it surely does make a tremendous difference. And you know the cult of martyrdom was something that, in the heritage, that could be mobilized in the Shiite case, and there just wasn't an equivalent in the Sunni case.

SPEAKER: Professor Cook knows me, because he graciously served on my Doctorial Committee at SAIS, and candidates (inaudible) I -- you cited that the signature of Islam is a cultural memory having a caliphate that includes the vivid rejection of despotism, corruption and social values within egalitarianism, and all of those things -- or all of those elements are part of the collection of concepts of what makes modern democracy. Even a very (inaudible) a fixed definition, and on it social justice figure in it, right?

So I wonder, would you say that when Salafis in Egypt, for example, talk about the democratic principles in Islam, and use that to support their political goals, which you could say, all right, democratic depending on which (inaudible) -- where they are coming from. Are they being apologists for Islam?

Or, to take it from the other side of the argument, is democracy fundamentally not just a political concept, but a spiritual concept as well?

MR. COOK: Okay. Now, whether democracy is a spiritual concept, I'm not sure I'm going to say -- have anything to say about that, but the question then, are they being apologetic. I think it depends who they are talking to, and I mean, you can say early Islam was true democracy, with an apologetic intent to the West. You say to the West, is with an apologetic intent.

Now, we had it, too, as good as you, but I think you can also say it in an internal context where what you are saying is, you know, we really ought to

have a working -- a functioning democracy here, because that's the proper Islamic way to do things. So I think, I mean, it's contextual whether it's apologetic or not. It serves two obvious and distinct purposes.

The question, of course, is how far you want to go in pushing the democratic character of the early polity, and I would say that -- I mean it's when, for example, Mawdudi talks about how they used to vote. I mean that is really -- I mean for anyone who has actually read the source, that is so implausible, that it doesn't hold water, and there are probably too many people around who know that, for that to be a very effective argument.

So that I mean the sort of -- characterizing and, you know, the early caliphate is full-scale democracy, I would have thought is, you know, simply in terms of -- I mean it's a very uphill argument as an argument. But on the other hand, yes, I mean, those kind of proto-Republican values, you can, in very good faith, and probably effectively, appeal to

them. In the back, sir?

SPEAKER: Hi, Professor Cook. One of the things that I've wondered about with respect to Salafism, in particular where -- which is really a strain at this time, and obviously it's a long strain with a long history. But it seems to me that part of the power in the modern era, comes from the facts, and I think you might have touched on this in your comment. But I would like you to flesh this out, and maybe correct me if I misunderstood.

But one of the things that strikes me is that Salafism offers you an Islamic sort of authentic, if you will, I mean problematic in that it's way of being modern, in the modern era, even though it's hard to be back to this incredibly modern time, by saying we get to cut out all of the -- you know, elastic tradition, but also all of the things that reforms the 19<sup>th</sup> Century we are calling for.

And you've got all of the accretions, et cetera, and the reason that this strikes me, it seems to me that, why is it that folks, now, who are

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educated, and these are people generally -- or, you know, in many cases who are approaching out of ignorance, for these are educated people who come out of a modern educated system of education that we appeal (inaudible) anti-Semitism in the Islamic world, and it's precisely -- it gives a journey, it's a sort of an Islamic journey in a funny way. And I don't know if this makes any sense, but it's like one of these things that strikes me like -- because you can be, what is the modern heritage of Europe coming out of that Protestant reformation, the rejection of the tradition?

You know, each person can speak to God and understand the Bible, et cetera, and of course that's all been Islam, I'd say it really hearkens back to (inaudible) and really gives you of being, you know, good detectors. Perhaps then, it's much more rational, once you accept the structure, it's a much more rational approach to Islam.

And I'm wondering if that makes it more appealing than to modern folks, and that it's not so

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much that it's an inherent thing. I buy your basic argument, it's an old thing, but why is it so widespread in the modern era, it seems to me, not because of that, but because of its appeal to people who want to be modern, and Muslim.

MR. COOK: Right. I mean, I think in a way, and the way you've presented the question also, answers it in that -- yeah, I mean. If you want to have a religious movement in the modern world that is going to be really successful, well, of course it helps to have Saudi oil money backing you, but I mean it's -- I think it's very foolish to think that the appeal of Salafism is just that. I mean, there's a lot more to it than that.

And, you know, if you want to have a successful religious movement in the modern world, it has got to somehow be a way that you can be modern. Otherwise it just -- you won't achieve takeoff. And I think, you know, the kind of features that you point out in Salafism, you know the fact -- we don't do any of this silly Sufi stuff, so to speak, this silly,

superstitious stuff.

You know, this is a sort of austere and, in a sense, rational, yeah. Now even though that's a very odd kind of thing to be coming out of the Hanbali tradition, which was in, you know, in theological terms, very antirational but, yeah, I mean. And what we are talking about is, unlikely affinities that you have between things, sort of that existed, long before the modern world, and things that exist now, and these affinities may in some -- may in some ways be quite fortuitous, and they are there they can work for you.

And of course, I mean, not all Salafis are like this, I mean there are conservatives in Saudi Arabia who live without telephones, without cars, et cetera, but I mean, that is clearly a very marginal phenomenon compared to, you know, the kind of Salafis that you were talking about.

SPEAKER: Hi. My question is -- Thank you, for all your remarks. My question is around, you know, given the current state of -- on identity politics within Egypt today, and Turkey in particular,

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I'd like to focus on those two countries. I know you have in each of the (inaudible), we have Muslims who reject Muslim Brotherhood, and these kind of overarching theologies -- I mean, theology, I suppose; and then in Turkey you have the opposite, and those two people now are at odds. Which are (inaudible), as long as it matches, you know, this kind of mix and match.

Is there a -- I know these two countries are being very prominent countries in the region, or at least in the Arab world. Do you see any sort of major shift that's going to happen depending on how things go today, in terms of identity politics in the region? Like is there now a potential for a real break from, you know, a super national Muslim state, or (inaudible) back from nationalist kind? Is there something that's unique about what's happening today with the dynamics about any politics today, like can act on kind of what direction for (inaudible) regions go? Does that make sense?

MR. COOK: Yeah, it does, but I'm not sure  
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that I have a good answer to it -- I mean, my expectation would be that a sense of wider Muslim identity, and a certain politicization of that, is going to be with us for a long time. But that also, nations in the Middle East, the ones that are more like nations, and then certainly -- well I mean -- say, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, are the ones that are most convincing as nations in the Middle East. They are going to be with us too, and how that's going to play out, you know, I would leave to a true prophet to say.

MR. DORAN: Joe, did you have a question?

SPEAKER: Hmm?

MR. DORAN: I skipped over you before, I forgot. Do you have question?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

MR. DORAN: All right. Go ahead.

MR. McCANTS: Yeah. And Garrett, this will be our last question, and we'll let everyone go home on time like we promised. But will you have a few minutes to stay around afterwards?

MR. COOK: Yeah.

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MR. McCANTS: So for those of you that I didn't call on, perhaps we can continue the conversation after we let everybody leave, who wants to go.

MR. MITCHELL: Professor Cook, I'm Garrett Mitchell, and I write the Mitchell Report. And I want to ask you a very different kind of question. And that is, we are sitting here thinking about how you've talked about your book, and your responses to the questions that were given.

And I was wondering, was this a book that's always been in your head, and along came this award that allowed you to spend some time and get it down on paper? Or, was this more of an opportunity or an occasion to say, it's a subject matter I've been thinking about for some time, but I want to get it down on paper, and see where this takes me?

And if it's the latter, if it was more exploratory in nature rather than sort of, you know, writing your music down, what -- was there something in this process that's surprised you as you thought

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about and wrote about it? And if that's the case, what was it?

MR. COOK: Right. I think it was certainly the second, and not the first. I was not born with this book in my head, nor do I have anything like it in my head at the age of 20 or 30 or 40, et cetera. It's something that -- I mean, I don't think that I'd even begun to have the -- have the first glimmerings of a thought about it, at the time when we decided to put that course on. And it came, you know, when I had to do -- you know, obviously, it must have occurred to me to suggest that we have competitive lecture.

So there must have been something in my head that then, you know, sort of favored some kind of comparison. But I don't think there was any, sort of content, to it at that point, so this is something that emerged then. So, what the second part of the question?

MR. MITCHELL: What was -- in the process?

MR. COOK: What surprised me, yes?

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. Yeah.

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MR. COOK: Right. I think I had kind of bought into the picture that you get from -- how can I put it -- you know, and so if you read the review section of *The New York Times*, every now and again, there's a book saying, God is back. Secularists Beware, Despair, and I think I had kind of bought into that, and what the -- this comparative -- one thing this comparative exercise did for me, was to make me realize that it isn't actually like that.

That there are very large parts of the world where God is not conspicuously back, or if He is, He's not playing a conspicuous political role. And that, you know, just as Western Europe is an outlier, so also, the Islamic world is an outlier. I think that was probably the single thing that surprised me most. It suggests that I read rather uncritically before that.

MR. McCANTS: Okay. Well, please, join me in thanking Professor Cook. It was really wonderful, and we appreciate it. (Applause)

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