

THE HUDSON INSTITUTE

**“9/11, MADRID, LEBANON, LONDON TERROR PLOT -
WHY NEO-CONSERVATISM STILL MATTERS “**

**AUGUST 14, 2006,
4:00 PM - 5:30 PM**

**THE HUDSON INSTITUTE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*Transcript by:
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

JOHN O’SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. My name is John O’Sullivan. I’m the director of the Center for European Studies here at the Hudson Foundation – Institute, rather, and on behalf of the Institute, I would like to welcome you here. I think it’s a tribute both to the topic today and to our speaker that we have such a large and distinguished crowd in the dog days of August. So, welcome in from the warm.

We’re very fortunate in having Douglas Murray as our speaker today, for two reasons. One is that Mr. Murray is one of those writers who seem to, like Minerva springing fully from the head of Zeus, seems to have arrived as a young man in the world with an enormous amount to his credit in a very few years. He first of all wrote a biography of Bosie, the friend of Oscar Wilde, when he was still an undergraduate at Magdalen. And secondly, he has now produced a book on the topic of neo-conservatism.

In between these times he’s become a fellow at the Social Affairs Unit in England, and for those of you who don’t know about the Social Affairs Unit in England – which I do know quite well, it is an organization which has managed to produce, in a sense, a more imaginative and lively account of social theory from a conservative standpoint than almost any other institution, and it does so, I think it’s fair to say – and this is not meant to be a libel but a compliment – on a shoestring budget. And so I think to be associated with the Social Affairs Unit is I think a high mark of credit.

Now, Mr. Murray’s second book, and the one we’re discussing today, is on the topic of neo-conservatism. Now, neo-conservatism, I think it’s fair to say – and, again, this is not meant to be a critical remark – but it’s fair to say that in Washington at least it’s past its high noon and it has come under severe criticism from realists and from others on the left. Now, Mr. Murray is a devotee of it.

I’m going to raise a couple of questions in question time that suggest that he is somewhat heterodox neo-conservative in Washington terms. But certainly he’s – not a representative I should say, but he’s one of a number of people in England who in recent years, at a time when neo-conservatism is perhaps more criticized in England than it is over here, who has emerged as the standard bearer of that idea and done so, along with groups like the Henry Jackson Society and the Euston Statement Group, people on the left and on the right – although he is on the right – who have emerged to champion this theory.

Now, when we first asked him to speak, we were asking him to speak on the topic – which at the time seemed the right way to approach it – “Can a European Be a Neo-Conservative?” since neo-conservatism was generally presented as a specifically American concept and idea. But in view of what has happened in the last month, both in the Middle East but also I think in London in the last week, I think it’s fair to say – to first ask the question rather of whether or not neo-conservatism is now, so to speak,

reviving, coming back. Are not the reasons why it was originally adopted beginning to look strong again, rather than being weakened by the Iraq war and other events?

So we'd really rather ask Mr. Murray to switch his emphasis, and he is going to now speak on the topic why neo-conservatism still matters. The topic of his book, by the way, is why neo-conservatism matters.

So with great pleasure I ask Mr. Murray to address us.

DOUGLAS MURRAY: Thank you very much, John O'Sullivan and also to the Hudson Institute for inviting me to speak to you today. The subject of my talk has indeed changed slightly but I hope I get some of – all of these matters in.

One of the things I hear more than anything else here in the United States is more of a statement than a question with a mixture of sort of bafflement and amusement. I hear the words: "You're a European neo-conservative?" I understand some of the bemusement. Many people here find it surprising that I don't object to association with a word that carries so many overtones of wickedness and dark dealings, but I do object and would very much appreciate it if people didn't refer to me as a European. (Laughter.) Of course, the British have never, historically or popularly, felt part of Europe, and today, as for many years, we have more in common with the average American than with the average Frenchman; the British attitude perhaps being best summed up by that famous headline around the time of the last war when the storms had raged for days in the English Channel and shipping had been prevented from coming through, and one of the British papers, entirely un-ironically, ran the immortal headline, "Storms in Channel: Continent Cut Off." (Laughter.)

But having raised this quibble at an early stage, whether we are now cut off from the Continent or not, I'm willing to temporarily partake in the pretense and will talk to you today as though the fact that I come from Britain means that I come from Europe. And that objection, having been registered, I think that's the substance. I was originally asked to address the question of whether a European can be a neo-conservative, but the answer to that question is obviously yes. And in the wake of the unfolding of the U.K. terror plot, I would like to look at that question in a slightly different way and ask rather: can a European, or indeed an American, afford not to be a neoconservative today?

This requires me first to sort out a definition. I think Kristol's famous remark that a neo-con was a liberal who had mugged by reality stopped applying perfectly some time ago. The change came about not only because what Americans today call liberals are very far from being liberals, but also because the most prominent neo-cons today were often never liberals in the first place, or were, in many cases – in fact, I'm thinking particular figures like perhaps Bill Kristol and John Podhoretz here – were born neo-conservative.

The definition I like to use relies on people firstly understanding the obvious truth that neo-conservatism is not a cabal or a party, but rather a sense, an instinct, a way of

looking at the world. That way of looking at the world is, in my definition, a blend of idealism and realism. We look at the world as it is but act in the world to make it as we would like it to be. This makes our instincts different from traditional conservatives who often distrust social engineering projects or any form of alternation of a status quo they perpetually see as being an irreversible if often quietly enjoyable decline. And of course it makes us different from modern day liberals who simply don't see the world as it is. I say that neo-cons look at the world from an idealist's eyes but wear heavy and powerful glasses. We're moralists with good eyesight. As such, I believe that neo-conservatism is the most valuable, and indeed necessary, political outlook of our time. I should point out here I'm not terribly worried about offending or alienating what you call liberals and I call socialists, people for whom in any case alienation, like self-flagellation, seems to be a pleasure as well as a principle.

But before offending any conservatives any further, I would like to stress that I see old-school conservatism not as wrong in itself but largely merely tactically wrong. As primarily an instinct and almost a non-philosophy, old-style conservatism today has, to my mind, two major flaws. The first is that conservatism relies on a noble sense of loyalty to the status quo, but the status quo, as we know in much of the West today, has changed, especially in the Western institutions. And thanks to socialist interferers, they've largely changed very much for the worse.

This being the case, the instinctive conservative is now often left trying to feel loyalty to a status quo that is not his status quo. That is, he's left trying to feel loyal to things which have not been loyal to him. I greatly sympathize with people caught in this dilemma. As an Anglican I'm, like many Anglicans today, left permanently caught between the desire to express loyalty to what one regards as a true faith and at the same time experiencing rage and bafflement to the church hierarchy which has thrown out the Book of Common Prayer, the King James Bible, and aspires, it often appears, to become little more than Greenpeace at prayer.

This process follows the same track as many institutions to which conservatives would like to show loyalty but increasingly cannot. In this situation, a conservative has an unenviable task; he either has to try continuing to be loyal to institutions which are disloyal to him, or he has to stop being a conservative and become that seeming anathema – a radical conservative, a revolutionary conservative, I believe a neo-conservative.

The other reason why neo-conservatism has a particular urgency today lies in the fact that instinctive conservatism, on its own, has proved woefully inadequate against the machinations and trickery of the left. Faced with someone performing the wicked but occasionally flashy acrobatics of the left, the instinctive conservative is often left feeling and looking out-performed and rather befuddled, confronted by poseurs and con-artists of the page like Fuko (sp) and Chomsky.

The instinctive conservative sense of natural right and moral certainty, though not disapproved, is made to look to a new generation desperately unsophisticated and therefore provably wrong. In an age where the pretense of moral as well as mental

sophistication matters more than the thing itself, I think is an especially dangerous lacuna. Neo-conservatism, by contrast, as I explain in the book, is a conservative philosophy which I believe can satisfyingly hold up, expose and destroy the presumptions which the generation of politicians now in power in Europe still hold onto.

In my book I trace the origins of neo-conservative thought, not just through the great heroes of Leo Strauss, Allen Bloom and Irving Kristol, but right back to the start: to Pericles and Plato, from the earliest thinkers who explained and expressed our deepest instincts about freedom, democracy and the striving of the human spirit.

I believe that at the crossroads of neo-conservatism, the in-built conservative instinct meets a hardened and tested philosophy, which not only defends natural right and certain absolutes but provides the antidote to the greatest philosophical disaster of our time; that is the disaster of relativism.

One of the precepts of my book is my firm, and I acknowledge currently unpopular, belief that ideas matter; that, as Irving Kristol put it, what rules the world is ideas. To that end, I trace how the neo-cons came out of the academy into Washington and then into the consciousness of our time. And if anybody doubts that it is thoughts and ideas which rule the world, one need only look at the results of relativism, the abiding philosophy of the left and therefore of much of the West. What began as a philosophical nightmare now has a real and devastating impact on our body politic.

Take the recent events in Lebanon and Northern Israel, which I've just come back from. Here's a conflict launched by a terror group on a democratic state, but the UN, itself the end product of relativism, and large numbers of democratic, not to mention tyrannical states, can find no way of discerning moral difference between the two sides. To them such a war is like all wars, a 50-50 event, a conflict in which to take a side would be to make an unacceptable value judgment. And of course the urgent necessity therefore is regarded not to be the disarmament of or disbandment of Hezbollah but a ceasefire, as though a return to a status quo ante is a victory for peace rather than a mockery of it.

Vast populations in the Western governments, such as that of France, can apparently now find no difference between a democratic state a terror group, between an aggressor or a defender, between a state whose intention is to save civilian life and a terror group intent on maximizing civilian casualties, between a state that builds bunkers to protect civilians from missiles and a terror group that builds bunkers to protect its missiles and then uses civilians to protect those bunkers.

Relativism has created a soup in which the most childish and well as the most pernicious ideas now flourish. It's no wonder that so many people, like the BBC, rely on body counts to decide who is right. Of course, it's not hard to point out that this doesn't quite work. Germany lost more troops in the last war than Great Britain but it didn't make Germany right. So this is not about right and wrong; it's about a nightmarish

nihilistic and lost philosophy desperately scouring to find a moral measurement in a world which they've made entirely relativist.

No wonder they can now find few other signals of legitimacy other than that believe is provided, for instance, by suffering; thus the emergence of Cindy Sheehan. No human being could feel anything but sympathy for the loss of her brave son, but does the fact that she lost her son really give her moral authority or military know-how? Maureen Dowd, the resident clown on The New York Times, certainly thinks so. A little while ago she described Cindy Sheehan's moral authority as absolute, which goes to demonstrate – as if it needed demonstrating – that relativists end up by becoming absolute relativists with hierarchies and peculiar papacies quite of their own.

But the result of relativism and its practical consequences do not stop at the equivalency of democracies and tyrannies, terrorists and free men. Because relativism gives equal credit to the wrong and the right, it can and does end up with a single result, which is that the wicked is unnaturally elevated and the good maligned, the malignant raised up and the right brought low.

Such a philosophical problem now affects not only our foreign policy but the very existence of the West at home. The absurd and disingenuous proselytizing of multiculturalism over the last few decades is just such a case. This is not about the whole world having a melting pot, and nor is it about people being nice to each other; it's about making the West a laboratory for an experiment which can lead only to the destruction of the West. I have sympathy here with Kristol's description of multiculturalism as "as much a war against the West as Nazism and Stalinism ever were," and Samuel Huntington's claim that "Multiculturalism is, in its essence, anti-European civilization...anti-Western ideology."

On this question and on this subject, the degradations of Europe and the problems of America constitute, as so often, the same problem. Border control and immigration issues here in the U.S. have at their root exactly the same dilemma that Europeans are facing with their Muslim and other immigrant populations. At the root is the simple question of how the West can remain the West, how the West can remain a cultural and not just a physical entity; rather trying to make sure the West isn't just one in this sort of set of lifestyle-like options in which you might chose the Western tradition, but then on the other hand, if jihad is your bag than that's fine too – an interesting mix for the dish except that with all those ingredients going in, something overloaded it and the whole Petri dish turned sour. Thus it is that Western governments, from America and Canada to Britain and Europe, can find no way to expel from their midst, or even make stands against, people who not only reject the societies which give them shelter, but actually plot against them.

Canada has the sobering case of the Khadr family, who have provided so many terrorists to the jihad that Mark Steyn has referred to them as perhaps Canada's principal contribution to the war on terror. In 2004, Mrs. Khadr returned to Canada with a surviving jihadist son who required medical attention from the latest al Qaeda shootout

with the Pakistani forces that he'd been involved in. But not for Mrs. Khadr the humility of the grateful applicant, but the simple statement, I'm a Canadian and I'm not begging for my rights; I'm demanding my rights. Mrs. Khadr's ungracious demand is echoed across the West to opportunist Islamists to take from us even as they plot to destroy us.

Looking for a rational reason to protect ourselves, we seem to have forgotten the most rational reason of all: survival. In Britain, our government has proved incapable of expelling clerics who preach violence and subversion against the state. Holland and Denmark can find no way of booting out imams who incite murder and the overthrow of the government, and have, indeed in many cases, proven track records of graduates leaving for careers in Afghan caves. And of course in Britain only last month, the home secretary was once again forbidden by the lower courts to expel a group of Afghan men who are only in Britain because they arrived a few years ago illegally on a plane. This wasn't any old illegality, though. No mere passport flushing on the BA loo for these guys. They arrived in Britain on a plane they hijacked themselves. And for all the guns, terrorism and terrorized innocents involved, the British state, after many years, can still find no reason or any way to violate the human rights of hijackers by asking them to leave the country.

Societies which can find no rational reason why they should not be destroyed will be destroyed, and free people who can find way to understand what makes them superior to terrorists will find the march of history going not in their direction but in the direction of their enemies. It's isn't a clear road, of course, and among the throng are plenty of glad fools paving the way. Foremost among them today are those who claim that there is no enemy of Western civilization, or that to make such a claim is an unacceptable value judgment. Or there are those who say we cannot criticize another group because our ancestors did bad things. This is now an overwhelming arrogance of my generation, far exceeding the arrogance, I believe, even of their imperialist forebears. Those whose belief in preemption runs only to preemptive apology are now messing with people's lives and it's suddenly stopped looking cute.

I lost count in the run-up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq of the number of times Europeans and Americans told me that we – such people, incidentally, only ever acknowledge collective feeling when it comes to collective guilt – that we had no right to fight al Qaeda because we created them, or had not right to overthrow Saddam Hussein because we had supported him. Put aside for a moment, if you will, the historical ignorance of these claims and focus for a moment on why someone would make such a claim. Is it seriousness or is it simply posing as seriousness? Is it an expression of moral maturity or of moral cowardice? I would argue it's an expression of the latter.

Only a generation brought up on a diet of self-esteem and ignorance could so continually parade under the not-in-my-name inanities of the anti-war left in which immersion in activism is actually an opt-out from action where you never have to deal with a tyrant or genocide because if you glance around, you can pretty much always find someone from the West in the background who you can blame and claim makes action not only illegitimate but, that terrible word, hypocritical.

And of course there is the prevailing presumption that choosing not to act is not itself a choice and a mode of action. So you don't want anything to happen, Mr. Ahmadinejad, so your conscience is clear? No. If you call for inaction, you are acquiescing in the acquisition of a bomb. You don't get out of the game; you just pretend to get out with your hands clean. People who think like that have got away with things for too long, and in my book I try to take the argument back to them. After all, who has more to apologize for, someone who supports the difficult and costly overthrow of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein or a so-called peace campaigner whose activities, if listened to, would have by now led to the subsuming of Kosovo into a greater Serbia after a successful genocide, the continued rule of Afghanistan by the Taliban, and an Iraq whose best hope for the future would be the succession of Uday Hussein? This isn't conscience; it's ignorance – profound moral and mental ignorance masquerading as seriousness.

And the self-blame parade doesn't end with young people taught only guilt about their collective past. We've fast-forwarded here at a remarkable pace. We have politicians here and in Europe determining that any hit against America or Europe must be not the fault of the bomber or the hijacker, but it's something we did in the distant or dim recent past. Terrorism, they end up claiming, is caused by our reaction to terrorism. So if we stop reacting or trying to deal with terrorism, apparently we wouldn't face it.

I watched, incidentally, with awe on Thursday as John Edwards pronounced in a television interview that last week's U.K.-stopped terror attacks were almost certainly a reaction to British and American involvement in Iraq. It was, as ever, a shame that Mr. Edwards couldn't have stopped talking because if he'd have laid off for even a few hours he might have seen, though not necessarily learned from, the news that one of the main suspects in the bomb plots converted and radicalized in 1998. That's before Iraq or 9/11. As so often, we learn more about Mr. Edwards from his comments than we do about anything else.

But for my part, I'd like to point out here something that he and others would have missed. You see, 1998 is an interesting year to convert to radical Islam. A wave of British Muslims, including Omar Sheikh, the privileged LSE graduate from London who graduated to murdering the journalist Daniel Pearl, radicalized in the '90s because they felt that Western nations didn't do enough to stop the slaughter of their co-religionists in the Balkans that decade. Now, as it happens, I agree with them on this one, although I never took it out on American journalists or infidel Westerners, but then I'm not a member of the religion of peace.

But I would like to suggest to you – and I wish Europeans and Americans could get this one a little better – I would like to suggest to you that if a group of people threatened to kill, murder and maim us when we do act, and threaten to kill, murder and maim us when we do not act, then that is a group of people we should not be listening to. The feelings of terrorists are evidently not a useful moral guide. But as I say, in the relativist soup, you've got to seize on what you can, even if the nearest thing is a phony grievance or a hardly disguised malevolence.

Seizing on such claims is understandable for loss, but we should consider the results of these fake benign ideas. Both the Islamists who beat us up from the outside, and the John Edwards's who erode us from the inside have one consequence to their rotten or lazy thoughts, which is that they intend to render or will end up accidentally rendering, the West incapable of action. And this overt and underlying pressure could not come at a worse time for the West or the global community. Over the last three years in particular, many gleeful commentators have declared that neo-conservatism is over. Well, we've been here before. The same thing was declared of course in the Reagan years. Many of the presumptions and misunderstandings were as evident then as they are now.

But let's look for a moment at what is being put forward to replace what had been, to only some extent accurately, described as the neo-conservative project. The declaration that Iraq may be failing causes barely disguised glee among some opponents of the war. A number of the most prominent left-wing columnists in Britain and America have expressed open delight at the prospect of President Bush and Tony Blair being taught a lesson. Evidently such moral people wishing the death of thousands of Iraqis is nothing besides giving Bush and Blair a bashing. At this stage, there is a branch of the left that is now subsumed by outright nihilism and support for violence. As Paul Berman charted in his recent brilliant book on Joschka Fischer, "They have ended up coming right round the other way."

And then there are those who have decided, for instance, that the election of Hamas or the tortuous negotiations over the new Iraqi government demonstrate that these foreigners aren't really keen on freedom, or don't really want to have a say in the running of their own countries. You hear this one from right and left now, and it is – and the word is one which has been so overused that I hardly ever use it – but it is an idea which is, without any doubt, one of the most genuinely racist ideas I know. The election of Hamas is a problem we have with Hamas, not a problem we have with democracy. Likewise, the painfully slow forming of a new government and continued civil unrest in Iraq does not demonstrate, as many are now claiming, that Saddam kept a lid on things. This phrase I believe will go down in history alongside Mussolini and his train timetabling arrangements for sheer, unimaginative wickedness.

So where are we with the world? Well, the axis of evil, one of the most derided yet accurate phrases of our time, which has been laughed off by the opponents of the war on terror, appears to be outliving and outdoing many of its doubters. The missile which hit an Israeli ship on the 14th of July, killing four IDF personnel, was sent to Hezbollah via Damascus and guided to its target by Lebanese radar. Iran has been sending not only munitions but troops to help fight the Israelis. Short of Kim Jong Il riding in on one of these missiles himself, I can't imagine a clearer example of the Axis at work.

But what has come from this? Absolutely nothing. And confident of our weakness, our lack of resolve and divided souls, Tehran and Damascus appear to have noted that when they put their heads above the parapet these days, not only does nobody

shoot at them, nobody even shouts. So they've raised themselves even higher, and in the last week alone, Iran has not only admitted but boasted of its supplying of missiles to Hezbollah, and boasted of its flouting of the international community over the nuclear issue. They have made the calculation that we are weak, and our weakness has proved, as so often, a provocation. The peaceniks and those who have counseled inaction or weak action have helped to bring us into a world in the next few years in which Iran will go nuclear and in which no one apparently will do a thing to stop them.

Contrast that with the situation just in March last year when the journalist Joe Klein met with Assad in Syria: "Please send this message: I am not Saddam Hussein. I want to cooperate," the Syrian president begged." Well, when someone asks when a golden moment was, I would say that was it, the period in which tyrants and despots felt genuinely concerned that they would be next and that the day of the great dictators were over.

Where are we now? The tyrants have become emboldened. Five years after September 11th we are, I believe, as a result, heading into a period as dangerous and avoidable as any in our history. We're heading there because we are losing faith in ourselves. Europe has been having a crisis of self-confidence for some time now, though I have some hope that Europe is coming out of this headless reverie. But exactly the least useful situation now would be if America joined in the crisis of confidence. The neo-conservative revolution, whether the "N" word is used or not, is vital, not for reasons of pride, but for reasons of right. Through neo-conservative thought and actions, I believe the West can deal with problems of our time, and deal with them early as truly liberal men, rather than down the road as barbarians.

But if Americans are swayed by the goons and propagandists who claim that spreading freedom is colonialism, or that liberation is occupation, or that up is down and left is right – if Americans are swayed by these people, then it will not only be America that will suffer; it will be the cause of liberty, the possibility of freedom across the globe. Our thoughts will indeed have had great consequences, and future generations will not forgive us for them.

At the conclusion of "The Closing of the American Mind," Allan Bloom famously wrote, "This is the American moment in world history, and one for which we shall forever be judged. The fate of freedom in the world has devolved upon our regime. The gravity of our given task is great, and it is very much in doubt how the future will judge our stewardship." Today we are a little closer to hearing that judgment, a little closer to success, or a little nearer to failure. This is indeed the moment for which America will be judged. The predictable dolts will be embittered by and critical of your success, but far more people will rue your failure.

In Britain and Europe, as I say, I see some signs of revival, of people finally speaking out again on issues on which they remained silent for too many years, of the throwing off and challenging of presumptions and platitudes which held sway for too long. For many of us, it is America which has inspired us and led the way. Neo-

conservatism is the first complete political philosophy founded in America to transfer slowly but measurably to Europe. Movements like the Henry Jackson Society in London and the Euston Group explicitly linked to and looked to the bold and inspiring philosophy which revived American conservatism in the last half century. We look to your example and we like what we see. I hope that you can find it in yourselves to continue the path you've been on. Now is not the time for you to go wobbly on us.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Well, thank you very much, indeed. That was a very powerfully reasoned and eloquent address.

Now I'm going to take questions from the floor. Is there anyone who would like to raise the – offer the first question? (Pause.)

In that case, I will offer one myself, and that is – my question is this: Looking at this very coldly, what would you say is the strength of neo-conservatism in British and European politics, considered in the everyday vulgar terms of labor, conservative and liberal democrats? Who are the people, how many, what kind of strength does it possess?

MR. MURRAY: Well, of course, it's a bogey word, as it is here. The supreme – some examples of the term is that generally people really refer to a neo-con as war-monger, of course, as you know, and a hawk – probably Jewish; all of those canards. And one of the few people – I mean, he wouldn't thank me for saying so, but of course, the top neo-con is Tony Blair – although there are signs that his chancellor – and probably our next prime minister – Gordon Brown is also a neo-con, only though, it must be stressed, on foreign policy – domestically very, very far away from being neo-con. But on foreign policy I suppose you're halfway there. It's not bad.

So it would be Tony Blair that people would look to as being such a person. Otherwise, Europeans see neo-cons as existing only in America. I mean, it's quite interesting, but I mean, there are a large number in Europe. Again, they wouldn't call themselves such, but -- they don't know each other and they don't identify each other.

Interesting enough is this conference recently of conservatives across Europe, and the number of people from the former Eastern bloc who were sort of self-avowed neo-cons. I mean, they were – I mean, much like the first generation of neo-cons here, and it of course started out as anti-communist and have now found themselves in the same stable as neo-cons. I was kind of hopeful.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I have to point out – slightly disloyally since I used to work for a conservative prime minister – that you didn't mention the Conservative Party in that reply.

MR. MURRAY: It's always best not to these days. (Chuckles.)

Yes, I mean occasionally -- there were some attempts when Cameron became Conservative leader recently -- there were some attempts to sort of smear him by saying that he was actually a neo-con or that he was surrounded by neo-cons. Some of his advisers are people I would say were neo-cons, like Michael Gove, a very neo-conservative -- very neo-conservative. But no, largely it was an attempt to sort of smear, and it didn't quite work because everyone in Britain has sort of recognized that so far David Cameron has talked only of bicycling, and I don't think the word "Iraq" has come from his lips. So --

MR. O'SULLIVAN: The gentleman at the back.

Q: You told us that orthodoxy is the guiding principle of paleo-conservatism. What is the most important value of neo-conservatism that unites its views on different issues? Is it orthodoxy or is it something else?

MR. MURRAY: Freedom would be one single word that sprang to mind always. I mean, on domestic that stretches as well as really freedom from the state -- is one of the things that all neo-cons have argued and which of course those few politicians who have been neo-conservative on foreign policy have often been rather bad about the freedom thing at home.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Yes, some other questions -- the gentleman here in the middle. Would you stand up? By the way, could I ask people, when they ask a question to state who they are and, if it's relevant, who they represent -- what they represent?

Q: Thank you. My name is Ethan Mann. I'm a student at American University's law school. I'd just like to ask you a quick question if I may about a point you touched on, sir: the ceasefire in Lebanon. You characterized it, if I understand you correctly, as an example of moral relativism at work: an inability to distinguish between Hezbollah's side and Israel's side of the conflict.

I have to say, I didn't quite see it that way, for two reasons. One is that the ceasefire does seem to have given Israel much of what it said it wanted: a security buffer to be staffed by Lebanese and international peacekeepers up to the Litani River; and second, because even though, yes, it would be very nice if we could totally disarm and destroy Hezbollah, or at least force its conversion to a pure political party without any weapons, the reality is that what we've seen over the past few weeks is that even with the very best of intentions on the Israeli side, we get very high civilian casualties in Lebanon during an attempt to actually destroy Hezbollah by military force.

So might it be a sign not of moral relativism but of simple prudence and regard for Lebanese civilian life to go for the ceasefire and say, yes, Hezbollah is a problem but we'll deal with it later and in a somewhat less bloody way?

MR. MURRAY: Well, that's a good point. I think not only because I see no desire in the international community to deal with Hezbollah. If they can't obey 1551, I don't see why they're going to obey a new resolution. I mean, how many resolutions do you have to give before Hezbollah gets the message? I mean, are they going to take it when we give them three or four?

I don't see anyone in Hezbollah who says, look, guys, the U.N. has given another resolution, let's disarm. I see no seriousness in dealing with the issue of disarming Hezbollah.

And on the issue of the international force, I see no likelihood that it's going to do what it has tried to do, or what its mandate would be intended to be. I think it's a great disaster generally having to put an international force in southern Lebanon.

And we all of course regret where we are with it. But what is the point of putting a buffer zone between Israel and a terrorist state – a terror group that's still fully armed? I see a return to the status quo ante on this one as being not a draw but a victory for Hezbollah. A draw – the terror group punched the nose of a big state. The big state tried to come back and was prevented from doing so.

Q: What is the alternative?

MR. MURRAY: The alternative? Well, the alternative first of all would be – I mean, the alternative is to deal with Hezbollah to destroy the 13,000 missiles. I mean, it's better that you have even 3,000 Hezbollah and no missiles than 100 Hezbollah and 13,000 missiles. You could just -- just to try to get rid of the missiles would be a start.

Now, that being the case, what would be a good idea and what would be a victory, I think, for Israel here would be to continue a military campaign. It would still continue to be a difficult military campaign – but to continue the military campaign and be rather better at the way they explained it to the world.

One of the most dispiriting things about being in Israel during this period has been seeing every single individual attack, such as the destruction of bridges, for instance, or the taking out of the radar facilities on the waterfront, and no explanation from the Israeli government or Israeli military for the international press. I mean, I kept on saying to them when I was over there, I will lend you a pointy stick, and get a general to stand with my pointy stick and he could – you could do it because, as it was, the presumption has gone around the globe that the Israelis just like blowing up bridges. Nobody explained that the soldiers – kidnapped soldiers could be spirited across these bridges or that the rocket launchers would be retreating back into northern Lebanon. No one explained that the Lebanese government had provided the information from the radar, which meant that the radar facilities on the seafront have to be taken out. All that happened was it was released by the international press that Israel had been bombing the waterfront of Lebanon.

I mean, these sort of basic problems -- I don't know why the Israelis don't do this. My only guess is they decided -- that people have decided they don't like them and they're not bothering to try to make people like them. I think it's a great mistake.

And it's been revealed here what happens. If you could have got out -- there was a letter to -- sorry, I'll finish my last point on this one.

There was a letter to one of the German papers -- some of you may have seen it -- a couple of weeks ago now from a Lebanese man who had left in 2002 after the Hezbollah came into his village, and started building their bunkers and putting the missiles in them and then building schools and hospitals on top of the bunkers, and this man writing the Lebanese -- to the German newspaper explained that he went up to the local sheikh and said, you know, why are you doing this? And the local sheikh said, because this way the Jews lose one way or the other. Either we missile them or they try to get us and the international community will stop them.

Now, I think if you could explain -- it's not an easy thing to explain to the public how one army that literally is killing the people is not responsible -- (inaudible). It's not an easy one; I acknowledge that. But I'm sure that people could get this idea if you got the idea out a bit better, if you got it out a bit clearer. I just wish that we had seen that happen.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: The gentleman there and then afterwards over there --

Q: Enders Wimbush from the Hudson Institute. You characterized neo-cons as people who believe that ideas matter. And for those of us who really believe that, when we look around the world today and we think what impacts the war of ideas has had upon this landscape, we retreat somewhat disappointed -- or at least I do. But I wonder how you would characterize fighting the war of ideas. What kind of a report card would you give us?

MR. MURRAY: American battle of ideas I'd give a Beta-plus; Europe I'd give a Gamma-minus. I mean, it seems to me that one of the problems that conservatives have had for some time has been that we presumed that we are being -- we're losing, you know, conservatives of all stripes. We sort of decided that everything is against us; that the best we can do is fight the battle for the next thing that will be lost. And that's all that we'll be able to achieve, is to temporarily sort of put off some decline.

I think that's a mistake. I mean, it is an instinctive thing, but it's also a philosophical thing. And I think it's a mistake to run on that. I think that conservatives should understand, and as I say, one of the things that the revolutionary conservative movement, as it were, can understand is that you can make things better and that you should try to, and you should argue for them.

And I believe that the result of the last 30 or so years -- about 40 years, '70s and '60s -- one of the results of conservatives not fighting this battle of ideas quite as hard as

we have done letting these basic presumptions to go ahead is, as I say, seen on our streets. I mean, conservatives, for instance, have never bothered, it seems to me, to battle the notion of – the whole argument about progress and historical inevitability whereby a liberal – as you call them here, unfortunately – or leftists or socialists can keep on portraying conservatives as only backward-looking, only regressive, only the problem a holdups to the great moment when we arrive at the hinterland and all say thank you. I just – I feel that the most basic things of the narrative, as well as, you know, precise things have been sort of volunteered up by us, so we decided we're going to lose and so we won't bother, and I say we bother.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Yes, the gentleman – Roger, did you have a question?

Q: I'm Roger Kimball. I'm actually the publisher of Encounter Books, which published this book. I urge you all to buy it.

But I just wanted to add to something that – what Douglas said with respect to this gentleman's questions. I think that with Hussein Moussaoui, the former Hezbollah leader – if his statement that we are not doing these things, like blowing up school buses and churchyards and so on – we aren't doing these things because we want something from you; we're doing them to exterminate you. I think that's hermetically (?) transparent, as it were, and would do a lot to further the understanding of what we're really up against.

But I wanted to ask you, Douglas, something that doesn't really come through in your book, but I'd be curious to know what your opinion was. Do you consider the Bush administration more or less neo-conservative now than in 2003?

MR. MURRAY: Less now, but that is not because of individuals. That's not because of, you know, Libby or Wolfowitz or anything like this. That is because I believe of something in the president and Secretary Rice, which it seems to me goes towards neo-conservatism now and has done since 2001, but doesn't always stay there. The impulse is there, but not always seeing it through. And I think particularly, of course, of Secretary Rice's dealings with Iran, which -- what I see as sort of a part desire to take the neo-conservative attitude to it, and then a sort fatal backing off of it, which I think is giving out all the wrong messages to Iran, and there might as well not be neo-con around the edges, you know, at all if that's the case. But it's not to do with individuals. I mean, I really object to that sort of thing about sort of the purge of the neo-cons, or that sort of they all came in 2001 and took it over and then flew off. I don't see that at all. But of course that's just at the present, and so on – love talking personality, whether it's for – (inaudible) – or anyone else. It's, you know a peculiar tactic, too.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Yes, a question here.

Q: Marc Plattner, Journal of Democracy. I wonder if you could tell us how you became a neo-conservative. It is not meant to be a narrowly autobiographical question, but, for example, you have mentioned certain authors. Did you first become interested in neo-conservatism and then turned to these authors? Was it these authors who turned you

to neo-conservatism? And more broadly, among other Britons or even Europeans who are following this path, what do you see as a cause of their turning in this direction?

MR. MURRAY: No, sure. I mean, I didn't kneel at the feet of Leo Strauss or – (inaudible) – or anything. I might say these days that, I mean, people tend to read Strauss and other such neo-con authors because they sort of realize they're neo-conservative and they like to find out – they work their way backwards.

I mean, on my own personal route on that one, I would say that people always say weren't – neo-cons, weren't you all lefties to begin with, and I would say if I had spent any time on the left, it was a matter of minutes. (Laughter.)

I didn't have anything to sustained period on the left, but I do regard myself as looking generally through the world's vaguely liberal eyes, and classical liberal eyes. And I suppose mugging – you know, if I was mugged by a reality, I suppose three things particularly. The first, the most prominent one I think was on the issue of the Balkans in the '90s. Like a lot of people -- I mean, there were people on the left, like Brendan Simms in Britain, the Balkan expert, and so on, who I have common cause with because of this. I mean, the sheer exasperation, amazement, and horror that, as far as one could see there was going to be a full replay on European soil of everything we said we wouldn't have again, and the incapability and the inaction of the international community, and all the things we were told stood in the way of such a thing happened again. I mean, the U.N. that was intended, as Robert Cooper said in his great book, "The Breaking of Nations," the U.N. was intended to retain the status quo, defend the status quo, not to create a new status quo. But it did create a new status quo, and it couldn't deal with an old problem. And Jack Poole (ph), who will go down in history for his incredibly arrogant – this is, you know, the European moment; you know, we will deal with it. This is the European moment. And it turned out they couldn't deal with it. They didn't.

And, again, I mean, even the American government, which of course did come in in the end, but even the American government the people looked to – perhaps the Americans will help us out again – again seemed for a long time willing to see a full replay of what had happened in Europe before. And I think that to me was the horrible (?) thing. We had at least pretended before that "never again" meant something. And then the pretense seemed to drop, and everyone just got on with life. So that would be the main thing I think with the Balkans.

Then, I suppose, like everyone – like 9/11 but more importantly, the reaction to 9/11. I always felt that the reaction to 9/11 gave away far more of the enemies of the West within the West than I think they intended to give away. I mean, all of the people who said, for instance – on the left -- I mean, the people who didn't know very much about Iraq and then thought that it was an atheistical state – all those people who said, oh, how could there be an al Qaeda-Iraq connection between al Qaeda are religious and Ba'athists aren't. There couldn't be a common cause between those two.

And you say, well, you have made common cause. Socialists are marching down the streets of Washington and London with Islamists. If you can do it in London, why the hell can't you do it in Baghdad?

Now in those people, all of those parties – I despaired of and I write in the book that to some extent, I regard what happened in the post-9/11 period as being similar to the counterculture in the '60s, which Kristol and Co. recognized. You know, when Kirkpatrick said, around the time that Vietnam debate was getting most unpleasant here in here in the U.S., she said – she wrote somewhere – you know, we all recognize that America could be improved, but to improve it had to first survive.

And what she and others saw then was that by large amounts of the anti-war movement then were not anti-war because it was a Vietnam issue; it was an anti-America issue, it was an anti-Western-action issue. And that is what I saw in the post-9/11 period – was the people who said don't overthrow the Taliban, then don't overthrow Saddam Hussein. There were legitimate ways of having that debate, doing it. But in large part, I saw it as being a new counterculture, a new culture which stood not to criticize our culture, but to denigrate it and actually to take it apart.

I always said they seem to me to be like children with bicycles. They take it apart, but they have no idea of how to put it back together.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Next question. The gentleman here, then the lady here.

Q: Thank you very much. My name is Yoichi Kato with Asahi Shimbun, Japanese newspaper. Thank you for your presentation.

I apologize to be coming in late, so if my question is answered already in your presentation where I missed, I apologize.

But I would like to know how damaging the way the Bush administration handles the Iraq war to the credibility of the neo-conservatism, and how you can recover from it. Thank you.

MR. MURRAY: I think in the portrayal of the war – greatly. I mean, I always thought the shifting between justifications was a mistake.

I always put it that there was – and I don't mean this flippantly -- there was no reason not to invade Iraq; i.e., that every criteria necessary to withdraw sovereignty temporarily from a country existed there. And I thought it was regrettable, for instance, that the humanitarian case for intervening in Iraq, which seemed to me to be overwhelming and had been overwhelming for decades, really was brought very late, and too late in the day.

I think a lot more people would have understood that conflict if it hadn't have looked like – whether it was or wasn't; in fact I think it wasn't -- if it hadn't have looked so much like they were grasping for the humanitarian issue at five to 12.

I wished that had been used in the beginning because it would have, at the very least – at the most it would have persuaded more people, particularly on the left, of the terrible urgency of dealing with that country in order to save it -- that family. But at the least, it would have smoked out the people who really -- who pretend to care about the people of Iraq and so on and actually do not at all, the people who masquerade as carrying and we've allowed to get away with it. It would have made them have to say, I do not care about repeated genocides; don't do it. That would have been okay. We could have said, fine. But it muddied the debate, yes.

And the handling of the war – well, as I always say, well, I mean, neo-cons did not handle the war. They were not running the great departments of state here.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: The lady here.

Q: Thank you. Sarah Baxter, Sunday Times of London.

MR. MURRAY: Hello.

Q: Hi. I wanted to ask you about Gordon Brown, who is quite likely to be prime minister in the next year or so – maybe a little bit later, if Tony Blair can stop him.

I'm intrigued to say that you – he might be neo-conservative in foreign policy. I'd like to hear the evidence for that, and – because I thought you might be saying as little as David Cameron on the subject.

And if I can sort of squeeze in a second question -- how do you regard Mrs. Thatcher these days? Was she a neo-conservative (on that level, so to speak ?) – they existed then, but she wouldn't have necessarily called herself that, and -- I mean, do you regard yourself in the sense as in any way a Thatcherite, and does that make things uncomfortable in today's Conservative Party?

MR. MURRAY: I don't regard myself as a Thatcherite. I think that is probably because – well, I don't look to Thatcher particularly. I might horrify American conservatives on this one because I know she is the only good leader we had for many years before Blair. But I don't regard Thatcher as – I mean, Thatcher was in some ways a neo -- she was certainly a hero, in the same way as Reagan, in dealing with the Soviet Union. And the moral clarity she showed then seems to me to be what one might call neo-con -- similar to her action in the Falklands, might I add, lambasting the American administration's initial reluctance to do anything but draw moral parity between my country and Argentina. I mean, that sort of thing seemed to me to be a fundamental sort of – now to call it neo-con in some ways is to, you know, call it a bad name or to make it look worse. I think it was simply a moral stand she took, and I – that's what I admire in

her -- admired in her then, and admire her now -- looking back at what she did in her reign, but I wouldn't regard myself as a Thatcherite. I suppose that's probably because when we refer to Thatcherism in Britain, we don't mean treatment of the Soviet Union and so on. We mean privatization and all of that, you know. So that would be my answer to that.

On Gordon Brown, there is material evidence of neo-conservatism. He gave himself away when Owen Stoltz (ph) wrote his book -- (inaudible) -- and a little-noticed jacket puff was given by Gordon Brown. Nobody picked up on it at the time, but Gordon Brown praised the book. And I can't remember the exact quote, but he was much impressed by it all and gave his endorsement.

I think that -- I mean, the evidence of Gordon Brown being a foreign policy neo-conservative would also -- as far as everything I see, everything right here, I see no particular difference of opinion between him and the prime minister on any major foreign policy issue. It seems to me to be one of the great sort of non-stories, and for once there is no water at all between the prime minister and his chancellor. I think this is a positive thing. But it's clear that if he becomes prime minister, he will inherit this and follow it. There is no other thing he believes in on foreign policy, as opposed, incidentally, to the conservative party, whose members don't seem to have any beliefs on foreign policy.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: I think you may be reading a little bit too much into the fact that Gordon Brown is not only a good friend of our colleague, Irwin Stelzer, but Irwin Stelzer is also a highly influential columnist.

MR. MURRAY: Yeah, and advisor, I believe, to Brown.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Next question. Yes, the gentleman in the back.

Q: Hi. Eric (sp) -- (unintelligible) -- from the Asahi Shimbun. And in America and elsewhere, public support for a military presence in Iraq has been eroding, particularly this year but also for some time. And my question is, what is -- you know, neo-conservatives have come under a critique for this, for over estimating the staying power of a democratic society in terms of foreign -- especially international ventures. So my question is, what is what is the relationship between the neo-conservative policymaker and the democratic society in terms of should neo-conservatives kind of drag the public along with their agenda or -- not to put a negative spin on it -- or should they wait until they have won the battle of ideas before bringing the public along?

MR. MURRAY: It's a good question. Iraq has -- incidentally I don't -- once again, I don't regard the failures in Iraq as being necessarily the feat of neo-cons, but particularly -- (inaudible) -- and those people who criticize the actions of the Pentagon and so on, and I'm not entirely among them, although I do have criticisms. But Donald Rumsfeld is not a neo-conservative. And whenever I say that, generally they're sort of amazed -- amused, but -- I mean, outside this audience, I mean, generally people really don't get that because he's a hawk. They see him as a hawk; they see him as a neo-con.

But on the issue of Iraqi society and whether the public will go along with it, I mean, it seems to me that one of the problems we're facing now is that that – the underestimation was the underestimation of the wickedness of the enemy, not its numbers or anything else, but the sheer depths to which they will go. It's something which every time amazes me. Every time, you know, dozens of children are blown up deliberately – the opening of a water plant in 2004, suicide bomber – local children were there to celebrate the opening of a water plant and the suicide bomber went in and just blew them all up. The case some months ago when a Shi'ites teacher in the south – when the government walked into the classroom and terrified all the children – shot their teacher in front of them. This sort of thing. I mean, the day-to-day things. We know – there are hundreds of cases, sadly, going on like this.

I think we underestimated the wickedness of the enemy, and I think they knew that we would underestimate them, and every time try to shock us, and shock us and terrify us and horrify us. This is the nature of terror. Why do they record kidnappings and beheadings? To horrify us, and it works. Of course it works. I mean, what journalist wants to venture outside the green zone? I mean, who would want to do it? Everyone in Iraq is terrified. They all have the premonition of themselves being on the camera, you know. And that works. It works every time. They are steps and steps ahead of our wildest horror, nightmares of what somebody is willing to do as a human being to another human being. And it's very, very hard to battle an enemy like that. It's very hard to battle an enemy that is willing to kill dozens of school children to get one American troop. And we didn't prepare for that. And I don't see how you could, as I don't see how the Russian government could have prepared for Beslan. What could you do? What on earth could you do to preempt that or to imagine that it was possible?

And that I think is why we're in that situation with Iraq, but it's a situation we know the terrorists have planned and plotted to continue. We know that Zawahiri left it to Zarqawi, the unlamented late Mr. Zarqawi. The intention was to create maximum bloodshed, to kill his own religionists, his co-religionists and people of his own sect in order to create maximum horror for the outside world and maximum horror for Iraqis. Sadly, all of the narrative – I hate that word but it's hard to avoid – all of the narrative of Iraq of course – and I think they know this – they knew this – all the narrative has come down to the deaths in Iraq. Of course they're at our hands for going in. I wish that the press in the West and I wish the governments of the West had stressed more that the death of people in a suicide bombing is solely down to the person who carried out the suicide bomb and the people who sent him. I wish that could be stressed more. I wish I weren't told constantly that a hundred-thousand people have being killed by us. They haven't; they weren't, apart from the fact that that figure is fallacious, of course. But they weren't killed by us. It wasn't American bombs that were dropped it on civilians; it was Islamist terrorists killing their co-religionists to spite us.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: The gentleman at the front.

Q: Thank you. (Inaudible.) As a Russian neo-conservative, I follow very closely American political debates. It's one of the privileges of my fellowship. It seems that one idea is becoming more and more prevailing, that while we should address the roots of Islamic terrorism and reach out to Muslims, not – (inaudible) – them to fight with their minds and hearts, to consider their legitimate grievances and so on and so on. And after all of the general blah, blah, blah they only want the same political accommodation Israel was – (inaudible). We should address the Palestinian problem. But this – it seems that this mood is widespread all along the political spectrum, not only among – (inaudible) – and liberals, but it's well known that – (inaudible) – a problem that would satisfy these Muslims whose minds and hearts they are trying to fight, is the final solution of state of Israel problem.

So there is impression that a kind of super – (inaudible) – is under preparation here, not as a conspiracy, nor as a political plan, but as a state of mind that, well, maybe after they abandon Israel, these people will finally live on in peace and so on. Do you share this perception and what do you think about it?

MR. MURRAY: Yes, absolutely right. I mean, I'll get to it this way; I'll get to it via Afghanistan, as it were. One of the things I always said that was interesting about this public discussion and public debate before the Afghan conflict was that interesting thing in which people started saying that thing about, well, we made the Taliban. Again, putting aside for the moment the sort of details of that and the possible factual inaccuracy of it. It was interesting then because during that period, that sort of month between 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan, and for the months afterward, the number of people who talked about that always sort of baffled me. And I always tried to work out why it was quite so irritating. I arrived that it was both morally and sort of historically a sort of acrobatic trick. I mean, if you said that at a dinner party, you could look like you cared about this and you could also look like you've been following Afghan politics for the last few decades. And most people didn't. But it had all the aura of knowledge without any of the actual basis.

And a lot of people with the issue of Israel and the Palestinians do the same thing. I mean, some people are witted (?) about it, some people are wrong and misguided, I believe, and can be argued out of it or not, but a lot of people just say, because they're lazy, because if you say the problem is Israel and Palestine, or if we just give this to the Palestinians, offer this solution, you can pretend that – you know, that that's it, that you know all about it, and then that – it's so easy; it's simple. If only the world were that simple. But there's also, I think, the stalling tactic, people who say let's first of all have the Israeli-Palestinian issue before we go into Iraq. Well, let's sort out Israel-Palestine before we go into Afghanistan. I mean, I think – I mean, I don't sound too pessimistic about it, but I do think that saying we'll wait to have peace in Israel-Palestine is like we'll wait until the seas run dry. It's saying we'll wait a hell of a long time, at any rate. And so a lot of that has, again, been designed to stop us from acting.

I don't buy the anti-Semitic line about a lot of people's objection to Israel. I simply think that ignorance is amazingly prevalent on this question. It is extremely hard,

particularly for people of my generation, to understand the ins and outs of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, but if you have been born in the 1970s, say, and while you've been growing up have always seen the issue of suffering Palestinians, whose suffering cannot be denied. The likelihood that you will get on their side in the same way that you'd get on the side of, say, the starving in Africa – as another of your moral hobbyhorses – is quite large.

So in the a large number of cases, I don't think it's wickedness that might lead people to that particular excuse; I just think it's laziness and not really knowing the facts. It's very interesting speaking to people and saying, when they say the occupied West Bank or something, and you say, well, do you know who occupied it before, or did that bother you; would that have bothered you? So Israel-Palestinian is at the root of it is one of their biggest lies.

The other lie, if I may just mention it quickly – the one about, you know, we must find out what their grievances are, and poverty and all these things. I would stress, just simply because I always have to stress this, that an end must be brought to this idiocy. You are more likely to become a suicide bomber if you are rich, and you're more likely to become a suicide bomber if you've gone to university, as far as I can see. In Britain, it was – and not to mention Mohammed Atta and Omar Sheikh and all these people – we have a cell on trial at the moment in London, and a certain university plotting to blow up nightclubs in London. We've had constant cell recruitment on campuses. A lot of these people are very rich, they're very privileged, they're well educated. They're not ignorant, not living in slums or anything else. If you see the school that Omar Sheikh went to, and then get the person to say this is about poverty.

And incidentally – just one last one on thought on that – incidentally on that, there was a very interesting program recently in Britain that revealed the link between Asif Hanif and Omar Sharif, the two suicide bombers who went out from Britain, shamefully, in 2003 and blew up Mike's Place in Tel Aviv – the link between them and Mohammad Sidique Khan, of the 7th of July bomb – the link revealed between the two of them. The program I used to get – a person who – an Italian peace activist who had been in the West Bank with Sharif and Hanif before they went to blow themselves out in the name of the suffering Palestinians. And they went to see some suffering Palestinians in Ramallah. And this Italian aid worker – this Italian peace activist and aid worker describes how he picked up this Palestinian child and just wept, and that Hanif and Sharif were just looking around; they weren't interested at all. He said he thought at the time it was strange that they didn't seem to care. Now, can somebody then please explain why we keep in hearing this thing, that they are doing it for their Palestinian brothers? I don't see it.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Next question.

I'd like to ask a question, which changes the emphasis of the discussion from foreign to domestic questions. I mentioned at the beginning that you to some extent heterodox as a neo-conservative, at least in American and Washington's terms, and that's particularly noticeable in your book when you discuss multiculturalism and

immigrations, which you regard, so to speak, jointly as being very serious challenges to the West and to individual countries in the West. This is something in which – there’s a huge debate on immigration at the moment in the United States, and I think it’s fair to say that most neo-conservatives are rather strongly in favor of a very liberal immigration policies, including – if you count the president as a neo-conservative – including President Bush. I’d like you to explain why it is you take the position you do and why it is that you differ, why you think – and your comments on, in a sense, the fact that so many of your conferrers in this country don’t.

MR. MURRAY: Yeah, I mean, I regard the borders issue to be – I would explain that one of the very few sort of absolutely basic things, apart from defense of the nation, that is the responsibility of the government is the defense of its borders and the protection of its borders. I cannot understand why this government here does not see that as a priority, an absolute priority. We tend to think that countries change by an invasion or some vast seismic shift of forces. And the truth is, the 21st century will not happen like that. Countries will be lost bit by bit and they will change vastly bit by bit.

And I’m not talking of the Huguenot or anything like this; I’m talking complete societal upheaval, not just the Hispanicization of America, the possibility, but for instance the fact that a recent Dutch government report revealed that, at the moment, two in three children at Amsterdam schools are Muslim, and by 2018, Holland will have a Dutch majority. Now, that is not a distant prospect; that isn’t something that we can say, oh, at least I won’t live to see that. You will. I hope we all will. And it’s the same with America. And my great fear on this one is that the borders issue, which I think some neo-conservatives see it as a liberalization issue. I don’t because I see societies that slowly change from societies that are less free – if it happens too fast. As we know, immigration works well when it happens slowly and people integrate. It does not work well when it happens at a great, great speed, which is what is happening with immigration in America and what’s happening and has been happening with immigration in Europe. When it happens at great speed there is no need to integrate, no need to become part of the society or feel loyalty to the society. And so the nature of that country will vastly change. And I do fear that this comes down to the same narrative, which is the narrative of the West. I was thinking – Bruce Bawer, I’m sure you’ve all read his recent book, “While Europe Slept,” a superb book, and one of the things that comes out of reading that again is that real – the question of our time is – I mean, it was okay for him 10 years ago to decide he wanted to go and live in Europe, although to then find out that Europe wasn’t the Europe he thought it was. But where will you go next? Where do you flee to next? Where do you find your Western society?

It’s all very well if you’re an Arab. There are plenty of Arab societies. There aren’t really very many nice Arab societies, but there are plenty of countries you could go to. And it’s the same for many cases.

But in 50 years from now, if the demographics in Europe go the way that people think they are, and if America continues to have such porous borders, can we honestly say the Western civilization, the Western tradition will still be upheld? I don’t think so.

It amazes me to say that because, I mean, I don't want to sound like a doom – a gloom monger on this one. But if anyone can seriously explain where the West will be, where it will be practiced, other than, as I say, as kind of one of a set of lifestyle options, then I'd like to know what the positive side of it is. And that's why the border issue is of such importance.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: Is there another question? (Pause.) Well, in that case, I want to thank Mr. Murray very warmly for a splendid talk, for answering what were extremely difficult questions very fully, and for, in general, presenting us with a somewhat – I won't say gloomy, but a somewhat challenging vision of the future with -- to which we have to respond. I think we are very much in your debt.

Thank you very much.

MR. MURRAY: Thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)