

# HUDSON INSTITUTE

## BEYOND RADICAL ISLAM?

### SESSION FOUR ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON ISLAM IN THE WEST

APRIL 17, 2004

**MR. ERIC BROWN:** I want to welcome all of you to the fourth session of our conference on radical Islam and future political and religious alternatives to it. My name is Eric Brown, and I'm a research associate with the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World in Washington, D.C. The subject of this afternoon's session is "Islam in the West."

Since September 11, the subject of Muslims living in the West has taken on increasing significance, and especially for American Muslims, because they've been forced to deal with the issue of radical Islam both as American citizens and as members of a worldwide religious community. To address some of the vexing questions of citizenship and belonging to a religious community, as well as questions related to assimilation and multiculturalism—questions which, I hope, will be addressed by this panel—we've invited a group of distinguished commentators. We will first have a roundtable discussion which will then be followed by an open discussion with all of the panelists and, hopefully, a lively discussion with the floor.

The first speaker will be Peter Skerry, who is a political scientist at Boston College as well as a fellow at the Brookings Institution. He is currently writing a book on the social, political and economic life of Muslim communities in America and in Europe. Second in line will be Asma Afsaruddin. She is an associate professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at Notre Dame University. Our third speaker will be Hillel Fradkin, who is a senior fellow and director of Hudson Institute's Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World.

Fourth will be Abdulwahab Alkebsi, who is presently program officer for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy. He will address the role of the American Muslim community in promoting liberal democratic reforms abroad. And finally, we will hear from Shaykh Hisham Mohammed Kabbani, who is head of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order in North America and Chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of America. Each speaker will talk for roughly 10 minutes—in the spirit of this conference, I'll be a little liberal with that rule. So let's begin.

**DR. PETER SKERRY:** All right. I am indeed working on a book about Muslims in America and their social, cultural and political trajectory or integration—but I do so with some trepidation. I'm not somebody who has studied Islam for any sustained length of time. I'm not a religious scholar. I'm just a political scientist who has devoted some time trying to understand racial, ethnic and immigrant politics in the United States, who now finds himself applying those frameworks to a very different set of dynamics in a very different group—and I'm excited to do

so, but also very mindful of what I don't know. So, I've been learning a lot here in the last two days, and very pleased to be here.

But I'm going to change the focus considerably, because I am going to focus on how I understand what's going on socially, culturally and politically among Muslims in the United States and how, especially, political dynamics in the United States are shaping what I would regard as this emergent group.

And that's my first point of departure, because the first thing I would emphasize is that there is no Muslim community properly understood in the United States today. There is no coherent Muslim community because we're dealing with a highly fragmented agglomeration of different groups that are divided along sectarian lines, for lack of a better term. [American Muslims] are certainly divided linguistically, and certainly along lines of national origin.

And indeed, if one will emphasize—as I will now, and then I'll make a larger point about this at the end of my remarks—if one emphasizes that fully one-third of Muslims in the United States—maybe even more than one-third—are African-American in origin, then that is one further piece of the fragmented mosaic we have of this emergent group. And the diversity of this group is important in trying to understand the politics [of this group], as I will argue.

I would also emphasize in a very sketchy, quick way that this is—as many of you here already know—is substantially a middle-class group—middle and upper middle-class, perhaps—and one that is greatly disbursed not only to different parts of the country, but disbursed residentially, for the most part. There are no large Muslim neighborhoods. I say that a short distance from Detroit, where I have yet to spend much time, but Detroit in that sense is somewhat of an exception, I think. And again, this dispersion across the nation, as well as residentially, has an important impact *politically*—the diversity, this middle-class nature of Muslims in the United States greatly distinguishes it from the European context, which is worth underlining.

But, my larger point is to suggest to you that this fragmentation and this dispersion bodes well for social and cultural assimilation—to use a somewhat controversial term, but I will use it nevertheless—by which I simply mean integration into the main structures of American society. [In the United States] there are not likely to be any of what Dick called “enclave affects,” because we're not dealing with one overarching group, but very many different kinds of groups.

We've learned from our immigrant history that this tends to mean that groups are all the more inclined to assimilate. They don't have the kind of overwhelming numbers or political or economic clout, say, that Cubans would have in South Florida. However successful they may have been—Cubans—that is definitely an enclave that's sort of held together. That's not what we're going to see with Muslims in the United States. And this assimilation leads to more and more fragmentation, I would argue, because as Muslims assimilate, they become much more individualistic and much more individuated, if you will, and I think that's a process that we're going to see continued to unfold.

Now, this social integration that I've just described I think is ongoing culturally, as well, and I think the best single example I can suggest to you about that is drawn from a recent experience I

had at the Muslim Student Association meetings in Berkeley, California about a month ago or maybe two months ago. There, we are talking clearly about the second generation—the Muslim Student Association is a longtime organization that was set up in the '50s or '60s, probably most accurately by the Saudis. It's ongoing now, and I can report to you that at that one meeting, one of the most popular sessions was on relations between the sexes and marriage, which was attended by just about everybody there.

There were two separate sections—one for the young men, one for the young women. They were separated in sessions, women on one side of the room, men on the other. Many of the women were wearing hijab, that's probably no great surprise, suggesting to you that this assimilation that I'm talking about [happens] in certain dimensions—not in any necessarily thorough way, at least among this population.

But what was interesting about this one session of the men: It was led by somebody who had done this a lot, talking about marriage and relations between the sexes to young Muslims. He was a gentleman from MAS, the Muslim American Society, which has got ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. But the overwhelming thrust of his remarks were really something that you would hear back in the 1950s in the United States really about the kinds of propriety of the relations between the sexes—not the kind of overarching puritanical kinds of notions that we might [expect] about such a meeting.

The sort of culmination for me of what this gentleman was trying to urge upon relations between the sexes was basically to suggest to these young men that they shouldn't get involved with members of the opposite sex unless they were serious about their relationship leading to marriage, and at the same time would suggest that they take a look at American popular literature, such as the book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. This is somebody from the Muslim Brotherhood. Make of that what you will.

But, the basic reality was that the assumption throughout this whole session was that the decisions to be made were the decisions to be made by these young men—by themselves, maybe in consultation with some deference to their parents, but definitely by themselves. There was no notion of arranged marriages. It was very much their individual decisions, albeit within the constraints of a certain notion of what the proper norms would be for a young Muslim. To me, that suggests the kind of complicated currents and counter-currents that go on when a group is assimilating, as indeed I think this group is.

So, those are the social and cultural dimensions. Really, what was I think much more interesting for me are the political dimensions of this assimilation process. And there, I think I want to emphasize that there's enormous pressure—I said there is no Muslim community, properly speaking, in the United States—but there is enormous pressure now for there to be a Muslim community. There's internal pressure. There's the notion of the *ummah*, but there's also a lot of extra pressure for there to be a Muslim community—including external pressure from the U.S. government, to begin with, which wants and needs interlocutors. The FBI as it has been surveilling Muslims in the United States since 9/11, wants to be able to consult and to say they consult with Muslims and Muslim organizations.

Suddenly, there's a need for there to be Muslim organizations, if there was any doubt before, and so there's a lot of interest from the government for this kind of Muslim community. And certainly, governmental policies have had a big impact, I think, on promoting a Muslim identity and reminding Muslims that they are in some ways a community—or, if they're not, that perhaps they ought to be. I am referring here to policies such as racial profiling, the post-9/11 secret detentions of Muslims and Arabs, and various aspects of the Patriot Act—which, in my view, actually don't impinge very directly on Muslims in America, but [Muslims] certainly think they do. And again, it's another policy that has sort of pushed them together as a community.

And I suppose the best example of this is the December 2002 detentions that occurred, especially in Southern California, when the INS invited permanent visa holders who were not permanent resident aliens, but who came from various Muslim countries, to come in and register so that their whereabouts would be known to the government. What, of course, happened then was that many of those individuals wound up being detained, very much to their surprise, because they were in some way out of status or somehow their paperwork was out of order. This was a big fiasco for the INS, but it was a big cause among many Muslims who, I think justifiably, felt betrayed and blindsided by this.

But what the impact of this was is one of the examples of how Muslims [have begun] to see themselves as Muslims in American society. After all, they were asked to come and as Muslims—not as Pakistanis or Iranians, but as Muslims. And it turns out, for example, Iranians in Southern California who hadn't seen themselves very much as Muslims—who saw themselves as very secular, very apart from many other Muslims in Southern California, apart from other national origin groups that were Muslim—suddenly began to see themselves more as Muslims because, after all, the government had brought them in as Muslims and detained them as Muslims. That has had [significant] impact among these very disparate groups. So, this is one important dynamic that I would underline to you.

This is an old story though: I mean, how different groups come to see themselves in the United States in terms of reacting to how Americans see them is an old story. What's a new story that I'll just mention to you quickly, is that there's a political institutional framework within which this emerging communities sees itself and seeks to forge itself—and here I would just simply try to sketch out for you quickly what kind of context we're working in— [it is one] in which interest groups, advocacy groups, political parties themselves lack strong social ties. [These groups] lack strong social ties to communities, to individuals where they live and work, and they also lack strong social ties to one another. [Non-Muslim] political institutions and organizations [in America] are not rooted that way. [They are tied] either to members themselves, to one another, as members of specific political organizations, or very strongly tied to the leadership or the hierarchy of organizations.

The best example I can give you is Robert Putnam. In his work, he has talked in terms of how political organizations today are more like Red Sox fans, in the sense that Red Sox fans around New England are not necessarily tied to one another. They don't know necessarily who is a Red Sox fan among them; they don't have direct ties to one another, nor do they necessarily have direct ties in any organizational or membership sense to the Red Sox as a team. But they have a common allegiance to a symbol that sort of hangs above them and to which they all adhere as

Red Sox fans. That's an important way, I think, of trying to understand how a lot of our politics works today. It tends to be very symbolic and very identity-oriented.

What this means is that our politics is—it's called "thin politics." It's not a "thick politics": It is a politics of these kinds of symbolic ties, not a "thick" kind of direct social ties among members or between members and leaders of the organizations. What this means is that this kind of politics, this thin politics, derives its cohesion and energy not so much by common goals as much as by common adversaries. We're Red Sox fans. We hate the Yankees, okay? And this is how this kind of politics tends to work.

This isn't the only political dynamics today in American politics, but it is very much increasingly dominant. It's where the cutting edge is, and it's how resources get raised. They get raised through controversies and played out through direct mail and media controversies, and this is the dynamic. I think this kind of political context is where this emerging Muslim community is going to come in. It's going to partake of this kind of politics, and it's going to come together around adversaries—and those adversaries could be the government, it could be those whom they see as opposing Muslim interests. We're going to see this kind of politics emerge among Muslims. It's the way Muslims [in America] will overcome their many divisions. All these different, disparate national-origin communities will come together in a more political community as Muslims through this kind of thin politics.

In a curious kind of way, what I'm suggesting to you is that it's a kind of mass politics. It's the kind of politics that social critics in the 1950s thought we had in America—a politics of an atomized mass society. Well, we don't have an atomized mass society today. I don't think we do. But we do have a mass politics. It's a politics of these atomized individuals who will come together because they feel a common enemy, a common adversary, and it will rely on a very contentious, controversial kind of politics. And I think there's reasons to be concerned about how this political community of Muslims in America will come together, because it's a very volatile and very explosive kind of political dynamic.

So, the good news is that I think Muslims are assimilating socially, culturally and politically. But the political forums that we have there today by which American society functions, is a contested, controversial kind of politics. How Muslims come together and define their interests in that context I think is going to be controversial and give us some reason for some concern.

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you. Next will be Professor Asma Afsaruddin.

**MS. ASMA AFSARUDDIN:** I'm going to take a slightly different tack when talking about Islam in the West, and really give a little bit more of a historical underpinning to it. And then [I'll] talk about the apparent problems.

I want to remark, first of all, that we must avoid speaking about "Islam in the West" as if it were a brand new phenomenon in the modern period. This is not, of course, historically tenable. Since the middle of the eighth century when a member of the Umayyad family in Syria fled to southern Spain and revived the Umayyad dynasty there, Islam has remained a presence in the West. Even when Muslims have not actually been physically present in specific European

regions, medieval European Christian theology, political and intellectual thought in general, and certainly the European Christian imagination have had to make room for Islam and its practitioners in diverse ways—not least of all to respond to the perceived challenge presented by Islam as a rival system of beliefs and civilization.

What is new, however, in the modern period is that Islamic civilization has lost the edge it once had over the Western (inaudible). I mean, it was a long, protracted process, but it's certainly come to a head in our contemporary period. Islam, it appears, is no longer a credible counter-balance to Western dominance. The expectation in some quarters is that it will go the way of other competing ideologies, such as Socialism and Communism, to crumble before the powerful onslaught of thriving Western capitalism undergirded by its democratic and consumerist values.

What is also new in our contemporary context is the growing number of Muslim immigrants in the West as minority communities, and the presence now of second-generation Muslims in the United States and Europe, all of whom are impacting the Western landscape in myriad ways. For some, this means that the enemy is now lodged within, and the alien values of these enemy segments and their worldview will covertly and overtly subvert the Western way of life as we now know it to be. For others, it signifies that Islam and Muslims can no longer be spoken of as if they were out there somewhere far away, but rather that they have become an integral part of the Western landscape and, like other ethnic and religious groups before them, their presence must be accommodated and taken into account.

I happen to become very leery when it is suggested, sometimes with the best of intentions in mind, that Western Muslims must be at the vanguard of a movement termed “moderate Islam,” or when so-called “Moderate Muslims” step forward and claim to represent a new and vastly improved form of Islam and devalue other expressions of Islamic affiliation. The underlying assumption is that Islam and the various Muslim peoples have not known moderation before, and [that moderation] is a new course for them to chart. This is, of course, a gross misrepresentation of historical reality and Islam's perception of itself.

Moderation, or temperate behavior, are defining characteristics of the Islamic tradition as viewed from within. In its self-understanding, Muslims constitute a moderate middle nation, *Omorosa* in Koranic terminology. Moderation in Islamic thought is described as the hallmark of the true believer. Extremism or exaggeration in any form is looked at askance and condemned outright when it causes harm to oneself and to others—and this includes even excessive fasting, for example, which would cause harm to one's body. That's discouraged.

One is reminded that a term of opprobrium in the medieval period was a *Holu*, which may be translated as “extremism,” and one who is extreme or excessive in his or her behavior was *Ahren*. By definition, one was *Ahredi*—and had, therefore, exceeded the proper bounds, had clearly exited from the middle nation. The earliest extremism is found in history with the *Harenge* from the seventh century, for whom violence is the principal means to impose their harsh and puritanical views on others. In spite of the fact that they appealed to scriptural warrants to attempt to justify their stance, the *Haweders* were repudiated by the vast majority of the early Muslims with reviled intolerance, recognizing a gross departure from their religious norms.

Respect for diversity in what today we would call multiculturalism and tolerance is a cardinal virtue in the believer, and already strong in Islam's foundational text. Therefore, we are talking about, or should be talking more about, re-valuing and resuscitating intrinsically Islamic values that are in danger of being submerged by more strident and intolerant trends within the Islamic world.

The tendency has been in some quarters to portray this new theology of intolerance emanating from Musku or extremist camps as more pervasive than it is, or that it is the only credible manifestation of Islam today. So certainly, Muslims in the West, as everywhere else, should combat both this illegitimate theology emanating from extremist sources in the Islamic world, and the myth being propagated in certain quarters that this theology, in fact, enjoys broad legitimacy among Muslims and is grounded in Islamic foundational matters.

Moderate Muslims—there are plenty in the West and in the rest of the world, but they need recognition and they need help for one another and for non-Muslims. It is clear that Muslims have to do with themselves. Above all, they have to re-acquaint themselves with their diverse intellectual heritage and draw on it to counteract the extremist rhetoric and actions of radical Imams. This is not mere romanticization of an earlier ideal period, and this is not merely looking back to a bygone golden period. It is a process of looking back in order to move forward.

For example, let us take up the subject of democracy, a very important contemporary buzzword, and sometimes it seems a stick with which to best most Muslims today because of the lack thereof in most Islamic societies. There are powerful, persistent voices in the West, which have maintained that Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible, and that Islam as a perceived essence is intrinsically authoritarian.

Such dogmatic statements fly in the face of what the historical record itself informs us, particularly about the pre-modern period. The record reveals that, throughout time, [Muslims] have, in fact, considered despotic governments to be un-Islamic and a betrayal of the Koranic precept to engage in consultative decision-making. Just to give you one example, although I have more: The 12<sup>th</sup> century Andalusian scholar Ibn Ateal was of the opinion that an individual—and here, he means a public official—who did not consult the knowledge of a morally upright people was liable to be removed from public office. There are many more examples in the literature of similar sentiments and similar individuals making such remarks.

So, without a doubt, there has to be a process of education and re-education among the (inaudible), and of renewal in Arabic tashgeet—a powerful, emotive term and a desideratum through the ages. And there has to be a process of re-reading and re-interpretation of the meanings of foundational texts in view of the contingencies and the circumstances of our own time to affect this renewal.

I prefer to call this process a “re-engagement” with Islamic tradition, which would allow for the stripping away of cultural accretions from it and the time-bound interpretations that undegird it. It would also be a process of recovery of the spirit of these traditions so as to allow for an authentic hermeneutic to emerge that would permit change and growth. What this new

hermeneutic might look like was, I think, very cogently expressed by Professor Fazlur Rahman in his important work, *Islam and Modernity*.

Rahman remarked in this work that, “Rather than treating the foundational text of Islam, particularly the Koran as a codebook of law, one needed to understand the rationale behind certain prescriptions and rulings. Having to serve this rationale, one could then proceed to interpret the text in the manner befitting this rationale and befitting the particular historical circumstances in which the prescription was to be applied.” I think there would be a greater receptivity now to work such a creative hermeneutic undertaking, and it is more likely to emerge and thrive, at least initially among Western Muslims who do not have to contend with repressive governments and censorship, as do many Muslims outside the West.

Secondly, this process of education must involve non-Muslim Westerners, as well. It is acknowledged without doubt by everybody, or practically everybody, that Muslims need to undergo certain cognitive changes to more effectively engage with their tradition and bring it up to speed, so to speak, with the modern world. What is not acknowledged at the same time is that non-Muslim Westerners must undergo cognitive transformations, as well, for this to work.

Certain commonly held western stereotypes of Muslims have proved to be genuine impediments to dialogue, an accommodation between Muslims and non-Muslims that need to be jettisoned. These stereotypes emanate from what I will call “the politics of difference,” and this is not my original coinage. [It means] politics predicated on and presumed [sic] essential and essentialist differences between a monolithically conceived “Islam” and the “West.”

Re-education of non-Muslim Westerners would entail replacing the politics of difference with the “politics of commonalities,”—that is, politics which would be based on emphasizing the commonly shared assumptions of Islamic and Western, particularly modern Western religious and political thought. These shared premises and values would include, of course, the basic dignity and equality of humans, political accountability of rulers to go (inaudible) over the rule of law, tolerance of religious and ethnic minorities, and so forth.

Another professor, Richard Bulliet of Columbia University is writing, or probably already has finished writing, a book on what he has termed “Islam-Christian Civilization.” In this book, Bulliet suggests that there are “phenomenal similarities”—his words, not mine—between Islamic and Western civilizations. He states—and I quote from a pre-publication interview he gave recently—“We cannot understand one culture without understanding the other. They are variants of the same civilization so, ultimately, they can come together.”

I think this is a very good augury of the kind of cognitive transformations that can take place in non-Muslims in the West with education and with exposure to historical facts. And the potential that this has for unleashing the inherent benefits of politics in a worldview that emphasizes a shared universal heritage. Muslims living in the West can considerably help this process along by being more visibly proactive in the larger community through interfaith work, through political lobbying, by joining school and community administrative boards, and by disseminating more accurate information of their faith in the various communities, whether as educators, co-workers, students, etc., etc.



It is very eerie to compare the radical discourse of Muslim rejectionists and the ideological statements of many in the right wing camp today in the West and discover the strong resemblances between the two. Both are extremely polarizing. Both are predicated on a supremacist, (inaudible) worldview. Both emphasize irreconcilable differences and inevitable violent showdown between the West and the Islamic world.

So, I would conclude by saying the highest priority of the day would be to stem the voices of immoderation, resurgent as it seems everywhere. Although extensively at loggerheads with one another, immoderation in the Islamic world draws strength from immoderation in the West, and vice versa. To break this unholy alliance, the proponents of moderation, wherever they may be, need to join forces and get past the rhetoric of difference.

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you. Next will be Hillel Fradkin.

**MR. HILLEL FRADKIN:** I think I'll begin also like Peter with a couple of caveats about the character of my remarks. I can honestly say to have been a student of Islam for a considerable length of time. I've had the benefit of very fine Muslim teachers, including one who I'm pleased to have heard mentioned here today, Fazlur Rahman. But it's also the case that I'm not a Muslim and, as a result, obviously the remarks I make have to be seen as coming from the outside.

I only have a few points to make, because I think a number of important points have already been made, and I will actually, to some degree, repeat them. In a way, taking off from what Asma just said, it is true that the Muslim communities in the West, geographically speaking, are not new, especially of course if one considers the experience of Muslims in Spain—I used to know a good deal about it but, with advancing age, I'm forgetting—and of course [there have been Muslim communities] in the Balkans, where there are Muslim communities of four to 500 years standing at this point, maybe even longer because before the Ottomans actually took Constantinople, they had settled very large parts of the Balkans.

But one has to say—the Muslim communities of today in the U.S. are certainly new in the sense that they're the first Muslim communities living under modern conditions—and I mean not only modern conditions for Muslims, [but rather] modern conditions for non-Muslim countries and populations. We had a good deal of talk this morning about the complications of the relationship between Muslim communities and advancing modernization, so [modern conditions] play a role that they couldn't possibly have played in the past.

And in this regard, I will mention something that it seems to me is a striking fact and an interesting one, and not in any way a malignant one, either. There was a period of time when it was—it is a legal question within Muslim law—and my learned colleagues can give the citations—of whether Muslims could live in non-Muslim countries for brief durations. And as I recall, this issue, as a legal matter, was raised sometimes in the last 40 or 50 years. Now, it was result as a matter of (inaudible), I think, that Muslims could live in non-Muslim societies, but that was still an issue not so long ago.

The next thing I want to talk about is a little bit along the lines of what Peter was talking about before: The objective conditions of Muslim life in Western communities. And I want to second what he had to say about the American Muslim community and underscore how really different it seems to me to be, as compared with Muslim communities in other Western countries, especially in Western Europe.

In the economic and educational terms to which Peter referred—the statistics, and a large part of what I'm going to say is based on an article I just published, so I hope I can remember—but the average household income for Muslims in this country, I believe, according to relatively reliable statistics, is about \$55,000 a year. I know if there are Muslims in the audience who are earning less, you'll feel out of step, but those are the official statistics. But also, remarkably, [those statistics] are higher than the national average for Americans. [What is] also particularly striking is the fact that a very large proportion of American Muslims have college degrees—I believe among adults some 60 percent [have college degrees], which far outstrips the average for non-Muslim Americans.

There is also, as Peter said, the fact that we do not have, for want of a better term, Muslim “ghettos” in this country. People are widely—communities are widely dispersed. All of these things are really in striking contrast to the situation in most of the Muslim communities in Western Europe, including in Britain, where economic achievement is much lower, educational achievement is much lower, and also Muslim populations tend to be concentrated or very highly concentrated. It seems to me that that, on all three of those factors, these are obviously responsible for tensions that exist within those countries and their Muslim communities—most obviously in France at this point, where there is considerable resentment. And that resentment is no different, I think, than the resentment that is felt by any immigrant community when its opportunities are disadvantaged.

[The situation in] America is, as I said, strikingly different. [America] is also different, it seems to me, in another respect that Peter mentioned—[that is], in the extraordinary diversity of its Muslim community. A Muslim friend of mine observed that he thought that there was no other similar collection of the diversity of Muslims in the world except perhaps at the Hajj. This has a variety of implications. It means that Muslims from many parts of the world who would otherwise never run into one another run into one another in America. I have no prediction about what will come out of that, but it is a new experience for the Muslim world, except in the sense of (inaudible) and the Hajj—and hopefully the Hajj permits much discussion or interaction. So, this is an altogether new experience, and it would seem to me it's an odds-on favorite to produce something new, something that is unpredictable. One cannot know at this point what that will be.

There will be, of course, various complications of the sort that Peter alluded to. [These complications are of the same kind experienced by] any immigrant community that has something in common but many things not in common when they arrive in a country. And [this is] especially so in the United States because this is a country where this most happens. But it also happens in Britain, from what I understand, and probably to a lesser extent in France, where there are diverse points of origin for its Muslim community.

There are various factors, which cause the community to think of itself as a unity. As Peter was implying, [this sense of unity is] largely solicited from the outside. Perhaps if left to a people's own devices, they would—Pakistanis would regard themselves as Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis would regard themselves as Bangladeshis, and Moroccans as Moroccans. But from the point of view of the non-Muslim community, these are all Muslims, and [this] produces a complicated dynamic for people who heretofore have certainly regarded themselves as Muslims, but do not necessarily have more than certain beliefs and observances in common.

This means, I think, [that this dynamic] is very important insofar as American Muslims or Muslims in other Western countries will regard it as somehow both necessary and desirable to think of themselves as having a common identity. There are various factors that have to be taken into consideration for this to be a healthy, productive development—or at least [to know] what it will look like. And in this regard, I want to mention one other thing that is distinctive about the American Muslim community[‘s sense of unity]. It seems to me, that—as distinguished from other Muslim communities—that this is a function, again, of something from the outside. But it comes not from the non-Muslim American community, [but rather] from the outside Muslim world—and that is the Islamist ideology.

And for this simple reason, for reasons partially described by Professor Ayoob yesterday, America has become thematic for Islamist ideology. And of course, [just as] this can be important for Islamists elsewhere, it can be important for non-Islamists elsewhere. This can be important for Muslim communities in Western Europe, but it has, obviously, a very distinctive bearing for Muslims who actually live in America. And that's a factor that no other Muslim community has to address.

Again, I don't know where [all of this] is headed, but I would say that it seems to me that, while this is true of all complicated situations, leadership is extremely important. Thoughtful leadership is very important in addressing these kinds of circumstances and factors. I'm happy to say it seems to me that the American Muslim community—on the strength of the Muslims who were here yesterday, here today, and will speak tomorrow—has the resources to provide such leadership. And there are some genuine communal leaders here, in particular my friend Shaykh Kabbani. But it will be very, very important for the future of the American Muslim community, what kind of leadership it has and how it addresses these considerations.

**MR. ABDULWAHAB ALKEBSI:** It's tough to talk about a subject like this, especially at a time like this when we're all regretting that last piece of cake we took. I'm looking at you guys [in the audience], and I'm sorry, it looks tough. This [conference] is about radical Islam, and the name of the whole conference is "Beyond Radical Islam?" I still don't know what that means. Is it a question? Beyond Radical Islam? Or is it "Beyond Radical Islam?" I don't know what it means, but I guess we'll talk about that.

I had on my index cards [a talk] about the definition of what a radical Muslim is. You can see it from different perspectives—one of them is, vis-à-vis, the role of women. Another, which was one of my favorites, is the relationship of a Muslim to the Holy Book, the Koran, and maybe we'll have some time afterwards to discuss it, but not now. And I want to beg your indulgence,

especially my friend Abdou Filali-Ansary: I'm going to talk about a subset of the Islamic world. I'll allude to the whole thing, but basically [my focus will be] the Arab world for many reasons.

One of them is that's where I come from. Second, it is arguably the least democratic region of the world—with autocrats, semi-feudal monarchs, *presidents-for-life*. It's also the most hungry place, arguably, for democracy in the world. [I say that] because that's my expertise: I work on promoting democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, which is basically the Arab world. So most of my comments will come about that.

As Frank Fukuyama mentioned this morning [regarding] the Al Stepan article in the *Journal Of Democracy*, [the democracy deficit in the Muslim world] is actually an Arab deficit, not a Muslim deficit. The rest of the Muslim world is, by and large, advanced when it comes to democracy, vis-à-vis the Arab world. And I want to also talk about the Arab human development reports that Frank mentioned this morning—there's two of them, one published in 2002, one in 2003. They were done, and they present an excellent diagnosis of what the problem is.

[The reports contained] some recommendations but, basically, what I took from them was a diagnosis. They were written by Arab social scientists—[they were authored] not by the UNDP at large, but by a group of Arab social scientists [and] about the Arab world. It talked about three deficits: a deficit in freedom, a deficit in the empowerment [of women], and a deficit in knowledge. And, in particular, they talked about what they called the “Human Welfare Index,” which is a way to measure the level of freedoms enjoyed by citizens of a country. And they divided it into “high,” “medium” and “below.” And within the 22 Arab nations, all members of the Arab league, none had a [measure of] high freedom on the Human Welfare Index. Seven countries had a medium, and these seven countries included about nine percent of the Arab world, and the rest, 91 percent of the Arab world, scored low Human Welfare Index.

Also, I want to bring your attention to two very important conferences that were held actually last month, one in the Alexandria Library, the other in Beirut, in preparation for what was supposed to be the Arab league meeting in Tunis, which was abruptly canceled very controversially. I don't know if you follow the news. I'm glad it was canceled, and maybe we can discuss why I'm happy. If you want, we can discuss it afterwards.

But, excellent documents came out of these meetings. In the final communiqués, they all demanded freedom of faith, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association. They want free elections for the executive branch and legislature. They actually talk about term limits. They demanded term limits for the presidents-for-life and the monarchs. They discussed how they wanted independent judiciaries and separation of powers, equally in both conferences.

They talked about equality for women. They talk about equality for minorities. These were demands by civil society leaders—not government, but civil society leaders—300 of them in Alexandria, and about the same number in Beirut. They also talked about intellectual, political and social pluralism, and keeping the clerics out of the realm of these things, keeping the

religious establishment out of the political and social realms. [These are] for the people or for civil society.

There's also been a rise in the level of debate about reform in the Arab world. I've been following it in the wavelengths and the television stations—usually I'm not so good, but the debate is obvious. People are talking about reform like they've never talked about it before. The Internet debate, the blogs, talk about a reform. Again: it's very strong, and there has been some public opinion polls—one of them, ironically by aljazeera.net—which described the people's feeling toward the American [democracy] initiative.

[There was a] surprisingly positive response to [the American initiative]. Most of them felt that this initiative would be bad for the government, not for themselves. By most I don't mean 90 percent. Maybe about 51, 52 percent. But most of them see it as a good initiative. This is the kind of reform that they're looking at.

There's also been some serious agitation for some of us who have been following the news in places that we haven't heard before. In Saudi Arabia, for example, there has been some agitation for reform. In Syria, too—and also of course in Egypt, and in places like Libya. Things that we haven't heard before—again: [there are] demands for reform coming out of civil society in these places.

Now, this is on one hand. On the other hand, there's the U.S. policy—and we'll talk about the Muslim-American role in promoting liberal democracy in the Islamic world, and in particular in the Arab world. That's again where I'm concentrating. I was the National Endowment for Democracy's 20th anniversary. So was Marc. I think it Frank, too, and many of us. When President Bush spoke at the 20th anniversary of the establishment of NED, I almost jumped out of my seat, and my friend had to hold me down when he said, "The United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East." Yes, that might just be rhetoric. When I heard it, [I thought it] might be just rhetoric. But to somebody like me, who's been doing this for a long time—to me, that was a departure from previous policy.

Later that month, in London, he also said, "Now, we're pursuing a different course, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East." This later was echoed by many members of this Administration. Again: talk about new policy, new strategy—we're doing new things; what we've done before was wrong. And we've seen some cross-pressures from the Arab league. If this is just rhetoric, why are these Arab leaders so worried about it? Why do we have five new proposals to be discussed that have been discussed at the last Tunis meeting?

So apparently, these Arab leaders are taking it seriously. They feel that this is a new strategy. They feel this change coming from the United States. I feel September 11th changed a lot of the calculations here in the United States. I sincerely believe it is different. We have a new political will to change. We have new resources committed to the change in the Middle East, in the greater Middle East, whatever that is for now, and a new strategy. Again, some of that might not be clear and it still might change but, for now, I'm working on the presumption that this is a new policy and a new strategy for the United States in the Middle East.

I also want to talk about [the fact that]—and I have a long paper about it, maybe I'll deliver it to the organizers of this wonderful conference—that Arab reformists who are opposed diametrically with United States foreign policy in the region look up to American values, look up to American freedoms, look up to American liberties, individual rights, separation of powers. I mean, as an example, I sometimes just sit down and explain to them what a “blind trust” is: how when a President is elected and everybody in the Cabinet [puts] all their wealth somewhere, and it has to be managed by a blind trust for them because, as the President of the United States, he can invest in oil, and that would make it more expensive. He could make a lot of money. And [the Arabs I speak with] really appreciate that. They like it. They like the American way of how things are run.

And Muslim Americans—and I talk to many of them—believe that, as a Muslim-American—and by the way, I believe in this wholeheartedly—[one] can live his or her Muslim identity in the United States a lot better than he can live as a Muslim in many Muslim countries. I would include even Mecca today. I can live as a Muslim who has his own views of Islam here in the United States better than I can live in most and if not, all Muslim countries. I see many of my Muslim-American friends shaking their head agreeing with me.

Despite the Patriot Act, and as the Arab Human Development report said, most Arabs would still rather live in the United States than where they are right now. Where does this lead us? What I'm saying is, we've seen a need for democracy in the Arab world and for reform. We see a demand for it. And then, we see a supply for it out here in the United States. This is what they want—it's right here.

And, my friends know me as somebody who really believes in the power of the market, so how come we haven't made that sale? How come we haven't connected? Supply and demand. Why haven't we connected? Why don't we see American kinds of values—Muslim-American kinds of values—in the Muslim world overall and in the Arab world in particular? I think it's that this salesman—Arabs do not trust the salesman.

They see the United States—and I want to quote the President of the United States again from November 6th, 20th anniversary, when he said, “Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe because, in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty.” This is talking about the future, but it's also admitting to the past.

There is a problem of credibility in the Arab world and the Muslim world for the United States. “Oh, they must have some other things they want to accomplish. It's not about us,” [the Arab-Muslim world says]. So, they don't trust the salesman. And of course, you cannot underestimate the Palestinian issue in the hearts of the Arab people and the Muslim people overall. So, it's a question of credibility and a question of current policy. Again, we do not trust the salesman. We like the product. I like this Big Mac—I *love* it. However, you must have something stuffed in there. I don't trust it. I really don't.

So, this brings me to what Muslim-Americans can do about it. The Muslim-Americans—if they're not a new sales force for this new market, they are an additional one. We, the Muslim-

Americans—and again, I include Asma Afsaruddin, Sohail Hashmi, Ahmed al-Rahim and many who are here, and also people who are not here, like Abdulaziz Sachedina, Ali Mazrui, Aziz Al-Hibri, Fatmi Asman (sp), and Muslim-American organizations like the Center For the Study of Islam and Democracy, for example, or Karamah, organization of Muslim-American lawyers for human rights--by the way, of which Asma serves on both boards. These organizations are embarking on courageous, new innovative programs to promote women's rights, to promote liberal democracy, to promote a new discourse of Islam and democracy.

Now, what can these organizations and these individuals do? And I'm sorry if I talk fast. I see Eric looking at me. They can do a lot of things. I think the most important thing these Muslim-Americans can do is: Number one, introduce a new element that's been lacking from the thinking of the Arab and Muslim world. That's critical thinking. As Muslim-Americans, we've learned a way of critical thinking that I think, I believe is absent in the Muslim and the Arab world.

Part of it is introducing their own work, and we've witnessed some of it. But also, they could (inaudible) use a popular intellectual culture in the sense that, instead of the Arabs and Muslims reading Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi, (inaudible), Ahmed Yassin, they can be reading Soroush, Arkoun, Mohammed Abdu Jabri, Fazlur Rahman, (inaudible), Jamal Bendel (sp), even Mohammed Abdul Athrani. I would rather them read Mohammed Abdul Afghani, although some of my friends disagree with me, than have them reading Bendel (sp) or Mawdudi, or Qutb.

Also: really, really fast, okay: There's important issues that they can work on—for one, educational reform. Many of these are teachers, professors. But we have a lot of Muslim-Americans as educators, as managers in the education system, and one of the biggest fronts for us in the war on terrorism and the war of ideas is the educational system in the Arab world and Islamic world. It is corrupt, it is terrible, and it produces the worst kind of Muslim today. And I think they can be very influential.

Women's empowerment. Women alike Azizah al-Hibri or Asma Afsaruddin or Zainab Al-Suwaij—who have the choice to wear the hijab or not wear the hijab—can provide really excellent role models for Muslim women all over.

Talking about democracy in the Arab world, there's no way to talk about it without talking about the Palestinian issue, the injustices committed against the Palestinian people whether by the Israeli government, by the IDF or the Palestinian leadership itself, or by the Arab world. You can't talk about this without alluding to it. But, what I want to say is I want to quote Imam Ali, the fourth of the rightly-guided Caliphs, which were mentioned before. Called it (inaudible). What that means is, "This is a just cause," but this is the wrong context.

Don't use the Palestinian issue to hold democracy as a hostage. Both issues are important, and we need to address them strongly—both, but separate from each other. If one has to be held hostage to the other, I would hold the Palestinian cause hostage to democracy because, once you have the people deciding on it, it would be a better peace, a longer peace, and better for everybody.

**MR. BROWN:** Shaykh Kabbani?

**SHAYKH KABBANI:** I don't know what I have to add to what they have said already. First, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me and inviting the others to this beautiful conference.

We have a radical topic—it's about radical Islam, or "beyond radical Islam?" I don't like to defend Islam because Islam is a religion. It's a heavenly religion, just like Christianity and Judaism, and it has already been defended by others on the panel, (inaudible).

So, Islam is a peaceful religion, it is a moderate religion. As Professor Asma [Afsaruddin] said before, (inaudible)—"we are a moderate nation," as the Prophet described us. And from that perspective, I want to come to the subject which is written about in the description of this panel: "How might the millions of Muslims today living in relative prosperity and affluence in Western liberal democracy contribute to the development of a liberal alternative to radical Islam around the world?"

What kind of American Muslims are we speaking about? I'd like to come directly to the subject—not to go here and there. I put the question like that: Are American Muslims in the right position to fulfill the requirements of the desired result [a liberal Islam]?

There are three different groups of Muslims in the United States. One of them—I will not call them "radical" because people may not like that—but one of them is the Salafi movement. The other one is the traditional, or classical. And the third one are the secular Muslims—[or those] who are Muslim but they don't practice usually, or they practice, but only sometimes. And the traditional Muslims—they really are taking the issue, their Islam as Prophet mentioned it and the Sahaba, according to their cultural or geographical and regions that they are living in. And the third Muslim group, which are the Salafi—they prefer a way that they have recently established [for themselves] in the 18<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Now, the question came, is that, in America, when we have these three different groups of Muslims—I prefer to keep these different Islamic perspectives because it makes a competition, and it make the really modern Muslims and scholars to come up and speak. I do not prefer, as it was mentioned, to have a "unity" between Muslims because I don't know what kind of Islam they would agree on. And [if they did agree] then it might affect me and affect others and jeopardize their lives in this big [American] community of 270 million people.

So, I prefer to have [many separate] organizations [that are] responsible for [themselves]. And at the end, they might come together, speak to each other, and develop a constitution to follow, a guidebook that they have to follow. And this is what we are not able to find in Europe. Dr. Hillel [Fradkin] mentioned that [in France] they came and they [made] a unity, and they [all agreed] on one Grand Mufti of Muslim community. But I will tell you a small story [about what] happened to me when I was in Guadalupe. It's a small Caribbean island.

I was visiting there with Guadalupan people. They [are] family—they invited me, they became converts, they accepted Islam here in America. So I went [to visit] with them there [in Guadalupe]. There is no Islam there. So, I stayed there 15 to 21 days, and in five, six days,



through their connections, we were able to bring some people into Islam who are not Muslims. So, I said to the family, “You have to establish a Mosque in order that these people can come and stay there.”

So, they were very generous. They rented a mosque and a house, and we opened the mosque. I [then] went to Venezuela for one week, or 10 days, to visit my brother. [Then I returned to] Guadalupe. [When] I went in [to the mosque], I looked and I saw hundreds of books there. I didn't send them books already, but I found hundreds of books there. “How [did] you get them?,” I asked. All of them were [books] by Al Qaeda, Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahab, the Salafi movement, the Wahabi movement, (inaudible). All of these books [were] already on the shelves in English and French language. [I asked them], “From where you got it?” [And they said] we contacted the main mosque in France and got it from the unity of Muslims there.

So, this is the problem. In America, let us go back to America: Immigrants came here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They came as businesspeople and they established mostly Arab people, Muslim and non-Muslim. They established their businesses, I assume. But, in the '60s, when the students began to come to study here, we began to see that they needed a place to stay, and they began to build the mosques. And who gives the mosques the money? The money is *Rabita*, and *Rabita* is what is from the Saudi Arabian government.

So, of course, [the Saudis] are going to give them the money. They are going to send them the Imams. They are going to send them the Shiu (sp.). The [Saudis] established the first legitimate voice in America through the Saudi government. [It is] a Wahabi or a Salafi voice.

So, [this affected] the normal Muslim, the moderate Muslim [in America], because we think that, [in] America, we can make a different Islam or a liberal or a modern Islam [rather than a Wahabi or Salafi Islam]. I say there is a disease here in America, which people are not looking at, among the Muslims in America. Not all of them, but the majority of them—and I'm sorry to say that because always they say I'm controversial, so I'll have to be controversial to bring an issue up.

So, what happened, back in my country, back home in Lebanon—everyone knows Lebanon is the Switzerland of the Middle East. It's very liberal. Muslims practice whatever they like in the way they like. No one says anything. Similarly in Jordan, similarly in Syria, similarly in Egypt. But, when we come to America—we [are here] liberal and practiced our own [religion], but we are [also] not involved in any organization because there are no organizations. [In Lebanon] the Minister of Religious Affairs runs the mosques, so it has to be run according to Islamic tradition.

So, when we come to America, we become radicals. America is making us radical—not because it's America but because we need a place to take our children on Sundays in order to learn. So we go where? Where there is a mosque. So, we go to that mosque, and we have to socialize with other groups. And slowly, slowly, our children are brainwashed, and they become radicals because they adopt the ideology that is coming from overseas.

So, we are falling into [this] problem. And now we are coming and saying, “How can Muslim-Americans solve the problem?” But who could show us [how to solve it] in America? It might be, perhaps [people like] Abdulwahab Alkebsi, Husain Haqqani, Mohammed Ayoob, could—but

you are, but we are like, sorry to say this, “like an ant on an elephant.” They (the Salafis) hijack the mic—you cannot speak. Who is listening to you? I see how much they criticize you on the Internet. So, that is the problem.

I think to solve this problem we have—and this is what I said [at the recent] Indonesia conference—we have to establish a guidebook for Muslims to follow. And when in America, or in the West, or in all the Muslim countries, there is an issue, [Muslims] can go to that guidebook. And that guidebook can be [written by] Muslim scholars that we know are modern in America. Some of them [should be secular] because you need the political aspect of [secularism]. [This will give legitimacy to] Muslim scholars from around the world [who should] have legitimacy but [who] cannot speak because the mic is being taken away from them.

I’ll give you an example. Mohammed Ali Romalaki (sp) from Saudi Arabia was able to say something [because of] the pressure that has been put on Arab government to open up their country as democracy. He mentioned the two conferences, but which--this is only for the domestic consumption. Really, it’s the opposite. The leadership will not allow real democracy to happen in the Muslim world or they will be thrown away from their chairs. So, Ali Romalaki, 1980, he is a very famous Sunni scholar moderate around the world, he challenged Abdul Aziz Membaz (sp), the Grand Mufti of Egypt--of Saudi Arabia because Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia was saying, until 1980 that “the earth is flat.” And [it would not be] until the Saudi astronaut went up [that he would admit] “Okay, now the earth is round.”

So, this is what the scholars that are governing us in the Muslim world are saying. So, [Romalaki] debated him on the television. He wanted to debate him on the television, so that both of them [could] agree on the issue of the permissibility of [celebrating] the birthday of Prophet, because the Saudis do not accept it. [Saudi Arabia] is the only country in the Muslim world [that does] not celebrate the Prophet’s birthday. And from there, we have all these educational books coming all over the world.

So, Ali Romalaki, the day that he was supposed to challenge him on the TV, he was—there was a subpoena for him to go to the court, and he was arrested and thrown in prison because he was trying to challenge Abdul Aziz Membaz. He was exiled to Morocco. If not for the King of Morocco at that time, King Al-Hassan Asani (sp), he will not be released for 10 years to go back to Saudi Arabia and Mecca.

So, that is the problem with Muslim scholarship. If we can empower—President Bush was in Indonesia, in Bali—and the President of Indonesia, the Prime Minister, all of the Indonesian government was there. And they were telling me privately that the Administration promised them \$157 million for education—that as soon as they go back [to America], they [would] release that money for education in Indonesia.

That money, till now, [hasn’t gone to] Indonesia for *madrrasah*-reform or to re-establish the *madrrasah* according to a more modern style of life, according to modern system. Why? Because they disagreed on one point with USAID. Why? Because, the government says, “you give us the money because you cannot reform our religion when it comes to discussing religious

issues, because you are not expert on that. But, you can bring the expert, and they can sit with us and [we can be informed by them.]”

So, this problem stopped the whole \$157 million project—because the Administration saw that [the funding] will go in different places that was not assigned for this project. So, we see that if the United States will push and encourage modern scholars from around the world [to come] together with American Muslim scholars—the ones really standing up today, you can count them on your fingers—I think there will be a lot of reform and lot of changes. [If not], reform [will remain] subject to discussions and discussions and discussions—and will never see the light.

When all of you were presenting about previous scholars like Al-Farabi in the ideal city—like Ibn Sina, like Ibn Khaldun—and like the others that came at the beginning of this century, whatever their belief was, Maududi and Athrani, or all of the others—they didn’t have any government problems, so they said their opinions, and [those opinions] are there.

But today, if someone speaks one word about democracy, the next day he will disappear and be diluted in prison with acid. They acid over his body—and he disappears from this world. This is how democracy is being implemented in some Muslim countries. That’s why there is no one who can stand up and speak—except [those that speak] whatever is [accepted] by the government and the regime. We hope that the speakers here can find a solution—but that is a question, *a big* question, [whether] in the future we can achieve something like that.

Thank you very much.

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you, Shaykh Kabban Some of our panelists have expressed an interest in giving some short comments before we open it up for discussion on the floor. I’ll turn first to Hillel Fradkin.

**MR. FRADKIN:** Thank you. I think I have three or four points. The first thing I wanted say was a comment on Abdulwahab [Alkebsi’s] remarks—about trusting the salesman, which I think is a good way of putting it in America—it is a very American way of putting it. I think it is very much the case that there was, as I said yesterday, for a long time in the United States, the notion that democracy was something we did and not [something that] Muslims either could do or wanted to do. And there was a very unfortunate inclination to simply go on supporting a particular distant notion—the status quo. But then, somehow or another, the status quo came up and bit us.

Of course, [we’ve] accumulated an enormous amount of experience where America was not a salesman for its own institutions in the Muslim world. And obviously Americans, both Muslim and non-Muslims, have to be patient and consistent in pursuing that. And also Muslims around the world are going to have to be patient, of course, until they’re convinced that we mean business—[until they’re convinced] we’re serious. That’s a kind of obstacle that can only be overcome through time and consistency.

I also want to make one comment about the remarks of Shaykh Kabbani, where he said that America makes Muslims radicals. He did not attribute this to America itself, but rather, it seems

to me, to the influence of radicals in the Muslim world affecting American Muslims. And I do think that is a serious issue. I do know—and I have had the experience that I'm sure many Muslims in the room have had—Muslims who have ceased going to mosques because they are radicalized, and because they don't feel comfortable with them without finding alternative institutions to turn to, including other mosques and so forth.

And that's unfortunate on both grounds because it means, as my discussions with people in my own community tell me, that they would prefer to see their children raised as Muslims, and that they would prefer them to be raised in their traditions. But they see no opportunity to do so. And I suppose that's a portion of the class that you talked about—the Muslims who are abandoning their Muslim practice because they see no opportunity or way of combining that with what they regard as [inaudible].

But, I do want to say that I do think there is a contribution [made by] non-Muslim America to the possibility of radicalization because of things that had nothing to do with Muslims, but are rather due to developments in [American] intellectual and especially academic life—[developments] which have, in general, tried to solicit a certain radicalism on the part of groups within America, and which predates by a long shot the rise of the Muslim community here.

And I think it would be important—I don't know how doable it is because of the various factors that led to it—if non-Muslim Americans, especially American academics, thought seriously and hard about this and the degree to which they might have some responsibility for encouraging people to become radical, or discouraging them from [settling] in the United States, and pursuing a Muslim life in a modern fashion. There is something that non-Muslim Americans have to contribute to this effort, and they need to be reminded of that.

Finally, I wanted to ask Peter [Skerry] a question, because it struck me. [That is] that the situation for Muslims in America, by coming from so many different places [around the world], tends to force on them a unity. A unitarian identity is not simply unprecedented in American history, and I wondered whether that history, since Peter is an expert on immigration to the United States, has any useful bearing. I think, for example, of the Catholic community in this country, which came from—not unlike the American Muslim community—from a large diversity of countries—Irish, Italian, German and so forth. And I wondered whether this process took place for American Catholics and how it went, and so forth.

The Jewish community in American also has this experience, but [that community] played so much of a smaller role in American life, that I don't know whether it can be particularly helpful. But if Peter thinks it is ... the only thing I remember from when I was a boy was that—since my grandparents on one side came from Russia, and on the other side came from Poland—that there was sort of a truce between these two groups, which didn't particularly think well of each other. But the truce was established on the grounds that we were certainly not to have anything to do with German or Hungarian Jews—the Germans because they were snobs and the Hungarians because they were crazy.

**MR. BROWN:** Dr. Skerry?

**MR. SKERRY:** Yeah, I'd be happy to try to respond to Hillel's question, and then I wanted to say one other thing briefly myself.

As I tried to suggest, I don't think this emergence of some sort of trans-ethnic [identity] or any other kind of coming together like this of a group from disparate parts is novel in our own era. The classic example of what I was talking about would be Italians coming to America. [They've] even conceived of themselves typically as Italians until they got here. They always thought of themselves as Neapolitans or Sicilians or something like that. I mean, it's only when they get to the United States that they're mistreated as Italians and referred to as—not in such nice terms—that they began to think of themselves as Italians or as Italian-Americans.

So yes, it's not new in that sense. There are some things that are new in terms of our political dynamics today. And as far as Catholicism as an identity goes—sure, there's lots of important parallels there, particularly around questions of loyalty to the United States, given the fact that, after all, Catholics have some allegiance to the ultra-mundane power of the Pope and the Vatican.

For me, the quite interesting question is why that Catholic identity didn't cohere and seemed to come apart into its component parts. I'm not sure I have a good answer for you on that other than that certain centripetal tendencies—that's not a very satisfying answer, I'll have to think about that.

Frankly, I'm more preoccupied with trying to respectfully—and I emphasize *respectfully*—push, poke or *challenge*—whatever the best respectful term would be—Shaykh Kabbani, because while I don't doubt for a moment that Saudi and Wahhabist influence is at work in the United States and, indeed, worldwide, and that we have reason to be concerned about that, I do believe that America is an extremely assimilative and resilient society. And if people can't get what they want at a mosque, either they'll find another mosque, or such an affluent and well-educated group will eventually, I would think, start their own institutions.

And in the same vein, I guess that clearly the best and obvious example is Saudi books and the subvention of books worldwide. But, I wonder, even as somebody who writes books, if I might not suggest to Shaykh Kabbani that he might be exaggerating the importance of books to the second generation of Muslims. I construct that, among the second-generation Muslims I've encountered—and especially at conferences, whether it's the Islamic Society of North America or the Muslim Public Affairs Council or the Muslim Student Association—that the most powerful, dynamic and sought after speakers weren't Muslims of immigrant origins. They weren't even second-generation Muslims, typically.

They were actually African-American Muslims—and this is where I get to mention the African-American dimension to things. [African American Muslims] are the most sought-after and powerful speakers, it seems to me, in terms of how the second generation of Muslim Americans respond to these African-American Muslims. They're so sought after because they speak in a very different idiom. They speak in a very personal and direct way. They're much less inclined to cite the Koran, much less inclined to invoke the Prophet. They do that, but they do it much

less and speak much more in an evangelical way. [This] shouldn't be surprising, it seems to me, given the history of African-Americans.

And it's also the case that these African-American speakers also bring, it seems to me, an enormous passion—and, indeed, *anger*—that I don't see among [immigrant] Muslim-Americans. I see [among immigrant Muslims] signs of a certain disaffection about racial profiling or other policies, but I also don't see a real gut-level anger. I see that among African-American Muslims, and I see young people—young immigrant-origin Muslims, the second-generation—responding to these African-American Muslims. I think there's some reasons to be concerned about that dynamic, about where that might go.

And to me, that comes back to my point that I tried to make in my remarks: that I think there's plenty going on in the United States. Some of these things are beneficial in terms of the integration of Muslims into American society. But in terms of the political dynamics, I see more cause for concern, because I see those dynamics being very much reflective of American dynamics and not so reflective of influences from the outside. While I don't dispute those influences from the outside, I see the Saudis are playing a losing game. I think you sort of alluded to this yesterday, Hillel. They're rather heavy-handed.

The dominant image for me of Saudi influence: I saw a mosque built outside of Sarajevo a couple of years ago. It looked like a big Home Depot built on the outskirts of town. That contrasted very sharply to the picturesque—indeed, *beautiful*—mosques that were in the center of town. And to me, that just sort of typifies the heavy-handedness of Saudis. And I think, to the extent that they're trying to influence Muslims in America, they're fighting a losing game. But that doesn't mean there aren't things to be concerned about.

But the things to be concerned about are much more along the lines of what I suggested between African-American Muslims and their passionate anger—and indeed, *alienation*—and how that comes together with a whole complicated mix among the second generation of [immigrant Muslims] who are Americans, but who have political concerns around the Mideast or other things, and who are young people, and [therefore] prone to all sorts of causes and ideologies. That's where I would focus, and less on the Saudis. I guess I'm asking Shaykh Kabbani, if I might, to respond to that.

**SHAYKH KABBANI:** I would like to respond with due respect, with all my love and respect to Professor Skerry and to the Saudis equally.

**MR. SKERRY:** You're putting me in the same category as the Saudis?

**MR. KABBANI:** No, I'm not. No—the Saudis are good people, but the ideology is not. It is wrong. So, I would like to respond, but I think I cannot respond now in 10 minutes. You can go to our website, [islamicsupremecouncil.org](http://islamicsupremecouncil.org), and I think you can find all the material that you need. So, you will get it there easy, but I will say something about it.

First of all, I would like to [respond to] Dr. Fradkin [and what] he said about Muslims [and how] they radicalize the other Muslims in United States. I came to the United States 1990. I went to

the first mosque my feet took me in Jersey City, and to the lecturer, I said, “This is not our religion.” [I said that it] might be that he brought it from somewhere else, because whatever he was lecturing was completely irrelevant to what I have studied all my life, and what also my parents and my ancestors and all scholars in Middle East [have studied]. [I said], “I knew what kind of lecture he was giving.” It was Wahabi ideology—“which is okay, it’s up to him,” [I said]—“it is [after all] a democracy.”

But, the problem is that, in 1990, that issue began to evolve, [and I began to notice it more at] different mosques and different Islamic centers. There are many mosques that are okay. They are good. There are Pakistani mosques or Bangladeshi mosques or Indian mosques or some Arab mosques, but they are really Aga, Sunnite, Amadhi (sp), following the traditions.

So, in 1999, when I saw this, I saw a tremendous threat coming to United States. I stood up in the State Department and I gave my speech, which is very famous. It was circulated all around the world by the respected organization that you must mentioned: CAIR (Council for American Islamic Relations). [They said] that I am a basher of Muslims because I stood and I spoke that there is a threat against the United States coming from bin Laden through student visas and through charity organizations, and that they are funneling money overseas. So, I’ve been boycotted from seven Muslim organizations, national organizations, including CAIR, MPAC, ISNA, ICNA—I forgot the rest—AMC, [they boycotted me, too].

And then, I was surprised to be [boycotted by an African-American Muslim group]. I took the phone, and I called [the group’s president]. I said, “What you are doing? I expect it from everyone but not from the African-Americans,” because African-Americans, unfortunately, are victims of the Arab immigrant’s leadership in America. So, they don’t know anything about the Middle East and the Muslim issue. They follow. They accept and they follow. They don’t try to rationalize things and understand things.

So, I say, “What are you doing?” He said—I don’t want to mention names now, but he said: “This and so, one of the main people of ISNA called me and he said, “You sign on to the boycott of Shaykh Kabbani because we are signing off.” And so, he said, “I signed.” I said, “Did you read what I said?” He said, “No.” I said, “Well, why did you sign then?”

So, this is from a Muslim perspective. I come back now to the Christian perspective. I was in Washington, and we received a call from a very famous organization, a non-Muslim organization, and they said “Please, there is someone who wants to come and visit you as a professor.” So, he came to our office, and he said, “We are Christians and Jews who would like to do a march, and an organization that supports peace in the Middle East—they mentioned your name [to us.] They mentioned your organization, and that [we should] work with you.” So, of course, [I said] we would be very happy. So, one of their board members [came to visit me]. And [then] suddenly, we [began] not to receive anything from them, although they are on the board.

What happened is that they wanted to get more Muslim organizations. [But] when they went to the other [Muslim organizations], they said “No, if you work with Shaykh Kabbani, we will not work with you.” So, they dropped us. So, this is an American non-Muslim—a Christian

organization, and it has some Jewish people. So, they prefer to work with the others, and they dropped us. This is a problem that we are facing in the United States. If these people who are scholars here today—if they will go and speak openly like [they are today] in the community, they will come against them. And then, once--Professor Mohammed Ayoob said he met in Syria and spoke in Grand Mufti's presence, I don't--I'm not surprised because I know the Grand Mufti. He's a Naqshbandi—He's a Sufi teacher, a guide. So, the spirituality is still there in Damascus and Syria. That's why they are open to anyone to come and speak.

This is the problem we are facing in the United States. The problem you are speaking about, about you don't think that the Saudi or Wahabi influence, that is--I don't agree with it because, to start our organization, we will start. We started, and many Muslim organizations being started, but they have been oppressed down by the national other organization because they have lot of fundings. You believe that one organization had, in their account--I forgot now. This is two years ago--\$1.7 billion or \$2.7 billion. One of these Muslim--two, it was not--\$2.7 billion.

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** Billion with a B?

**MR. KABBANI:** Billion, not with the M. Billion dollar, and disappeared suddenly in year 2000. So, these people, they disseminate all kind of literatures and books around the world. If you go to Hajj, you are speaking about they are not unified--are not unified except in Hajj. You know what happen when they go to Hajj in pilgrimage? As soon as they are--.

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** --I'm not permitted.

**MR. KABBANI:** No, make Shahada (sp), and we will be (inaudible). It is rational (inaudible), because how they did one--that Mehdi--he is the savior of the Muslim and came in 1980, I will correct. It was not 1979, it was 1980 when the Mehdi came and said, "I am the Mehdi. I want to take Matkava (sp)--'79, then--.

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** --It was New Year's Day in the Hijid (sp) day.

**MR. KABBANI:** Because I was there, and I was stuck at the airport. They were (inaudible) me. So, what happened is they asked some people who came from Europe and some Americans, say Shahada and enter Mecca, take that person out. So, that's it, and these people were not Muslim. They were soldiers from America, from the United States, they were from Europe. They went inside Mecca. How they stand inside Mecca? They said Shahada, (unintelligible) in front of the Grand Mufti and go in. That's it. So, say it, and you go in.

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** There's no Godspeed.

**MR. KABBANI:** So, what happened is that they go back to Hajj. As soon as they arrive, they give them a package in their language. They have all languages around the world. Alkeed Al-Sadim (sp), Mohammed Rabdulahab (sp), Ossa Amin (sp) and Ad-Araziz Mombas (sp), all translated in different language. So, that pilgrimage--two million pilgrims goes to Hajj. Every one of them carry a package. He take it to his country. He give it to his children and his family, tell people, tell other family become Wahabi. So, they multiply quickly, and in our mosques



here there is no--and there is--now, you know how there is, how many mosques? Around 500 mosques. They own the titles of 500 mosques. How you--we are going to establish a new mosque, a new organization? It's over. It's over.

For me it's over, and I would like to tell you one more thing about--you know in your military, in the American military, you cannot have a Muslim chaplain not accredited by ANC before Adrachman Amoudi (sp), or now by the Islamic University of Islamic Sciences, or something--.

**MR. ALKEBSI:** --The School of Social--Islamic and Social Sciences.

**MR. KABBANI:** All military chaplains has to be accredited with that university. Then, the prisoners, prisoners--chaplain of prisons has to be accredited by that. I was in a big meeting with all these federal chaplains, and there are 12 federal chaplain--Muslim chaplains in the prison system, in the federal. You know how many of them were--studied in Saudi Arabia? Ten of them. So, what you are--they are everywhere. Now, Hagog and Magog. You know Hagog and Magog?

**MR. SKERRY:** They tell me.

**MR. KABBANI:** Over dinner, okay. Then, they are go--are coming--they came to the Press Club two years ago, and they are the Rabbitar (sp), who is Prince Turkey, and they are giving books to everyone about the good faith and will of Saudi Arabia towards the Americans. They went to Chicago, and one of our Muftis--Imams there asked a question, and the head of ISNA was with them. He asked the question, "Why you don't introduce in Saudi Arabia the four school of thought? Why you only take the Wahabi school of thought? Why you don't take the others?" And he said, "Don't worry. Send your Imams to us and we will teach them." So, he completely--.

**MR. SKERRY:** --Just ignored it.

**MR. KABBANI:** Ignored the question. I asked a simple question. Before you come and teach us, why you don't teach your 19 hijackers that came to America and hijacked these planes to be good Muslims? Why you want to come and teach us here? So, this is a problem. If America cannot solve this problem through stopping this infiltration of such books--I know it's against freedom of press--but it is really a situation, a problematic situation that we cannot solve.

**MR. BROWN:** --Okay, let's open the discussion up for questions from the floor. First on my list was Professor Ayoob.

**PROFESSOR AYOOB:** Shaykh Kabbani's act is a very difficult one to follow. I won't even try.

Now, I have--about the homogenization of Muslims in the United States, I think this was pointed out by Professor Skerry that it's probably inevitable to (inaudible), except that when we was doing it, this sort of (unintelligible), it makes (inaudible) appear to be one dimension, as if the other dimensions of their identity, in terms of culture and language and so on, either do not exist

or are to be (inaudible). And I think that detracts from the richness of Muslim cultural contribution to the United States.

But, if homogenization is electable, then one has to (unintelligible) on one terms (unintelligible) homogenization space. Why (unintelligible) that the homogenization takes place while, of course, preserving at least some of the differences between the culture, and so on and so forth. We're beyond the basis of the most liberal principles of Islam. Unfortunately, at this point now, that has not happened, that this--you want to (inaudible) people like me who think that if the homogenization has to take place, it has to take place in a suitably modern form.

And the other thing that follows from this (unintelligible) the United States, particularly the American Muslims, can (unintelligible) in terms of the promotion of democracy, particularly in the (inaudible). And I agree that there are things that the (inaudible) Muslims can do about it, but there is an even more difficult task that they have, which is the promotion of the separation of religion and (inaudible), what's commonly known as Sacredism.

Muslims in this country, as in other countries when they are in the minority, have a vested interest in the separation of religion and state, and a vested interest in seeing that the religion--religious precepts of majority communities do not intrude into the public sphere, but that will automatically (inaudible) to this advantage and create different categories of citizenship.

But, if we are faithful to our own beliefs in that sense, and in terms of our interest in public life in countries where we operate, we should be preaching the same sermon to the Muslim world by saying that if you're going to be as true to yourself and the piece that you can do is to promote (inaudible) democratic, but also a secular agenda in the Muslim world. And I know it's much more difficult to do than to point (inaudible) democratic agenda, and many Muslims in the West feeling that, despite the part of this that they have in operating in a sacred environment, there is something within that which makes them believe that, though in Islam, Muslim countries ought to be forgotten in public life. And this is a big change, dilemma, it's a genuine dilemma they face, but I think it's time they, which means we, resolve it in order to get into (inaudible) to make our contribution to public life across the world.

This is one way of also responding to (inaudible) comment on my paper yesterday, that I was--I could say I was preaching to that. I was trying to do, but what I was doing was pointing out the misconceptions of the West with their (inaudible), and that I wasn't equally looking at the problems within Islam, because I still think, the other day--well, yesterday afternoon, that I was speaking to a particular audience and trying to point out the shortcomings from which to (inaudible). So, I (inaudible), since I see (inaudible).

Thank you.

**MR. SKERRY:** And actually, that was a question--could I quickly respond?

**MR. BROWN:** Short response.

**MR. SKERRY:** Yes, short response.

Yeah. I appreciate your observations (inaudible), although I don't know that I was suggesting that Muslims in America would become homogenized. They might become in the sense that there might be a lot of intermarriage and that national differences might fade. But, what I was suggesting--but I think that's a long-term process.

But, what I was suggesting is that the emergence of a political identity and a political interest as Muslims. I was talking with (inaudible) of a political community or a kind of symbolic and kind of hybrid one. The parallel, in my mind, is with Hispanic Americans. You know, we talk about Hispanics, but not--but that's a political construct that sort of exists somewhere up here or somewhere in Washington. People in Los Angeles don't call themselves Hispanics. They call themselves Mexicans or *salva de renneos* (sp), or something, like where they come from. There's not much sign--not much of it. It's of these different sub-groups of Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and so forth intermarrying. There's some suggesting of that.

But, I think, by and large, those groups are somewhat separate from one another, but there is this thing that we call Hispanic, which is a political identity that sort of hangs in the air above them. And I think that's what I was trying to suggest might be going on with Muslims, or I think will be going on with Muslims in America, and homogenization might occur, but that's a somewhat distinct and different process.

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** It's tough to have a roundtable meeting when you have flat table like this. But, I want to tell Shaykh Kabbani that I truly feel your pain, what--seriously. I'm a victim of it myself. I happen to come from a Martezelite (sp) Zedi tradition in Yemen which, basically as I said in the first session of this conference, is basically extinct because of the spread of the Salafi-Wahabi kind of tradition in Yemen through 500 schools, through 500 million Saudi real, which is about, what, one-point hundred something million riyals a year. So, yes.

But, what I want to say is, first of all, I do want to be optimistic. Sometimes my comments come as naïve optimism, but I'm proud of that. We have to be optimistic, and also not to oversimplify it. It's a function of many things in the United States, not the least of is what other communities went through. When the Jewish immigration happened in the United States--and Hillel would be a much better expert than I am--they tend to become more religious. And so, what happens to us--and Christians the same. What happens to us is we tend to gravitate towards the most conservatives because we are afraid to assimilate. Assimilation is such a dirty word. So, we tend to stay as the most conservative, and they present that.

So, just fighting Wahabism or Salafism in the United States is not going to solve the issue. We have to solve it from a multiple approach. One of it is--and I think, overall, this will decimate and we will become more assimilated and we will become more liberal. And just to comment also on Hillel's comment about diversity, and I would advise you all to go--this is not New (inaudible) Mecca--to go during Eight Prayer, which is a big feast, the two feasts, and we go--the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. or another place, and you see the diversity of all the different dresses, all different languages. It's really amazing, and I agree with you 100 percent. You don't see it anywhere else in the world.

And now, a direct answer to--and I agree with you 100 percent about the question of secularism. And I'll tell you from personal experience, only a Muslim-American can present this view. Secularism is the best thing that happens even to Islamists. When you present it as the American way of secularism, not the European, and it's actually not like it appears, who wanted to liberate the state from the church. It's actually the opposite, where if you want today in the Muslim world, and the Arab world in particular, it's to liberate the religion, for God's sake, from the state. It's--we don't want to establish--the state establish a religion that will dominate everything else.

They love it. They agree with it. And I think only a Muslim-American can present that view. Not a non-Muslim American, not the European Muslim, only a Muslim-American can represent that view.

**MR. BROWN:** Dr. Laitliff (sp), do you have a question?

**DR. LAITLIFF:** I have a question and a comment. Now, the question is, (inaudible) the differences between Shaykh and Peter, to what extent is it because you're focusing on a new generation? First generation of immigrants (inaudible) Muslims are not (inaudible). Peter seems to be talking more about the second generation (inaudible), and I wondered if that's a factor.

(Inaudible) there was, with Peter (inaudible). We did a study on (inaudible) people who were (inaudible) in Europe and (inaudible), and here's a (inaudible) that we found (inaudible) countries with (inaudible) and the people were actually arrested and jailed. But, I think it's inaccurate to describe this as racial profiling. We found that, for instance, Iranians were called in first for some (inaudible), and there was a big commotion in Los Angeles, the southern California region, which I don't think it was (inaudible) last people in the world (inaudible). And waiting (inaudible) fourth round were Saudis and Pakistanis and Egyptians, so there's nothing very weird about the (inaudible). I think there's a (inaudible) factor. But, in the case of the (inaudible), indicates that the MPIA or it was a case in the INS that (inaudible) description.

Well, virtually everybody called them Muslims, but I think the (inaudible) profiling abstracts from what happened on 9/11, and from the fact that Al-Qaeda is a political organization (inaudible) operations of wisdom. So, if the national (inaudible) that the FBI operates from, there are going to be Muslims, not Jews, not (inaudible). I think--it sounds to me, I think this is probably to your point, but the government was put in a tragic situation. It's a tragic dilemma, at least for most of the people (inaudible), and that (inaudible).

**MR. BROWN:** Dr. Skerry, your response?

**MR. SKERRY:** Yeah. I wasn't referring to the INS registration as racial profiling. I listed that along the other policies that I thought were helping foster this identity of Muslims in America. But I would agree with you that that's not racial profiling. I think the policy was ineptly carried out, as your remark suggests, but I wasn't endorsing or criticizing that policy. I was saying these policies are there. I would defend most of them probably if you pressed me. But, they have consequences, and all I was doing was pointing to the one consequence. And to your point about

the second generation, I think that's part of what we're--we would--that explains the difference between the two of us. I think so. I'm not sure if the Shaykh would agree.

**MR. KABBANI:** I agree with that.

**MR. SKERRY:** Okay.

**MR. BROWN:** Hillel?

**MR. FRADKIN:** I just wanted to make a small point--well, maybe it's a large point, but it's only connected with one aspect of what you said about the fact that, somehow or other, they began with Iranians, and that suggests a great deal of ignorance on the part of our public officials because, while it's obvious to you, it obviously wasn't obvious to them.

And that leads me to endorse in a somewhat different fashion a point that Asma made earlier concerning the degree to which it's necessary for non-Muslims to understand something about Muslims. Hopefully--but here when entering into the realm of Utopia, all Americans will--and non-Muslim Americans--will someday understand something, and understand correctly, something about Islam and Muslims. But, I would be very happy, for starters, if people who have some role in education and also in government service, where they have specific responsibilities who are much better trained and much better informed.

And you're right. If I may point out a small story, which I hope--but I'm not certain, after what Bob Lincoln (sp) said wouldn't happen. It so happened that I was in the Army during one of the Indo-Pakistani wars, and I served in an airborne unit of translators. And our base was put on alert for possible deployment to Pakistan because we were tilting towards Pakistan in those days. You may remember that.

And I was called to the general headquarters to debrief by some senior officer about what our role would be in this deployment, and I said, "That's very interested--no objection to be going, but exactly what am I supposed to do there?" And--because I was an Arabic translator. And so--and he said--and the officer said, "Well, you're there to translate." And I said, "Well, that's fine, but they don't speak Arabic. They speak Pakistan." And he said, "Well, what do they speak there?" I said, "Urdu," and he said, "Oh, well, I guess we won't need to take you, then."

**MS. AFSARUDDIN:** Just a couple of remarks to say I wasn't suggesting that everyone needs to know everything about Islam, but I'm--that there should be a pretty good of people, and that should be the role of education and talking to one another and reaching out to one another. And I see that already happening in a larger scale now after 9/11.

I think it already has made some appreciable form of difference. I see that in my students, for example. I mean, after they've taken a class elsewhere and come to my class, I mean, they already seem so much better informed than the typical student coming and taking their first introductory class on Islam, for example. So, every little bit helps, and that's basically what I was saying. It's a (inaudible), if you'd like, if you go and put it in religious terms. There should be a group of people doing this. It's certainly not the obligation of every single individual.

**MR. BROWN:** If you have any more questions, could you please come to the microphone? We're on the receiving end of a menacing stare from the Kellogg Center, so please keep your questions short.

**UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN:** I'll try to (inaudible), but I've got to say I (inaudible), so I'm simply interested in the West (inaudible), how the Muslim community (inaudible) the U.S. and the West, and I guess I--I don't know (inaudible), the challenge around especially (inaudible) and politics and (inaudible), for the fact that what (inaudible) brings together in community of color (inaudible) is their common history, let's say, around (inaudible), which is so very much (inaudible) today. There are (inaudible) in the U.S.

So, things like a language and history, colonialism, (inaudible), all bring together communities. So, I kind of am concerned about what continuing to offer (inaudible) to be used by (inaudible) speakers here. Not fear, but the (inaudible) seems to undercut the possibility of speaking up or out as people of color, or if that idea of color is being shaped (inaudible) for a number of communities. Let's have a question on what ideas (inaudible) using, in particular, we have (inaudible).

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** This is directed to (inaudible). Sorry, I tried to (inaudible) your name, but I can't (inaudible).

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** (Inaudible) when you say critical thinking and, in the same breath, you said don't read (inaudible) and don't read for other author. While I have read Sarouche, I have read Hajni (sp), I have read Arkoun (sp), and I have read Madoudi. It hasn't changed me, (inaudible). So, what's your idea of critical thinking while not being (inaudible) critical yourself?

**MR. BROWN:** We'll take one more question from this gentleman (inaudible). What's your name, sir?

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** (Inaudible.) I think--I converted to Islam April 1992, and pretty much (inaudible) in Muslim community organizations, and then gone through the process of being very involved and then, to a certain point, being marginalized because of (inaudible) within its organization. And one thing really struck me during the original lectures was you were discussing, Dr. Hillel, differences between the American Muslim community and the European Muslim community, and it got me thinking about actually the difference between the American Muslim community and the rest of the world--the rest of the Muslim world, and America as a society and the rest of the Muslim world.

And while I do agree that the majority of Muslims in this country are going towards the individualistic nature (inaudible) original statement, Dr. Peter (sp), and I also do agree that the Saudi Shah are immune to the erosion (inaudible) in this. For me, it's that one (inaudible) game, and from September 11<sup>th</sup> essentially made a common problem for American Muslims, the rest of the Muslim world, and the American society for the rest of the Muslim world, which means that it's a common problem for all of us. And from American Muslim (inaudible), as he's illustrated

so well, the difficulties the American Muslim communities have (inaudible) these things. But, because it's a common problem, how do you see American society, through its institutions, actually being able to help the American Muslim community (inaudible) this common problem in overcoming radical Islam?

**MR. BROWN:** Brief responses?

**UNIDENTIFIED MAN:** Good question. (Inaudible), I was talking about two separate things. Number one, there is a lack of critical thinking in the Muslim world overall and the Arab world. There is. We read things without thinking about it critically, and that's something that's more available in the United States, and I'm hoping the scholars and people who have spoke here (inaudible) would deduce that to the Muslim and Arab world. That's separate from also that they can introduce instead of just the traditionalists that you read, including Madoudi, including, say, Kutup, some like them, some don't like them, introduce new writings by Arkoun and by Sarouche and by others. So, these are two different things, and I'm glad you've read all of them, and I hope you read each one of them critically, not just as it comes.

**MR. SKERRY:** I guess the other two questions quickly go to me. I'll ask--answer--try to answer the last one first. It's a difficult question, what can Americans and the American government do to help American Muslims deal with these challenges. I guess my short--and too-short answer, but we could--I'd be welcomed to talk to you later--would be that we need to hold onto what our principles are what--and to maintain an accurate understanding of what American society is about, and I think we ought to have more confidence in American social and cultural dynamics, albeit we have lots of problems. But, I think we ought to have more faith in our ability for the, if you will, a quaint expression, "The American way of life," to challenge and undermine forces such as Shaykh Kabbani has suggested or were very much there, and I don't deny that for a moment. But, I think our resilience is formidable.

And to the question about notions of community, I'm not sure I can give you a satisfactory definition of the kind of political community I was trying to suggest is in formation, but I'm not sure I could give you any definition that would satisfy you, I think, but I'm not sure I would challenge any of your assumptions about the forces that you identify as being operative. Yes, they're operative, but the kind of community I'm talking about is, nevertheless, I think in formation in part responding to some of those same forces that you identify. And so, I'm not sure how to answer the question, but not sure what we need to explore, either, together. But I'd be happy to talk to you afterwards.

**MR. BROWN:** Hillel, a concluding remark?

**MR. FRADKIN:** Well, I don't know if I--exactly what I'd conclude on this (inaudible), but I do want to address the issue that was raised by--I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name. Perhaps you didn't give it. But--the man seated in the back. I said in my remarks that it seems to me the American Muslim community is different than all other contemporary Muslim communities in two ways. One is this extraordinary diversity, and the other is that it has to think in two different ways about the place where it is. All immigrant communities coming to America have to say, in

some (inaudible), “Okay, there’s me and there’s America,” and if you look back through the literature of American immigrant communities, you’ll find America and us, whoever the “us” is.

And in that sense, the situation in American Muslim community is probably not--is not simply unprecedented. It’s not even unprecedented, it seems to me, with this special anti-factor that now the worldwide Muslim community has made America thematic. So, what I meant before was that, because that’s happening in the outside Muslim world, it creates--what I would say, in fact, a special burden on the American Muslim community, a burden Abdou was so eloquent about picking up. But, it is a burden, but it’s not altogether an unprecedented burden because, of course, there were people who came, the immigrant communities from Europe who came here who subscribed to ideologies, some portion of the community subscribed to ideologies which were--which also made America thematic, and also in the same way that the Islamists idealized it, that is to say they were hostile to America.

So, that took a long time for itself--to work itself out of our system, but we did, and--but it also took not only time but effort, and I think Peter was suggesting America has faced this kind of situation before, and could do so again. But it--again, it’s effort.

**MR. BROWN:** Okay. We have to finish this session because the Kellogg Center has another event scheduled in this room. If we can continue the conversation out in the hallway, that would be ideal. There were many questions left unaddressed, which should have been. Thank you.