

TRANSCRIPT

"THE CULTURAL WAR ON TERROR: RACE, POLICY, AND PROPAGANDA"

A Conversation With Hisham Aidi and Arun Kundnani

Moderator: Peter Beinart

* * *TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: audience members identified by gender unless they self-identified. Some audience members speak with a strong dialect.* * *

ANNOUNCER:

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STEPHEN HUBBELL:

Edward Said observed long ago that Islam as viewed from here seems to mean one simple thing, but is, in fact, part fiction, part ideological label, part imitable designation of a religion called Islam. Said wrote those words back in 1981 and in the intervening years, a burgeoning library has appeared purporting to help Americans better understand the complexities of the relationship with the Muslim world. But one can't escape the sensation that the more volumes that pile upon these shelves, the further away we are from actual wisdom and understanding about that relationship.

So, we're delighted to be able to celebrate the arrival of *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* by Hisham Aidi and published by Pantheon; and *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror* by Arun Kundnani and published by Versa, two books that really do clarify and elevate the discourse about Islam and the West. I hope that you will pause in the lobby on the way up-- on the way out and pick up copies of both books and insist that they be signed by the authors.

Lastly, we are truly honored to have Peter Beinart here to lead the conversation. Many of you will know Peter from his-- stewardship of *The New Republic* during a particularly-- fruitful and creative period from 1999 to 2006. Others of you will know his as one of the most trenchant and acute observers of the relationship between the United States and the Middle East, particularly Israel and as the celebrated distinguished author of *The Crisis of Zionism*.

It is testimony to his-- extraordinary range and (UNINTEL) that still others of you may know of him through his-- commentary on a variety of subjects in *The Daily Beast*-- *The Atlantic*, for whom he now writes; *The New York Review of Books*; *Time* magazine; *Haaretz*; and many other publications. Speaking personally, my most-forwarded journalistic article of 2013 was something Peter wrote for *The Daily Beast* on the deeper meaning behind the election of Bill de Blasio as the mayor of New York City and its implications for national politics. Welcome, Peter, and thank you very much for being here.

PETER BEINART:

Thank you. Well, it's-- it's a privilege to be invited to be here with you. I am going to quickly turn things over to the panelists to make some-- some relatively brief, roughly five minutes or so, opening remarks. And then, I'll-- I'll conduct a conversation-- with the three of us for a while. And then, we'll-- we'll turn it over to you. So, without further ado-- Hisham, do you wanna (INAUDIBLE)?

HISHAM AIDI:

Sure. Thank you all. Thank you for coming out. (UNINTEL) of the big World Cup game playing out right now, but thank you for being here, choosing us instead. I was-- you know, when I first started thinking about writing a book on-- Muslim youth-- two-thousand and-- about four or five years ago-- I was thinking of-- writing about sort of how are Muslim youth responding-- to war on terror policies.

I was-- when I started working with O.S.I.-- I was involved in a project based in London and Brussels called At Home Europe-- led by Nazia Hussein, which looks at some of the situation of immigrants and Muslims, particularly Muslims in Europe, and they look at various indices. They look at-- discrimination, job discrimination, labor market-- media coverage-- and so on.

And in every-- and-- and a number of states (UNINTEL) and in North America, you tend to have three factors, three variables. You tend to have a hostile state policy. You tend to have xenophobic movements. You tend to have negative media representation, right. And, so, my thinking was how are Muslim youth responding to this? How are Muslim communities responding to the surveillance states, to the negative media, to the rhetoric, to the xenophobic movements. And I think that one way to get at these movements, at these youth cultures--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

HISHAM AIDI:

So, I decided that one way to get at-- to study Muslim youth culture and Muslim youth movements was by-- b-- by looking at music-- adopting the optic the lens of music. Why music requires some explanation and a number of people ask me, "Why would you write a book on the war on terror and the culture of the war on terror-- looking at music?"

Well, first of all, music in general, when you're looking at m-- youth movements, social movements, particularly the youth culture, youth movements, music tends to be-- rather important. Youth tend to use music for-- to build community, to declare-- identity, to proclaim their politics. So, music is a first-- is a good first cut-- at understanding youth movements.

Another reason why music is because-- there's a very intense, hot debate within Muslim communities on whether music is permissible and what kind of music is permissible. And-- you know, you have centuries of opinion about this. This debate is-- is alive and well. A few years ago-- a scholar by the name of Mark Anthony Neal wrote a book-- talking-- where he argued, he said, "If you look at the African diaspora, African-- the di-- identities of the African diaspora were forged on the dance floor."

And I thought, you know, in some ways, identities of the Muslim diaspora are being forged in debates in and around music. So, music is a very good way to get-- differences between various Muslim-- movements, Muslim youth cultures-- liberal, conservative, Sunni, Shia-- Sufi, and so on. Another reason why music is that governments have decided that music is a good way to get at-- to-- f-- to approach Muslim youth, to reach out to Muslim youth.

Governments have-- are aware of the fact that music broadcasts ideas, broadcasts ideologies. And, so, there are a n-- a number of initiatives-- the U.S., France, Germany, Britain, on how to use music-- for public diplomacy, for deradicalization-- music to resocialize, to moderate, to discipline-- Muslim communities. A final reason on why music is-- music-- music broadcasts, disseminates black internationalism. Music-- tends to broadcast black political thought, right, given the dominance of black music in the world today.

And one of the arguments I make in my book is if you look at the Muslim political landscape-- (UNINTEL) today, it tends to be dominated by conservative movements, by-- by right-wing forces, right. So, if you look at the Muslim political landscape, you have-- on the far right, you have the Salafis. Center-right you have Muslim Brotherhood. If you're a liberal, you'll gravitate to some Sufi organization, some Sufi community or another.

But what about the left, right? There's a vacuum, right, in terms of movements of an Islamic left. And-- a question that you hear often among Muslim youth activists is,

"Why is there no Islamic left?" One of the arguments that I make is that the Black Freedom Movement, the cultures of the African diaspora, cultures of freedom of the African diaspora, tend to fill that vacuum, right.

African American Islam in particular tends to fill that vacuum. For youth, left-- you know, youth Muslims who lean left, who are interested in social justice and racial justice, inequality, and empire, right, where do you go to, where do you gravitate to? Well, you end up gravitating often towards the Black Freedom Movement, right. And this is why music is important as well. It's because it is often through music that they hear about-- black internationalism, about black political thought, you know.

Many of us who didn't grow up in America, we first heard of-- Marcus Garvey through the music of Bob Marley. We first heard of Malcolm X through the music of Public Enemy. We heard about the Civil Rights Movement through Curtis Mayfield, right. And, so-- w-- you know, in writing about Muslim youth movements, one of the things you notice is that a number of the movements that are emerging in the U.S. and Europe are drawing on the Black Freedom Movement.

They're drawing on the deep wells of-- of-- of the African diaspora. And-- so, I've had-- and this is a side note. I've had this long, ongoing debate with (UNINTEL) the French scholar of global Islam and so on. One of the arguments he makes, he says after the Cold War, you know, with the collapse of communism and socialism, there is no more narrative of social justice. The only narrative of social justice that we have today is political Islam.

So, if any youth growing up in Birmingham or London or Rotterdam, if you're interested in social j-- if you're anti-globalization, if you're cr-- critical of-- of-- of empire, you tend to gravitate towards some Islamist movement or another, right, Richard Reeves, Zach Moussaoui-- Zacarias Moussaoui, and so on. And I respond to him when I say, actually, that's not quite true, right.

First of all, this notion of global or political Islam being a post-Cold War alternative is not quite accurate. Anyone who modestly familiar with the history of Islam in-- in America since the 1910s, the 1920s, you had minorities, African Americans draw on-- Islamic civilization, Islamic history. But also, there's a great deal of discontent within-- within-- within Muslim communities today, with the-- the ideological alternatives available, right.

If you're (UNINTEL) young, progressive Muslim, where do you go, right. And I say, actually, with the end of the Cold War, the alternative, that the narrative of social justice that exists is the Black Freedom Movement, right, in all its glory, from-- you know, from, you know, struggles of Brazil to Haiti to Harlem, the Civil Rights Movement, but also more broadly-- the-- the cultures of freedom that we created-- in the African diaspora.

So, the book largely looks at sort of-- the movements that have emerged. You know, the-- the black power riots in Europe-- hip hop trends. I look at various, you know, different types of music-- rock, reggae, funk, samba, Gnawa, (UNINTEL) and so on-- as a way to get at these movements, right, to understand the debates taking place

within-- Muslim subcultures. So-- what else do I have to say? I have five minutes, something like that, a few-- a couple minutes?

PETER BEINART:

A couple minutes more.

HISHAM AIDI:

Okay. A couple of minutes more. Right. So-- you know, in the introduction, I mentioned Aimé Césaire, the great-- Caribbean thinker, who says that after World War II, right, he says after WWII Europe was devastated right after-- and that Europe, to reinvent itself, drew on the cultures of black America, right.

It was through jazz and the literature of James Baldwin and Richard Wright that it would (UNINTEL) reinvent and remake itself. And one of the things I argue is that the movements that are emerging in Europe today also tend to draw on the-- on the cultures of black America, tend to draw on the cultures of-- of the African diaspora. And, so, this-- it is this, you know, transatlantic dialogue, transatlantic-- culture exchange that's interesting to me.

And, of course, the book is also about-- policy and public diplomacy. And I'll just talk very briefly about two initiatives. After 9/11, 2002, 2003-- the argument was made by a number of state officials, but also outside government that ran corporations, the (UNINTEL) and a number of NGOs and-- and think tanks began arguing that the problem today that-- the-- the violence that we're facing from the-- the-- the wider Muslim world is-- is ideological. We need a new ideology. We need an Islamic reformation.

And a program was put in place to trigger an Islamic reformation. And what that meant in practice was globalizing Sufism, long seen as the more liberal, more moderate-- against Wahabi, Salafi-- ideologies, now this idea of-- of-- of Sufism as-- as the liberal moderate alternative-- Islam as more c-- being c-- more compatible in modernity goes back to the 18th century. So, it's-- it's an old colonial idea.

But it would be put in place, you know. It would be a globalized again-- in 2003-2004 for three or four years. So, I talk about this and how-- again, how music was central, right. The idea-- a number of policymakers said, "Okay, there's this debate taking place within Muslim communities, whether music is permissible or not." And music became a shortcut way for policymakers to distinguish between moderate and radical, a lifestyle criteria, right.

If the kid listens to music, they listen to hip hop, chances are they're moderate, they're not extremist, right. And, so, you had these initiatives of trying to, again, disseminate Sufism and broadcast Sufism, mobilize Sufi practices through music, through festivals, through concerts, and so on. (INAUDIBLE) was largely unsuccessful, this branch and this-- this part of the public diplomacy program.

There was another analog part and that was targeting Europe, Muslims in Europe. After-- I'm almost done. One moment. After the-- the riots of 2005-- the French riots of 2005 the National Security Council would produce a document, a study, talking about the threat posed by ethnic tensions, racial tensions, separatism-- in Europe, right, arguing that the Europeans are not capable of integrating their minorities, African, West African, North African, Middle Eastern, Asian, and so on.

This is leading to heightened tensions. This is leading to separatism. This is leading to-- sort of cities divided, fractured states. And this is a threat to the United States because it's gonna weaken and balkanize-- our strong allies, such as France. So, all kinds of programs were put in place, right, to help integrate, moderate-- Muslims in Europe, right. So, the State Department would launch programs, again, direct financial assistance, workshops, conferences-- again, cultural forms of-- cultural-- initiatives, bringing young Muslims over here to the United States.

And these policymakers are fully aware of the emotive power of black music, of-- of the attraction to the Civil Rights Movement. So, the tours, when young Muslims from Italy or-- or Holland are brought over here, you know, they're given a tour that, you know-- they meet civil rights leaders. They're taken to-- historically black colleges.

And it culminates with meeting President Obama, right, sort of to show that America is, you know, unlike Europe, has been able to integrate its minorities and able to integrate its Muslims. The wars that have been launched are not against Islam, per se. They're against terrorism. They're against extremism, right. Muslims in America are flourishing, doing well, and so on.

All kinds of initiatives. We'll talk about this later. Simply to say that in Europe, the U.S. seems to be having more success than in-- in-- North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia. And the reason for that is that European Muslims are not living under American-backed (INAUDIBLE) right. These are-- they're largely free and-- many a Muslim activist see their relationship to the America embassy, to the embassy in Paris, in Amsterdam, and so on as a way to leverage concessions from their government.

So, if you look at-- French Muslim, French opinion in general, of the United States in 2006 and compare that to two-thousand and st-- and nine, an astonishing turnaround, right. Even-- the *New York Times* will write a piece about how Obama is the most effective public diplomacy tool-- in dealing with-- with-- minorities in Europe, right. I have a lot more to say, but I'll stop there. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

PETER BEINART:

Thank you. That was great. I wasn't looking at you (UNINTEL) noticed that the soccer game is actually on behind us, which frustrates a particular challenge-- (LAUGHTER) but one we can withstand. That was great. Arun, do you wanna make some (INAUDIBLE)?

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Sure. Thank you for coming. And-- I wanna thank the-- fellowship program here for making it possible for me to spend a year-- traveling around the United States doing the research for this book. So-- one of the-- I'm gonna kinda bounce off a couple of the things that-- Hisham's already introduced.

So-- Hisham was talking about this challenge for-- young Muslims, of where do you go if you want to find some kinda left-wing ideology, right, which I think is-- is a real question. One of the things I-- I write about in the book is actually-- a trajectory of-- of young Muslims in Britain-- who-- who, in the '80s and early '90s were active on the left, right, and involved in-- in left-wing politics.

But then-- shift-- during the '90s to some kind of-- political Islam and some kind of ideology along those lines, and why-- why that might've happened. So, there's-- there's an interesting kind of-- you know j-- trajectory there. So, this-- this moment that-- Hisham also mentioned of-- round about 2004, 2005 when the-- the kinda narrative of the early war on terror-- entered a kind of crisis moment, right.

We've had the-- the kind of-- you know, the failure of the Iraq War. We've had the kind of fracturing of the Atlantic alliance. We've had-- terrorist attacks in European capitals. And-- and, so, there's a desire to find a new way of-- of thinking about the war on terror, right, that gets away from, if you like, the kind of neoconservative narrative, the crash-of-civilization's narrative, right.

And I think it's in that crisis, out of that crisis, that you get the emergence of what we can call-- the liberal war on terror, right-- which-- which does these things that Hisham mentioned about, trying to think about ways of using culture to reshape-- the identities, the ideologies among Muslims-- all around the world, but for the purposes of our discussions, they were focusing on Europe and the United States, right.

And-- and whereas, I think, you know, there's been a hell of a lot written about-- about the neoconservatives critiquing the crash of civilizations, that's been kind of done to death. This-- this alternative way of thinking about war on terror has had relatively little analysis, right. And I think-- it's something that both-- both-- Hisham and I have been trying to think about.

So, the-- the key idea here is-- is-- the-- the-- the kind of underlying assumption is that we can divide up Muslims according to are they moderate or are they extremist, right. It's the first assumption. Second assumption is an assumption that what causes terror is amidst some kind of extremist ideology, right-- that comes out of Islam. It's not Islam itself, but it's some perversion of Islam. It's that kind of idea, right.

And-- and the assumption that the best way to deal with this problem is-- is-- is not shock and awe but-- but hearts and minds, right. It's about using culture and-- and, you know, to keep very soft power here, right. So, kind of trying to nudge communities to-- to change how they look at things, right. So, it's this idea of public

dis-- diplomacy, right. And in the book, I look at some of the c-- f-- for me, the kind of-- key figures in-- in kind of developing the intellectual framework like that are people like Paul Berman-- Timothy Garton Ash-- and a number of others, right.

So-- and obviously, part of what's going on here is a certain notion of multiculturalism, right. The idea is that we can identify something-- something called mainstream Islam and give that particular kind of identity-- a form of multicultural recognition, right, within European countries, within the United States.

And part of what's going on with the State Department's initiatives in Europe is, actually, also an attempt to export to Europe, particularly continental Europe-- a certain notion of n-- of multiculturalism, right, as-- as a formula for integration, right, which-- you know, which certain-- certainly is a different model from how-- countries like France have s-- have understood-- you know, this question of integration, right.

And I think one of the-- one of the kind of emblematic moments in this-- in this politics is-- Obama's speech in Cairo in 2009, where essentially, you know, when he-- when he gives that speech, which he-- he says is addressed to Muslims around the world, right. So, it's-- it's a speech directed at the entire global Muslim population. They're being addressed as a single group, right. He's not addressing Arabs, Egyptians, he's addressing Muslims around the world.

And-- the assumption is-- is that, you know, he wants to-- he wants to break with the notion that there's a clash of civilizations. He wants to say they-- that we respect your civilization, right. We have a kind of idea of-- of a multicultural recognition of your-- of your civilization, right. And the-- the idea behind that is that by-- by doing that act of recognition, we can-- we can do this cultural move that draws in-- Muslims to-- to-- be favorable towards the United States and also isolate people that we're labeling as extremists, right.

Now-- so, and-- and, for me, the kind of-- the-- the kind of flaw in that approach is that it misunderstands what is essentially a political problem as a cultural problem, right. It assumes that somehow what's lacking-- for Muslims around the world is-- is a feeling that their culture is-- you know-- the problem is that their-- their culture is being disrespected.

Rather than that there is a political problem around things like foreign policy, right. And-- and when you look at the-- the-- you know, why-- why in-- in the-- you know, so, in Egypt, why has that-- that kind of style of public diplomacy not worked for the United States? It's actually because, as-- as Hisham hinted-- it's not backed up by the kinds of political changes that you would-- that would-- that would give that rhetoric meaning, right.

And you see-- I think you s-- it's-- you know, it's interesting to look at-- that same era-- appearing in a number of different settings within the war on terror. So, if you think about-- you know, think about Guantanamo. We've had this situation over the last year where-- prisoners there have been subjected to this very brutal kinda force-feeding, which is-- really, a form of torture.

But-- to avoid offending supposed cultural sensibilities, it's not carried out-- during--

you know, during Ramadan during the daytime so that you don't offend that-- that cultural principle, right. So, it's this kind of bizarre paradox of this brutality combined with this cultural recognition, right. Or, again, when-- you know, when-- when bin Laden is-- is killed and buried at sea, apparently according to some kind of Islamic ritual, right.

So, the-- the issue of, like, is it legitimate for-- the political issue, is it legitimate for the United States to go in and-- and kill someone in Pakistan is-- is-- is not really addressed. But, you know, hey, we rec-- we respect your cultural practices around burial, right. It's the same kind of paradox. Now, in-- in terms of domestic policy, you see-- you see this idea-- implemented in a number of ways. One of-- one of them is-- is previous initiatives music that Hisham has been-- been working on.

In-- in Britain, one of the-- one of the aspects of this that I've spent a lot of time looking at is something called Prevent Violent Extremism policy, which essentially is a very ambitious, hugely funded program that came out of the Tony Blair government and continues-- up to the present day, a program to-- use various kinds of-- mechanisms to-- to ch-- to try and create a kind of pro-Western-- mindset amongst Muslims in the United Kingdom, right.

I'm using that phrase, "pro-Western--" drawn from the literature. I'm not-- it's not-- a concept that I would use myself. The-- and-- and that's done through, for example, f-- funding community leaders and-- and-- recruiting them to give a kind of-- a kind of narrative that is about saying, you know, "We are-- we need to embrace British values." But they're never quite defined.

But-- somehow, there's some sense of allegiance to Britishness in-- in this. And-- and-- and a whole kind of set of mechanisms to identify people that are considered to be extremist. And, again, that's a number (UNINTEL) hugely-- laid in terms that we-- that we can unpack maybe at some point. And-- and trying to isolate those people-- and prevent them from being able to-- be, you know-- voices in the community, right.

In the United States-- we don't have-- anything quite like that. But we have a number of ki-- kinda fragmented initiatives that-- that try and do some-- some similar things. It's interesting if you look at the-- the speeches of John Brennan-- before he was-- heading the C.I.A. when he was-- a counterterrorism advisor to-- to Obama. He gave a series of speeches where he more or less-- says-- this-- you know, gives an interpretation of what the correct meaning of Islam is and what the incorrect meaning of Islam is, right.

He's-- attempting to give a kind of official stance on what is-- what is-- what does it mean to be (COUGH) Muslim? What does it mean to be an extremist Muslim? Right down to getting into what would actually be theological questions about the meaning of terms like jihad and so forth, right. So, it's-- it's a very interesting moment.

In-- when I was researching the book, I spent some time in Texas-- trying to look at how-- particularly law-enforcement agencies, police departments, the F.B.I. interact with Muslim communities. And-- not so much around the investigative work, I-- I do that as well, but also around-- the-- the kind of relationship building, the community

engagement work that they try and do, right. And one of the key things that comes out when you look at that is-- there is this same sense of-- attempts to build partnerships with-- community leaders who are considered to be moderate Muslims because of a certain-- narrative Americanness, right.

And then, trying to isolate and-- and, to some extent, demonize-- people who don't sign up to that notion of Americanness. And paradoxically, you know-- often what Americanness means is not what it-- what it would actually mean according to the Constitution. So, one of the notions of Americanness that gets invoked in-- in-- in this-- is a notion that being American means you don't talk about certain subjects, right.

You don't talk about Iraq. You don't talk about Afghanistan. You wave the flag and you kinda keep quiet about government policies that you might otherwise be critical of, right. In-- in Minnesota, where I spent some time as well-- again, you see this very clearly with-- programs that are being run by police departments to engage with young Somali Americans there-- funded by the Department of Justice.

And those programs, again, have this notion of-- "We want to promote integration, right." And what does integration mean? It means don't talk about what's happening in Somalia. It means don't talk about U.S. foreign policy in relation to East Africa, right. So, the notion of integration here is-- is-- is actually very political, right.

It's not just about-- you know, it's-- it's actually not defined by-- the kind of basic civil rights and freedoms that you might expect. So, you have a kinda paradox here where-- where-- both in Europe and in the United States-- liberal states which otherwise kind of proclaim a secular separation between church and state (UNINTEL) are actually advancing a certain interpretation of Islam, right, as the acceptable way-- to be Muslim, right.

So, you have government officials becoming what-- one scholar calls de facto theologians, right. Implicitly approving particular interpretations of (UNINTEL) rebels, right. And, at the same time, you see on both sides of the Atlantic efforts to-- to suppress the freedom of expression of those whose interpretation of Islam is deemed to be incorrect, right. And-- and you see systematic surveillance of every aspect of-- of Muslim life in-- in order to try and distinguish and identify those who are moderate and those who are extremist as part of this broader thinking, right. Now--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Okay. So-- and-- I think more broadly, in order to-- to understand the place of Muslims within Europe-- and in the United States-- I think we have to look at how-- something you might call Muslimness has been-- racialized, right, to use a slightly academic phrase.

So-- you know, so you usually get this objection that-- that-- in-- if you think about racism as a concept that might be relevant here, you usually get this objection that Muslims are not a race. But, actually, since all-- all racisms are socially and politically constructed-- rather than resting on the reality of any-- any kind of biological race, it's perfectly possible for cultural markers associated with being Muslim, where that's things like forms of dress or (UNINTEL) to be turned into racial signifiers, right.

So, if you think about anti-Semitism in the 19th century, what anti-Semitism is it's turning people who share a religion into a race, right. And we've s-- I think we've seen something very similar with Islamophobia-- in recent years. Now, all-- you think about-- you know, think about history of racism in-- in Europe-- it always has this kind of-- this kind of double aspect, this kind of internal inconsistency.

So-- you know, kind of immigrants coming from outside Europe into Britain-- are always, you know, accused of kicking themselves to themselves and not really wanting to mix; but, at the same time, kind of secretly infiltrating the mainstream of society, right. It's always that kind of paradoxical double-- aspect to it. Or-- you know-- immigrants are always really lazy and don't really wanna work, but at the same time they're stealing our jobs, right.

So, with-- but what's unique about anti-Semitism, I think, historically-- until recently is that that-- that kind of inconsistency is arranged in a way so that Jews are seen-- by anti-Semites as both this kind of-- subclass that's kind of corrupting society from below, but also this kind of secret elite that-- that secretly manipulates the world through some kind of Jewish conspiracy, right. That's historically-- what's been unique about anti-Semitism.

It's had that idea of-- of a kind of powerful secret conspiracy ruling the world, actually, right. What we've seen with Islamophobia is the first time that that kind of same structure of racism is now being applied to another group, right. So, Muslims are seen as, you know, this-- this subclass, this group that-- is backward and so forth, and corrupting society from below.

But also, Muslims are running the White House because Obama is a closet Muslim, you know, the Muslim Brotherhood has infiltrated all aspects of the government. In Europe-- there's this thing called the Eurabia conspiracy theory, which is the idea that-- that the European Union is-- secretly a p-- a plot to enable the Arab colonization of Europe and so forth, right. So, again-- these tropes that have come from anti-Semitism now-- we now find them in Islamophobia as well.

When I was in-- when I was in Texas doing some research-- in a place called Katy in Hous-- in Houston, I went to-- a restaurant there. And on the wall of this restaurant you see a poster-- of-- a lynching, right. It's one of those famous photographs of a lynching taking place, maybe 100 years ago-- a body hanging from a tree-- a group of people standing looking at the body, looking quite pleased with themselves. But where you'd see normally in the original photo the face of-- of a black man you see, instead-- a kind of stereotypical image of an Arab, right.

And then, the caption that's been written on the bottom of the poster is-- "Let's play

cowboys and Iranians," right. So, it's obviously-- a kind of shocking image and obviously-- for the purposes of these people, there's no distinction between Arabs and Iranians, right. But-- (LAUGHTER) but-- so, it's obviously a shocking image. But what's very striking-- for me about image is-- the way in which it-- it has all these different layers of the kind of racial history of the United States captured within it, right.

So, you have with the phrase-- "Let's play cowboys and Iranians," you have a kind of implicit reference to-- the genocide of Native Americans. You obviously have the reference to lynching and Jim Crow segregation in the South. And then, as it were, the third layer on top of that history is Islamophobia. And-- and, so, I think image kinda captures that way in which racism works in the United States.

Where kind of-- you know, there's new layers being added onto this longer history. And I think that's-- so, we-- I think it's-- it's helpful for us to understand this particular-- kind of demonization that we have at the moment within that longer history, both of--anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. Thank you.

PETER BEINART:

Great. (APPLAUSE) Well, this is really fascinating stuff. And-- there's so much to talk about in terms of the way in which-- qu-- ideas about religion and race get blurred as-- as templates-- in the-- that-- that come from American or European history are used to kind of try to understand this new reality. Your-- your-- en-- the end of what you described reminded me of-- of a phrase that I once saw in the *New York Times* where an American general was talking about the difficulties the U.S. was facing in Afghanistan. And he said, "We control Kabul, but outside of Kabul, it's Indian country," you know, right.

Which is a kind of-- you know, an old phrase in America, basically meaning a lawless area where the government has no control. But it reminds you of what people like Walter Russell Mead have-- have argued, which is that Americans-- America's-- America's comp-- in America's conflicts with the non-Western world, the template of America's kind of hi-- history of wars against Native Americans in the 19th century tends to create templates that reassert themselves.

I guess, Hisham, I wanted to start with-- with you, and Arun, you can jump in on this or-- or-- or not. With this-- with your idea of your response to (UNINTEL) that-- that there is another resistance to Americanization, globalization that's not the resistance of the-- of Islamism.

But-- it's a reisis-- it's the resistance of-- of-- of a left, which is drawing on narratives of resistance that come from-- African diasporas. And I'm what-- what really fascinates me about that is, then-- the question of whether we should consider that a religious left or not. Is this-- you-- you know, you're talking about-- obviously, African-American diasporas that may have traditions that m-- have maybe Christian or maybe secular that we in the U.S. don't tend to think about them in religion.

And, so, I guess the question is in the-- in this other kind of resistance that you associate with the left-- especially 'cause you also mentioned this fascinating theological question about the degree to which music is-- is-- is legitimate religiously, tell me-- to what degree (UNINTEL) talking about that thing that-- that you often hear talked about in Christian and even Jewish circles, which is the r-- a religious left that people are looking for? And what degree does it not make sense of-- to think of it as religious?

HISHAM AIDI:

Well, there are-- you know, there are movements that can be described as a religious left. If you look at-- and I was saying earlier, there is no leftist Muslim movement that you can belong to. There are leaders that you can gravitate towards. There is Farid Esack, a theologian in South Africa.

There is Hassan Hanafi in Cairo. There's Tariq Ramadan, who's-- who's one of the biggest voices in European Islam. And-- Tariq Ramadan in particular is deeply-- inspired by the African American experience, right. When he talks-- when you hear him lecture, he talks about his father's relationship to Malcolm X and how, as a five year old, he sat on Malcolm's knee and-- and the barakah that came from that, the-- the grace.

(THROAT CLEAR) So, you have that. You do have religious-- certain religious movements that are deeply influenced by African Americans. And I talk about this in the book, sort of the influence of not only Sunni African American (INAUDIBLE) but also sort of fringe-- quasi-Muslim groups-- like Nation of Islam, which now has a branch in London and Paris-- groups like the Five Percenters (INAUDIBLE). Yet, at the same time, there's also secular influence. One of the movements I talk about is-- it's called a decolonial movement, right.

So, after France passed its-- law banning the veils-- wearing the head scarf in public-- in public-- institutions, a movement emerged called the decolonial movement that's-- that's sort of ripped-- took a page from the Black Power Movement, right. And their argument is that the major Muslim organizations in Europe tend to be liberal integrationists. They speak a language of color-blindness. They don't talk about race, right.

We're gonna do to them what-- Stokely Carmichael did to mainstream-- civilized leaders in the United States. So, you've got this movement that has branches now in France and-- and-- and-- and Holland, in England, and elsewhere that makes an argument that is-- that is drawing on not just the Black Power Movement, but they're deeply influenced by critical race theorists, American critical race theorists. They quote Kimberlé Crenshaw.

They quote Robin Kelley. They-- it's-- it's-- it's really quite extraordinary, right. And what they're doing overlaps, a certain extent, to what the embassies are doing. 'Cause the embassy is trying to introduce American race discourse to Europe. They're trying

to y-- you know, introduce ideas such as policies of affirmative action and-- American race (UNINTEL) in general, okay.

But these are groups that do not want a relationship with the embassy. But they're sorta moving in a similar direction. And that's-- you know, that's-- so, the-- the interplay between the integrationists and the-- the race activists in Europe today is very interesting, all right. That's something that people don't talk about much. People tend to focus on the religious separatists, the Salafis versus the liberal integrationists. But there is-- there is a new left emerging. And that is drawing-- the irony is that they're very critical of American policy, U.S. foreign policy. But they're drawing on American political traditions.

PETER BEINART:

And when, on these-- these-- these tours where-- where eur-- young European-- European Muslims are brought to the United States to meet-- with civil rights leaders, right, and historically black colleges, and then to be with President Obama, the idea from the United States needs to be that there's gonna be one narrative they're gonna hear about how-- about our-- a triumphant march towards equality in the United States.

But I would imagine that, actually, whether-- does the U.S. realize that it's probably exposing them to very, very different narratives, some of which, I would imagine, are intensely critical of the United States and-- and not very inclined to say that the United States represents a great model.

HISHAM AIDI:

Well, that's-- well, no, that's part of it, is that they come in to get a range of the-- hear a range of voices and that shows how pluralistic America is, how there is freedom of expression. And it's-- it's-- it's astonishing that-- you know, one (UNINTEL) I mean, one of the-- you know, they-- they-- they stop in Harlem. One of the stops is they'll come to Columbia to talk to us and they'll go to Harlem. And often, they'll meet former Black Panthers. They'll meet civil rights leaders who are now in their 70s and 80s.

And-- it's-- it is incredible that black culture and hip hop, right, which, you know, domestically comes under so much criticism. I mean, black music is blamed for all kinds of social ills. Overseas, it seems it can pay a dividend overseas, right. It can help make America safer. It can make-- help America be better liked. And it can-- it can rebrand the country, right. So, the-- the ra-- the role of race in cultural diplomacy and rebranding America, blackness as a sort of soft power, as source of soft power, is-- is fascinating.

PETER BEINART:

And Arun, I mean, you guys are-- so much of what you're talking about is the same. And, in some ways, I think also, you know, Hisham is talking maybe a little bit more about-- about the way it's experienced by Muslims themselves. And you're talking a lot about the way in which it's being perpetrated by the-- by state power.

The-- the-- this question of the-- the-- I want you to talk a little bit more about why you think it is that the United States in 2014 responds to this problem of-- you know, is jihadist Islamist terrorism, whatever you wanna-- whatever you wanna call it-- by-- by t-- by taking-- by saying that we embrace Islam, but we're gonna divide good Islam from bad Islam, right-- which is-- and-- and-- and tries to make a separation between-- cultural acceptance and-- and-- and-- and kind of-- and-- and putting foreign policy questions aside.

Is it-- is the response in-- in Europe, which is considered to be where European-- Europe is considered to be a little bit more of a secular society, different? And I also wonder if you could talk a little bit about the-- I mean, there are people who are considered to be-- there are some people who have c-- who have critiqued that from-- I don't know whether you call it from the left or the right.

Who have said, basically, "If we stand-- if we stand up for any values in the Muslim world, you should stand up for secularism. Like, why are we trying to find good, moderate, religious Muslims? There's-- we should basically stand up for secular people." And, so, I wonder how that-- how that plays itself out.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Sure. You know, I think-- I think part of what's going on here is-- is-- w-- you know, one-- one of the things that happened after 9/11 is-- is a whole load of money went into-- terrorism studies, departments that were created in-- in universities, and-- think tanks that-- that kind of provided-- an intellectual framework.

Where these notions of extremism and the notion of radicalization-- even words like Islamism and Salafism and so forth were kind of given-- you know, kind of developed into-- part-- the vocabulary that could be deployed by foreign policy and-- for-- for policies aimed at-- Muslim citizens of the United States and Europe. And-- and-- and the way-- you know, so, this is not something about-- you know, actually, this is something that is across the political spectrum, right.

Because it's-- it's embedded in the-- in the-- the vocabulary but is used-- by liberals and conservatives to debate with each other, right. There's something that both sides in those debates tend to share in common. Because they use the s-- the-- the same underlying conceptual framework that's never really taken on, right.

So, you have this-- you know, you have a debate that's been going on between liberals and conservatives in the United States now for-- for more than a decade-- you know, which is the debate where someone organizes a debate around the question, you

know, "Is-- is Islam a religion of peace?" this kind of ridiculous-- debate. And-- you get with whole load of conservatives saying, "No, Islam is-- is, essentially, a religion of violence. It's unable to reconcile itself to modernity or democracy."

But then, you get the kind of liberal response that says-- "No, you know, Islam is a religion of peace because of this and this reason." They trade quotes from the Koran-- necessarily drawing them out of context. And, actually, both sides were assuming that, in some way, there is this thing called Islam that is defined by the original texts and which, therefore, c-- you know, you can therefore get some kind of textual answer to the question of-- of Islam (UNINTEL) of violence, right. And what-- you know, the-- the-- the-- what-- what's not done is-- is recognizing that we are-- you know, we're in a political conflict, right, with-- with c-- with non-- the non-state actor. And we're in a cycle of violence with the actor, right.

So, if you want to understand the situation here-- it's no-- it's-- you know, the-- the concept of radicalization, for example, is an interesting concept. It tries to make a claim about-- what causes someone to become a terrorist, right. So, you have all these models of radicalization that have been developed by academics and by the F.B.I. and so forth that try and lay out the stages that someone goes through bef-- f-- f-- on the way to becoming a terrorist.

And then, supposedly, there's these kind of indicators of-- of-- or warning signs that someone's on that-- journey. And then, you can use that as the basis for your surveillance and-- so forth. And the-- the assumption behind all these models is that some kind of Islamic ideology is driving someone down that journey, right?

Well, why we-- why do we not also ask what's causing our violence on our side, right. 'Cause we're-- we're in-- as much in this war as-- as the other side is. So, there must be things that have led us to be violent as much as them. You know, so, what we're doing is systematically failing to really look full on at the situation we're in, which is-- which is-- you know, a situation where we're using violence as much as they are, and-- and-- and-- and then, face up to that and-- and look at how we can create a situation of peace, right.

But-- instead, we just wanna kind of-- externalize this as a problem of someone else's culture, a problem of someone else's ideology. And obviously, that's just a very convenient story for us to tell ourselves, right. 'Cause we don't have to re-look at-- our own policies and practices that have led up to it. Is it different in Europe? You know, I think one of the things-- one-- one of the things that I try and do in the book is-- is not so much do a c-- kinda comparison between Europe and the United States.

But look at the ways in which ideas travel across, right, and-- and at different times, the flow is-- is one way, other times the flow is the other way. You know, the-- the-- the-- a lot of the-- a lot of the-- the kind of academic thinking around terrorism-- that's-- that's come out of the United States has-- has been very influential in shaping how-- how the British government thinks about these issues.

Equally-- policy ideas from Britain, like the Preventing Violent Extremism policy, have been very in-- influential in D.C. So, it's more about a kind of shared set of

assumptions across the Atlantic-- differences in-- in terms of how those ideas are implemented to due, obviously, the different political histories and so forth, and structures in-- in-- in different countries. But what's striking to me is just the kind of broad consensus, so underlying shared assumptions across the Atlantic and across the political spectrum here.

PETER BEINART:

And I wanted you to talk-- ask you a little bit about the-- the different alternative responses from-- American Muslim leaders who are-- get engaged in a dialogue with the state in response. It seems to me what you're suggesting is that there's a kind of implicit bargain that's offered in which basically the bargain is, "Don't criticize American policy.

"Because that could radicalize your members and lead them to do dangerous things." And, perhaps, although you didn't say it, I would imagine also, be willing to inform on people if you're-- so, be willing-- you know, be part of-- our law enforcement efforts. But-- so, there are real dilemmas and-- and-- and dangers and threats and-- and questions.

But then, also, I imagine that there's potential for leveraging the-- leveraging this relationship for power. If you-- you know, financial resources and also just-- you know-- to-- you know, you could y-- an entrepreneur could take advantage of this. And I can-- I can think of certain people on the national level who, in some ways, have been-- Muslim and non-Muslim, who you could see of-- kind of as entrepreneurs in this environment. And, so, I'm wondering if you could talk about the range of-- of-- of responses from people who are-- get deemed Muslim community leaders.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

So-- and I think here, you know, there are-- there are s-- some significant differences between the U.S. and the U.K. So-- in-- I mean, in the U.K.-- you know, because you have this very-- highly structured and highly funded program called Preventing Violent Extremism, which is directed at com-- at recruiting community leaders to a certain kind of politics-- you know, it's-- it's a much more systematic and organized process.

And, so-- you have got-- you know, I think entrepreneurialism is the right word to use here. It creates a kind of-- what you can call a kind of-- you know, some people call it-- Preventing Violent Extremes an economy, where you have different community leaders competing with-- with each other to position themselves as the best person to deliver this particular kind of ideological program within the community.

And the kind of assets that you're gonna bring as a community leader is-- is, like, how

trusted are you, how big is your constituency, how credible are you. But the-- so, the-- the-- the dynamic for the community leader is can you articulate an unpopular message while r-- retaining your constituency, right.

PETER BEINART:

Unpopular because it's not to be critical of state policy.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Unpopular bec-- yeah, exactly. Because the-- you know, because it-- you-- you are being asked to-- tell people who are by and large, you know, critical of things like-- the British government's involvement in the war in Iraq, to not talk about that. But to think more about, you know-- adopting this ill-defined idea of British values and so forth, right, which is-- which is something that most young Muslims in particular-- find weird, essentially.

Not even objectionable, but just simply weird. Because their response is-- "I'm already British. Why do I need to change anything about myself to-- to-- you know, to adopt this thing called British values? And also, why haven't I got as much right to define what British values might be as anyone else, right? Why is it presenting as this thing that is somehow being imposed on me from outside, as if I'm an outsider to this society, right?"

So-- so-- yeah. So, theirs is a kind of-- it d-- it does generate this kind of entrepreneurialism and-- and a kind of bargaining. But the-- you-- I think you'd be hard pushed to find-- you know, the way-- the way that community engagement should work is-- where in exchange for-- you know, in exchange for this kind of-- community representation role that someone takes on, they get some kind of accountability from the state in exch-- in-- in r-- as a deal there, right.

So, where-- where-- you know, where-- where-- you know, community-oriented policing, where that does actually work best is where-- community leaders take on a role where they partner with the police to address real crime issues and-- and in response, they also hold the-- the-- the police accountable for civil rights issues that may be present, right.

But y-- you'd be hard pushed to-- to find anything like that in the counterterrorism sphere. Because counterterrorism policy-- you know, the loc-- the local F.B.I. field office is not set in counterterrorism policy. So, even if it does community engagement and gets some feedback from Muslim community leaders-- that, you know, "We're-- we're concerned about the number of people in our community who are getting put on watch lists for no reason--" the local field office cannot really change that.

That's a policy that comes out of a D.C. policy process, where Muslim organizations and leaders have very little purchase. So, you're doing-- you're doing-- so, the kinds

of-- the kinds of deals that community leaders get are more like-- you know-- helping my cousin get a visa-- helping my-- you know, helping someone in the community get off the watch list, right.

So, you're-- what you're doing is you're getting-- individual exceptions from-- from-- the kind of general pattern of-- of-- civil rights abuses that-- that manifest in state policy, right. So, I think that's more what it looks like, particularly in the United States-- where-- where the community engagement does happen is-- is actually with police departments and the F.B.I. at the local level.

PETER BEINART:

Why don't I turn it over to all of you? I'm sure we have-- a lot of interesting questions here. If things start to flag, I'll-- I'll come back in.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

I don't know to whom I would address my question. Farid Zakaria in his latest book mentioned that majority of Muslim, particularly young Muslim, until now, believes that September 11th was done by C.I.A. and Muslim. Do you have recent data about this, about (UNINTEL) because (UNINTEL PHRASE) what is going on and one government still suspicion. And another things. No questions that answer to prejudice to Muslim supposed to be found not Koran.

And (UNINTEL) you can find (UNINTEL PHRASE) in Old Testament, like in Koran (UNINTEL). That's not the point. I believe the major point which create prejudice and hostilities (UNINTEL PHRASE) inside Muslim when you see what going on between Sunnis and Shiites--

(OVERTALK)

PETER BEINART:

--question.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

All of them. It make people scared what will be done to Christian, to Jews, if they treat each other like this. To explain everything by hardship of (UNINTEL) by colonization, look at China. They have not less hardship and oppressions on Muslim, but they (UNINTEL) history in different way.

PETER BEINART:

Okay. The first question was what about the-- the-- the-- the question part--
(MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: INAUDIBLE)

PETER BEINART:

--of that that I heard was-- was about-- how prevalent are-- are ideas-- among-- about the idea of-- American or Israeli culpability in September 11th and how should we understand that discord? Do either of you guys wanna?

ARUN KUNDNANI:

I mean, I'll-- I'll start taking it. I mean-- yeah, I don't-- I-- I d-- I'm pretty skeptical about those kinds of opinion polls. I d-- I certainly haven't seen any-- anything more recent. You know, I think-- I think you'll find that-- that-- conspiracy theories about 9/11 are very widespread amongst ev-- every part of American society, at least.

There's-- there's many Americans who seem to believe that it was the government doing it. And-- and often, the r-- the reason for believing that is because they think it was too clever for Arabs to pull off. (LAUGHTER) So, you know, there's all kinds of paradoxes around how people interpret that event.

The-- you know, I think-- I think-- the-- you know, the question about-- where-- where do these prejudices come from, are they in some way rooted in-- an-- a kind of-- fear of a real threats. You know, the-- the language of-- that you were using is one in which you're-- you're, you know, lumping together huge numbers of people, all kinds of different-- contexts and-- and thinking that there's something about being Muslim that-- that might make you more threatening, right, which is exactly what we've been trying to talk about as-- as, you know, the-- the problematic thinking here.

And-- you know, this is something that I think has-- has been systematically promoted through all kinds of propaganda, say, over the last 20 or 30 years. It's something you'll find in the media quite regularly. And, so, the opinions you're expressing are v-- are very widespread but they don't correspond to the reality of the situation.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

HISHAM AIDI:

When I was in college, Sam Hunting published his famous *Clash of Civilizations* argument, right. The argument is that borders are bloody between different civilizations. There's a civilization of logic inherent in East cultures, at least of

violence. And I remember one of the critiques that was included in *Foreign Affairs*-- responding to him.

An author-- a prominent political scientist said, "You know what? You should know better. You're a brilliant student of the states, come out of the realist tradition," and so on. "You should know that-- civilizations don't shape states, states shape civilizations, right." So, many of these trends that we're seeing, ideological trends of violence and so forth-- tend-- are the product of the state policy, right, the product of state collapse. And it tends to be-- it tends to be st-- and my book-- my book is not a theoretical argument. But if there were to be a theoretic essential framework around it, it would be that it's states that are driving much of this, right.

If you look at when do you get these cultural tensions, ideological tensions in Europe? Well, you get them when Saudi Arabia, for instance, pushes back against the-- the Arab Spring, right. So, yeah, I'd look at states rather than-- religious scripture. And somebody mentioned-- there was a mention of Farid Zakaria. Zakaria is an intriguing-- intellectual.

You know, the debate you were talking about around extremism, the debate in America around extremist violence tends to be sort of two camps. In one side, you have left-leaning people-- people who read *The Nation*, Glenn Greenwald, and so on, along with-- the realists, right, people who don't believe in intervening everywhere, all the time. And their argument is that the extremist violence is a product of state policy. It's a response to state policy. It's block back.

The U.S. should, you know, lower the profiles as to avoid these types of-- of attacks. On the other hand, you have liberal (UNINTEL) neoconservatives, and-- even liberal-- it's not a liberal-conservative split, I don't think. You even have liberals in that camp who say, actually, that extremist violence is a product of ideology, theology, the narrative, right. And it's this side that pushes for all kinds of interventions, right, social engineering, cultural engineering, how to disrupt the narrative.

Tom Friedman wrote an article about how to disrupt the narrative. And herein lie the roots of the public diplomacy initiatives that build on the Cold War. And-- Zakaria's interesting. Because he's one of the major voices in this camp, right. This isn't the product of-- the violence we're seeing is not a product of state policy, it's a product of ideology.

And-- you know, in the book, I talk about sort of the rise of these new Islamic left movements, right. But I could've written a chapter on the rise of the new Muslim neoconservatives. I would argue today that the biggest neoconservatives, right, that are the most vocal neoconservatives tend to be Muslim, right.

You're not really-- you're not really hearing from Marty Peretz and people like that anymore. Today, it tends to be (UNINTEL), Irshad Manji, Farid Zakaria, and so on. That's an interesting dynamic. Like, where did that come from? Where did they-- where did this school of thought come from?

PETER BEINART:

But isn't that as-- I mean, isn't that part of the problem that-- that these are people who are actually willing to offer advice to the empire, right. They're willing to offer practical advice to the state, right. I mean, after-- whereas people-- that problem that people on the far-- on the academic left tend to be.

Is that since they basically believe that the-- that the American lib-- hegemony is bad-- they're not particularly interested in detailing it how to do a better job of being an empire. And, so, if you-- you have very, very understandable reasons for not wanting to play that role.

For one, I can see you're in opposition. But you can hardly complain, then, when that space is filled by people who actually-- want the empire to do various thing and are willing to s-- fill that space, whether it's Fouad Ajami or Farid Zakaria or-- you know. And, so-- so, how do you-- is-- is there any-- is there any way in which it could not be thus, I guess is-- is--

HISHAM AIDI:

I mean, people on-- in the camp, in the first camp, the left-leaning, they're r-- they talk to the government all the time. Rashid Khalidi talks to the State Department all the time.

PETER BEINART:

Not (UNINTEL)--

HISHAM AIDI:

You know, I mean--
(OVERTALK)

PETER BEINART:

--those people are much more distant from power than-- than I-- anyway--

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Yeah, but that's--

HISHAM AIDI:

Well, I don't think--

ARUN KUNDNANI:

--that's because they're not-- it's not because they're-- they're unwilling to do that. It's because their advice is how to dismantle an empire, not how to make it run better.

PETER BEINART:

Right. So-- right. Right.

HISHAM AIDI:

No, their-- their advice is--

ARUN KUNDNANI:

They're not gonna get invited as much.

PETER BEINART:

Right. Right. Right. Right. Right.

HISHAM AIDI:

(LAUGH) Their prescription is don't conquer, right. That's their prescription. Or else, change your foreign policy. And if you talk to people about the Prevent program in London, you know, (UNINTEL) you know, y-- Muslim community leaders go meet with government.

And one of the things they prescribe is, you know, "This-- this war, what's going on, the drones," and so on. The government people will tell them, "That's not gonna change. What else can we do for you? What else can we do for you on schools (NOISE) community centers. That's not gonna change," right. And I think policymakers are fully aware of the level of dissatisfaction with these policies.

But it'll go away. I mean, there's-- there's some price to every policy, right. You know, those-- we can live with it. But it's-- you know, but it is interesting that-- these Muslim kids, you know, with, you know, baggy pants and corn rows have sort of suddenly emerged as-- as a threat, right.

They-- they're seen as they can disrupt the transatlantic alliance, right, that you're getting the Pentagon and D.O.D. and state writing reports about Muslim youth and their alienation. And, you know, the kids in Birmingham, and Paris, and so on. So, it-- it is taken seriously, though. You know, what the kids are asking for, what communities are asking for is not gonna be granted.

JULIE ASHCRAFT:

Hello. My name is Julie Ashcraft. And I've been a journalist and a curator who's been covering (UNINTEL) I've been covering-- the hip hop scene in Iran and Syria since I visited Iran in 2009-- and published by *Rolling Stone* (UNINTEL) and *New in Chess* magazine. My question-- I have two questions. One is for Mr. Aidi. And I'd like to know-- you mentioned that-- hip hop can-- is seen as a sort of negative thing by some people in the United States and-- and-- that it's being promoted by the State Department to sort of promote Americanism or something-- abroad is sort of sort of power.

And my question, is it possible that the real intention coulda been beyond that, to-- to break the youth of those countries away from their indi-- more indigenous forms of instrumentation and even beats, and to help to incite some kind of backlash or Islamic backlash (UNINTEL) utilize and help to stabilize the country? My question for Mr. Kundnani is that-- in the phrase you've framed-- terrorism in discussion about it very much within-- about-- Islamic terrorism.

But then, I'd also like you to speak in a way that Islamic terrorism might be being utilized by economic terrorists to put in their own agenda to help destabilize countries and make it easier for-- other interests to penetrate into those countries.

HISHAM AIDI:

Regarding-- the hip hop and the rap. If you look at, you know-- the relationship between Islam and hip hop is-- is fascinating and dynamic. It begins in the early '70s-- with-- Afrika Bambaataa, a Bronx-based group that would start drawing on (UNINTEL) Islam teachings. And you get a very-- sort of very dynamic cross-fertilizing between-- between Islam and hip hop, various-- various types of Islam movements-- would-- would influence the lyrics of artists such as, you know, Gang Starr, Poor Righteous Teachers, '90s-- '90s artists. And-- so, the relationship in the '90s was largely-- was largely this.

Once hip hop goes global, all those references to Islam are broadcast around the world, right. So, non-Muslims or mus-- non-Muslim youth overseas and even domestically hear (UNINTEL) right through hip hop, throughout Public Enemy, and Poor Righteous Teachers, and so on. The other side of that is that black history is transmitted around the world. The Civil Rights Movement, Black Power tradition and so on, all the references are-- are-- are broadcast around the world through hip

hop.

So, we have kids from São Paulo to Istanbul to Karachi finding out about Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and so on through music. So, at least all kinds of-- you know, you get new identities. You get new movements. You get new subgenres of-- of the music. You know, I talk about-- the music that's emerged in the favelas of São Paulo, sort of a mix of-- of Black Power, Islam, and-- and American hip hop.

After 9/11, the relationship becomes more political and begins to draw government scrutiny, right. And I believe the-- the critical episode was when John Walker Lindh, remember him? Right, a young American-- middle class kid from northern California, October 2002, he's found-- October 2001, I believe, he's found behind enemy lines in Afghanistan, right. They're wondering, how on earth did this young American kid, middle class parents, become a Talib, right.

And, so, you know, there were all kinds of studies. And policymakers conclude that when he was 12, his mother took him to see the-- the film, the biopic, Spike Lee biopic, *The Life of Malcolm X*, right. After that, he read Alex Haley's-- biography of Malcolm X. Then he started listening to rap, hip hop. And that sort of, you know, put him on the journey towards (UNINTEL) radicalism. After that, you start hearing policy planners talking about how, you know, for new radicalization, we need a moderate hip hop and we need a moderate understanding of Malcolm X, right.

Malcolm X argues sort of-- emerges the patron saint of-- of Muslim diaspora consciousness, right. And, so, you get embassies from Nigeria or Bangladesh doing all kinds of events, rap-- around Malcolm and the Black History Month and so, and present a moderate understanding, again, of the race struggle in America. And, of course, then Obama comes to power, right.

And Obama also overseas-- you know, his Muslim ancestry is played up, right. So, domestically it's downplayed. But overseas, you have Black History Month in Cairo. The Cairo embassy, for example, you know, is-- is about how Obama-- sorry, Malcolm made Obama possible, right. It's sort of the relationship of these two-- you know, these-- these two gentlemen who have-- of Muslim ancestry and so on.

Now, this is-- you know, the-- the point of hip hop was-- you know, the idea was that we need to introduce in discourse, right. The battle is discursive, right. The battle is about ideas and ideologies. It's not about policy, right. The (UNINTEL) no matter what our policy is, right. It's about ideas. And that grows out of the Cold War, right, and many of these initiatives, you know.

If you're familiar with the book, it's Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*. These initiatives build on the initiatives of the Cold War, right. But the comparison is not quite right, obviously. Because during the Cold War, you're trying to liberate states under Soviet domination, right. Now, the U.S. is trying to liberate populations that are living under American-backed tyrannies, right. So, the frame doesn't really work. The metaphor, the Cold War metaphor doesn't really work. And Europe is different.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Yeah. Would you mind just being a bit more specific about the-- the part of the question that you directed to me? 'Cause I didn't quite follow it.

JULIE ASHCRAFT:

Okay. I'm kind of thinking as I'm going. That-- basically, there's been a lotta discussion about-- you know, religious-based terrorism or (UNINTEL) and how it related to a religious ideology. But I wanna point out the fact that-- sometimes it's-- it's used to further an economic agenda and-- of-- you know, by people that could be considered economic terrorists.

And, in fact, that maybe what's growing in some countries now. And would you like to speak to that, and that-- that in some instances, they're tr-- they say they're fighting against terrorism, but they're actually trying to instigate it sometimes in order to destabilize countries and further their economic agenda?

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Right. Look, I mean, my-- the kind of burden of my argument is that-- is that-- a lot of what we label as Islamic terrorism is better labeled as-- forms of political violence that-- that are rooted in politics rather than cultural religion, right, and-- and-- you know, the-- the-- I think, you know, that the-- if-- if you wanna really get at-- at the roots of this-- you do need to look at the political histories of-- you know, of countries like Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia-- and the political histories of U.S. policy in the Middle East, right.

And-- and obviously-- those-- those kinds of political questions al-- also intersect with economic questions, right. I mean, one of the-- one of the factors here is-- is-- obviously, you know-- part of our foreign policy is driven by economics, absolutely. Right.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Yeah. (THROAT CLEAR) Thank you. I (UNINTEL PHRASE) from Vienna. So, I (UNINTEL) something that perhaps you would change a little bit--

PETER BEINART:

Okay. But remember, (UNINTEL) question.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Yeah. No, I was just (UNINTEL) question. But the thing is that-- that what they're going to tell you, I didn't (UNINTEL PHRASE) has decided to come to Europe on his own imitation and to speak to the-- Turkish minorities in Germany, Austria, and France.

Now-- according to Turkish law-- they are entitled to vote in the elections (UNINTEL). So, this was an election campaign by-- a head of a state c-- going to another state to talk to the people that the host state is trying very hard to integrate.

That means he actually came to interfere with-- local-- policy of integrating the immigrants into a nation state. Most of these heads of state in the Middle East-- have only one thing on their hand, which is the religion. They don't have a nation state, even in states (BACKGROUND VOICE) history that is pre-Islamic, Iran, Egypt, even Turkey. Now-- as long as secular Turkey existed, the Kamalist movement, they had-- a chance of becoming part of the E.U. Now--

PETER BEINART:

I-- I do want to get-- you to get to the question--

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

No. But-- my question very simple. How do you relate in what you are saying to a situation that, in effect, will never create a left Muslim-- religious sector, whatever you want to call it? There is no left within the religion. There is-- or you take the belief or you don't take the belief. If you take the belief, you take everything that is written in the Koran.

What is written in the Koran is divisive. That means if-- but-- we're talking about the-- the-- the children that become jihadists. I mean, this is very natural. And if you bring them up in a religious way, unimportant what kind of musics you're going to give to them. They will end up becoming jihadists. And this is a big problem in-- in Europe today. Because some of these European citizens go to Syria, come back, and--

PETER BEINART:

(UNINTEL) I think we-- I think we got it. I think we got it.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

My question is very simple. If you take these realities and learn them from experience that the Europeans have, where these kind of things have surfaced and--

in Austria, the--
(OVERTALK)

PETER BEINART:

Sir.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

You don't want to hear about--

PETER BEINART:

No. No. No. It's just-- I still don't hear a question. I still don't hear a question.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

My question is--
(OVERTALK)

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

--that you do not have--

PETER BEINART:

I appreciate it. The way these panels work is actually that you-- you-- you ask questions and-- and the people here who have written the books respond to the--

(MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: INAUDIBLE)

PETER BEINART:

--to the question. So-- so-- let me-- no, I-- I think I have it. I think I have it. I think the qu-- the question is that you're-- you're making-- you're making-- about the-- about the idea that people who are ra-- raised in a religious Islamic way, irrespective of music, are-- are likely to be-- to be inclined towards terrorism. I think Hisham wanted to-- to jump into that.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Hold on. Let me add to this question.

PETER BEINART:

One sentence.

ARYEH NEIER:

A sentence can be very long. (LAUGHTER)

HISHAM AIDI:

Actually, let me say--

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Excuse me. I-- I'm hearing from these gentlemen a closed mind.

HISHAM AIDI:

Okay. Okay. Okay--

(OVERTALK)

PETER BEINART:

--I do think-- I do think-- I do think we have-- we have an idea of what you're getting at here.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

No. I am reading your material. I-- I know that--

(OVERTALK)

PETER BEINART:

Let-- let's-- let's-- he want-- Hisham wants to respond to you. So, let's give him an opportunity, all right.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Now, it's not only the question of the religion. It's a question of the leadership in the countries that we are dealing with.

PETER BEINART:

Got it. The political leadership. Got it.

HISHAM AIDI:

What was I gonna say? Remember-- after the Boston bombings, the young-- he mentioned jihadi, jihadi. And he got me thinking, remember after the Boston bombings, the younger Tsarnaev brother, he developed a sort of a following on Facebook. And then, *The Daily News* had a front-page cover with his face. And it said *Jihottie*, H-O-T-T-I-E. Anyway-- (AUDIENCE REACTION) I-- I think I'll answer the first part of your-- of-- of your question.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Comment. Comment.

HISHAM AIDI:

Yeah, of y-- of your comment. You know, I mean, regarding Islamic left, there-- there's a long tradition of leftist thinkers. I mean, (UNINTEL) to--

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Seculars.

HISHAM AIDI:

--to contemporary. There-- absolutely, there are secularists. Yeah.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

So, it's not the religion.

HISHAM AIDI:

No. The--

PETER BEINART:

Okay. (BACKGROUND VOICES) Sir. Sir. Sir. Sir. Sir. Sir. Now, the question is over, please.

HISHAM AIDI:

There are even liberation theologians. But my-- my most-- the most interesting part of your question to me is when you spoke about-- (UNINTEL) going to Austria and sort of meddling, right, the idea of meddling, intervening in another country's minorities, right.

One of the words I learnt, the terms I learned in-- in-- in this project is the detransnationalize, right. Is that a number of European regimes are worried about these sort of transnational attachments that Muslim youth may have and how do you transnational-- detransnat-- nationalize them. How to, you know, create a local Islam as opposed to an embassy Islam.

Now, with Turkey, they generally don't have a problem. The Gülen movement was one of the preferred alternatives, right, even for the State Department after 9/11, you know. The Gülen, which you may have heard about, that is-- now has tensions with-- with everyone was seen as the moderate alternative, right. In the '90s in the u-- actually, starting from the '60s onwards, right, I interviewed a number of-- retired career diplomats-- people in their 70s now.

Who told me that in the-- in the early '60s, right, one of the reasons we let the Muslim world, the-- Salafi movement, you know, set up offices in Europe and Washington and New York in the U.S. is we saw them as a stabilizing force, right. Salafi was seen as, you know, they're good, they can stabilize-- the sort of troubled neighborhoods. They're a good response to the-- black radicalism, to the Black Power Movement, and so on.

So, for 30 years in the U.S., you had the Salafi movement, sort of, you know, these organizations existing. After 9/11, all of a sudden, you know, government elites realized that, you know, this movement is not as quietest as we saw. And we need-- you know, we need-- a movement that's more compatible with America. And they would sort of-- they would zone in on the Gülen movement, right. The Gülen movement and the Turkish Sufi-- movements that-- whose leader-- is based in Pennsylvania.

And, so, this movement now is the preferred alternative. So, with-- with Turkey there t-- there tends not to be much tension. But this debate about how to detransnationalize Muslims-- it used to be European leaders are worried about these

kids may be drawn to some movement in Egypt or Pakistan. But now, they're worried about America.

They're worried about America's influence. And the debate around Amer-- around American initiatives in Europe are-- are fascinating, right. I was at-- I was in Paris and went to see Sciences Po and my colleague Al Steppen (PH) told me, "You should look up-- Riva Kastoryano who teaches there. She's sort of the expert on European Islam." And I told her, "I'm interested in American initiatives-- you know, efforts to integrate-- European Muslims."

And she says, "Our entire program is funded by the Department of Defense, right. It's funded by Minerva." Minerva is a very big program launched by Robert Gates-- in 2008 on-- is based on Kremlinology, right. It's the idea to identify terrorist threats. It's-- produced studies on China, but also to map modern moderate Muslim communities, right-- Europe, North America. And it would create all kinds of partnerships. University of Arizona with Sciences Po and so on.

But it would split the opinion in Europe. It would divide opinion, right, between universities that wanted D.O.D. money. You'd get \$15 million a grant. I mean-- in academia, that's-- that's-- that's pretty impressive, right. And then, universities that said, "No, we don't want anything to do with this." And even in the U.S., anthropologists, you know, you'd have 1,000 anthropologists who would sign this petition against-- Project Minerva.

But the debate is-- is fascinating. On the one hand, these-- you know, all these efforts, American efforts to, you know, workshops on affirmative action, workshops on race and ethnic statistics, as we have here in the U.S.-- efforts, you know, the tours, conferences being sponsored, funding different magazines, funding different websites, you know. It's-- it's similar to the Cold War initiatives and the cultural-- cold war.

And the responses are fascinating, right. The f-- responses, it's-- it's polarized. It's split opinion, right. And-- and France, in particular, given its-- adversarial relationship with the United States, right. So, on the French right, they resent these initiatives, right. They're seen as undermining French-- sovereignty. You're making our m-- m-- m-- French Muslims are seen as a fifth column. They're pro-American. They-- you know, Americans tend to be more religious than the French.

So, there's an American-French Muslim alliance to undermine French (UNINTEL) and so on. That's on the right. On the left, you have scholars resent the imposition of American categories, American race categories, American policies. (UNINTEL) would write-- a well-known French sociologist, based in (INAUDIBLE) would write a book s-- saying, "Stop talking about Muslim ghettos in Europe, right.

"There are no ghettos in Europe. Ghettos are a thing of the past. Not every ethnic enclave, every race space is a ghetto." Europeans, for obvious reasons, are sensitive to the term "ghetto," right. So, there's that on the left. But-- and in response to the American multicultural interference, you know-- meddling, whatever you wanna call it, actually, Francois (PH) would remove the term "race" from the constitution, all

right. This is in America, you know. (UNINTEL) race and we work with (UNINTEL PHRASE) racism and so on.

There was actually a backlash against American (COUGH). Having said all this, you know, having, you know, all these elite academic opinions, the kids on the ground actually appreciate the intervention. That's the great irony, right. So, the left might-- speak out against it. The right might speak out against it. But the kids who are in the (UNINTEL) of Paris and Marseilles and so on, they appreciate having a positive relationship with the embassy, right.

I mentioned-- a gentleman who runs-- an NGO in Brussels. He said, "We approach the Belgian government for financial assistance all the time. They don't give us anything. As soon as the American embassy gives us \$10,000, the Belgian government will-- (LAUGHTER) will double it, for example." Another thing, I-- you know-- my friend who runs an NGO (UNINTEL) northern Berlin, he says, "You know, having-- a relationship with the American embassy, you know-- we-- we know the downside, right.

"If you're getting money from the American embassy, you can't show up at-- a rally for Palestine or a rally against-- war in Afghanistan and so on. You-- we see you're an American puppet. You're a stooge." He says, "At the same time, however, if the American embassy labels us moderate, local authorities, local police would see us as a moderate, all right."

So, you have these 20, 23-year-old kids being cast in a very delicate diplomatic balancing act, right, into these very d-- difficult roles of how-- do we accept money from the (UNINTEL) or the Americans or the French and so on? And, you know-- and this is unprecedented, right. I mean, there's a long-- there's a long tradition of U.S. and, you know, great powers intervening in North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia to protect minorities. But intervening in Western allied states to woo their minorities, to help integrate their minorities, that's new.

PETER BEINART:

I think we have one last question. And I may throw in something of my own.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Okay. Has there been any research on the large number of disaffected, alienated-- younger people in Europe who come from Muslim backgrounds, but many of them are already born in-- in-- in Europe, their parents were the immigrants, and who are so alienated from Western society, Western culture that despite being raised in Western liberal democratic environments, they feel so disaffected that they-- that that's-- some of them have an Islam-is-the-answer-- mentality, that that-- that allows them to become jihadists?

Now, obviously now all young Muslim people in Europe are like this. And to what

extent has there been research on this to try to understand-- the extent of this phenomenon, the-- the-- the approximate percentages-- and-- and what motivates some-- maybe lower-income Muslim people. Not necessarily, I mean, s-- sometimes these are educated people who make these decisions. And what drives them to these decisions?

ARUN KUNDNANI:

I'm tempted to say chapter two of my book, but that's not (LAUGHTER) actually quite right. The-- the-- you know, there's been a whole-- whole heap of research that's been done trying to-- reconstruct-- the factors that lead to someone-- becoming-- a terrorist, right-- in-- in Europe. And-- and-- most-- and most of that research is-- is done-- in relation to Muslims in Europe, even though, actually, the-- you know, the number of people who have died from far-right violence in Europe over the last 20 years is roughly the same as the number who've died from-- from terrorist act-- acts by Muslims, right.

But the-- but the re-- the research is-- is kind of-- limited by a number of factors, the main one being the number of cases is so small, right, that you-- you just don't have a data set that would-- that would stand up to the usual kind of-- academic rigor that you would want to make these kinds of causal connections. And-- and obviously, even for the-- the individual cases that you have, your-- you know, your-- your d-- really trying to read inside someone's heart and someone's mind to understand their motivation, right.

And doing that on the basis of-- of-- of, you know, statements they might've made online or-- s-- material that might've come out through the surveillance material presented in court. But it's a very flimsy kind of process to try and-- to find those causations.

I mean, obviously, you can do certain statistical correlations, right-- where you-- where you say, "What is the correlation between these people who've-- who've been involved in an act of violence and, you know-- socioeconomic status?--" and things like that. And-- and by and large, you find very little-- correlations with anything.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Well, if I can just (INAUDIBLE) clarify. I was asking less about individual terrorists of y-- of whom there's very few. I mean, the-- the number of, you know, terrorists, actual terrorist acts is-- is, so far (UNINTEL) a small number. I'm thinking more about the large number of alienated younger people who while not engaged in actual acts of-- of murder, per se, are empathetic, sympathetic-- and form a recruiting ground to maybe go to Syria or-- or could be recruited, or-- or at least are quietly sympathetic and supportive of those who are engaged in violence. And I think that's not a small number.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Right. And I think this is part of the problem in this field, is that we always blur those distinctions between violence and nonviolence and-- and we use these ideas of-- of-- you know, talking about people who are radicalized as this wider pool of people, right. But the-- I think what-- what that actually means is very-- you know, in this literature is-- is actually very imprecisely defined and-- and-- and, for me, you know, it's-- it's very suspect as well, right.

So, you know, people-- p-- people get labeled as radicalized or extremist, for all kinds of things that are-- nothing to do with-- with some kind of support for violence, right. It's-- it's-- we're reading people's-- complex ideological belief system through a very simplistic lens of-- trying to find these-- these kind of indicators that they're on-- that they're, in some way, sympathetic of terrorism.

Well, actually, that's not the best framework to understand the-- you know, the-- the kind of tapestry of ideological belief in Muslim communities, in-- in young Muslim communities in Europe. So, I think-- yeah. I f-- I mean, y-- your question is exactly the question that is repeatedly asked, funded, researched-- you know, in relation to European Muslims. But I would say it's-- it's a flawed-- project.

PETER BEINART:

Did you wanna jump in on this or sh-- otherwise, I'll close it up. So-- let me just throw-- one last question to both of you, which is kind of going forward. One of the things that strikes me is that-- in the United States, since a lot of what you're writing about is American state policy, there is less I-- political, intellectual interest in winning-- Muslim hearts and minds today than there was-- perhaps when you were writing these books.

I mean, it's-- it's-- American foreign policy continues on, but I think that-- I think you can see the thrust of American-- of American political debate has basically been-- in-- as-- because of the disillusionment of the war-- of the-- of-- of wars in Iraq. And Afghanistan has basically been. "Stop. We don't-- stop-- we don't care about their hearts and minds anymore. We certainly have no prospect of changing any of that. That was way too big and ambitious. And they're probably incorrigible. And let's just send drones to basically kill the people we need to kill and other-- and that, try to forget about until-- focus on China."

And-- and I think the-- the rise of the whole-- of the f-- intense focus on the Sunni-Shia divide I think is-- has-- you know, in-- in a way has become-- is-- is, you know, as a m-- greater focus of American interest, it's-- has not been a dialogue in which Americans really see themselves as actors who can have as p-- as much of an effect as-- as a few years ago, well people like Paul Berman and-- and lots of other people were-- were-- were v-- had-- had very ambitious and, I think, b-- optimistic ideas about how American power, hard and soft power, could remake-- the large swaths of the Muslim world.

So-- it's-- also, interestingly, it strikes me as that on the-- on the right, there's been-- even as we've moved-- that there's-- that the-- the focus on Amer-- on the threat domestically in the United States of sharia law has only grown and grown-- even as we've moved further away from September 11th.

So, I just wondered if maybe I could ask you guys to close a little bit by-- by-- by talking about what you think the future of these state efforts-- by the United States and our-- and-- and Western European governments are vis-à-vis-- Muslim communities and-- and-- and the-- the dynamic nature of the response to that.

HISHAM AIDI:

Sure. Look, I think we're at a moment-- one of the things I'd argue is that the moment that we're goin' through today is comparable-- the moment today, where-- with the emergence of these Muslim ghettos in Europe, right, with these disaffected populations-- in Europe-- populations that are not (UNINTEL) the Muslim communities, young Muslims that are not politically incorporate-- I see this as comparable to what was going on in the States about 100 years ago, in the U.S. a century ago with the emergence of the African American ghetto, right.

And back then, you had a situation where you had African Americans landing in northern cities, products of the great migration, and there's a sense of global black besiegement, right. You have Jim Crow in the South. You have riots in the North. You have-- you know-- Africa is-- is colonized. And then, you've got all kinds of movements emerging. And the state has to respond, right. And you're seeing somethin' like that in Europe, right.

You're-- you're getting a population that's very European, right, that speaks French and German and-- and-- and Dutch, and so on; but that is still alienated from state institutions and is worried about the global Muslim predicament. Where do you go? Some people will go-- you know, will leave the country and go to Turkey, go to Paks-- I'm more interested in the movement westward, right. People who come to America that immerse themselves in black history.

People who go to Brazil, who go to South America, you know. In the book, I talk about how, in general-- in terms of the encounter between Islam and the West, Western Europe and America, you tend to have surveillance states, xenophobic movements, negative media representation. Latin America is quite different. There's none of that. There's very little of that, right. So, you're also seeing movement and interest in Latin America and the history of-- of-- of Muslim (UNINTEL) in Latin America.

So, I think this question will-- will continue to be an important question, right. I think the Obama administration pulled back from all the social and cultural engineering of the Bush-- of the Bush administration-- understandably so. It wasn't working. But last summer-- Congress reformed the Smith-Mundt Act, which was the antipropaganda law, which was a law that passed in 1948 that prohibits the voice of

America and other B.B.G.-owned-- radio outlets s-- sort of like Radio for Europe and Radio Liberty.

That broadcast overseas, right, Al Hoda, for example, are prohibited by law, by the Smith-Mundt Act, from-- from-- channeling, directing their propaganda at American communities, right. That was amended last summer in order to allow for (UNINTEL) voice of America to broadcast in Somali to Minneapolis, right. So, I mean, there are-- this is still ongoing. There are these efforts.

In-- last summer as well, the State Department started-- created an office for religious engagement, right, which was, again, about identifying moderate versus, you know, (INAUDIBLE) and so on. Also, after the Wingate (SIC) attack in Kenya, you remember the Wingate (SIC) mall in Nairobi-- last October, right-- the U.S. and Turkey came together to create a big global fund for community engagement and resilience, right.

So, that-- the whole business of promoting Sufism as a liberal alternative and so on sorta was put on a back burner when Obama came to power. This deal with the movements that we have, Muslim Brotherhood and so on, they have the capacity to control the streets and so on. But now, it's coming back again, right, partly in response to (UNINTEL) conflict, partly in response to (UNINTEL) and so on. So, I think we'll be seeing this makin' a comeback. The pendulum will spin back. We'll s-- we'll swing back towards the social engineering, yeah.

ARUN KUNDNANI:

Yeah. And I think that's right. And I think a lot of that energy is-- is happening in relation to-- social media, right. So, what-- you know, whereas a few years ago, it might have been through hip hop or through some of these other kinds of intervention, now social media is being seen as-- as-- the space where-- you know, where these interventions can be done most productively.

And the State Department has had a whole set of initiatives around-- tr-- you know, trying to-- trying to use social media as a way to seed youth movements that-- that can kind of advance particular cultural, political agendas-- in different parts of the world-- in particular in the Middle East. The-- and-- and also, the-- you know, the-- you see the same things being-- being organized in relation to Muslims within the United States, right.

So, you know, there are-- there are different government initiatives. But, you know, just mention the Somali-- American communities in-- in-- Minnesota, you know. There's all kinds of initiatives that are being run by Department of Defense-- and-- Department of Homeland Security to-- to try and-- again, do these kind of cultural interventions with those communities through social media, right.

So-- so, I think-- I think it's-- it's-- that's-- that's the kind of trend that we're seeing in-- in relation to where this stuff goes-- over the coming years. Yeah. I think-- I think the point that you made about-- how the-- the sort of-- the fear mongering

around-- you know, the idea that sharia law is about to take over America and all that kind of stuff, that the legislation that's been passed in quite a few states around the U.S. to ban sharia law-- yeah.

How that actually gets going, you know, pretty much a decade after 9/11 seems to s-- seems to get more-- seems to get more support-- you know, in the last few years, compared to that immediate moment after 9/11 is-- precisely points to the way in which-- this is not a kind of spontaneous reaction to this traumatic moment of 9/11, but it's something that's-- that's organized politically-- and-- you know, it comes from a different place.

And, so, I think that-- that kind of-- of tactic, of-- of-- mounting these kind of conspiracy theories and these attempts to demonize people-- from-- from the far right-- you know, is-- is always gonna be there-- over the next few years as-- as a tactic that we-- that we would see-- see mobilized. You know, it tends-- it tends to come about around election time. So, you know, with the-- we saw it around the-- 2008 election, 2010 election particularly.

We saw-- a whole lotta money going into these kinds of campaigns p-- and partly because it was a way of-- trying to subtly demonize Obama without doing that in an explicit racial way. So, yeah, I mean, I think-- I think these-- these are tr-- kind of-- strategies that we'll see being around for a while.

PETER BEINART:

Thank you. And why don't I turn it over to you?

QUESTION #2:

Thank you all for-- coming here today. This was a fascinating conversation. And please join me in expressing our gratitude-- to Hisham Aidi and Arun Kundnani for-- for their contributions, and to our moderator, Peter Beinart. Thank you all.

(APPLAUSE)

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *