

Talking for Peace – A Karl Kahane Lecture Series

The Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in co-operation with the Karl Kahane Foundation
kindly invites to the lecture of

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RADICAL ISLAM: IN DECLINE OR STILL VIGOROUS?

Welcome address:

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Moderation:

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Head of the Task Force Dialogue of Cultures in the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

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Emmanuel Sivan

was born in the Kibbutz Kfar Ha-Koresh and educated at the Hebrew University (BA, MA) and at the Sorbonne (Ph.D.). Currently he is Professor of Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University and Visiting Professor at Columbia University, Rutgers, Princeton. He served in Israel's Prime Minister's Office as advisor on Middle Eastern Affairs under Shimon Peres (1984-1986), Yitzhak Rabin (1992-1995), and Ehud Barak (2000-2001). In the late 1980s he was among the first scholars to begin to look at radical forms of Islamic movements that were generated from the Iranian revolution. He has also written more than 150 articles and chapters, and one of his areas of expertise is Islamic conceptions of the sanctity of Jerusalem. Sivan is a regular commentator on Islamic movements for Israeli television and writes prolifically for the Israeli press. Since 1996 he is editorial page writer for the daily *Haaretz*.

His major books are: *The Clash Within Islam* (2005), *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (2003), *Mythes Politiques Arabes* (1995), *The 1948 Generation* (1991), *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (1990), *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present* (1985).

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Head of the Task Force Dialogue of Cultures in the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs. Kroissenbrunner studied political science at the University of Vienna (Mag.a phil.), Bosphorus University, Istanbul/Turkey and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London/GB (Master of Science in Politics of Asia and Africa). Research projects and publications on socio-political organisation of migrants, religion and migration, Turkish immigration and Islam in Austria and Europe, Muslim Leadership and Turkey. Since 2000 Sabine Kroissenbrunner has been working as diplomat in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was posted to Berlin (2004-2007).

Patricia Kahane

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the Kreisky Forum and the Karl Kahane Lectures this fall. I'm happy to see so many of you interested in what's going to happen this evening. I have just noticed over the past year, year and a half, that of course for obvious reasons many important things that happen in the world are sort of receding behind the so called world economic crisis and people started talking and worrying only about that and are mostly not very interested any more in other things going on in many parts of the world which I think is a shame because one thing is the world economy but the world consists of many more things, more people, more emotions, more lives and livelihoods. And this is why we invited Prof. Sivan

to remind us that there is more to it than regional conflicts and bank crashes and stuff like that which will pass. Thank you.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Good evening, thank you very much for coming. I have the pleasure and the honor to briefly introduce to you Prof. Emmanuel Sivan. He is a well known scholar of Islam, of especially Islamic theology and their ideological background. Mr. Sivan was born in a Kibbutz in Israel close to Nazareth which is also one of the reasons, he told me, that he knows Arabic very well. And if I understood him correctly in the few moments before we started here he says, I'm suspicious about knowledge without knowing the language, without being in command of the language. I think this is one of the probably most important aspects also of his vast knowledge, knowing Arabic and dealing with the issue of Islamic theology and Islamic politics. He was educated at Hebrew University and at the Sorbonne and is currently a Professor of Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University and Visiting Professor at Columbia University, Princeton. Of particular importance also to this topic and this might guide us in our discussion as well is that Prof. Sivan is not only an outstanding academic but also he was a political consultant and served in some of his Prime Ministers offices as and advisor on Middle Eastern affairs, under Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, and Ehud Barak. He was among the first scholars to begin to look at radical forms of Islamic movements that were generated from the Iranian revolution. Prof. Sivan has written more than 150 articles and chapters. One of his area of expertise is Islamic conceptions on the sanctity of Jerusalem. Among his major books are *Interpretations of Islam Past and Present* of 1985 and *Radical Islam. Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* of 1990, two books I'm still aware of as a young student of political science, also his last book of 2005, *The Clash within Islam*, all these three works are of particular interest to the discussion because they have not really lost any importance in terms of analysis and perspective. So I am particularly glad to welcome you here this evening and we are looking very much forward to hear your lecture on Radical Islam. Is it in Decline or still Vigorous? Prof. Sivan the floor is yours.

Emmanuel Sivan

The topic I assume was set by design for this week, that's obvious. Friday will be the anniversary day, namely 9/11. Even the formulation is kind of to be found in other places. You will be happy about it that you foresee that even a newspaper like *Le Monde* which had as a headline yesterday, exactly the same kind of topic. And I think it is a justified concern and an anniversary is a good time to take stock.

Now let me explain one thing very clearly. What set me to be interested in these questions was not the Iranian revolution or movements spread by the revolution which are all of them and remained contrary to the expectations at the time Shiite movements. What set me was the assassination of Sadat. The thing is that sometimes I think there must be a God if this happens, is that a way. Six months to the day before the assassination on April 6 I was in Cairo. It was heady time for us for the first time to go to Cairo. I noted one thing which nobody noted or at least nobody reported. The writings of a certain medieval theologian whom we had to suffer to read through as graduate students because he was very difficult, called Ibn Taimia, were all the rage in Egypt, not only in Cairo, also in Alexandria, in Asyut in the south. He was an inspiration for a revivalist movement at least in the end of the 18th century. I said to myself, something funny is happening here. Six months to the day Sadat is assassinated. Soon enough they discovered that the four assassins relied upon a book written for them by a disciple of Ibn Taissia in order to justify why you can kill a Muslim ruler which is not something which in Islam is acceptable. In principle even a bad ruler is better than anarchy. Ibn Taimia was one of the few people who took another view. He paid for it, sitting in prison in Mameluk, Egypt, in Syria.

But if I look today at the writings of the Islamist movement, I prefer the term radical Islam, I think it has a better quality, you find three major ideas which these ideologies and other of his ilk in Syria and elsewhere pioneered around the state. They are all of them inspired by a master who lived in the mid-sixties and was executed by Nasser, Said Qud by name. You'll find those three ideas in all the radical Islamist movements in the Sunni world which is 90% of Muslims worldwide. There is a continuity. The variation is in formulation of course, in emphasis, in style. That's to be expected. The three ideas remain. Osama bin Laden does not change anything. He changes one jota perhaps in the third idea. But those ideas always have to adapt themselves to circumstances. And when you deal with radical Islam you have to confront two facts. One is the continuity. Even though there are many deceptions in reality the movement continued to stick, sunshine or rain, to those three ideas. Two, the movement survived. For a movement which is persecuted to the extent that they have been since the radical Islamic ideas were born in the mid-sixties - the assassination of Sadat

was just a continuation of other plots and attempts at revolt - the movement has been bludgeoned in some places on an enormous scale. There is a debate whether in Algeria during the civil war which was initiated by the Islamists the government forces have killed 100.000 or 200.000. This is the extent that there is a debate. I don't know if anybody will ever find it or there will be a judge like Balthasar Garçon who would try to find all the bodies of the people who were killed by Algerian planes bombing from the air villages of radical Muslims. In Egypt the numbers are much smaller, it's in the thousands. In Syria in 1982 at least 20.000, Amnesty International says 30.000, people were killed in the city of Hama during a revolt of the radical Muslims. Most of those killed were not radical Muslims. But like this medieval French king has said, St. Louis, after they began the crusade, we are going to kill also the innocent, and God, he will make a selection later. This is a movement which is suffering all the time. And yet it survived

Al Qaida is just the last avatar of this movement. And I will of course concentrate on it. There is about the movement, about its capacity to produce leaders and leaders, given the structure of this movement, have to be charismatic. I think one of the secrets of the success of the movement is not only the fact that there will be disillusioned young men who will join radical Islam for any number of reasons. It is those three ideas which I'm going immediately to speak about speak to them. But also that there are enough and the movement has always found, not everywhere, in some places the movement went into decline completely, but in most places it has found charismatic leaders. Why? Because their structure is a kind of a sectarian structure, what we call enclave in anthropological terms, meaning a group of equals. You are a simple disillusioned Muslim, the moment you join such a movement you become empowered. Everybody is more or less equal. The hierarchical structures of society are barely existent there, we are different. And yet, of course you need to make decisions sometimes and they are hard or unpleasant. So you try to keep hierarchy as small as possible. And on the top you meet a charismatic leader. This is a dangerous structure because when a charismatic leader is liquidated like happened to the radical Muslims in Iraq in 2005, the replacements were not that good. Two of them were already killed. And the third looks as if he doesn't control the movement. There is a danger. And this is why Osama bin Laden is important even though he may be in a cave, completely separated from ..., is even incapable of dealing directly with the internet, because he has become such an icon of inspiration for the movement to continue.

But now to the three ideas.

The three ideas are the following:

One: diagnosis. The world of Islam is in decline. This is something Muslims have been complaining about for ages. So what's new? It is in decline because of our sins, because of our elites. The danger is not the colonialist rulers, remember the ideas are born in Egypt in the mid-sixties with the British already out, it is our own elite, our own populist elite. How more populist could you be than Gamal Abd El Nasser, the then President of Egypt, who was the son of a postal clerk from Alexandria. And yet, those elites are now brainwashed, magnetized by the ideas of the West. I should insist that when you say that, in the mid-sixties Egypt West also means Russia. Of course the most important modern presence in Egypt was Russia. And Russia of course as he saw directly, this man also wrote about Marx, is part of the modern culture, of the Aufklärung linked to German and British history. The attraction of communism will be less of a problem from the mid-eighties on. But even in Iran for Khomeini the danger of communism was present as one facette of modern culture, including of course its consumerist aspects for the masses because the masses are basically stupid, can be easily distracted etc., is eating us from within. Maybe, he says, and this is something which is quote time and time again, Islam may die a sweet death, a pleasant death.

Two. What is the treatment? What is the solution to this tough situation? The basic idea is for Islam, meaning the faithful of Islam, to go into politics. This looks to you like a banality. Haven't you heard from Muslims all over that in Islam there is no distinction between religion and politics, Islam is all encompassing etc? This is both true and untrue. It's true as an article of faith. In reality ever since the conquest, ever since the Caliphate was established, there was a separation between the role of men of religion who were in charge of personal status affairs, rituals etc. and the tough decisions of economy, politics, and military which were in the hands of people who in the beginning were religious minded, less and less so as time gone by. And when I say as time gone by we are speaking already about the second century of Islam, the 8th century. We, say this man, Islam are in one dry valley and life is another valley. If you go to such a valley in the Middle East try to cry strong. Nobody will hear you in the other dry valley. I think it's a good simile which is repeated time and time again. We need to take over life, and to take over life means politics. And it means all the more so because we are dealing now in the sixties, this is even truer of course today, about a state which

controls many aspects of our life, but above all education and the media. Now admittedly some of the most sophisticated speakers of the movements will say, those people when they use education and the media they don't think that they serve the West, they even want to do good, the irony of it all is that they do bad. They educate us, science has got all the answers to everything. There is something called individualism, there is an individual separate from another individual whose benefit and welfare is the ultimate concern. There is nationalism, this new religion, and the time we are speaking about mostly about pan-Arab nationalism, which is brainwashing everybody to believe in it. We have to go into politics.

Idea number three is if we go into politics, the question is what we do. The man who wrote the basic treatises, and by the way they are still being read, Osama bin Laden quotes them, Zawahiri studied with his students directly in Cairo and quotes him enormously, he is the better educated of the two. Not only is he a medical doctor but also in terms of knowledge of Islam. He was a very pessimistic person. And most of the people you are dealing with in that movement, who maintain it, are very pessimistic because they know that their task is enormous. They think that they can do something, and that in a way makes them also optimistic, but optimistic in the short term. In the long term they don't do. We know it's an uphill battle. So what do we do? Preferably, says this ideology, take power by force. They took power by force in 1952. They took power by force in 1969 in Syria. What's so legitimate about them? We have to take it by force. If we can't have a nucleus of army sympathizers, which they rarely had, assassination or at least to create a situation of destabilization by putting bombs near government buildings etc. But if we can't, and the honesty of this movement that it faces those questions. I think it's part of their survival. The leaders don't lie to themselves. the foot soldiers are sometimes stupid. Having been myself a foot soldier in another army I'm understanding how little I understood about the decisions of our superiors, I tend to think that this is the way of the world. The strength of the movement of course is the top. No doubt. Not only the leader himself, but also the ... against him. If you can't then for a while go into education, try to spread the word, do welfare work and thereby have an impact on society, attract young people, especially educated young people. And they understood very well that the best educated people came recently from the countryside because like all immigrants, internal immigrants in that case, are more or less open to change of ideas. And hope that you create thereby a kind of quantic mass which one day will operate. Whenever I go to Egypt I talk with two Muslim Brother leaders. One of them was for a while a member of parliament. They always tell me it's a long term, we have eschewed violence because we see that violence is like hitting a wall, we are going to break our hands. And we will educate and finally one day you'll wake up and all the members of the government will be more or less impacted by our ideas which will seep through. If you can to some extent go into parliament and thereby at least have a podium for protest so much the better. They don't believe in taking over through parliamentary means because they know that the power structure will not allow them. We have seen this during the elections in 2005 when in the third round they were bound with the blessing of Condoleeza Rice, take over at least one third of the deputies, in the third round Mubarak told the police, now you do it my way, my way meaning Chancellor Bismarck's way, so that they don't let people know about how you make sausages and how you make elections. They knew it. They don't fool themselves. For the first time, in my last visit which was in June, I saw them more optimistic. And the reason is that they begin to assume, this is just speculating of course, this is not planning, that there might be a situation of an interregnum, if Mubarak dies and there is no clear decision between the army and his son. And in such a situation, if we organize mass demonstrations, we may get our share of power. This is the extent of what they were ready to tell me. I'm sure if they have secrets I'm not the addressee of those secrets.

Those are the three ways.

They tried it for almost thirty years. By the mid-nineties they see that number one is okay, number two nobody questions, number three we don't know. Maybe our way today doesn't operate. We tried and tried it and by 1995, 1998 there was one defeat after the other, including the Algerian defeat which nobody speaks about today. But it was a horrible defeat which shook them. It shows that a government when being pushed to the wall is being taken, is going to take the most extreme measures. This bombing of villages is not something which happened twice. And they don't run in Algeria to Angela Merkel to speak about how come as they do with regard to Afghanistan. There was no press to report it. Nobody could run to the Algerian president. But as soon as the regime, bastard as they are, are ready to defend themselves and have a nucleus of people ready to follow others.

Then comes Osama bin Laden. You waited so long for him to appear upon the scene of my lecture, so here he is. He is in that problem, it's a debate about means. And Osama bin Laden begins by a critique in the early

nineties of the movement. He said, we made two mistakes. One, we against what everybody teaches you in military strategy which is concentrate all your force on the weakest link of the enemy, we spread our efforts on all the countries and we are very nationalistic in a way. One movement did not help the other. People in Egypt say, we want Islamic Egypt. They don't say, we want a Caliphate or we want to help our brethren in Syria in their hour of doom. No. So we have to create a large international movement which will have a base, base in Arabic is Al Qaida, and will have outreach structures. Not everywhere, only in places which are useful for us, where we think there might be a crisis, or people are more open to our ideas, whichever reason. This is a very practical person, he was very successful in business. Not in terms of the one million dollars which he inherited from his father which is all he inherited. They took off all the rest of his inheritance when he left Saudi Arabia. He is not that rich. But he is a very good businessman. For example, he made a lot of money from the movement out of marketing honey from Yemen, including in the US. A very complicated operation. Part of the money for his own operations came from that. This is the one critique. Let's concentrate our strength on a few areas where we want to hit and let's have a basis of operations, this Qaida, where people will be trained, educated also. They will be the sort of vanguard of the revolution. I don't know if he would use those terms. But it is roughly almost professional of the revolution. Where to hit?

It was a mistake, said Osama bin Laden, to limit ourselves only to Muslim countries. After all our regimes, those regimes we hate, and the number one regime which he wanted to topple is of course the Saudi regime. Don't believe those who tell you that he wanted to conquer the United States. He is a highly intelligent person and he understands that this is not feasible. He doesn't even want to conquer Europe against all those prophets of doom and gloom who tell us about that. They are not stupid. Many of the foot soldiers say this. What does a foot soldier now? His is not to reason why, his is to go forth and die. As the poem said it. You listen to the foot soldiers. I try to listen to the leaders and to the cadres and to those in the margins of the movement who sometimes criticize and sometimes disagree. Assuming that our regimes are helped a lot financially and militarily by the West, especially the US, he writes in the wake of the first Gulf War with the coalition of the willing led by the US, we should also hit not only in his terms the close enemy - the close enemy is our own rulers - but also the distant enemy, meaning Europe, the US, etc. In the past distinction counted for a lot. It was one of the reasons for example why the revolutionaries in Egypt refused to help the PLO, this is another business. We will deal with Israel in a second round. We are about saving Islam. Remember the diagnosis counts much more than the treatment and the way of administering the treatment. The diagnosis is the crux of their vision of the world, of history, and of their basic pessimism, a pessimism which nevertheless pushes you into action. There must be some margin for human activity here. We should hit them. He never thought, by the way, that participating in Palestinian radical Muslim activities is interesting for his movement. For two reasons. One, Israel is strong. We try to hit soft targets. So why break our neck? Two, of course, there are Fattah and later Hamas who are not very happy about poking our nose into their affairs. So forget about it. From time to time he brings forward an audio or a video backing this or that activity of Hamas etc., that's sheer PR, never invested. The groups which you must have heard about recently, the one which was slaughtered by Hamas in August, are basically local people, basically a part of a kind of revivalist movement who sort of link themselves to Osama bin Laden. There was no foreigner among them, contrary to rumors. And none of them has ever been trained or educated abroad either in Pakistan or in Waziristan.

But the most important twist to this operation which Osama bin Laden has added was the idea - I will call it by terms proper to Europe, but he has analogues in Arabic to it -, those are the anarchist terms of propaganda by act. If you want to make real propaganda hit big and hit an important, an improbably, a symbolic target which of course linked to the power structure. Why? One, because you have to appeal to emotions. you can't even make an argument for the foot soldiers. You have the emotions. Osama Bin Laden is very elitist. He is a very cool fellow. His argument is very logical. And two, because we in that particular time, we Muslims, we need it. We Muslims, meaning the faithful of Islam, the radical Muslims. Why we need it? Because we have suffered too many defeats. We need to make one success or a number of successes. He said a number of successes, he didn't specify, meaning that he is a good politician, he doesn't want to cage himself into a term, in order to show that we can do it. And if we can do it in this place we can do another etc. As you remember there were a number of attempts at US targets, embassies in Africa, a US destroyer near Aden which had very limited success. But they were the early test of fighting against the distant enemy. And of course the US is arch satan here. That's obvious. But Great Britain comes second. And for the people in North Africa France is certainly third and not second at times. And then there was a plan for exploding twelve planes in the air in the Philippines, most of them American planes, done by the same planner who now stands trial in Guantanamo. This failed for technical reasons. Comes 9/11. True to say he was a good psychologist. For

Muslims worldwide, even for moderate Muslims it was a moment of elation. Some were really very astonished by the way. They said it can't be that Muslims can do such a complicated operation. Well, they did. And then astonishment transformed itself into elation. He created an icon. And in that respect, at least in the short term, he never fooled himself that he is going to bring down the American economy because of two towers. Again, he is intelligent and he is quite well informed or was well informed, I can't say about today.

Nevertheless should we be still fearful of Al Qaida? I would say yes, but reasonably so. Not as much perhaps, just to give you an order of magnitude, that we should be afraid that the pumping of money by our governments into the banks will not save the economy as much as we would. That is the gravest danger.

So what's the success? Let's make a balance sheet. And I'll do it in a somewhat abstract manner, a semantic manner in order to give you time for questions. Number one, on the negative part of the balance sheet, they never succeeded to do another 9/11 or anything approaching it. The three people who were convicted this week in London for trying to use liquid in order to blow up planes came close. And we should be thankful for the British services who have stopped them. There were a few other attempts. There was an attempt to blow up the cathedral in Strasbourg in December 2001, there were the bombs in London in July 2005, just to mention a few events which you might remember, the assassination of the journalist Van Gogh in the Netherlands, and a very daring attempt about a year ago to blow up the headquarters of the Renseignement Generaux, the French service which follows militant Islam near Paris. All of them were of limited success or failed. The only operation in Europe, remember there is nothing in the United States. There were groups here and there, and it's not very clear, the groups are just standing trial, not very clear how much people discussing or really moving into action. The United States because of the very unpleasant limitations on the movement of travelers has not been touched. The only two places which have been really hit large is Indonesia, in Bali, by a group which is somehow connected to Al Qaida, meaning some people among the movement spent time. But it is originally a movement from Bali. And of course Madrid, the train station. But the story of the train station is interesting because it shows also - a horrible story, 200 dead - the limitation. The group is local. It's made mostly of recent Muslim immigrants who ponder the state of Islam and say Islam is going to the docks. My point number one for diagnosis. They decide to do something, collect some money, not enough. They don't have expertise. What to do? So somebody tells them that somebody else is an Al Qaida member who lives as a sleeper in Spain. They contact him. He tells them, I'm in a very bad situation, can't help you. We have no money. We think that you are right that you should hit now because this is on the eve of elections in order to bring to power the socialists who were supposed to take their forces out of Iraq. This is exactly the strategy of hitting a soft point. But we can't help you. Then he goes back to them and tells them, you know what, I looked at my address book, I have the address of a Christian maker of explosives. You go to him, you tell him you need these explosives in order to dig mines in Morocco. He will give you a fair price, no questions asked. Which they did. This is not such a powerful movement. This is a movement, remember, it's not even in decline. It's persecuted.

The world has done, especially the West has done certain things, some of them unpleasant for human rights of the citizens, I'm not speaking about the way people who are arrested are treated. But still some of this worked. Above all they lost Afghanistan which is something that the Taliban leader warned them against before the 9/11 operation. You are going to lose Afghanistan and I am going to lose Afghanistan, this will be the end of it. And this will be the price I get for my hospitality. This basis of operation is no more. It's not something to sniff at.

The last element in this negative part of the balance sheet is the fact that of course contrary to what the West would like to believe they tried to do and continue to do quite a lot of operations in the Islamic world. they don't have a hang up about the West. They would hit wherever possible. Because the West has such an image it needed to be hit large. But if we can't do that we do it elsewhere. We tried to do it in a number of places, failed in all of them, the famous case of bombings in Morocco. But the place more important than all of course was Saudi Arabia, Osama's homeland, in which they tried in 2004 a number of attacks on government buildings in the attempt of taking over. We know now from the trials that actually the movement in Saudi Arabia which is more or less affiliated with Al Qaida and made of people who knew Osama when he was a young man, the movement pleaded with Osama, please don't have us launch the operation now, we are not yet prepared, we need more training, more coordination. He needed success, immediate success. And of course hitting Saudi Arabia, even if it were only for a while, it would have been a big success. Perhaps second only to the Wallstreet towers. So here we have failures.

What do we have on the positive side? One, which I mentioned at the beginning, the movement survived. It survived in the sense that Al Qaida itself, the basis, is actually threadbare today. Very few people, mostly dealing with communications, but that's it. And most of them are in Pakistan, on the Pakistani side of the border. How much they will continue assuming that they have the protection of the tribes, they can survive for long. These tribes have a way of establishing some discipline. But sleeper cells around the world, zilch. This is an invention by people who were educated by reading so many John le Carré novels or being impregnated by the Cold War. It's another kind of war. We have never found until today one sleeper cell, like we don't have any licensees. People speak about that Mr. so and so is a licensee of Al Qaida in Algiers. This is not McDonald. This is not serious. You hear this from state department people supposed to be serious people. They just show themselves how West intoxicated they are. ... that other cultures organized differently. What they do have is groups, some of them the establishment thereof has nothing to do with Al Qaida, affiliating themselves with Al Qaida in order to boost their morale, in order to create a kind of a winning image, a presence, and also because they have thereby immediately an icon. Osama Bin Laden and his three basic ideas has given Islam radical Islam for those who wish to follow. An unbelievable audience. So a lot of isolated individuals, especially in Europe, when they say I want to do something against the West, against the society of this or that country I am living in, they will naturally, you don't need to have a twisted personality for that, use this successful image. And some of them will be more or less organized. We have organized cases for example in Algeria where there is a movement born out of the end of the civil war, called the group for the preaching and the fight, fight meaning Jihad, which associated with Al Qaida, does not get any money or instructions, they don't need it. They are well trained on the spot. The movement of this man, Zarkawi, a Jordanian hoodlum who got islamized in prison and wanted to go to fight in Chechnya, was stopped from fighting in Chechnya, he said well, second best, I go and fight in Iraq. And he was quite a pain in the neck for the Americans for a long while until he was killed in 2006. His movement is now in decline. But for everybody who wants to volunteer to a kind of international brigade of Islam to help, this is something which fits Osama Bin Laden's vision. It was supposed to be a very good thing, something which he did not control very well because the movement began by slaughtering all Shiite. Which is certainly not the enemy according to Osama Bin Laden. And he tried by the way to plead with them. But how much can you plead with them if in one of his missives which have been intercepted he says, please stop to do this and by the way can you give me 30.000 dollars. What kind of a boss are you if you have to get a loan from a local leader? So sometimes it works. In Algeria at least the movement is still alive, making a big noise. The one which is associated with Al Qaida in Gaza failed.

And here I come to number two and the most important thing. I kept this most important thing because you are a European audience. The area in which success came to Bin Laden as a bigger surprise is Europe. He never thought about Europe. He never planned about Europe. He basically never knew about Europe. His family made a lot of business in the States. So he knew the United States and had ambiguous attitudes about it. Not about Europe. And it came as a surprise to him that from time to time you discover people, sometimes even well educated people, remember the doctors from Glasgow, who as a reaction to whatever. Actually what we know about the brainwashing systems in a number of such groups they don't speak much about the situation of Islam in the world at large or in your own country. What we found is that they barely will speak to them. They show them videos. In that respect they are very much like young men in Austrian society as well who get most of their information that way, by showing videos from Chechnya, from Iraq, from Algeria. that's it. You need to expect anything. And the third thing which they play on especially in Europe which is a big achievement of Osama Bin Laden is a study which was made of 500 terrorists and suicide bombers from all over Europe, a study of their families, if they were killed, but a study of them there if they were in prison, has found that the basic motivation, the core emotion which motivates them, especially in Europe, is not humiliation, is not Islamic honor, Muslims are very touchy about their honor, no. It's a deeply felt sense of injustice.

What's the difference between humiliation and injustice? It's very simple. Humiliation is in the eyes of the beholder. I call you by first name and say, you don't call me by first name, you call me Mr. so and so. Sorry, I didn't know that you are so touchy about the topic. Anyway, it's in the eye of the beholder. I'm not taking more sensitive examples. Injustice has some objective criteria to support it. And certainly everybody would agree that in the situation of Muslims in Europe there are elements which can objectively be quantified of injustice. How much our societies do about this is another matter. How much they can do about it, given the economic crisis, is even a graver question. The one thing about understanding another side, even if it's an enemy, it's to empathize and to try to begin to take it as he is or as he feels he is. This is at the level of the foot soldiers. The leaders have other aims. The problem is that in Europe today the movement is so

decentralized. There are very few leaders or real leaders from whom you can get instructions, mostly banned leaders sometimes even created in prison where people found themselves. Austria doesn't look to me like it's very much in danger of that matter, you can go relieved. France and Great Britain have for various reasons an explosive social situation with the Muslim minorities. And it is bound to continue to feed radical Islam. Thank you very much.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Thank you very much, Prof. Sivan, for this highly interesting analytical assessment of the complexity of radical Islamic movements. I would like to start by what you took as the main three issues and diagnosis treatment and what to do. When you said the diagnosis lies in the assumption that there is a decline of the Islamic world and that this is due to the own elites within the Muslim world. When you say that the treatment of such a situation would be going into politics and this could reach from either taking power by force until the other end, meaning going through the institutions or getting into education. At the same time you also mentioned at some stage that radical Islam has not really much to offer in political terms. What has radical Islam to offer apart from this diagnosis one could agree with or not? Going into politics is maybe not enough. There must be some sort of vision for their societies, for their countries. At one stage I think it was clash within Islam. You said radical Islam does not have much to offer in politics. What does radical Islam have to offer?

Emmanuel Sivan

Two answers. Why do they have to offer anything? How much does David Cameron, head of the opposition in Britain, offer the British electorate? He says very simply, enough is enough, throw the rascals out, throw the bastards out. If I concentrate on the negative, for example you could speak about class discrepancies and income discrepancies in Egypt to take a larger case, and the corrupt connections between the powers that be and the economic elites, Gamal Mubarak being a personal link between them, that's enough. Many of us even in democratic countries vote negatively, sometimes. Two, their answer is usually, Islam is a solution. You just do it Islam, everything will be fine, Islam is all encompassing. I criticize this view of Islam. But analytically as a self view of Islam it is real. Real Muslims believe it. You can prove to them that for example Islam has nothing to offer in terms of organizing the economy. Forget about more touchy topics. They will say, we shall solve it while walking, when we come, then we go to men to religion. They are very unaware, it's very interesting. The Shiite world is elsewhere. But they know bad things about Iran, above all the dictatorship. What they don't know, when I'm telling this to radical Muslims they look at me like I'm planting a curious idea, in Iran, within the Islamic majority party, there is a strong trend to say, send the Ulema, the men of religion, to the Madrassas. This is your place. Which means that the idea of Khomeini who wanted to take them from the Madrassas and rule the country is bad. They are both inefficient and corrupt. They are not aware of it. But I would say that the perspective of getting to power is so hazy with most of them, and the hatred of the powers that be is so all encompassing that we are sort of spoilers when we raise some questions.

I give you an anecdote to simplify this. In the night before they were executed the four assassins of Sadat, and these ideologies I told you about, were given a piece of paper and a pencil to write about their last wishes or testament. It was published years later in Al Haram. It's very interesting how similar they were, they were of course separated from each other, and two, what was the order of magnitude. Basically there were twenty issues which bothered them. Number one issue was Hijab. Why? Because on the eve of the Sadat assassination the government made a really brutal attempt to force girl students to come barefaced to exams because they said that they use the Hijab and sometimes even the Burka, which is the tent, as a way of hiding their identity. One of them even sent her boyfriend under a Burka to write the exam. This is a question of personal status to say that the government intervened in this sanctuary area where Islam was really always respected. This bothered them much more. Peace with Israel came nineteen. That's very funny, nevertheless. I don't know the presence of mind of people who are going to be executed. But they were worried about the ways of the West, and exams are of course the way of the West, which are going to destroy Muslim society. Now, those are people who acted on their beliefs. And one of them, this engineer, was a very knowledgeable person.

So I think that yes, when the Muslim Brethren of the more moderate variety, I don't call them moderate, I would call them pragmatist. When I was teaching in Columbia the argument was, what is a Columbia conservative? A Columbia liberal who has been mugged which is very common in the Columbia area. They have been mugged by their government, don't mess with the government. They are much more bothered by

these questions. I follow what this 20% minority which they represent in the assembly, they try to rely on specialists to suggest amendments to laws, like everybody else, but with no vision. You are right. What I wrote is true, but basically irrelevant. I don't think there is any chance that they will get to power by getting a majority. They can get a majority only if they shape, transform themselves from within. The way the AKP did in Turkey, obviously. But Turkey is not an example which they follow. ... Iranian ... They gave the word Koran. Who are they? Indonesians who are a democracy? Who cares about Indonesians? Try to speak with them. they are completely uninterested.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

A very brief question concerning the alternative to radical Islam, would be, to simplify it, liberal Islamic forces. What do you think is the weakness we can also see of so called liberal Islamic forces compared to the radical Islamic forces in society?

Emmanuel Sivan

There is a liberal tendency in Islam, perhaps more successful in Western Europe among exiles. I think that the basic thing which works against them is fear. Given the alternative of radical Islam most of the middle class, an ideal clientele for liberal Islam, say in such a situation, better have the tough men. Okay, they are also corrupt and there is some torture going on, but you know what will happen if those ... So this appeal even though some of the people who write for it are very able writers and writing for major newspaper, I don't see how much they can have of an impact. So what you have is a pragmatic conservative elite, more or less dictatorial, more in Syria, less in Egypt, which has put economic performance at its major role while trying to make concessions to the Muslims on cultural matters.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

So not much future for liberal Islamic tendencies?

Emmanuel Sivan

Who knows? There is a liberal tendency which is coherent, which is sophisticated, which is very well aware of the situation of its own society, making even polling and things like that, attempts you would not have though able. Who knows? And they educated some of the people who go to government. In government they cannot show their colors, but they are implicated. For a while it doesn't look good. The only country of course which is completely different in this is Indonesia which is unbelievably for a country which was just liberating itself five years ago from an autocratic regime, which has really transformed itself into a legal state, a participating society. But then maybe I think so well of them because I don't know much.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Also an important aspect in Indonesia is the very fact that in the constitution Indonesia is charted as a multi-religious and pluralistic country.

Question

You spoke about Glasgow and the doctors in Glasgow. You said also that one of the problems is the fact, according to you, that the United Kingdom is in a way not dealing with the Muslim minority as it should. But the fact is that most of the perpetrators of London did not come from the disenfranchised people. They were coming from so called good families. This is one thing. And the second thing which probably you can explain, Indians who are also of dark skin are not complaining in Britain about being discriminated. Some of them make wonderful careers. Why do people believe that everything has to be explained with economy or that economy is playing such a part in this radical Islamic movement when the leaders, as you have said yourself, have been millionaires or doctors etc?

Question

Mr. Erdogan of Turkey is for sure someone who knows about Islam. He says, there is nothing like radical Islam, there is only one Islam, and there is of course no moderate Islam. I think the proof is that we non-Muslims are called by Muslim non-believers, Muslims have special human rights in contradiction to the UN Declaration 1948, and where Christians are concerned there are persecutions in all the Islamic countries. These are the facts. But I wanted to know to which extent is this concept of Eurabia influencing the Islamic power all over the Western world and to which effect does green money work in the same way?

Question

I missed in the presentation the word oil. Going back to 1945 when Roosevelt came back from Yalta and stopped in Port Said to meet with Ibn Saud, at that time what became Saudi Arabia was actually led by a joint Wahabi monarchy that lived at peace. Was that Faustian bargain of providing funds to Ibn Saud for a perceived deed of oil in the West that destroyed the internal peace that the Saudis had with themselves, and that is actually the reason that we call now the rebellion against the Saudis because we think that we are dependent on that oil and we continue to send them the money that they can then use, that that actually is a reason for the revival of the Islamic movement starting in that place that the Koran came from.

Question

In your diagnosis when you mentioned the three points I had the impression that this is the classical definition of a lot of radical movements. I'm just thinking about communism, trying to a) seeing the regime is corrupt, b) we have to change it, we have to get the power, and if we couldn't get the power by legitimate means we do it by force. You would therefore say radical Islam is fitting into the classical notion of what is a radical movement. After the question of our moderator, what is this radical Islam offering or making believe that the followers could gain, would it be just a sort of Sharia and a Sharia power? And therefore would countries in which the Sharia is in development be spared? Because I think Saudi Arabia in a way could be considered as a good pupil on the way to Sharia, but it is not spared by the radical Islam. Is Sudan for instance spared because they are on the good way?

Emmanuel Sivan

The first and the last question can be fit together: I certainly did not give an economist explanation of radical Islam. I said injustice. Injustice, also in part in the eye of the beholder, is the fact that the Iraqis being killed now by American soldiers. The Iraqis are being killed now by American soldiers, this is a fact. You could say, this is the way it shows to you how screwed up the world is. This is injustice. I meant this sense. You can put injustice which would be based at least in part on facts. Now linked to what you say, what you said is certainly correct about number three, about the sense of injustice. And by the way a few studies of communist revolutions, I am thinking about a famous book by Archie Brown, have found that an obsession with injustice is the one which is present in all communist revolutions.

What worries the radicals is civilization decline, not about the bad situation economically. Our civilization is going to the dogs. It's a beautiful definition one of them gave, we are not underdeveloped, we are stragglers, a straggler was one leading the convoy, we are now at the end of the convoy of civilization, how did it come? Second, go into politics, it's a particular Islamic hang-up. The thing is that subjects and scholars have got nothing to do with politics, this is the business of the upper guys, however you define it. Now to tell people that they should be empowered to go into politics, given a politics of protest and not necessarily of militancy and violence, is a big step.

Which brings me to the question of Saudi Arabia and oil and Sharia. Officially Sharia is the law of Saudi Arabia. But every militant of radical Islam would tell you that this is a hypocritical country. This is a country in which the princes get lavish percentages from all foreign transactions. This is a country in which in the privacy of their palaces a lot of hanky panky is going on, perhaps not with Muslims, but with non-Muslims etc. And there is whole very savory literature on this. This is not the way we want Sharia to be applied. And it's true. They are appealing to a myth. They myth is there is a myth of Sharia. Which is very difficult to prove, was the Sharia really created by the Muslim scholars, did the Muslim scholars actually play a game according to rules set for them by the authorities, how much was it applied in certain fields? Certainly not in politics. Not a transfer of powers. I'm sure you know that more than half of the Caliphs were assassinated. Well, it's one way of transferring power, but it's not the Sharia way. But it's a powerful myth. And some of them believe it. The fact is that Khomeini believed it when he took the people out of their scholarly endeavours in the Madrassas and put them in jobs in the government. Later on they were replaced. They were replaced by the kind of Islamic minded engineers like Ahmadinejad. But it took the war with Iraq for them to do that.

And as for oil, of course, everything begins with the oil revolution. Sure. The moneys which came, the moneys which came even to the non-oil countries, which brought up the number of real estate targets, etc.

About Eurabia. If you mean Eurabia in the terms which Bat Yeoz speaks about, I frankly think it's a fake. It's an invention. It's a figment of the imagination. It doesn't explain anything. There is no such danger. If there

are dangers today to European societies in which Muslim minorities are certainly involved then ... of a plot. They are the results of thousand decisions by thousand individuals whose motivations may vary.

Question

Many thanks for your excellent presentation. I learned a lot. Away from these questions about Western ideology and Islamic ideology my interest is the Far East. How do you explain the confrontation between the Islamic ideologies, Islamic world, with China? There is an infiltration politics of Islamic activities to Thailand from Malaysia, into Myanmar from the North, from Bangladesh. How do you explain? Because this world, China is interesting to have no problems with this world, far away from the Western ideas and the Western interests. How do you explain? This is a new confrontation, China as a more or less communist country or you could call it a neo-Confucianistic country, and the Buddhistic world of Myanmar and Thailand. This would be an interesting point, not a discussion about ideological questions, but this strategical confrontation.

Question

What is the role of women in radical Islam? Because women suffer in every sense of injustice.

Question

Do we need to fear against Al Qaida still? From the perspective of the economy I would do the following comparison. Let's say Osama Bin Laden had an invention. He actually invented a new strategy attacking the United States and by this action he introduced a global brand name well known in all societies, the West as well as the Muslim societies, as Al Qaida. The question is, if a brand economically is associated with a lot of non-successes it will be damaged. And from that perspective I would assume that there is a decline in the threat of Al Qaida attacks because it's a damaged brand. And I would expect an innovation, whatever it is, which we don't expect. And I would like to know what is your opinion on that thought.

Question

I would like to ask a question on Egypt since there is an upcoming presidential election and many people started talking now about this upcoming presidential election which is still ahead in 2011. It seems that Egypt and Egyptian politics haven't succeeded in integrating liberal Muslims in the political system or just to a certain minor degree. Now it seems that the son of Mubarak is inheriting his father's course as president. How do you see the future of Egyptian Muslim integration into politics if Gamal Mubarak is going to be the next president? Isn't that going to be dangerous for that political era and the social development in Egypt and the region?

Emmanuel Sivan

I can venture an opinion only on China. I know less the environing countries. The interesting thing about the question of the North-West, I visited it twice, my impression was that most of the protests, I talked with some people involved in them, were more ethnic than Islam although there is an Islamic underpinning. But more important than that is the complete disregard, disinterest of radical Islam in the Third World, and radical Islam being a Sunni phenomenon is above all in the Arab world, about this. Far from the eyes, far from the heart. Maybe there are some very small references. People do not appreciate how much despite mass phenomena, mass fevers or epidemics like the Danish, how vast is the world of Islam? This for them is an isolated phenomenon. China is an interesting phenomenon and being a non-religious country for them it's fine. They are much more bothered by Christian traditions.

With regard to the question of whether we are too complacent about radical Islam today. Well, I hope I am not. But I am trying to limit the problem, to reduce it to its true dimensions. there was an interesting invention, an interesting twist created by Osama Bin Laden. It worked up to a point. It didn't do as much as he wanted. He might be planning something new. He is an evil genius, let's give him that. Imagine for example that the operation played in London with the liquid bombing material would have succeeded, seven planes would have been up in the air, and we would have said that this is the second 9/11. Of course it would have been what Osama Bin Laden wanted, another propaganda by act. But the fact that we have been lucky until now, they have been discovered almost by fluke, by the MI5 which penetrated them, doesn't mean that it will not happen again.

With regard to the elections in Egypt. I don't have a clue what will happen in 2011 if Mubarak is still in shape he will present himself. There have been fellows around for longer. So why shouldn't he? In

expectation of the Muslim Brothers, the less militant, the less violent and pragmatic, there will be some fight within the ruling elite, a situation in which there is an interim president. The president of the National Assembly is by decree the one who serves in this function for sixty days. And those sixty days are the ones in which they would hope to bring the troops. But to tell you how much the government itself is mindful of this, this Ramadan which began ten days ago is the first Ramadan in years in which the government did not give the Muslim Brothers license to have an official open-air gathering of breaking the fast on the first day. This was a way of telling them, if you try to do something in public we have also our way. The Muslim Brothers refrained from challenging this order. This is the real way that the dialogue between government and subjects operates in Egypt. They understood the message.

Women and radical Islam. The answer is very simple. Yes, of course, they are. But in their rightful Islamic role, secondary and separate. I am simplifying terribly. But that's the way it is. There are certain novelties like the right of vote which even Khomeini came to accept. I don't know if you know that Khomeini got into politics in the beginning, in 1963, in trying to organize a protest against the right of vote accorded by the Shah. So Muslim Brothers movements all over the Sunni world followed him in certain respects. But for example in this testament of the five assassins of Sadat, number three on the list was the annulment by decree by President Sadat of the right of males to challenge divorce. Those basic rights related to human, on education they will go with the trend, no problem. Even though the basic interesting things, a field study made in Egypt of attitudes of girls and boys in high school and in university. As you could imagine, girls on the whole had more progressive views, but with one exception, girls who are educated in religious schools. Even religious schools teach you modern subjects, except in advance high school and university, the fact that they will not have a career. They will have jobs and in between jobs nurturing their children. Certainly those religious schools are one of the major impacts of the Muslim Brothers on Islamic society. Maybe they don't get power. But they shape minds and as a result behavior. But I see some adaptation of course we'll have, especially because of economic needs, the need for women to go into the job market because you need two salaries etc. That is acceptable, understandably so. Those are people who are pragmatic.

Question

Could you give me your opinion who is behind the Huti movement in the North of Yemen in the Zardai area?

Emmanuel Sivan

I know nothing about it. I'm sorry.

Question

In view of your analysis of the Al Qaida strategy and of the proliferation of radical Islam what is your advice to counteract this challenge? And if we counteract this challenge how would you coordinate it worldwide?

Emmanuel Sivan

I think it's quite well coordinated on the whole. Let's at least give the Bush administration its due that prior to the foolhardy invasion of Iraq it has set on a system both of combating but above all of exchanging information because information is the name of the game. I think this system works on the whole quite well. It is much less undifferentiating in the past regarding the use in France and Great Britain after every panic regarding to put all the usual suspects in prison. The result was many people found themselves in prison and got islamized and radicalized in prison, and then were liberated because there was nothing against them. So the system is much more calibrated, I believe, today and it is done quite well. What is lacking, however, and this is not something which governments even though, my co-speaker here would know more about this, they are doing courses for Imams etc, I think it has got its limits. Most of the combat on all this kind of movements has also to be in the fight for hearts and minds. And given the fact that liberal Islam is not a real alternative how do governments and authorities in the West, and Al Qaida has its major operations today in the West, willynilly, it didn't plan that way. Apart from that you got Algeria. You got the declining movement in Somalia, a state which is disappearing. And another non-state in Iraq, also in decline. In Algeria it's a powerful one. Wait for some surprises of course. There is no real fight. Funny enough, the only place where they do something serious about it, it really breaks my heart to say it, is Saudi Arabia. They take radicals out of prison, those not employed in the most dangerous act, and pass them through a kind of brainwashing session. And once they are sure that they have on the whole returned to the right path, which is of course Sharia and everything they are supposed to believe in, they get them a job and let them out under surveillance, I even think with some electronic devices attached to them. Until now there have been only two

or three cases in which those people fled to Yemen and then to freedom into some activity. I don't think that any Western government would do that. This is the only attempt. It just tells you how much shaken were the Saudis by those events. We are speaking about five years after the events and more than seven hundred people are still in prison with long duration. But it's the only attempt. Some more delicate attempts should be made despite the deterring function of all those means set in the year 2001.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Maybe I briefly add a comparison Saudi Arabia to Yemen in terms of reintegration of radicals into society. It's probably due to many reasons. But when Saudi Arabia works with art therapy and other brainwashing programs in the end these people are offered jobs whereas the Yemen experience, as far as I am informed, shows that there are also interesting experiments or interesting programs for reintegrating those people, but in the end they are not offered jobs. They get out of prison, and they get out of these programs, and they have nothing to do. And this makes of course also get them back into some sort of radical movements.

Emmanuel Sivan

I am surprised because both have a precedent. This is a way Algeria dealt with the defeated troops of the civil war. Among the defeated troops there was a substantial presence of people with technical and even high technical education. They were called Al Gazara, Algeria First Movement. They were not very high up, they were more in the support, the technological device. When given amnesty all those people were provided jobs and there are very few good economic news about Algeria except the fact that it's a major gas producer. But one is that Algeria has succeeded with the help of this troop to introduce a complete digitization of its government service which was lagging by giving them jobs. The idea was not known. Could it be that Yemen is just too poor?

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Yes, I think so. If you allow me a remark on the question of how to counteract the challenge. Of course you dealt with the complexity of radical movements, but it came down to the importance or the role of Al Qaida. But I think when we look especially to Europe studies really show an interesting phenomenon especially among young people, and that is the ideological influences or the points of references this Muslim youth is drawn to. An experience especially among young Turkish Muslims is that there is a sort of triangle, of three points of references that are continuously made. One point of reference is the homeland of the parents. The idea that looking to the homeland where their parents immigrated from will lose importance, this idea has not been realistic as it shows. Because the homelands of the immigrated parents generation of course also have change or do still change. That's very banal. But that's the case. And so of course the younger generation looks to the homeland. It more strongly, however, looks as a point of reference to the countries where they actually live. And this is a highly different situation in France, in Austria, in Germany, and in Great Britain. It's historically different. The discourses are different. The intellectual debates are different. Muslim intellectual output is different in Great Britain and Germany. The third point of reference, and I think that's an interesting aspect where Al Qaida may come in, is global Islam. I don't have to mention the internet and all the facilities. But we can understand is that especially Muslim youth in Europe is constantly switching from one point of reference to the other. And it is very difficult for movements be they conservative, more liberal, or radical to attract Muslim youth and to keep them as a loyal clientele. So it is also difficult to understand where the point of full radicalization that is taking a form of violence is actually starting. Because as we know in these different setups young Muslims, be they economically deprived or more successful, they really change their ideological attitudes depending also on the situation they are in. And this makes it also difficult to understand how important Al Qaida at least in this surrounding is.

Emmanuel Sivan

I would agree. I want just add, and this in a way brings us back to the topic of this lecture, that in this fleeting world of the internet a powerful icon like 9/11, many people have seen many times the two towers crumbling down. It's one of those pictures which defined an era. Give me a picture to define conservative Islam, liberal Islam, even Muslim Brethren Islam, no icon. So the power of picture... Osama Bin Laden knew what he was doing. He announced it in advance.

Sabine Kroissenbrunner

Thank you very much. Thank you for having stayed with us, for your interesting questions.