

‘Trosky and the Totalitarian Dialectic Revisited: Whether You Are Interested In Islamism or Not, Islamism Is Interested In You’



Judge Michael B. Mukasey

81st Attorney General of the United States

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12 – 1pm, Tuesday 30th October 2012

Committee Room G, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

<http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2012/10/30/a-keynote-lecture-by-michael-b-mukasey-81st-attorney-general-of-the-united-states/>

The special relationship between the US and the UK has proven especially useful in countering the threat of international terrorism. Through intelligence sharing, military campaigns and attempts to understand the ideology that drives radical Islamist movements, both nations are better equipped to defeat the terrorist threat than they were prior to 9/11.

The bond that binds the US and the UK on a variety of counterterrorism issues has however been tested recently by a variety of controversial developments concerning Britain’s involvement in the European Court of Human Rights and the UK-US extradition treaty. A series of high-profile cases involving American attempts to extradite British citizens has – fairly or unfairly – led to a perception in the UK that the US-UK extradition treaty is asymmetrical and unjust, with Brits being disproportionately susceptible to being deported to the US.

By kind invitation of **Baroness Scotland of Ashtal**, **The Henry Jackson Society** in collaboration with **The Federalist Society** is pleased to invite you to a discussion with **Judge Michael B. Mukasey**, **81st Attorney General of the United States and Partner at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP**. Drawing upon a wealth of experience, Judge Mukasey will discuss the legal aspects of counter-terrorism and the war against terrorism. How best can the US and UK resolve future disagreements while remaining a cohesive alliance against the terrorist threat? What lessons can be learned from a decade of experience in battling the threat posed by radical Islam? How can we increase our capacity further? And what developments within the legal frameworks of both countries are hindering this capacity?

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VENUE: Committee Room G, House of Lords, SW1A 0PW

To attend please RSVP to: Emma.pike@henryjacksonsociety.org

Biography

Michael B. Mukasey served as the 81st Attorney General of the United States, the nation's chief law enforcement officer, from November 2007 to January 2009. During that time, he oversaw the U.S. Department of Justice and advised on critical issues of domestic and international law. From 1988 to 2006, he served as a district judge in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, becoming chief judge in 2000. Judge Mukasey joined Debevoise & Plimpton LLP as a partner in the litigation practice in New York in February 2009, focusing his practice primarily on internal investigations, independent board reviews and corporate governance.

Transcript

Baroness Scotland

I want to welcome you all on behalf of the Henry Jackson Society. It's a very rare privilege for us to have with us a former Attorney General from the USA. Michael, as you know, was the 81st Attorney General and the Attorney General has a broader spectrum of responsibility than do we. And many of you will remember I was the Attorney General here in the United Kingdom for some of the time that Michael was the United States Attorney, because he was Attorney between November 2007 and January 2009. He was the last Attorney, I think, to serve in the Bush administration.

Now during that time, he oversaw the US Department of Justice and advised on critical issues of domestic and international law. But before that, from 1988 to 2006, he served as a district judge in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York; becoming chief judge in 2000. So it's an unusual transfer for our jurisdiction to go from judge to attorney. But it's not a usual one, I think, for the US. So we very much look forward to his address, after which there will be an opportunity to ask questions. So Michael –

Judge Michael Mukasey

Thank you. I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to Baroness Scotland for sponsoring us today to Hanna Nomm, Leonard Leo for the opportunity to speak here and of course to the Henry Jackson Society. I have to tell you that when I first received the invitation, given the name of the society, I thought that I would be addressing an audience of American expatriates. I am both encouraged and delighted by the fact that I'm actually addressing Britons who share the values of 'Scoop' Jackson and of the Federalist Society. It's a particular pleasure to be here.

I actually thought for a moment about following the example of our president and providing some gifts for my hosts. For Baroness Scotland, perhaps an iPod loaded with some of my speeches. For Hanna, perhaps DVDs of some American movies formatted in such a way that they cannot be played on British machines. But I was occupied with other preparations for the trip and so I neglected to do that – maybe next time.

I'm happy to see that the source for the title of my talk is not so off-putting as to drive away the audience. Leon Trotsky is reputed to have said at the beginning of the last century, referring to the Communist dialectic, that you may not be interested in the dialectic, but the dialectic is interested in you. It occurred to me that the same might be said of the current totalitarianism with which we are grappling, namely Islamism, or Islamic supremacism. So I thought I would speak with you for a few moments about that 'ism' and about how countries like ours [inaudible] themselves and their values.

I have to tell you that it's by no means universally thought in my country that, and perhaps likely here as well, that there's any need to understand Islamism and take a defensive posture with respect to it. The reasons for this seem to be rooted in the fact that Islamism claims to be, and in fact is, rooted in a religion. In part because of the limited role that religion plays in our own countries, we tend to think of it as only one aspect of a person's life and a private aspect at that. However for the vast majority of the world's 1.4 billion Muslims, it's not just a private matter. A substantial number adhere to a view of religion that agrees on the need to impose *Shari'a* or Islamic law on the world, beginning with that part of the world that at any time was Muslim which is referred to as the *dar al-Islam* – the domain of Islam. This includes not only what we would conventionally think of as Muslim countries, but also Spain, referred to by an Islamist as Andalusia, and once a part of the Islamic caliphate; as well as any part of the Muslim world that comes under the control of Muslims, with the result that, for example, some suburbs of Paris, in which Muslims are the majority, are in fact a no-go zone for the police and for fire-fighters unless they've gotten the consent of local authorities.

The other part of the world to which there's also an obligation to spread *Shari'a* is called significantly, I think, the *Dar al-Harb*, or the domain of war. The war referred to is a religious war to impose *Shari'a*, which is a comprehensive legal framework that has spiritual aspects to be sure; but is supposed to regulate all behaviour – economic, social, legal, military, political, and personal. Because it is all-encompassing and lays claim to being divinely inspired, it regards the notion that people can determine for themselves the rule that govern any aspect of their lives, either on their own or through elected representatives, as anathema, which is to say that *Shari'a* is totalitarian and profoundly anti-democratic.

As the United States government established in court during a trial before me, as it happens, when I served as a US district judge in New York, in which the defendants included Omar Abdel-Rahman, known as the 'blind sheikh' – as the government established at that trial, Islamic scripture, including the Qur'an, which is regarded as containing the revealed and unchangeable word of Allah, contains commands of violence against non-believers. There are some scholars who try to restrict the reading of such commands by limiting them to the historic context. Islamist scholars, however, construe them literally as a wide mandate for violent action against people they perceive as their enemies. Such a scholar was the 'blind sheikh' – convicted along with about a dozen others – of seditious conspiracy to wage a war of urban terrorism against the United States and a bombing conspiracy that included the bombing of the World Trade Center in February 1993, or as it's now known, the first World Trade Center bombing. A plot to bomb New York City landmarks, that plot was thwarted when the joint terrorism task force in New York infiltrated it and, among other things, recorded the conversations of the defendants. The proof also included some of the speeches of the 'blind sheikh', urging a violent interpretation of the obligation to wage jihad, as well as testimony of more explicit directions that he gave his followers.

The defendants argued that the prosecution, and certainly the use of religious sermons and other pronouncements, infringed their rights to religious liberty and free expression. But the second circuit court of appeals affirmed the convictions and indeed offered lavish praise to the way the case was handled by the prosecutors as consistent with the highest traditions of the Justice Department and the defence lawyers as equal to the most exacting requirements of their calling. In fact, there was enough praise left over so that it included kind words for the trial judge as well. That case was prosecuted under a Civil War era law that barred seditious conspiracy and it was very difficult to apply; however based on

the lessons learned in that case, the Clinton administration and Congress collaborated to enact a sweeping overhaul of the US counterterrorism law, known as the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. That act was expressly designed to permit aggressive investigations that could interrupt terrorists and their supporters before plots could pose a danger to the public.

The court rulings in the Abdel-Rahman case and the subsequent revisions of the anti-terrorism laws, indeed the creation of anti-terrorism laws, was based on a single, simple conclusion: one that the 9/11 Commission would reiterate after the terrorist attack that killed nearly 3,000 Americans in 2001: namely, that there is a radical, ideological movement in the Islamic world that, in the words of the report, draws on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one string of Islam.

It's possible, I suppose, to debate how broadly this influence runs. I think it's fair to say that in any event, it is far from a fringe and that it is highly influential in the Middle East and increasingly influential in the West. But what is not debatable is whether this ideology exists, and whether those who adhere to it consider themselves to be at war with the United States and the West in general, and whether that ideology motivates the continuing threat to the United States and its interests around the globe. It does. Any realistic terrorism strategy, which is to say, any strategy that is intended to prevent attacks, rather than simply respond to them; and in general to avoid losing ground to terrorists and their allies, rather than dealing with attacks after they've occurred and people have died and properties have been destroyed, has to accept the existence of that reality.

We have to accept that the threat is ideologically based and support a programme that identifies the enemy ideology accurately, in order to understand and anticipate its operations so as to defeat them. The ideology can't be wished away by pretending that it doesn't exist and the Constitution of the United States cannot be read as a set of rules that prevent the government from performing its first and most essential duty, namely the duty to protect the American people. Yet, unfortunately that the pretence that the threat does not exist has become the government's principle approach.

So, for example, take the case of Major Nidal Hassan's massacre of 13 of his fellow soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas in 2010 which he preceded by shouting 'Allahu Akbar'. The army's after action report on that incident does not mention the word 'Islam' and refers to the incident as 'workplace violence.' The Army Chief of Staff said on television after that massacre that the greatest tragedy would be if it had a negative effect on the Army's diversity programme. Or consider John Brennan, a principal national security and counterterrorism advisor to President Obama who told an audience at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies – now this is a deep thinker, talking to other deep thinkers – he said that violent extremists, as he referred to them, attacking the United States are products of 'political, economic and social forces' and should not be described in religious terms because to do so would create the mistaken impression that we are at war with Islam and thereby give credence to al Qaeda propaganda. Products of political, economic and social forces. Let's review the bidding. Osama bin Laden was a millionaire many times over. His successor, and also coincidentally the folks who planned and carried out the 2007 attack on the Glasgow Airport, are physicians. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attack are well educated. A man named Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, he was the youngster who tried to blow himself up on an airplane over in Detroit over Christmas of 2009, is the son of the former Economics Minister of Nigeria. Products of political, economic and social forces? Understand that this to be [inaudible] with the

current administration; this being that sort of euphemism. It was present in the administration in which I served as well. President Bush told the nation shortly after 9/11 and continued to repeat that Islam is a religion of peace. His principal National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State went him one better, she said it was a religion of peace and love. And of course, we heard that the terrorists had hijacked that religion. Now in order to savour the significance of that formulation, consider how the United States would have reacted if President Roosevelt had gone before Congress on December 8th 1941 and said that the peaceful Shinto religion had been hijacked by extremists.

National security officials and members of the administration seem to have convinced themselves that Americans are the cause, rather than the victims of terrorism. So the president goes before the United Nations and suggests that violence against US diplomatic stations is the appropriate and understandable reaction by Muslims to a video, rather than being precipitated by supremacist ideology – [Baroness Scotland sneezes] bless you – and he goes to great lengths, as does his Secretary of State, to tell the world that the US government objects to the video and had nothing to do with producing it.

A recent report by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations criticises a fusion centre of the Department of Homeland Security – of Security, I'm sorry – for focusing on the list of reading suggestions circulated by a Muslim community group, when several books on the list were written by people cited in a terrorism database maintained by the intelligence agencies. The Subcommittee figuratively wags a finger at the fusion centre and says 'we cannot report on books and other writings simply because the authors are listed on the database since, as it says in the report, the writings themselves are protected by the First Amendment. Unless you can establish something in the writing indicates planning or advocates violence or other criminal activity.' Wrong. The speeches of the 'blink sheikh', Omar Abdel-Rahman, were protected by the First Amendment in the sense that the government could not stop them; but the government did present them as evidence at his trial: indicating his state of mind and the state of mind of certain of his listeners. I permitted them to be introduced and the Court of Appeals made it clear that they were admissible; even less, with the gathering of such material for intelligence purposes be objectionable. Simply because someone has the constitutional right to make a statement, doesn't mean that he also has the constitutional right to prevent the government from noticing it. If he did, it would be impossible to prosecute any would-be terrorist until after an attack.

We must certainly recognize that Muslims have been the principal victims of violent jihadists globally. Also, the desire to avoid tarring millions of law-abiding Muslims who do not wish to impose *shari'a* on others is noble, and intelligence should be gathered with sensitivity and digression. In addition, many of those same law-abiding Muslims have provided important help to law enforcement, intelligence and military agencies in confronting terrorism and should be empowered, rather than made the focus of suspicion. But they, and we, and our government have to realise that whatever struggles there are between anti-Western Muslims and those who embrace the West are secondary to the government's main national security obligations. Obviously, we would prefer to see truly pro-Western Muslims prevail, but the influence of their adversaries will not be diminished by pretending that they do not exist, or that their world view is not based on an interpretation of Islam that has strong appeal in the Middle East and a growing number of enclaves in the West.

But what of the vaunted Arab Spring? What, indeed. As events unfolded in Tahrir Square, we in the United States saw a great deal of coverage of how the driving forces of that revolution relied on Twitter and Facebook; but not so much coverage of the public rape of the CBS journalist in Tahrir Square accompanied by shouts of 'Allahu Akbar', and even less coverage of the emergence of the Sinai Peninsula as a refuge for Hamas-trained terrorists who travel regularly from Gaza and launch attacks that kill Israelis. There was, I think, virtually no coverage at all of the return to Egypt of Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, who had been exiled from the country by Hosni Mubarak and who delivered a triumphant sermon in Tahrir Square upon his return. Now, Qaradawi is praised in many quarters of the West as a liberal and a reformer who has, among other things, stood up for women's rights, and so he has, even to the point of issuing a fatwa that authorises women to participate in suicide bombings. More recently, Mohammed Morsi, the newly elected president of Egypt, and a candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, has retired the senior members of the military who were expected by some to act as a counterweight to the Brotherhood. Whether they could have done that or not is debatable, but President Morsi has mooted that debate by appointing as the new chief of staff, someone whose Muslim Brotherhood's credentials are well-established.

Tahrir Square was the scene of a sort of inaugural speech by President Morsi, in which he said that one of his main goals is to secure the release of Omar Abdel-Rahman, the 'blind sheikh' who I put in jail for a term of life. And most recently, a week and a half ago, Morsi was seen on Egyptian television in prayer, led by a cleric, Sheikh Futouh *Abd Al-Nabi Mansour* at a mosque in Mersa Matruh answering 'amen' to a prayer for the dispersion and destruction of the Jews – sort of a Reverend Wright moment for him. The venue of Mersa Matruh, by the way, is interesting for a World War II buff like myself. It happens to have been the scene of the last Nazi victory for Rommel and his Africa Corps before they got chased back across the rim of Africa.

But we're told that we mustn't panic. Just last week the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, that communal warm bath of *bien pensant* liberal thought in the United States, carried an article by Roger Cohen assuring us that we can work with the Muslim Brotherhood, who he portrays as centrist pragmatists. Well, pragmatists they may be; centrist is another matter. The Muslim Brotherhood motto, which has not changed since its founding until today, is as follows: 'Allah is our objective, the prophet is our leader, the Qur'an is our law, jihad is our way, dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope'. The fact that the organisation still exists after decades of suppression by governments in Egypt from Nasser to Mubarak is testimony to its resilience and to the ability of its members to use tactical deception. There's even a word for it: *taqqiya* – in order to tack in on direction, and then another toward an ultimate goal. Perhaps the best illustration of that is Turkey. Their president Erdogan has now overcome the Kamalist and secular military to the point where he can announce, confidently, that he finds the term 'moderate Islam', in his words, ugly and offensive. He says there is no moderate or immoderate Islam, Islam is Islam and that's it. Roger Cohen in the *Times* says that we should note that the Muslim Brotherhood is looking to Turkey as a model. He finds that comforting. I find it terrifying. Turkey, under Erdogan, is not about democratisation; Turkey was a democracy before Erdogan came to power. What it's about now, with women shunted out of the workplace, and journalists arrested, is about Islamisation, not democratisation. It was, after all, Erdogan who, in 1994, when he was mayor of Istanbul, proclaimed himself a servant of *shari'a*.

In Tunisia, Islamists are in control. Their leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, like Qaradawi, recently returned from exile to lead his party – barely five years ago, called for the public hanging of two Tunisian intellectuals, one a woman, who were too vigorous in his tastes in their supports of women’s rights. But even a member of the *Wall Street Journal’s* editorial staff, in a column in that paper several months ago, assured us that Ghannouchi is a new breed of Islamist, with a sense of irony and a sense of humour. Ghannouchi even assured the journal editor that he would not seek to ban alcohol because alcohol is consumed privately and he recalled, for the *Wall Street Journal* editor, that the United States itself had an unpleasant experience when it tried the experiment of banning alcohol many decades ago during prohibition. Quite an ironist and a humorist, and apparently the spiritual successor to that parade of Soviet premieres who you may remember back in the 1970s when we were told that each succeeding one was a liberal because he drank scotch and listened to jazz.

But isn’t what is happening in Egypt and Tunisia and Turkey a manifestation of democracy, and aren’t we duty-bound as supporters of democracy to support it? The answer to the second part of that question, whether we should feel bound to support the outcome, as someone pointed out, depends on what you mean by democracy. If you mean by democracy, not only a process of majority rule, but also an underlying culture that includes protection of minority rights, then yes, we would be obligated to support it if that were the process. But if you mean simply majority rule with no such underlying culture of tolerance, then what’s happening in Egypt and Tunisia and Turkey is not democracy, and in my view, no, we have no obligation to support it.

If, as President Erdogan put it, to Islamists, in his words, ‘democracy is just the train we board to reach our destination’, then the destination is obviously Islamist rule and I would think we should feel no obligation to support that. Now why is it important in the struggle that we’re in that we understand all this? In past conflicts it may not have always been self-evident that we had to understand what our enemies were about. Perhaps it wasn’t necessary when we fought the Axis powers in Germany and Japan to understand all the ins and outs of Nazism and Fascism and the military culture of the Shinto religion. We could simply blast those countries to smithereens, as we in fact did, because the evil had its home there. But it was much more necessary to understand the enemy when we fought Communism, as a man named Whittaker Chambers taught us, even when it was centred principally in the Soviet Union because although it may have been centred there, it was not simply that nation, but its militant ideology that we were struggling with. Chambers prefaces his excellent book, called ‘Witness’, with a preface that consists of a letter to his children in which he explains why he went through what he did in order to expose Communism for what it was, so that they would understand why it was that he had exposed himself and them to a life of torment. He points out that Communism, at its root, offered the same promise that was offered by the serpent in Eden: that you shall be as gods, that Communism dreamt of a world without god, who would be superfluous.

The great totalitarianisms of the last century, and of this one, have in common that they’ve all dreamt of a world without something that they can’t stand because they think it interferes with their ability to dominate the lives of human beings. Nazism dreamt of a world without Jews. Communism dreamt of a world without God. And Islamism also dreams of a world without something. It dreams of a world without infidels. A world in which infidels are either killed, or converted to Islam, or reduced to a second-class citizen status called *dhimmitude*, such that they themselves recognize their inferiority and present no

obstacle. And so we must understand that 'ism' as well, or else be prepared to live with people who look forward to a world without us. Thank you very much for the privilege of speaking to you.

Baroness Scotland

Well thank you for a very thought-provoking, and I'm sure stimulation in terms of questions, presentation. I intend to take questions now three at a time, if I may please. If you could indicate by usual manner by holding up your hand if you would like to ask a question and give you name and where you come from or which group you represent. So who's going to be our first three questions?

Question 1

Fascinating, thank you very much for that. I'm Alan [inaudible]. I don't represent anybody except myself. A couple of issues around your analysis. Firstly, you do appear to have put totally on one side the essential tribalism that exists within many Muslim societies and the impact on that in terms of the internal conflicts. Secondly, the much larger conflict between Sunni and Shi'a, which has been waging for many years but appears to have accelerated since the Arab Spring. To what extent do either of those blunt the impact of Islamism, or rather mute the effectiveness with which Islamism could be applied?

Baroness Scotland

John Reid.

Question 2 – John Reid

Hi, first of all, thank you very much. John Reid, I now represent myself nowadays, thank God. Thank you for a provocative and uncompromising speech. I understand your criticisms of those who, I suppose you would say, take a social work attitude towards this problem. But I wonder if by doing it, you don't miss a heavy element that has to be addressed. I'll separate the political phenomena structure and leadership of Islamism, which you referred to, and let's accept that that draws as much from Bolshevism as it draws from Islam. The nature of the injected consciousness into the unconscious masses by rather privileged leadership – and that analogy, of course implicitly, refers to Lenin, Trotsky, other educated people who run the movement but it also extends, of course, to the British cabinet – but let's leave that aside. But in emphasizing that, you tended to reject the socioeconomic and political conditions that give rise to a mass movement and I think that's pretty dangerous. While it is true the way you describe the nature of Islamism as a political movement and its leadership, I think it would be a big mistake to misunderstand the socioeconomic and political conditions that give rise to the very popularity in certain quarters that you referred to as being attractive to them. And more importantly, when we're responding, if you dismiss socioeconomic and political conditions, you will not defeat this phenomenon merely by going through the leadership. I hate to say something that sounds like tough on crime and the causes of crime, but both are absolutely essential in my view. You have to accompany a relentless pursuit of the Islamist leadership and their terrorism with an understanding and addressing of some of the underlying problems that give rise to potential popularity in certain sections of the world for the people who support it.

Baroness Scotland

Ok, and one last. Gentleman at the back, I think.

Question 3

My name is Alexander [inaudible] and I don't represent anyone [inaudible]. You brought in your excellent speech several very good examples of most high-level politicians and media using the terms and basically, let's call it euphemisms, OK. And I just wondered if we look at this in a more wider context of society. You and your opinion on that – do you think that's hard for the [inaudible] political correctness where people essentially have to and encourage to self-censor themselves, which to some extent reminds how it used to be in the Soviet Union in Communist time where people knew you better not say certain things, or else. What do you think?

Baroness Scotland

Judge.

Judge Michael Mukasey

For the first question, I think, concerned whether I thought that the forces of tribalism and of the Sunni-Shi'a rivalry, historic rivalry, would tend to blunt Islamism. I wish that were true, I don't think it is. The reason for that, I think, goes to a kind of set of concentric circles that are drawn around many people. The currently relevant circle is the one that's drawn around Muslims and the rest of the world. The Sunnis and the Shias will get to settling the hash between them after they've dealt with the rest of us – not before. Same for tribalism and the experience – my experience – teaches that, in fact, a stronghold of Shia Islam, Iran, has served as a refuge for members of al-Qaeda who, as you know, are Sunni, and has provided support for Sunni groups because it would rather see violent Sunni groups prevail than it would see Western groups prevail. The Shia and the Sunni will deal with one another after they get done dealing with the rest of the world and I'd rather that didn't happen.

So far as the question of whether my analysis misses dealing with socioeconomic conditions, yes, to a certain extent it does, and I'm not – God knows I'm not in favour of promoting poverty. On the other hand, there are many poverty-stricken cultures in the world that have not generated the kind of violence that has been generated in this culture. You said you thought that Islamism drew from Bolshevism and I don't think it does. I think, indeed, the two of them share a common pattern, but I don't think it draws from Bolshevism – I think the common pattern that they share accounts for the fact that the left has been very accommodating of Islamists and vice versa. Paradoxically, the lawyer who represented the 'blind sheikh' during my trial was a long time left-wing activist who was later convicted of getting secrets from him from jail and transmitting them to the outside world in violation of the rules under which he was imprisoned. Notwithstanding that if people like him ever came to power, she and others like her would be the first to go, but she felt an affinity for him that I think had nothing to do with him drawing on whatever Bolshevism may look in her ideology, but rather just something that they share.

John Reid

Sorry to cut in – I didn't mean the ideology of Bolshevism. I specifically said from the structural form of Bolshevism, which is the injection into the masses of the right way of thinking and intolerance of anyone against it. In that sense...

Judge Michael Mukasey

I think, my view is that that's been going on long before there were Bolsheviks and will be going on long after. And so far as political correctness, yes it is what I've been talking about is a subset of political

correctness. I'm not – I can barely take this one, I can't take on all of political correctness. But the proliferation of euphemisms was something that, I think, was pointed out vividly by George Orwell in his splendid essay called 'Politics and the English Language', which if you haven't read it, I would commend to you. He talks about the way that our desire to avoid confronting a reality has of raining euphemisms down on harsh reality and, as he puts it, obscuring it the way snow covers the harsh outlines of a landscape. It's a splendid essay and if you read it, I think it will both help you confront reality and write better English. Not that you don't all write obviously far better English than I, but it's a wonderful essay and I think it points out this phenomenon beautifully.

Baroness Scotland

Gentleman in the glasses on the end; the lady on the far right; and in the middle. Thank you very much.

Question 4 – James Phillip

You didn't address weapons of mass destruction during your talk in a big way and it seems to me that having, say, 300,000 people killed in Manhattan would be the type of thing that could genuinely change the lives of everyone in the West and everyone in the world whereas nothing else would. That you could lose 3,000 people a dozen times added it wouldn't fundamentally alter the character of even the United States, let alone the whole planet. Do you think that the fact that we haven't had a WMD go off since Hiroshima and Nagasaki means that we underestimate the significance and impact of those weapons?

Baroness Scotland

And can I just have your name?

James Phillip

James Phillip – I write and [inaudible]

Baroness Scotland

Lady on the right.

Question 5 – Sarah Rose

My name is Sarah Rose and I would like to ask about Iran. Would you say that Iran is different from other countries where there's a large, kind of, Islamist element in the [inaudible] of the cultural and secular elements in society that might seem rather different and are able to exist...what you're talking about.

Question 6

Yes, two brief questions. Can you comment on the persecution of Christians that seems to be spreading from the Middle East countries – Egypt notably, Nigeria, and Syria – persecuting and killing Christians? And secondly a question you refer to Islam as a religion and yet everything you seem to be saying implies it's also a political movement. It's almost self-evident that you're correct. Doesn't that mean that we have to address both the political ideology and the religious ideology if we're going to get anywhere?

Judge Michael Mukasey

The – so far as the WMD, I did not specifically address that. My view is that's a means, not an end and I would've thought that – I mean I was in New York on 9/11, I would've thought that that would be enough to change a society. We don't need that multiplied by a hundred. I don't think that the fact that, and I may be misunderstanding your question, but I don't think the fact that we haven't had a WMD attack or that

there hasn't been an atomic explosion since Nagasaki means that somehow the world has, or everybody necessarily, has been able to obtain possession of those weapons, has decided to avoid it. They've decided to avoid it thus far, largely because the only two superpowers who had it in appreciable numbers – the United States and the Soviet Union – and mutual assured destruction was a deterrent. With respect to Iran, my view is that mutual assured destruction is an attraction, not a deterrent and that that's why we are so adamant about their not getting it. I mean they've articulated a desire to wipe another country off the face of the earth. Their response to the notion that they might be hit with atomic weapons has been, more than once, Allah will know his own. Now, do they mean it? I don't really want to find out. The question about whether Iran, because of some secular tendencies, is different from, say, other countries that are mostly Sunni countries that also follow *Shari'a*. I don't think it's different in relevant respects and certainly not in the respect in which we confront it. It is, as I said before, just as welcoming of Sunni violence as it is of Shia violence, notwithstanding that later on there will be a settling of scores when they get around to it. So, I don't think it's different in any relevant way.

With respect to the persecution of Christians, that's been – that is an ongoing horror and it's obviously accelerated since the Morsi government took power in Egypt. The persecution of the Copts has gone apace and I mean, I would not want to be a Christian living in Egypt. I would not have wanted to be one before; I certainly wouldn't want to be one now and I believe that there is a large out migration of those Christians who could leave. The same, obviously, is true in Nigeria and in Syria.

You say we have to confront both the political and the religious aspects of Islam. I don't really draw a distinction. I say we have to confront what it is in that ideology that wants to step over the line and trump on us – whether you call it political or religious or anything else. To me, it doesn't make a whole lot of difference. It may very well make a difference, ultimately, I just don't see the distinction now and I see, rather, the need to confront it and to deal with it and to oppose it. How you do that may mean using religious means, it may mean using political means. But the 'it' that has to be confronted is, I think, the same.

Baroness Scotland

David, and then the gentleman behind David Blunkett in the green sweater, and then there's the gentleman on the far right.

Question 7 – David Blunkett MP

I'm David Blunkett and I'm a member of the UK Parliament. We're all familiar with the old adage that those who are not with us are against us, but sometimes, those who are temporally with us, turn out to be against us. I enjoyed reading 'Charlie Wilson's War'; it was very much about militant right-wing Christians who, what they believe to be right, which turned out to be arming militant Islam and, as a consequence, killing our troops and your troops in Afghanistan over the last 11 years. How do you square circles where in the world you describe, things are literally black and white?

Baroness Scotland

And I think it was the gentleman behind David...

Question 8

My name is David [inaudible]. I actually have a relatively similar question, which is that let's assume for one moment that everything you say is absolutely correct. What do you propose to do about it?

Question 9

Hi, my name is Gavin [inaudible]. I'm the director of [inaudible] Intelligence. Your view, sir, is certainly uncompromising [inaudible]. There seems to be a binary choice, in some respect, between a military intelligence approach, which is the approach which particularly the US and UK governments have adopted over a long period of time addressing the key threat. But how does a democracy, how does our society – our societies – address a religious threat without itself potentially drawing the Messianic [inaudible] that David Blunkett just mentioned.

Judge Michael Mukasey

You refer to the unintended consequences of the Charlie Wilson's War phenomenon and it's certainly a valid criticism. Do you have to be careful? Yes. I don't think that simply the arming of those who are opposing the Soviets was what led to what happened later on. There were a whole lot of steps in between. Although the principal lesson that was learned by the people who got those arms was that, well these guys with suits are the same and it doesn't really matter whether they're Communists, or anti-Communists, or Americans, or Russians – they're all the same and they're all vulnerable. You need to, obviously, figure that out. Does it mean that you don't, in a tactically advantageous situation arm some of them? I don't know that I'd go that far, but I agree on the need to be careful.

The what do you do about it and the third question really kind of merge. I think it's not so much what we do about it because the ability of, certainly of the United States government and, I would assume, of the British government as well, to change Muslim doctrine is limited at best. But, what you certainly do about it – what you certainly don't do about it – is to empower the people who are trying to destroy you. In the United States, law enforcement and, to a certain extent, intelligence agencies, have engaged in outreach with, to organisations that are documented to be part of the Muslim Brotherhood. By contrast, there are other organisations and other people who are trying to preach a peaceful brand of Islam. There's a doctor named Dr. Zuni Jasser, who just wrote a book, he's been on television quite a bit, he has a foundation and he's doing his best. He gets no support, no outreach, and indeed when he prepared a film for training by the New York City police department, the mayor, the current mayor of New York, made the police department stop using it as a training device because the groups that I mentioned earlier made a fuss and said that it was anti-Muslim. He is a Muslim. His doctorate is not, regrettably, is not in theology, it's in medicine and he's a former lieutenant commander in the US Navy. I think reaching out to people like that and others in the Muslim community who represent forces like that is a partial answer. It's certainly a better answer than reaching out to CARE and ISNA and other organisations of that sort.

Baroness Scotland

Gentleman at the far right and then the gentleman in front of me. I'm afraid you only get one bite of the cherry.

Question 10

[inaudible]

Judge Michael Mukasey

I'm sorry?

Baroness Scotland

Ridding Western dependency on oil.

Question 11

Sir, very interesting talk. Your last answer left me wondering whether or not we should – we, in the West – should be doing anything about it – about what's happening. How would we know who to support? For example, should we be supporting Assad in Syria? Or should we be supporting the rebels? Same thing, really, in Libya. How do we know what we're going to get in the end and how do we make an intelligent idea – or is it just frying pan, fire, frying pan, fire?

Baroness Scotland

I think there's an opportunity for one last question. Gentleman in the lavender.

Question 12

My name is Harold [inaudible]. I'm from the London Jewish Culture Centre in the Ivy House and what I would like to ask you, sir, we're nearly at the end near enough of this session and I would like, if possible, if you could predict for me and others what you think, possibly, will the world will look like in three years time, with caveats, I would really appreciate that comment.

Judge Michael Mukasey

As far as the first question about ending our dependency on foreign oil, the funds from which are funding a great deal of this – I have an optimistic view of that. I think that problem may very well be almost about to solve itself because the exploitation of shale oil – my own country and in a lot of other countries, and shale gas – is galloping along at incredible rates. I think we are not very far from the day when we can tell the folks who have the oil take a bath in it if you'd like.

So far as what we in the West do with regard to places like Syria and Libya, I think I may have been somewhat at fault in getting out of my own lane – I was Attorney General, I was not Secretary of State, I certainly wasn't president and don't aspire to be either – but one obvious thing that the United States could do in Syria was what various countries did in Libya; which is to create a no-fly zone, in which rebels can take refuge without, perhaps, the need for relying to the extent that they have on the support of organisations like al-Qaeda. We did that in Bosnia with no loss of US life. And we did it in Syria – in Libya, I should say – leading, as the president said, from behind. I would just assume that we led from the front, but that's something that can be done. The Syrian air defences are primitive. They can be taken down very easily and a no-fly zone created near the Turkish border, whether that would upset the Turks or not, I have no idea and candidly, I care less. But it would at least give people who were opposing the regime a place to regroup and possibly to reinforce themselves without the need for the kind of help that they're getting from organisations who'd rather they didn't get help from.

Projecting what the world is going to look like in three years. If I'm not – I don't aspire to be Secretary of State and I don't aspire to be President, I certainly don't have the gift of prophecy. If common sense takes hold, and things like development of shale oil and so on go forward, I think the world will look somewhat better than what it does now in three years. So, I'm optimistic. Besides, I have two grandchildren aged eight and ten so I have to be optimistic.

Baroness Scotland

I think we're about to 1 o'clock now. So we're going to pull up the stamps now, but can I, on behalf of everyone here, give you a profound thank you for your uncompromising honesty and the vigour with which you expressed yourself. I think we've been treated to a rare treat from an Attorney General who has been let free of the burdens of office. You know in our country, we'll say I couldn't possibly comment. Thank you very much indeed.