

Transcript

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So thank you everyone for joining the last presenter as it were our keynote for these two days. Who will be sharing his reflections? Professor Salman said is of course a well known scholar in the realm of political Muslim studies in the theoretical arenas of reflection that we've been engaging, including in Islamophobia, one of the leading scholars in that arena.

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Correct me if I'm wrong, proceed, but I'm chair of the sociology department at Leeds University.

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I used to be. I've stopped doing that at the end of 31st of July's.

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OK.

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Up until very recently, in taking on valiantly the the task of university administration, but of course also the distinguished author of several volumes, including on Islamophobia, recalling the caliphate which has been in its second edition.

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Relatively recently and can't present reassigned without mentioning a fundamental fear. A really pioneering post. Modern reflection on what it means to be an Islamist or to use language of the time, a fundamentalist, and thus the term a fundamental fear.

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Without further ado, proceed, the floor is yours for.

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Yes.

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Well, thank you very much everyone. And it's been a wonderful listening to so many really, really compelling conversations and interventions. So the point that I want to make really are kind of riffing off what everyone.

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Said before and I'm just picking up a few things which I thought.

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Really stood out for me, but also made me.

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How to reflect upon on a kind of general proposition? I guess we all have as people who are writers and academics and engaged in that kind of business of trying to think about things.

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It's really what do you do when you're confronted with something so horrific, like the Rabbi massacre, and there is a sense in which you're kind of thinking, well, what is there to do and not just because of the massacre itself, which is, you know, terrible enough, but really that it stands for a metaphor for almost a decade of real oppressive.

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Rule A kind of dismantling of any kind of notion of human decency, all kinds of things that we know and we've suffered. And, you know, people have mentioned in many different ways.

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Given many more experiences of.

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So the question really is this.

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Why study or why reflect upon this massacre? There are things that we could do which are much lighter, fluffier. We could talk about Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and all of these things. But why do we reflect upon something so horrific?

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And I guess part of it is this temptation is to really say, when confronted with something like that, is to say, well, what can we do? What can be done about it? What is it that we're trying to do? What is it that our skills allow us to help to deal with, something like that?

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And.

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And while you know Vivian talked about the traumatic element of that, and I think she made the point which.

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Think.

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A really, really powerful point, and I think it needs to.

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Re emphasised again, trauma is what you can't speak of. That's what becomes traumatic. So in a way, part of what we're doing here is almost therapeutic in a way. We're trying to speak of something.

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And in that, we're trying to perhaps do at least that we can do, but I think there's also temptation among those of us who work in this sort of academic business kind of thing that well.

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So how we know? And this is where I think I don't have Jasmine's still here, but the whole thing about knowledge production becomes key because the idea is this that we as producers of knowledge or as.

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We, who we'd like to think of ourselves as privileged producers of knowledge.

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Really are hoping that we can answer the question of what can what to do, and we do this by saying if we understand what happened.

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That will allow us to do what so understanding becomes the key so we can understand as a form of therapy. It makes if you understand something.

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It kind of helps to deal with the trauma understanding as a kind of curiosity. There may be some of us are saying, well, actually something happened. It's just a puzzle for us to resolve. How is it that 1000 nearly 1000 unarmed people, civilians protesting.

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Were shot down or subject to such violence by their security forces. And when you think about the security forces, the military, those who were doing the violence were not necessarily dissimilar.

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From the people there, they were ordinary people who would go back at home to families, etc. It's not just, you know, the people sitting in large houses and things like that, but it's just the ordinary stuff. It's then there's, of course, the old fashioned thing about beloved of political science, and it's kind of, especially in this kind of behaviouralist incarnation.

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That understanding will give us prediction and we'll be able to control events somehow. So again, it's a mastery of events. If you can understand it, we can predict it and we can do something that and related to that is I suppose is the kind of understanding is a kind of undoing.

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If we understand what went wrong.

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It will perhaps give us the ability to do things right in the future and I think that's, you know, these are the kind of ways of understanding, but the challenge we always face is.

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We.

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Try to understand.

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Without necessarily understanding what it means to understand.

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And I would say to you, this challenge becomes a more radicalised when we're dealing with things.

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Up.

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Outside the purview of a particular.

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Formation.

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Of let's call it social sciences, humanities.

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Because in the way that knowledge production was formalised, structured put together the tools that invented was not done innocently on a blank slate. It was done over a particular moment in time.

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And in a particular view of the world.

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And therefore, many of the tools that were invented.

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For understanding one form of reality, then have to be exported to outside that reality. To make this more concrete, let's just be honest about it, what we call the social sciences in the abstract are basically Western social sciences.

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And Western social sciences construct the Orient and the Orient, then, is a place and or or or a space metaphorical extensive which is really the the limit of what? What is western?

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And it is also the point at which.

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The normative heart of the social science Western social sciences has formed. So if you look at, for example, the notion of the family, you study a family which is a normal family. A normal family is a Western family and the contrast to make it normal is by constructing families, for example.

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In Africa or South America or Asia, etcetera. So you already have that. So the Orient is necessary to give shape to the western epistemist itself.

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Now if you do that, then you have a number of challenges that are faced when you start and how do we study Oriental? And again, I'm using this in air quotes societies using the tools.

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Formed not necessary to study the oriental societies per SE, but to really to mark out the western Epistem to make that work now in the good old days, in the good old days. For some this wasn't much of a problem, because what the Western.

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Epistem dreamed up.

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Then Western administrators imperial violence could easily.

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Make real. So in a sense, the relationship between knowledge, formation, classification, categorization and the construction of the world was fairly tight.

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And and it was so tight that those who were subject to it would be able to speak that language and internalise themselves into those categories. So in a sense, what you had is the belief that the Western epistemology.

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Was giving you.

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Almost a God's eye view of the world because it was giving you such an accurate picture of reality.

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Because reality itself used to confirm the Western epistemology. But now, with that kind of weakening of that relationship between power and knowledge, you have these gaps appear right? And the question then becomes, how do we understand?

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What tools do we have in a situation where that link between knowledge formation and world formation?

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Becomes weaker and I won't put any stronger than that.

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Well, I'm not going to belabour this point too long, but just take the category of religion for example. And again, this is a category that has been used throughout these conversations that we've had around the rubber massacre.

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We've all used it in a way which is almost unproblematic, and the idea is this. Well, we understand what religion is when we use the term, et cetera. And we know that if sometimes it doesn't, it doesn't work, but.

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We know that the religion that is being used is a category that has because a kind of post as an enlightenment category of expansion of Christianity is a religion and everything is fitted into that Christian shaped whole.

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In which case, of course, traditions like Islam find problematic, but the success of that operation is such that we can talk about religion, and LCC can talk about religion and people and he is scared to talk about religion.

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In a way that does violence to the very, very experience that they're living.

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Does violence in a way to the way what they understand or how they live their lives, is already violated by a conception of religion which asks for certain kinds of boundaries, which is not based upon where their experiences are, not the template, or do not contribute for it.

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And that already is the moment of kind of original violence, in a sense.

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So I want to take these initial points to really focus a little bit more directly upon studying the Rabbah massacre and what what it unleashes. So I guess just to annoy

some people, I'm sure not people here. I'm going to sort of do this in a series of binaries because everyone tells you that binaries should be shunned. And I'm just.

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One reason to just for the heck of it, really. But there's a real serious intent on that as well. So let's take the binary between accepting an object of study and inventing an object of study.

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I think this is really really.

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It's important because in a way, before we study something, one of the things we assume is that we have an object of study. We know what we study and we know what we're studying because that's always given to us. It can be given to us by publishers. It could be given to us by PhD supervisors. It can be given to us in many, many different ways, but we have an object of study already.

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He made just picking from the shelf and that's it. And then it could be a big it could be a category, right? Religion. It could be a category like a class. It could be any kind of particular category that we think is already there on the shelf. You just pick it up and then you do it and often you can see kind of particular kind of methodology.

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Where you would say, right? I am going to. There's a gap in the literature. I will fill that gap by studying because there's an object of study. It has a gap in it and my job is to fill that gap. Yeah. And I want to contrast that with the idea of actually having to invent your object.

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Study that in a sense, the invention of object of study means that you don't. You have to look at and pay attention to what is it that you're trying to do and what you're trying to do may not already.

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In the various categories which are already available to you to do that stuff, and if the work is interesting enough, and if the circumstances are compelling enough, you may find that you're very analytical.

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Language.

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And your analytical tool.

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Will not deliver you what you want to deliver because you're taking them, applying them to a place where they should not necessarily could not necessarily be applied. So I think one of the ways of thinking about it is what would be the object of study when we study the Rava massacre, what are the things, how should we do that?

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And again, what I'd like to suggest to you is that perhaps and this came out throughout the various interventions and presentations that I was able to listen to.

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Is the stain of methodological nationalism.

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Now I am sure.

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As anyone can be sure that the 100 million Egyptians do not talk about methodological individualism while they're watching TV or having dinner, etcetera.

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But I'm also sure nearly every single one of them.

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Acts according to it enacts it, lives it, and this shows 2 contrasts, not because anything about Egyptians ability to understand mathematical individualism, but perhaps a recognition that there are two different types of languages. There's a language of analysis or a language of knowing.

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And there's a language of being.

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A language of doing.

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And sometimes they should overlap and, but they don't always have to overlap. We have no problem listening to medical professionals use a particular specific language.

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Describe things in ways that ordinary what we would not normally use for ordinary language, but then we we assume that they do so for a particular purpose.

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But then they also then have to break those things down in a way that their patients can understand.

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And and you can see this for example if I asked you what's a headache, very few of you will point to your knee. And this is when I have.

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Pain.

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In my knee, but I have no way of knowing whether the pain that you describe is the same as the pain that I would have described.

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But how do we learn to talk about something so subjective, like pain through metaphors and language, which is socialised to us?

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In.

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A way that we have still no belief that this is the same thing. What is a sharp pain versus a dull pain?

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We kind of we kind of work this out.

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But there's no kind of intrinsic way of knowing this, and the reason why I mentioned all of this is partly because one of the biggest problems with understanding all of this phenomenon and the Radha massacre, is part of the subgenre is that unless we are able to deal with the problem.

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Or challenges of methodological rationalism, our understanding of the phenomenon is always going to be curtailed and.

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Unsatisfying on many different grounds.

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Let me illustrate this point.

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There's a kind of curio that the massacre took place on the 14th of August 10 years ago. About 76 years ago, on the 14th of August, the country of Pakistan was its babe became independent.

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Now you could say these two countries are.

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By thousands of miles, however, many of the experiences that are happening now for the rest, for example of someone like Imran Khan, the arrest of Mohammed Morrissey, the kind of.

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We have a a group of what people would call or call themselves liberals, but a part of what I would call you know, following the Iranian journalists.

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Ists toxic.

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Are involved in de facto supporting this crackdown on that and in both projects you have a notion that.

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Accountability in these settings, whether it's Egypt, Tunisia, Pakistan, Syria.

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I knew would need to have a place for the muslimness.

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And if you don't have a place for muslimness, you cannot have accountability. But the problem with Muslimness is that it strains against the frontiers of the nation, of the conception of the nation, and that creates many, many different kinds of challenges.

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So one of the things that I would like us to think about perhaps is really.

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In what kind of way can we understand this phenomenon, which has very specific, very specific which is very local?

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But without conceding to that, it is so specific and so local that it has no kind of analogue and without any analogue, without any comparator, we have no sense of making any sense of what it actually means.

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If I was to ask you, I don't know. Say to you I've got 20. I don't know. Kenyan dollars in my pocket. Unless you know the conversion rate. You do not know whether this is a lot or nothing or what.

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But we feel that we can conduct and understand things without having those kind of comparators around it, and part of that is erasure of two things, erasure of the past, and it's done by erasing the immediate past.

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Or or sometimes by reaching far back into the distant past.

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So for example, many Islamophobes will tell you everything about Islam, the formation of Islam in the 7th century, and how it from there on things haven't been right, but they can't see 100 years of colonial back 100 years. Look at colonial impact.

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Right. So they can go back 1400 years, but not 100 years and that's quite a routine way of dealing with that. You don't deal with the past, but the other thing is it doesn't do it doesn't say, well, what is actually happening here is how do we understand?

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And this came out really interestingly when the discussion around, for example, Tunisia.

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The idea that Tunisia's not Egypt made better sense 10 years ago, before Tunisia became Egypt and what I mean by this, is that the whole idea with Tunisia was that we're going to do what the Egyptians haven't done, and therefore we will have a different alternative outcome.

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And I would say to you that in fact there hasn't been real alternative outcome at the end of the day.

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Yep. But also now we have a situation in which Tunisia, the experimental Tunisia, fails the experiment. Egypt fails the experiment with ISIS, fails the experiment with Algeria fails. What is it that we need to?

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In these repeated failures, how do we understand that? And if we maintain everything within that narrow remit?

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Of the only understanding Alan Masker in the Egyptian context as something specifically Egyptian, we will not be able to see how all of this actually has ways of understanding and illuminating.

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That are broader than this and have this kind of logic.

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And I wanted to just conclude with two very quick points in my own work. I've talked about the category of Kamala.

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And I extrapolate that from the experience of what Mustafa Kamal did in Turkey. And remember next year it will be 100 years of the end of the caliphate. And I think this is one of the kind of shaping of this kind of format because.

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One way of thinking about that abolition of the caliphate would be to think about how it opens up a question for how Muslims should live. It opens up political theory in Muslim contexts.

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As long as you have some kind of idea of the caliphate, then the idea of good governance is simply because the problem is limited to finding the right person to be the good caliph. Etcetera. Yeah, once that is not there, you suddenly have this or What Car should be.

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A Muslim caliphate to give you a rather Eurocentric analogue just to help, because all our education is basically Eurocentric anyway, is it's the same effect of when you cut off the head of the king, either in England or in France. Suddenly the question of governance opens up in a way that's never before opened up.

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We're going to have good kings and bad king, but once the king is once you cut off the head of the king.

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Then it's a question of finding a good king or a bad king. It's the question of what? What is the purpose of kingship itself.

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So putting that into context, I was so Kemalism for me.

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Does a number of things which reflect upon not just what happened in Turkey or then followed up in Iran or even in Afghanistan, but has become the grammar of governance throughout areas.

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Which you could describe as an Islam term or Muslim Stan or the islamis fear in which the Islamic hate presence in them, and to make it very, very.

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Short if you think about kamalaism, firstly, it understands westernised modernization and westernisation as being synonymous. But to do that it requires the orientaliation of the Islamic Society. So you can actually modernise it.

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And even when it doesn't describe yourself a secular, it's actually the opposite of secular in many ways. It's not that it's separating religious institutes from state institutions. It's actually the state taking over religious institutions.

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And taking over civil society institutions, that is what happens in every single case.

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So you have in one hand this equivalence between westernisation and modernisation. Secondly, then you have the construction of the national subject rather than the Muslim subjectivity, and you have the invention of the Turk. The invention of the EM and the various kind of Egyptian nationalist subjects are created.

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That already then and that, of course, is not just a dictator from government, it's there's a whole culture which is formed around it and it's come internalised and becomes the lived experience of so many people.

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Way and a third element to that is the disarticulation of Islam.

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From the possibility of public life or for unfettered public life?

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Now when I was listening to him, I can't remember the presentation of. I think it may be in Sammy who said this, that about people who would when you talk to common Egyptians they would say they voted for the brotherhood because as long as you fear God, everything will be OK. Now that is not a sentiment which I think is exclusive just to Egyptians.

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I think it's a sentiment that you find in Indonesia. You'd find that in anywhere among talk about themselves and they would say that and they would say that at the same time as being cynical about the possibility. But in a sense, they're the ones who are.

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If you have someone who fears God, then the question of torture and things they think will disappear.

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So what you have is the idea of Islam itself has to be marginalised and depoliticized, and there are many different ways of depoliticizing it. And that is one of the key kind of components.

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Commanders now the reason why I talk about commandism rather than Arab nationalism or Egyptian nationalism is because if you talk about it in terms of those specific, you miss out that family resemblance.

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You miss out the way in. Those similar moves are made similar oppositions are made. Similar circulations have made and a similar opposition to those has made and that I think is very, very important because you're reconstructing an object of study, you're inventing an object of study rather than just sustaining one which is made by area studies, et cetera.

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OK. The second point of this one, I will conclude with around the question about thinking beyond methodological nationalism and thinking transnationally.

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We've had a number of discussions about the question about Islamophobia and orientalism and racism and etc.

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And I think these are really, really key kind of points there. Let me give you just overarching picture. I think right now we live in a world where you have the global institution of Islamophobia.

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It's not something that is done just in Western Europe or North America.

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If you read about the statements made by Minister, Chinese officials in eastern Turkmenistan or Indian officials or or Israeli officials, or you name it, you could actually play a you could invent a very interesting parallel game. Who said what?

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Because the language that they use is almost identical, and it's the same language that people like LCCU that people like Tunisia are using, the people that that this is, we are,

we are, what are we doing here? Is stopping terrorism. What we're doing is stopping violence. What we're doing here, these are extremist. The notion of who is an extremist.

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How we understand Muslimness and its articulation?

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Through that kind of global institution of Islamophobia, now set, and we know in terms of more sociological terms, that institutional links between the circulation of material from Serbia to from Israel, from white supremacist groups to Brahmins, supremacist groups, et cetera, we know that there's a whole Islamophobia industry. It's.

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In a number of cases specifically where you can actually trace it there. But how Islamabad fits into this? And I think it's why I think it's worth thinking about.

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We often talk about colonialism as something that happened.

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But we don't understand that colonialism, the colonial order, was also racial order. So in a way, colonialism and racism are not two different things. The category of racism emerges in Germany in the 1930s.

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It emerges to describe what the Nazis are doing, mainly to the Jewish population in Germany. But if you look at what the Nazis are doing and you look at what they think they're doing, all they're doing is implementing what is happening to African Americans under Jim Crow.

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What is happening under French rule as under British rule under Dutch rule?

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The laws against segregation miscondition all of those kind of these are. So the question is if they're doing all of these things are being done.

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In these spaces. Then why do we need a new concept of race racism?

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Why not just have colonialism and in fact you have? For example, people like tazar and and a number of kind of. You know what we would call an our third world intellectuals and people anti colonial thinkers saying look what the Nazis were was simply imperialism brought to Europe.

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Or to use a footballing flag imperialism brought home.

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But that in itself is quite telling, because the reason why racism exists is partly to preserve the hierarchy between the West and the rest, and you can see that in the way that racism is managed, that racism is affair of domestic policy.

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It's the ministers of the Interior who ultimately have to deal with it, where colonialism is always a matter of something else side, and what you have seen in successful anti colonial movements is the attempt to break.

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That bridge.

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That divide between colonialism and racism, you can see that in the anti racism movements as well, that where they have been successful is that they haven't broken with this idea of this division. So so you can see that with Malcolm X when he tries to the United States to the.

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Yeah. On grounds of that. But there are many, many examples of this. So what I would say to you, the colonial racial order built the world that we all live in.

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And it's important to hyphenate the racial and the colonial to remind us that colonialism is racism. It's a racial and all the colonial empires were racial states, and when they were racial states they created, it was not just a question of attitudes. It was a question of administrative machinery.

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Cultural compartments economic algorithms, all of that was put together to create this idea. Racism isn't about things that we carry in our heads. It's a form of governance. It's a form of regulation.

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That's what's central to it.

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And every single state that exists in the world right now.

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Which was part of a colonial racial order.

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Ended up with incomplete decolonization, which meant not only just the continuation of these ideas, but the logics of racism were embedded in the armoury of the state itself.

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And in a sense, for example, you can see this in the way that the militaries were organised in countries where you had the discourse, whether avert or an unadvert or Marshall Reef is or you have a notion of who the people are and what the relationship between the security, the police and the people must be.

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And even in the discourse about these, we are, you know, this idea that we are the real Egyptians as opposed to the Egyptians, is a kind of relates to that notion of this idea of the security forces.

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Being separate from the national forces, even though within the kind of patriotic notion we are the same, comes in, but in reality, it's that nearly every single military that exists.

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Has it traces? It's a rich roots, either administratively or through unit history, to either the British Army or the French Army or the Dutch. It's even when they don't, they still have the same kind of armoury of that same kind of cultural organisation.

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So Islamophobia is not something which is external to this. Islamophobia is simply one way of thinking about Islamophobia is really.

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Denial of Muslim agency. It is an racializing it is.

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To understand governor racism as a form of governance, then you can see Islamophobia as a form of racism because it targets expressions of Muslim lists and you can see that even in the discourse of those who oppose the Muslim Brotherhood or those who oppose islamicist Muslims who do that.

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They start talking about these people in terms of which they're racializing them.

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To talk about breeding the talk about the fact that their identity is remains their identity. They cannot transform it. They have these kind of different kinds of logics about what they're like. You have the kind of inscription of behaviour and culture already on to.

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Their bodies of who looks like an Islamic.

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Whether they do or not, or whether and what is an Islamic system, Islamist could be someone who expresses their Muslims.

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A little too carefully, or someone expresses a muslimness beyond what they think should be done, and This is why you have regimes like in Abu Dhabi and elsewhere funding Islamophobic organisations but also supporting the discourse and saying, look.

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We.

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I think these Muslims are dangerous, so we act as an alibi for other Islamophobes.

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So let me then just conclude with a final point that I want to make and I think this is putting it together.

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But the points that I've done, I've tried to raise is 2 kind of issues that we need to think about, a conceptual vocabulary which is cognisant of the long shadow of Orientalism, and not just in terms of Orientalism as a kind of.

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A sociology of knowledge in terms of a distorted reality, etcetera, but really, orientalism as a conceptual way of conceptualising the objects of study that we do so in our place.

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And in that sense, for us to broaden the diet of examples by which we understand the world requires us to think beyond that kind of boundary. And here it seems to me, categories like komalism the categories like Islamophobia and the categories of thinking about.

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Muslimness not.

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In specific national iterations of localised iterations, but as something which has.

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Help us. You could yield to us far more interesting and therapeutic and insights, but also they go to the heart of the project everywhere where you see the most authoritarian tyrannical regime being set up.

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The most Islamophobic regime, one of the first things they're trying to do is nationalise the muslimness. Whether it's in France or Austria, or whether it's in Egypt or whether it's in Turkey, wherever.

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And part of that is because up till this point transnationalities inscribed within muslimness and that's both represents epistemological problems, geopolitical problems and cultural problems. And the biggest problem it presents is it raises a question mark.

00:33:17

Over the idea and the inevitability of the current order of the nation state, and that current order of the nation state predicated on an exclusionary, ethno nationalism is the main source, I would argue of violence and violations throughout the world right now.

00:33:35

Thank you.

00:33:37

Thank you very much for saying it's always a pleasure to hear you speak and in so many respects, even though these were extemporary reflections, they've weaved together some very important themes in the discussions that we've been having.

00:33:53

Over the last 48 hours or so, and I think this is a an opportunity for anyone who wants to maybe over the next 10 minutes or so direct their questions specifically towards per SE before we open the floor to a more plenary sort of discussion.

00:34:09

Which again can can start off to a large extent large extent.

00:34:14

Reflecting on these.