Religious beliefs and nationalist loyalties are among the most powerful convictions and motive forces in the world we know. We see them at work to a varying degree in many different situations, from Ireland to China, from Afghanistan to Argentina, from Israel to the United States. Sometimes they reinforce each other; often they are at odds, even internally or within the same country or region; frequently they interact in unexpected ways.

Neither can be assumed to be always present. Nationalism is essentially a phenomenon of the last 500 years, much more recent in history than racial, tribal, or dynastic feelings. Religion is as old as mankind, yet some have seen religion dying out in the face of modernity, while others view it today as growing stronger, especially in the non-Western world.

What social needs do religion and/or nationalism fulfill? What human psychology do they reveal? What realities do they convey? What illusions do they offer? Are they "imagined communities"? Or inescapable building blocks? Do they offer important clues as to who we are?

Twenty distinguished scholars from the region -- eight paper-givers and twelve commentators -- offer us their thoughts about these fascinating phenomena in examinations of different country settings.

Thursday, May 17
Humanities Gateway 1030

0815 Coffee
0850 Welcome

ISRAEL
0900 Deborah Hertz, UC San Diego
Commentary: Michael Alexander, UC Riverside

ARAB SPRING
1045 Mark Levine, UC Irvine
Commentary: James Gelvin, UC Los Angeles
1230 Lunch Break

IRAN
0130 Yuhang Vevaina, Stanford
Commentary: Touraj Daryaee, UC Irvine & Afshin Matin-Asagari, CSU Los Angeles

COMPARATIVE
0315 Richard D. Hecht, UCSB
Commentary: David Rapoport, UC Los Angeles & Ron Hassner, UC Berkeley

Friday, May 18
Humanities Gateway 1030

0815 Coffee

UNITED STATES
0900 Jack Miles, UC Irvine
Commentary: Paul Lovesque, CSU Fullerton & Jon R. Stone, CSU Long Beach

CHINA
1045 Perry Anderson, UC Los Angeles
Commentary: Jeffrey Wasserstrom, UC Irvine
1230 Lunch Break

CHINA
0130 Chaohua Wang, Independent Scholar
Commentary: Richard Madsen, UC San Diego

RUSSIA
0315 Ivan Streski, UC Riverside
Commentary: Lynn Sargeant, CSU Fullerton & Patrick Patterson, UC San Diego

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