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# Islamism

*The only alternative to an Islamist dystopia is the culture of Enlightenment*



WHY, more than two decades after 9/11, when Osama bin Laden attacked America in order to inspire and lead “the global jihad project”—the term is from the left-leaning Brookings Institution—do we see massive demonstrations on the streets of Europe and the United States in favor of the antisemitic, genocidal Islamist butchers of Hamas, who are dedicated to the same project? Why did the presidents of Harvard, Penn, and MIT, three of the most renowned universities in the world, refuse in their testimony before Congress to say that calling for the destruction of Israel and genocide against Jews violates campus rules—hiding instead behind the studied talking point that it depends on the context? Why have antisemitic incidents in

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the United States gone up by 400 percent? How did this happen?

I have told my story many times before, so I will be brief and to the point—that point being that I believe my story offers an answer to this question, as well as a proposal for how we ought to proceed in the face of the current moral and intellectual rot in the West.



I was born in Somalia. I spent my formative years there and in Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. I was part of a “clan culture,” in which the bloodline mattered above everything else. My clan “uncles” were there to help us out with schooling, food, and money wherever we went. There was no escape from the clan, which was also, in many ways, a microcosm of Islam, the dominant religion of Somalia. Many of the clan rules, especially for women, were the same as and sometimes drawn from the strictures of Islam.

Too often, the West dismisses clan and tribal networks simply as primitive structures superseded by superior, secular, American models. This is a mistake. If we are to fight against the “global jihad,” we must understand its sources of power. One important source is that clan networks have much to be said for them. The clan network certainly helped my family survive. My father, an anti-government dissident, relied on it for support. And the clan was at times generous and hospitable. But along with and inseparable from its generosity was its willingness to be vicious and brutal when its unwritten code of honor was violated. This was the case especially for girls. I was raised as a Muslim girl. I attended Koran school, and, per the values of the clan and my religion, I carried out back-breaking domestic labor. Girls and women were for marriage, breeding, and household chores—and not much else.

Worse, girls were seen as problems. My grandmother had a single son and 10 daughters. When describing her children, she would say, quite

openly, “I have one son and 10 problems.” Girls were a burden, and the misogynistic culture of the clan and of Islam was enforced by women as well as men. Like the majority of other Somalian girls, I underwent female genital mutilation—“purification,” as it was described to us. That and the very limited roles assigned to us in the kind of Muslim society Osama bin Laden championed should tell you all you need to know about the status of women in my native society.

Clan life based on Islam was a life full of violence. I was beaten constantly as a child. For many years, I thought this was normal. Death was also normal—to the point of being ever present. People died all the time, of violence, of disease. “From Allah we came, to Allah we return” was a phrase I heard constantly. To this day, when filling out medical forms that inquire into my family history of cancer and such things, I find myself unable to answer. Death was such a common occurrence in my early years that we hardly bothered to inquire into its causes.

When I was a teenager living with my family in Kenya, along came the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood subscribes to a vision of Sunni Islam that believes that Islamic teachings and politics are inseparable. It is also the Islamist group that spawned Hamas and al-Qaeda. And it offered me something more than life had offered me thus far: a life of service to Allah. I felt a glorious purpose. We had a mission to convert people to the “true Islam.” There was intellectual nourishment too, as we studied the Koran and the Hadith intensively. We were a community, a true brotherhood, united by a divine purpose. And this true Islam (i.e., Islamism) went even further than the passivity in the face of death with which I had grown up. It embraced death. To die for Allah was the most wonderful thing I could imagine. I would be guaranteed a place in paradise!

And it was through clan life, the Muslim Brotherhood, and my Islamic schooling that I became an antisemite.



We knew no Jews, but to call someone a Jew was so deep an insult that it sometimes led to murder. My female friends and I would sit in the mosque and pray that Allah would destroy the Jews. To want Israel's destruction was an act of worship. We were never told about the idea of a two-state solution, much less did we entertain it. To do so would likely have been considered an act of sin; a transgression; a betrayal of God, His Prophet, and the Umma. My teacher, Sister Aziza, read us the Koran's descriptions of Jahannam, the everlasting fire of hell in which the Jews — physically grotesque beings bearing horns out of which flew devils that would corrupt the world — would burn.

We made no distinction between liberal and Orthodox Jews; between Jews who settled Palestine and those opposed to settlements; between religious or atheist Jews. We also made no distinction between adult Jews and children. Male, female, mothers and fathers, old and young — to us, Jews were Jews, all evil and all enemies of Islam and all that is good, true, and decent. Jews controlled everything, and it was the duty of Muslims to destroy them.

I believed it all.

Much later, when I fled to the Netherlands to escape a marriage to a man in Canada that my father had arranged, I was shocked by my new home — so radically different from anything I had known. Looking back, I could see clearly the violence, hatred, and discord of the societies I had grown up in. Here, religion and politics were separate; women had equal rights and could live independently and make their own choices; I learned about the common good, a concept I had never known before. There was no talk of death, no enemies to fight or pray against, and no bloodline or religion that could be defended only by waging war.

The more I understood about this new society, the more I liked and admired it. I assimilated. I lived life as a Dutch woman, suppressing the dissonance I felt at betraying my religion and upbringing. I abandoned the ideas of Islamism and educated myself about antisemitism.

But then 9/11 happened. Osama bin Laden was frank about his motivation: He despised the West and wished to supplant it with his fundamentalist vision of Sunni Islam. My response was very different from that of many Western leaders over the years. I was forced into a crisis of belief. I lost my Muslim faith. I recognized the challenge Islamism posed to Western institutions and values, and that Western political leaders, mired in the ideology of multiculturalism, were failing utterly to address the threat.

As I became increasingly involved in politics and activism, I watched with great interest and even greater dismay the continuing Western response. They chose to believe that bin Laden and his Islamist ilk did not mean what they said. They believed that multiculturalism was the solution, because, they thought, it would allow those who disagreed with the values of the West to live in the West as they saw fit, without disturbing its fundamental political arrangements.

But I saw that Islamist multiculturalism was really an embrace of clannism and primitivism. It segregated Muslim immigrants into ghettos and allowed them to subject women to arranged marriages, sharia, and other abuses. Nor did it intend to stay in the ghetto. It could not defeat the West militarily. But the goals of global jihad can also be achieved through what Islam calls Da'wah—proselytization.

This is why it was so baffling that the West sought the help of nations such as Saudi Arabia in dealing with Islamist terror: Saudi Arabia was for many years the world's biggest funder of Da'wah! Saudi Arabia may be less violent than its co-religionists, but its goals are not different.

Western leaders naïvely saw sophisticated Islamist infiltrators as “moderate” representatives of Muslim communities. When asked how to integrate Muslims in the West, these “community leaders” unsurprisingly demanded separate Muslim schools, media platforms, courts, and victim status—but did so based on an exaggerated claim of “Islamophobia,” concealing their true motivations. And the more Western leaders tried to appease these “moderate” Islamists, the more the Islamists demanded as the price of “mediating” between the West and the jihadists. And yet the Western leaders kept on with these wrong-headed approaches.

When I left Holland for the United States in 2006, I hoped to find that America had learned from Europe’s failures. But while America did a better job of destroying terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, the country barely understood the concept of Da’wah, or the web of Islamist outreach, propaganda, and charities that finance Hamas and other terrorist networks.

America similarly fails to deter Iran’s Shia Islamist regime, which clearly seeks nuclear weapons to strengthen its hand against the Sunni Middle East and is quite direct about its destructive intentions to Israel and America itself. You can’t get clearer than “Death to Israel” and “Death to America,” the “little Satan” and the “great Satan” respectively.

Today, as a result, on Western soil and of course on the internet, Islamist recruiting and funding networks are entrenched. Sam Westrop of Focus on Western Islamism, a media outlet that educates readers about the Islamist threat in Western democracies, recently uncovered “over 260 million dollars sent through the 501(c) system to Hamas-aligned charities in the United States, provided by corporate foundations, employee-giving schemes, partisan community groups and a powerful array of Islamist grant-making foundations that make use of a largely-unregulated nonprofit sector.”

260 million dollars! It is shameful that this is allowed—and all because Western leaders failed to understand the true nature of Islamism more than 20 years ago, and more than 20 years before that, when Hamas was created in 1987.



I wrote last year in *The Free Press* with my Dutch friend Evelyn Markus about the way in which Islamism has poisoned the Netherlands:

- During the second intifada in Israel, which began in 2000, Muslim immigrants from Morocco started beating up Jews in Amsterdam and elsewhere in Europe, out of “solidarity” with the Palestinians. Some of our friends were attacked. Week after week, stones were thrown at Jews on their way to synagogue. These crimes barely made the news.
- In the years after, it was commonplace to hear “Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas” chanted in soccer stadiums by thousands of fans, some of them Moroccan immigrant kids, during the two minutes of silence in commemoration of those killed in World War II.
- “Jew” and “cancer Jew” became popular slurs on the streets of Amsterdam.

Sadly, particularly in the wake of October 7, this sort of thing has become common not only across Europe but in the United States, too—witness the shocking December 3 mob attack on Goldie’s, a restaurant in Philadelphia owned by the Israeli chef Michael Solomonov.

Is there hope for the future? In election after election, Western elites have reasserted their commitment to multiculturalism. And even when some leaders—for example, former U.K. Prime Minister and present Foreign Secretary David Cameron—dissented from this view, they never followed up with programs of assimilation or immigration reform. Things simply kept on going as before.

Now, however, ordinary working- and lower-middle-class citizens, on whom the cultural burden of multiculturalism always falls, have at last rebelled against the establishment, as Geert Wilders's shocking victory in Holland has shown. I shall stick with Holland as a prime example, although it is not the only one: In response to Muslim immigration, conservative parties advancing traditional Western values are prevailing all over Europe.

In Holland, political and media leaders told the public that opposing migration and Islamic practice was xenophobic and bigoted. Insulated from the effects of multiculturalism, they persuaded themselves it was not changing the nature of the country. Meanwhile, the Muslim population in the Netherlands grew twentyfold from 60,000 to about 1.2 million in 60 years. This population is largely Islamist, increasingly well-entrenched, and making its presence felt. Unwelcome warnings from Dutch intelligence officials about the rise of Islamism have generally gone unheeded by the country's elected leaders.

Not surprisingly, the Jews are leaving, down to fewer than 50,000 from a high of about 160,000 in 1941. But Dutch people outside the educated, well-off elite who were not Jewish and so not under the same direct threat, nevertheless saw and felt the structural changes in their daily lives, were frustrated at having their concerns dismissed in the most insulting terms—and voted accordingly. The post-October 7 pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Dutch streets—some violent—may have been the final catalyst.



In his landslide victory, Wilders won more voters from the 18–35 age group than any other party did.



Perhaps, then, there is hope. Ordinary people are resisting the mainstream progressive consensus. Perhaps the elites will start to listen, if only to maintain their position in Dutch society. When voters complain about immigrant ghettos in which women are effectively enslaved, or about their community and sports centers being turned into Islamist headquarters, politicians will no longer be able to dismiss them as racist. No longer will they be able to repeat mindlessly the mantras of toleration and multiculturalism, or to claim that “integration is a two-way street,” while demanding integration in only one direction.

Hopefully, in the post–October 7 world, the stakes are clearer to all. Unless we change course in the West as a whole, Bernard Lewis’s prediction of a majority-Muslim Europe by 2050 will come to pass, and the Islamists will have entrenched themselves so deeply and widely that their vision for Europe will prevail. The prediction of the leading Muslim cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, often erroneously regarded as a moderate, will come true: “We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America! Not through sword but through Da’wah.” Will the message be heard in the United States and the West more generally?

The answer is far from clear. Today, Western societies continue to torture themselves over their histories of colonialism and imperialism, while allowing antisemitic, genocidal thugs and their apologists free rein on our streets, barely 80 years after the Holocaust. The disciples of bin Laden smile as Gen Z TikTokers idiotically praise his evil rantings. The woke revolutionaries who have infiltrated our institutions seek to tear down the civilizing work of centuries.

Unless October 7 is the beginning of a reversal of Europe's and America's creeping cultural suicide, Islamism will prevail. We must sound the alarm, restating the Judeo-Christian values that have benefited us all so much. We must be loud in speaking up against the wrongheadedness of the go-along-to-get-along policies of our elites, and elect leaders who understand the West's existential crisis and are willing to address it. We must champion our Western civilizational heritage and show Gen Z that the world built up over centuries by Western values is infinitely superior to the hellish dystopian vision of the Islamists.

In short, we must fight for our values wholeheartedly and unashamedly. Only then might we save the West. I have seen the alternative: I have lived in that Islamist dystopia. The wonderful cultures I found in 1992, which have immeasurably improved my life, are vanishing before our very eyes as our society's terrible mistakes lead us to the Islamist precipice. Let October 7 be a spur to us to act before it is too late. \*