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Islamic Fanaticism, Presidential Power, the Electoral College, and the Myth of the Entrepreneurial State – Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Larry Bernstein:

Our next speaker is Ayaan Hirsi Ali, she'll be discussing Islamism in France. She's the author of Infidel and Heretic. Ayaan, if you're on the line, please go ahead.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Larry, thank you very much for that. And I just have to thank Michael McConnell for a fascinating conversation. I completely forgot what I was supposed to do, that's how fascinating it was. I'm going to start the six minutes and try my best to adhere. I want to start with the timeline, Larry, when Samuel Paty, a school teacher in France was beheaded on October 2, 2020, because he had been teaching a class on free speech. And he had shown caricatures that the magazine, Charlie Hebdo, had shown in 2015. This was back in 2015, January, 2015, a number of journalists were beheaded because of those caricatures. But the school teacher, Samuel Paty was killed, accused of blasphemy, not because he had drawn the caricatures, but because he had shown them. And then Larry reached out to me and said, "Could you please speak to us about the dangers of Muslim radicals in France?"

Well, what I'd like to do this afternoon, is to say the problem is really much bigger than France and that we have to see it in a European context. And in order to do that, we have to understand it in a way that ... you can come at this from different perspectives, but my perspective is it's really a failure of leadership, a failure of modern European leadership from pretty much after the second world war. And the leadership in Europe has failed on this particular issue, and the issue is, look at it like a branch with three intertwined twigs and it's a confounding problem. The first part of that is the failure of the leadership in anticipating the problems from Muslim majority countries. And when I say that, I mean immigration from Muslim majority countries. I think they should have been able to anticipate that, given that they had colonized a number of these countries and were familiar with the way things work, in those contexts, they should have seen that once Muslim immigrants in large numbers would settle or resettle in Europe, that some of these problems would present themselves.

And so they failed to see that. The second is the inability to integrate or develop a coherent set of policies to integrate those immigrants. And in that sense, they failed not only their own societies, but they also failed the immigrants. And finally, and this is later in the 1980s, they failed to understand the nature of political Islam, and in particular, the difference between jihad, which is the acts of terrorism that have now been carried out, like the beheading of Samuel Paty, the attacks in Bataclan, there's been several attacks in France. France has been in the news more than in any other European country that has hosted Muslim majority populations. But radical Islam was like a background music, they were setting up mosques, Islamic centers. They were persuading young, confused, in some ways, disenfranchised and victims of discrimination, young
populations in Europe, from Muslim majority countries who are either born there or who were first generation, into projecting the values of the country that they had come to.

So, if you combine these three failures, you have to ask yourself, why did they do it? Why did these European leaders fail to do this? And you are going to get different explanations, but one that I find fascinating is that a lot of these European leaders on the center right or on the center left, tried to squeeze the issues of Muslim immigration, the problems with integration and radical Islam into the left vs. right wing spectrum or cleavage, that they were used to addressing their own issues, their own economic issues, political issues, et cetera. So, in some ways, that does actually make sense because every time you bring about the issue of, well, what should we do about immigration? Why, more or less in what manner, what is the morality of rescuing people that are coming from failed states and civil wars? They were absolutely incapable of agreeing on that and the crisis continued and continues and gets bigger.

On the issue of integration, even more interesting. Some, especially those on the center left and beyond, would argue, well, these people should keep their values and their customs. If that's the case, then how do you integrate them? And then the center right would respond in almost a caricature manner, that the people on the left were either too dumb, too relativist, too cosmopolitan. And a legitimate discussion on what it is and how should we integrate immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, how should we talk about such issues as blasphemy and if you come from an area where you have blasphemy laws.

The integration part is very, very important. It seems as if the leadership on the center left and the center right, could not possibly agree on what it is that represented the core values of their own countries. And what makes Muslim immigrants different from say, other immigrants, is when such issues come about as blasphemy, if you take freedom of speech for granted, beheading someone because they blasphemed against your religion is just something you can't ignore, you have to have a rational conversation about that. But what about women's rights? What about gay rights? What about antisemitism that's now promoted in the name of Islam, in the name of radical Islam? And then finally, and this is the point where I think probably the failure is at its worst, is European leadership ignored the studies, the reports, and the facts on the ground, where dour is the proselytization, it is the process of converting non-Muslims into Islam and radicalizing moderate Muslims, and turning them into jihadis.

Once you ignore that process, you will forever be surprised and shocked every single time a Jihadi terrorist attack takes place. But then you do nothing about the foreign money that's flowing into the country, the foreign institutions that are established to, and to use Macron's words, that's the president of France, create and establish an Islamist separatist parallel society. And so I'm going to just leave the test of this for my Q & A, but to end, it is the failure in these three areas, the squeezing of these problems into the left right framework that I think has brought us to the place where we are in Europe.