

Religion of Peace?

By Jamie Glazov

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Frontpage Interview's guest today is Gregory Davis, the managing director of Quixotic Media and producer of the feature documentary *Islam: What the West Needs to Know*. He received his Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University. He is the author of the new book *Religion of Peace? Islam's War Against the World*.

FP: Gregory Davis, welcome to Frontpage Interview.

Davis: Thanks for having me.

FP: What motivated you to write this book?

Davis: The book is a direct result of the documentary and seeks to expand on the latter's material. My old friend, Bryan Daly, and I had the opportunity to make a small movie and we wanted to tackle something that no one else had, something of social import that was poorly understood. The facile way in which politicians, commentators, and academics dismiss Islam as a 'religion of peace' indicated to us that there was more that needed to be said on the topic. The Muslim terrorists claim to be doing the will of Allah, while Western leaders insist that Islam is peaceful. The obvious question was: who is right? There is no a priori justification to assume that peaceful Muslims represent authentic Islam while violent Muslims do not.

FP: How would you interpret the West's illusions about Islam?

Davis: The West is guilty of the ages-old error of projection, of imposing its own ideas, beliefs, and aspirations onto the other guy. When Westerners approach Islam, they imagine that it is a religion like others that they are familiar with - like, say, Christianity. They see Islam as basically another item on the religious menu available in an integrated world. What they fail to understand, however, is that Islam is decidedly outside the Western tradition and therefore Western assumptions are inapt when assessing it.

In *Islam: What the West Needs to Know*, we talk with Robert Spencer, Walid Shoebat, Bat Ye'or, Serge Trifkovic, and Abdullah Al-Araby, who all affirm that the most important aspect of Islam not understood in the West is that Islam is less a personal faith than a social and political plan for organizing humanity - really, a system of government.

It was only in the West that religious power developed in parallel with secular power but distinct from it thanks largely to the doctrinal distinction in Christianity between giving 'to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God's what is God's.' While religious and secular power have certainly commingled at times in the West, it is fully possible for the two to coexist separately. But in Islam, there has never been a distinction between religion and political power; the two are inseparably united. An Islamic society is invariably a theocracy ruled by *Sharia* (Islamic) law, which is understood as God's prescribed legal code for all mankind, based on the commandments of the Koran and the precedents set by Muhammad.

There can be no question of the type of government in Islam because Islam *is* a government, which Allah through Muhammad has ordained to comprehend the entire earth. Once the political nature of Islam and its universal pretensions are grasped, it is not hard to see why Muslims and Muslim societies are so hostile toward the rest of the world.

FP: The Islamization of Europe is occurring at a lightning speed. What do you make of it?

Davis: It is truly astonishing that a civilization as organized and materially powerful as Europe today is voluntarily going to its death. The Europeans could certainly forestall the Islamization of their continent, but so far they have shown no stomach for it. Already portions of Europe's metropolitan areas are de facto Islamic states ruled by Sharia law - the London Telegraph mentioned this the other day with remarkable equanimity.

The Parisian police have admitted that they are in the early stages of a civil war. The negative growth rates of the native Caucasian populations mean that Europe is committing generational suicide while its Muslim populations continue to grow very rapidly. While Muslims in Europe are still poorly organized and outside the conventional halls of power, they nonetheless possess something invaluable that Europe does not: faith. Europe has lost its faith and with it the will for self-preservation. The Europeans who fought to defend Europe through the centuries during the major waves of jihad knew what they were fighting for. They had faith in their God and in the inherent legitimacy of their civilization. Their successors today are freely throwing away what their forebears gave their lives to preserve. It is a tragedy on a civilizational scale and should be a cautionary tale for those of us in North America.

FP: So is there any possibility of building democracy in the Islamic world?

Davis: In a word, no. If one means by democracy nothing more than some kind of nominal electoral process, then technically there are already democracies in the Islamic world, but that definition is not terribly meaningful. If one means democracy as an open society on the Western model with freedom of speech, religion, and equality before the law, then the answer is categorically no. As we saw in the elections held in the West Bank and Gaza, the will of the people there is for Islamic government.

It is possible to have elections in an Islamic country as long as Sharia law is not violated - which is hardly what we would call democracy. Democracy implies some sort of pluralism, which is the very antithesis of a Sharia state. Installing genuine democracy would first require a program of de-Islamization, which would be simply impossible.

The only means of achieving a form of secularism in an Islamic country is through the sort of repression we see today in Egypt, Pakistan, even Turkey. In Islam, there can be no freedom of religion, freedom of speech, equality of the sexes, or anything that transgresses the highly specific dictates of Sharia law. Any kind of popular movement by Muslims is by nature away from secular, genuinely democratic principles and toward a theocratic, Sharia state. While there are nominal Muslims who would prefer Western democracy to Islamic Sharia - such as those who fled the Iranian Revolution in 1979 - they are being false to their faith, and in any Islamic context, they will not stand against their more aggressive, orthodox counterparts.

FP: What do you think the U.S. needs to do in this terror war in general and in Iraq in particular?

Davis: The 'war on terror' is misnamed. Terrorism is a tactic, not a goal. It would have been absurd to have declared war against 'sneak attacks' after Pearl Harbor but this is essentially what we have done. It is the goal of Islamic terrorism that we need to understand, and this requires an understanding of Islam itself. Islam and its faithful adherents are trying to undermine our secular governments with the ultimate aim of replacing them with Sharia.

Terrorism is a means to this end as are Islamic proselytizing, fund-raising, lobbying, education, etc. As during the Cold War, we are under attack from a hostile political ideology that does not operate in the same moral universe as we do. Broadly speaking, we need to develop a program of containment that will operate on all levels of government policy.

At this point, it seems to me premature to get too specific with respect to policy because the full magnitude of the problem is still so poorly understood. Every Western mainstream statesman, academic, or commentator who opens his mouth on Islam bends over backwards to affirm its peacefulness. Even Western religious leaders, who really ought to know better, continue to demonstrate a depressing lack of understanding and penchant for appeasement.

With respect to Iraq, the main problem there was and is our fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Islam. There was good reason that someone as brutal as Saddam Hussein rose to the top in that society. In the Islamic world, the most powerful force is not some universal desire for human freedom but the will of Allah and the example of Muhammad. Until we grasp this overarching fact, our policy toward Iraq and the rest of the Muslim world will be fundamentally flawed.

FP: But at the same time, we need to reach out to Muslims who are truly *on our side* and who truly want to democratize and modernize their religion. What do you think is the best way for us to do that?

Davis: Encouraging democratic or popular forces in the Islamic world is to encourage the resurgence of orthodox Islam with all that entails, namely, Sharia and jihad. Rather than democratizing the Muslim world we should be seeking to secularize it. Contrary to the Western experience, democratization and secularization are not at all synonymous in an Islamic context. To encourage secularization, we will have to deal with undemocratic forces. During the Cold War, we were willing to deal with unsavory characters as long as they forestalled the much worse alternative of Communism. We should take a similar stance with respect to Islam. Secularists in the Muslim world should be encouraged and accommodated, though their success in any Islamic context may necessitate a decidedly undemocratic approach.

I believe that the best way to help nominal Muslims who value peacefulness over Islam is to get them to confront the violent nature of their faith and to reject it. In *Islam: What the West Needs to Know*, we interview a prominent former Muslim and terrorist who left, and there are many other cases so it is possible.

Obviously, we are not going to convert Muslims en masse to something else, so this is effective at only the individual level. But the unhappy fact is that as long as a Muslim affirms that 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet', he is open to the call of jihad even if he never heeds it. We have seen numerous examples of this in the West, such as the American youths from Lackawana, NY, who were turned into aspirant terrorists by a Koranic study group. We must bear in mind - contrary to the protestations of the ruling class - that Muslims who want

to de-politicize Islam, who desire societies organized on secular lines rather than according to Sharia, are heretics within their own faith.

I have spoken with such Muslims and, while they are much to be preferred over the true-believing jihadists, the illogic of their enterprise is readily apparent. Within any Islamic context, their position will always been tenuous at best, which makes them inherently unreliable allies. In the current climate of opinion, I think such 'Muslims' do more harm than good in permitting wishful-thinking Westerners to persist in the myth that Islam can be pacified. To secularize or pacify Islam would require it to jettison two things: Muhammad and the Koran.

This is a harsh reality but one we must face. Islam has existed in its violent form for nearly 1400 years and were are kidding ourselves if we think we are going to undo that basic fact. It may be painful for the idealists, but there will likely never be a time of genuine peace where the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds live in harmonious coexistence. As during the Cold War, an uneasy truce may be the best we can hope for - but that's better than losing.

FP: Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the war and conflict we face?

Davis: Power is a function of capability and will. Right now we have plenty of the former but little of the latter. The jihadists' situation is the opposite, but with time we can expect them to acquire greater capability through the diffusion of military technology and the growing wealth of oil-rich Dar al-Islam. If the West possessed the will, there could be no doubt as to the outcome. But right now we are still trying to fight an antiseptic war against a nameless adversary. Islam has declared war on us while we have declared war on 'terror'. The magnitude of the problem is still totally misunderstood. If the demographic trends of the past three decades continue in Europe, that continent will be majority Muslim in several generations' time. If we think we have problems with the Islamic world today, wait until Dar al-Islam reaches from the Pacific to the English Channel.

In short, I am not optimistic. For the West to win, it will have to rediscover the reasons for winning, the reasons that the West and its heritage are worth preserving. Sadly, there seems to be no one today of public eminence capable or willing to articulate the merits of Western Civilization, which would be the first stage in mounting a defense. So far, Islam's atrocities - the Armenian genocide of the early 20th century, the increasing number of rapes of unveiled women in European cities, even spectacular episodes of terrorism such as 9/11 - have not managed to shake the West out of its complacency.

There is going to have to be a sea change in the West's self-interpretation if it is going to survive. It increasingly seems that, as Europe sinks, it will be left to America to nail the colors to the mast. America is certainly much better off than Europe today for two reasons: first, her Muslim population is much smaller (maybe 5 million despite what some people say); second, she is still largely Christian. It is should be easier for Americans to understand the danger of Islam because they can better empathize with the religious motivation of Muslims. Even her leaders, however, have yet to face up to reality.

FP: Greg Davis, thank you for joining us.

Davis: Thank you.