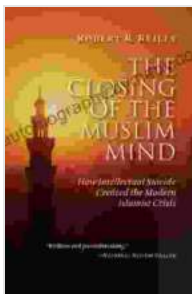# How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis

The modern Islamist crisis, characterized by violent extremism and intolerance, poses a grave threat to global security and stability. While much attention has been given to the political and economic factors that have contributed to its rise, less emphasis has been placed on the intellectual underpinnings that have made it possible. This article argues that the rejection of critical thinking and the embrace of irrationality have played a central role in creating the ideological vacuum that has allowed Islamism to flourish.

The Rejection of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, the ability to analyze information objectively and form independent judgments, is essential for a healthy and prosperous society. It allows us to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to make informed decisions about our lives and the world around us. However, in many Muslim-majority countries, critical thinking has been systematically suppressed. Educational systems have been corrupted to promote rote memorization and blind obedience to authority, rather than encouraging students to question and challenge received wisdom.

The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis by Robert R. Reilly

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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This suppression of critical thinking has had a devastating impact on the intellectual development of Muslim youth. Without the ability to think for themselves, they become easy prey for demagogues and ideologues who offer them simple answers to complex problems. They are unable to distinguish between rational arguments and emotional appeals, and are more likely to be swayed by fear and hatred than by reason and compassion.

The Embrace of Irrationality

The rejection of critical thinking has created a void that has been filled by irrationality. In many Muslim-majority countries, superstition, conspiracy theories, and magical thinking are rampant. People are more likely to believe in jinns and evil spirits than in science and reason. This irrationality has made it easier for Islamist extremists to recruit followers and spread their message of hate.

The embrace of irrationality is often driven by a sense of powerlessness and despair. When people feel that they have no control over their lives, they are more likely to turn to supernatural forces for comfort and security. Islamist extremists exploit this sense of powerlessness by offering a simple and seductive solution: blame the West, blame the Jews, blame the infidels. By scapegoating others, they provide their followers with a sense of purpose and belonging, even if it is based on hatred and violence.

The Role of Political and Religious Leaders

Political and religious leaders have played a major role in promoting the rejection of critical thinking and the embrace of irrationality in Muslim-majority countries. Many of these leaders have used their positions to suppress dissenting voices, silence critics, and control the flow of information. They have also used their influence to promote their own narrow and intolerant interpretations of Islam, which have contributed to the rise of Islamism.

For example, in Saudi Arabia, the government has banned the teaching of critical thinking in schools and universities. It has also cracked down on dissidents and free speech activists, and it has blocked access to websites and social media accounts that are critical of the regime. As a result, Saudi Arabia has become one of the most intellectually repressive countries in the world.

Similarly, in Pakistan, the government has allowed religious extremists to operate with impunity. These extremists have targeted schools, universities, and other institutions of learning, and they have intimidated and harassed anyone who dares to challenge their authority. As a result, Pakistan has become a hotbed of Islamist extremism.

The Failure of Education

The educational systems in many Muslim-majority countries have failed to prepare young people for the challenges of the 21st century. These systems are often outdated and irrelevant, and they do not teach students the critical thinking skills they need to succeed in a globalized world. Instead, they focus on rote memorization and blind obedience to authority.

This failure of education has contributed to the rise of Islamism in several ways. First, it has made young people more susceptible to extremist propaganda. Without the ability to think critically, they are more likely to be swayed by simple and seductive messages that offer them a sense of purpose and belonging. Second, the failure of education has created a generation of unemployed and underemployed youth who are frustrated and angry. This frustration and anger has made them more likely to turn to violence as a way of expressing their discontent.

The Role of Social Media

Social media has played a major role in the spread of Islamist extremism. Extremist groups have used social media to recruit followers, spread their propaganda, and incite violence. They have also used social media to create a sense of community and belonging among their followers, which has made it more difficult for them to leave the group.
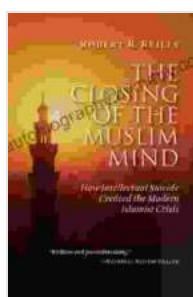
For example, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has used social media to great effect to spread its propaganda and recruit new members. ISIS has created a sophisticated online presence that includes videos, tweets, and other content that is designed to appeal to potential recruits. ISIS has also used social media to communicate with its supporters and to coordinate attacks.

The modern Islamist crisis is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been caused by a variety of factors. However, the rejection of critical thinking and the embrace of irrationality have played a central role in creating the ideological vacuum that has allowed Islamism to flourish. Unless we address these intellectual failures, we will continue to face the threat of Islamist violence for years to come.

Recommendations

There are a number of things that can be done to address the intellectual failures that have contributed to the rise of Islamism. First, we need to reform educational systems in Muslim-majority countries to focus on critical thinking and independent thought. Second, we need to support free speech and open dialogue, and we need to challenge the spread of superstition and conspiracy theories.

Third, we need to work together to create a more just and equitable world, where all people have the opportunity to live in peace and security. This means addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality, and discrimination that drive people towards extremism. By working together, we can create a world where Islamism is no longer a threat to global security and stability.

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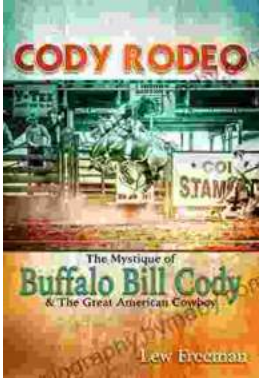|	
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