

Professor EXPOSES West's 1000-Year War on the Holy Land | Adnan Husain

Settler colonialism goes not far enough to explain the insane level of cruelty we see with the Gaza Genocide and the rampage of Israel in Lebanon, Syria, and other parts of the Holy Land. It doesn't explain why the entire West, Europe and North America are on board with the project. The crusading spirit that is baked into the colonial system, does. Looking at the original crusades, we see that they sparked the relentless drive for Europeans to go out, destroy and dominate—something they never stopped and that they are currently still doing, especially the neocon faction of the barbarian empire. Today I speak with Queen's University historian Dr. Adnan Husain about crusading society, the Crusades as a force in Western state and social order, the split between Latin and Eastern Christianity, Jerusalem's place in medieval politics, and the claimed links between crusading, colonialism, modern Israel, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and genocide. Links: Adnan A Husain on X: <https://x.com/adnanahusain> The Adnan Husain Show: <https://youtube.com/@adnanhusainshow> Guerrilla History Podcast: <https://guerrillahistory.libsyn.com/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction and guest background 00:03:47 Crusading society and Western order 00:12:22 Great Schism and the First Crusade 00:20:30 Jerusalem and the rise of holy war 00:30:52 Judeo Christian identity and Israel 00:45:45 Crusades colonialism and genocide 00:56:06 Islamophobia and closing thoughts

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. This is Pascal, and I am joined today by Associate Professor and Director of the History Department of the School of Religion at Queen's University, Dr. Adnan Hussain. Hussain, welcome. It's great to be with you, Pascal. And I'm sorry, I should have said Adnan, of course. Hussain is your last name, but either way, I'm very grateful that you're coming online. You've been researching West Asia for most of your academic career, and you've actually developed quite a bit of a framework to understand what is currently going on with Israel. That's what I would like to talk to you about. Can you maybe give us a little bit about your background, your research, and then tell us how this shapes your outlook on West Asia at the moment?

#Adnan Husain

Yeah, thanks so much. And again, it's a pleasure to be on with you. I'm what I would describe as a medieval Mediterranean and Islamic world historian who has specialized in the religious cultures

of the Mediterranean and the interactions between Muslims, Christians, and Jews over the medieval period, basically. And so that covers everything from looking at the interrelationships between these religious traditions and their spiritual, mystical, or theological dimensions, but also, in historical terms, everything from the mixed societies where there was some semblance of coexistence, of tolerance, of living together in places like medieval Spain or Al-Andalus or parts of the Balkans, or frankly, you could say all across the Islamic lands or lands where Muslims ruled, which were, of course, populated by longstanding groups of people who adhered to monotheistic religions in the Near East, around the Mediterranean, whether Christians or Jews. And those societies under Muslim rule continued to be very diverse ones where those populations existed for millennia up until today.

Although I would say that the modern Middle East in the post-colonial period has been particularly devastating for that tradition of heterogeneity, diversity, and cosmopolitanism. I'm also, however, interested in some of the unhappy cases in the premodern period that helped pattern what I think of as some of the abiding and recurring structures that transmit themselves after they're formed during the medieval period into forms of war, holy war, crusades. In fact, what I'm at work doing right now is trying to detail and articulate an understanding of the transformation that takes place in Europe in the 11th to the 13th centuries, where it becomes what I would call the crusading society. So I would characterize the work as a project to study the formation of the crusading society, what that is, and how it has reverberating consequences for subsequent Western history, particularly in its relation to the Islamic world.

#Pascal

I find this so important because, you know, some of these concepts of history are something that especially Europe and North America today look at as closed chapters, right? So most Europeans would say, colonialism—no, no, closed chapter, learned our lessons, not doing that anymore; feudalism—closed chapter, you know; and certainly crusades—closed chapter. We know it's part of history, we know it was violent, but we're not doing that anymore. Right. I'm pretty certain you have kind of a different perspective on that one. But before we go there, can you explain a little bit the concept of a crusading society? Because, like, the crusades in the plural are usually what we talk about to describe these different periods when different groups of Europeans, one after another and in concert, then went down to the Holy Land and, well, on the way, pillaged and plundered and murdered and conquered, and then went back. Can you maybe explain a bit why you look at this as a society?

#Adnan Husain

Yeah, that's an excellent question, because very often when people have studied the Crusades in the past, the long tradition of scholarship on it, it was something that was fascinating to historians, medieval historians. But it appealed to a particular kind of historian who was interested maybe in military history or thought that the romance of this kind of history, the folly of, like, idealistic, you know, ideas about going to Jerusalem, you know, were somehow kind of oblique to or extraneous to

the fundamental paradigm of European history and its development. It's just something, you know, kind of that happened. But the trajectory of European history was based on a whole lot of other developments, you know, internal, political, social, cultural, intellectual, and so on, in its transformation. Right. So very often the Crusades is not really integrated into the story of how Europe becomes Europe in the way that it does.

And my thesis is that you can't really understand the effect or importance of the Crusades only by studying them as a military phenomenon that had a beginning and an end, but rather we have to look at it as a process by which Europe—well, I would say more accurately at this time, before Europe is really the category that we would think of—this society is really Christendom, and particularly Latin Christendom. And in fact, actually, the very idea of Christendom, particularly Latin Christendom, as something like the lands that recognized the suzerainty of the Pope, who guaranteed the legitimacy of political order in the kingdoms and so on of these various polities—that was sort of Latin Christendom. It's almost coterminous as a concept with crusading and with the start of the Crusades.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video.

#Adnan Husain

And so my point here would be that we need to understand that these were wars and mobilizations for wars. They're organizing, they're preaching, they're financing, they're administering, they're provisioning. That happened from 1095 to 1291 in a very transformative way. If you think of a society that organized nine massive military mobilizations over the course of almost 200 years, 1095 to 1291, and ceaselessly in the periods before was talking about, you know, the need to recover the Holy Land, regarded the loss of, say, the County of Edessa, one of the four principalities that were established—the so-called Crusader States of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem—as a consequence of the first very successful crusade, the loss of Edessa in the 1140s became its own emergency around which there was a mobilization that had to take place for the Second Crusade. And the loss of Jerusalem to Salah ad-Din in 1189 then called forth the Third Crusade.

And the desire to kind of expand the territories led to the Fourth Crusade, which went off the rails but sacked Constantinople and then led to a Latin Byzantine Empire controlled by these former crusaders. And that itself imposed all kinds of new obligations that led then to the Fifth Crusade, the Louis IX, you know, the Seventh Crusade in the 1250s. You know, it's very hard to talk about European history or Latin Christendom's history during this period without thinking about the consequences of this constant mobilization for war—a sense of emergency that put pressure on how

you should organize Christian society, right? In order to have proper order, to make sure that you didn't have the dissent of heretics—that had to be suppressed. We need to purify. One of the explanations for why the subsequent Crusades went so badly and why there were constant losses to Muslim resistance against the Crusader states was, of course, to turn inwards and say, we must have been sinful. We can't tolerate these dissenters.

We have to purge the sin, and so we need to purify society. And so there was an ordering paradigm that is yoked to the Crusades and the consequence of the Crusades that leads to persecution of heretics, persecution of Jews, persecution of the Muslims who are conquered in places like Spain or in Sicily. Or, you know, there's even a small—Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor in the early 13th century, put down a major revolt in the eastern part of Sicily that had been, you know, populated by Arabs. It was a very diverse society. There were, you know, Arab Muslim peasants, but there were Greeks, Jews.

And then, of course, there were Latin Christians under the Normans in particular. And there was a rebellion, and he put down this rebellion in the southeastern part of Sicily and decided the best way to make sure that there wouldn't be future rebellions from this population was to remove them and put them on the Italian peninsula and create a city just for them. And they ended up turning, you know, this very important place called Lucera that nobody has really heard of. I visited the ruins of his city there. There's one small plaque that talks about, you know, what happened here.

But there was, like, for 60, 70 years, a predominantly Muslim city on the Italian peninsula that was loyal to Frederick II and his heirs, the Hohenstaufens, and was part of his wars against the popes during the 13th century, before they were ultimately liquidated when the Angevin monarchs of Sicily and southern Italy—a kind of allied branch of Louis IX's family, in fact, actually first his brother, Charles of Anjou. So, you know, what I'm saying is that there's a certain ordering of this Latin Christendom. Yeah.

#Adnan Husain

Internally, that is a response in some ways to these unceasing external overseas wars that are very expensive, largely unsuccessful, and constantly beset by resistance. And that experience of two centuries has a very formative kind of role in shaping Western identity and the shape of politics, society, and culture for the future.

#Pascal

Yeah, this is a very, very good and, I think, important observation about what this does to not just this or that country, but actually to the way that the society itself was organized before that. And I think it's very pertinent to point out that the modern nation-state system, the way we know it, goes back more or less to 1648. And the Crusades were way before that, right? Way before. And the way that the European continent and the people on that continent were formed, and the laws that they

abided by, and the belief systems they held, were not that much put into these geographical locations, rather than these religious institutions. The religious aspect was way more of an ordering system.

And in this sense, you know, the religion is not necessarily something that was under the nation. It was something that was different from the nation, but it was an ordering system, right? Not based upon geography, but based upon who subscribes to what kind of rule book. And the modernistic beliefs are, of course, they all come with their own little rule books. So, in a sense, a counter-concept to the nation-state. These Crusades, they also kind of happen in the context or parallel to maybe one of the most important events that we don't talk about anymore—the Great Schism of the Christian Church, right? How does the schism and this differentiation between Eastern and Western Christianity play into what you're researching?

#Adnan Husain

Well, that's a very important point, that you have two polities: the Eastern Roman Empire and some kind of confederation that we would call Latin Christendom, a kind of commonwealth of states that are always fighting with one another but recognize some kind of common sense of political legitimacy under the Catholic Church and the governance of the Church. And they shared many things in theological terms—you know, the Nicene Creed, for example. And so there were a lot of these compatibilities that defined both Orthodox and Latin Christian traditions against some of the other dissident, non-Nicene forms of Christianity that existed in the Near East or even as far as Central Asia.

But in the middle of the 11th century, because of disputes over many things—you know, there was the filioque, I don't want to get too deep into abstract theology—but how you understand in the creedal formula “and the Son,” filioque in Latin, and differing interpretations about that from a theological and creedal perspective led to controversies. Other things like, you know, things that exist today, such as the calculation of when Easter should be, when some of these major religious festivals—even, you know, when Christmas is to be marked, and so on in the calendar—that gradually you have these disputes, and there's a divergence where there's a schism.

They don't recognize one another as individuals. And so I think one thing that happens, however, is that there are papal interests because the popes end up developing this doctrine of their universal supremacy and authority. They're constantly eager to bring the Greek Orthodox Church and the patriarchs back into the fold, as it were, of recognizing the primacy of the apostolic tradition attributed to Peter that Rome symbolized—that it's the Church of St. Peter, and therefore it should be the most prestigious. Now, of course, Greek patriarchs from old centers of Christianity—you know, let's remember Christianity really started in the Eastern Mediterranean.

It didn't start in Rome. So there were places like Antioch and Jerusalem and places that were centers. They didn't necessarily recognize the pope as anything other than a key major bishop from

among the early centers, but nothing to distinguish him. However, the Eastern Roman emperors, who had political reasons to need aid and support against, say, the Seljuk Turks, who, after the Battle of Manzikert towards the end of the 11th century, started to take territories in Anatolia, in the heartland of the Eastern Roman Empire that had already, of course, lost many of its possessions in the Eastern Mediterranean—from the Levant to Egypt—to the early Arab Muslim conquests of the seventh century.

They saw this as an alarming possibility that, you know, these Turks would come, and so they called for aid to the West. And the emperors were often willing to make some kind of accommodation on religious negotiations and willing to bring the Orthodox Church into harmony with the Latin Church if the popes would help organize some support for the Eastern Romans against their various enemies. And so, in fact, the first call for the crusade, in a way, comes from, you know, the Eastern Roman, so-called Byzantine emperor. And he was probably thinking, you know, a few hundred kind of mercenaries—maybe we won't have to pay them if the pope can pay for them—but a few hundred warriors to come help us would be wonderful.

Instead, what he got was, after the call in 1095 by Pope Urban II at Clermont, an enthusiastic army of not just nobles, but people who embraced it. So there were some famous figures like Peter the Hermit, who preached the First Crusade and had rather apocalyptic and millenarian, kind of radical spiritual ideas about what this kind of pilgrimage to the East, you know, to Jerusalem, might mean. And so, you know, there was always this tension between the two, but for political reasons, the Eastern Romans were more interested—the Eastern Roman emperors were more interested—in some kind of rapprochement with the Latin Church because they saw it as a source of political and military support.

But what you find is, you know, over the centuries, as the traditions grew apart, that the actual clerics, the patriarchs, they were very, very resistant to any kind of sacrifice on principle. And so, as a result, in modern history, these differences have continued to this day, being independent churches, even if they have had longstanding affiliations in the past of creedal conformity. But now they're rather separate. And I think over history, you've seen that there have been many alliances between Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims against basically the aggressive sort of Catholic power of the medieval period and the early, early modern. So you see strange bedfellows where Protestants and Eastern Orthodox are all, you know, kind of in this position of being on the outside of, you know, the Catholic Church.

#Pascal

Right. And I think this is quite important. The Crusades were fought basically from the European heartland down to the Holy Land. And what is it then that gave this drive and that made it so popular? Why was it that a thousand years after the death of Jesus Christ, suddenly there was this idea, let's go, let's march forward and take it back? And the idea that Jerusalem must be held as a Christian city, must be under the Crusader dominance. What is it that makes that land so incredibly

important? Because today, of course, the idea is that the Middle East—and I try to avoid that expression, I prefer West Asia—but the Middle East, the Europeans look down on that place, right? They look down on it in so many ways. That's where all the immigrants are from. That's where all the wars are. This is where the terrorism comes from, and so on and so forth. Can you take us back to the Crusades and how these people looked at the Middle East?

#Adnan Husain

Well, you know, during this time, of course, the Middle East is much more urbanized. It is part of these trading networks that connect the Mediterranean to Africa, the Indian Ocean, and to other parts of Asia overland. And it's this intermediate position and its long kind of history of large-scale political units—of kingdoms and empires—that made it a very prosperous, urban source of human culture. We know many things like writing was developed, the first code of laws, all of these monotheistic religions come from here.

Even one could argue, I mean, this is something that is outside of my sphere in ancient history, but even if you look at the Phoenicians and the, you know, ancient residents of the Levant, you know, of what is today, you know, Palestine, Syria, the state of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and so forth, is that the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, even their pantheon, you know, and the myths around their pantheon were absorbed and taken up and adapted, but affected, you know, Greek mythology and later Roman pantheons and mythologies. Of course, every society and culture added something new and unique, but you can see that the Near East was an incubator for thousands of years of innovations, you might say, in human culture.

And the reason why is because it was a kind of crossroads between many different places and peoples that would come together through these trading networks. It was comparatively urbanized, and so it was a source of great wealth. And the images that the crusaders have of Palestine is of it as a land of milk and honey. You know, it's just dripping in wealth that properly belongs as a holy land. In fact, this concept of the holy land is fairly, you know, close in time to the idea of the Crusades itself. It's not like some long, you know, running kind of aspiration, I mean, for hundreds of years. And as Anselm of Canterbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, would say, among the few kind of critical voices about the Crusades, was that, well, Jerusalem is this heavenly ideal.

It's not this earthly place. I mean, that's the whole point of the Christian narrative — that we move from this idea of the Messiah as a king in a particular place, restoring the Jewish kingdoms, to the heavenly kingdom, the Redeemer and the Messiah, Jesus. And so we're all about, you know, aspiring to the heavenly Jerusalem. He said, what is this kind of desire to go to this earthly place and conquer it? But he was really in the minority, because already for a couple of hundred years, starting maybe in the ninth and tenth centuries, pilgrimage to Jerusalem started becoming very popular for people in the Latin West — penitential pilgrimage.

So it wasn't just that you wanted to go visit a holy place, but the idea that if you had committed some sin and you needed to do something—penitential acts and works—pilgrimage, and especially a long-distance pilgrimage to a prestigious sacred place, was one way of guaranteeing forgiveness for your sins and expiation of wrongs. And so it ended up becoming an extremely prestigious thing to do. It became increasingly popular in the 11th century. In the 10th and 11th centuries, the routes through Eastern Europe opened up because of the conversion of Stephen of Hungary.

He became a Catholic monarch, and so you could facilitate this. It started to become more and more popular. And so aspirations and connection to Jerusalem as Christ's land, and going and visiting the places that he actually lived, increased in spiritual significance and importance in the imagination of the Latin West. And of course, they also had these geographical ideas of Jerusalem as the very center of the world. And so, yeah, in addition, you know, when there were... This is actually kind of a strange thing to me. It's a little bit like what we're seeing today about the absolute anger about Iran deciding to impose some kind of a duty or charge or a toll on transit through its territorial waters in the Strait of Hormuz. One of the biggest complaints that you keep hearing in pilgrimage stories is that they're being harassed by the Muslims.

They're being forced to pay tolls to, you know, go through the territory. And this is considered an absolute outrage against the dignity of, you know—so I would just say there's a kind of funny way in which it seems that that justifies military action for them. And so, in some ways, there was this idea that we have to avenge Christ because he is being subordinated. His sovereignty is being subordinated by this polluting, kind of filthy pagan rule, because they didn't understand Muslims as another confessional religion with a monotheistic creed and doctrine. They had these ideas that they were pagans and were somehow defiling this holy place of Jesus that needed to be restored to Christian rulership.

And one of the other kinds of complaints that appear very strongly in, for example, the accounts of the speech by Urban II announcing the First Crusade, are concerns about these Eastern Christians. Okay, so the Greek Orthodox and Eastern Christians, that they are being cruelly and brutally oppressed because they're not living under Christian sovereignty. And there were also very lurid sort of tales of, you know, even that they were forcibly—this is, I love this one—in one of the accounts, forcible circumcision of Christian youth, and with the blood of the circumcision defiling the holy altars of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Right. So there are these kinds of, like, blood piety, which is very important for Catholic Christianity. You know, this is the body, this is the blood.

You know, but this kind of counter-ritual and this counter kind of narrative that is this defiling and oppressive ritual. So in some sense, they felt that it was important to intervene on behalf of the Eastern Christians because they were brothers through the body and blood of Christ, that we take the communion together, and this unites us. And you see some kind of proto—I don't know if you could call it—there's definitely religious affiliation, but it's also this kind of body and blood connection, that we are part of one body and blood. That is this idea of Christian-ness that I think is

partly on the path to an ethnicization of Christianity that starts to take place, and that from there it's not a huge step, as we see maybe in Iberia at the end of the 15th and through the 16th century, a transformation of this...

#Adnan Husain

Religious identity and religious difference with forced conversion of Muslims and Jews, that it then creates a new boundary on kind of ethnicity and culture, and then ultimately racialization of the modes of difference that are sort of at stake here. And so one of the most famous Crusade historians, you know, tried to argue that the reason why this happened was—it's a famous article that he wrote called "Crusading as an Act of Love." Okay, so he wanted to kind of portray and understand this as part of a Christian ideal of *caritas*, charity, you know, love your neighbor as yourself. And this idea of needing to intervene, right, for the sake of protecting the Eastern Christians. And I would argue this is maybe the first version of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect. You know, in international law, we have this new development of humanitarian interventionism. And you could say in some ways that, you know, the Crusades represented some early ideal in a religious language of kind of humanitarian interventionism.

#Pascal

R2P is usually traced back to Augustine and the Just War doctrine, but the Crusades, I mean, it's one historical line into them. But let's jump even a bit further, because everything that you're talking about rings so many bells when it comes to, let's say, today's obsession in Europe and North America to tell us that it is up to us to protect the Judeo-Christian heritage. And you see the pilgrimage, especially at the top of the U.S. political structure, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, putting on a kippah and then praying at the wall in Jerusalem, and then doing all of these weird acts, these performative acts of religiousness and piousness and connectedness.

And of course, these are mostly evangelical Christians that directly link themselves, and then also link their political power and their political systems, into a system that is now dominating and has effective military control over exactly those holy sites. Can you maybe speak a little bit to how you see the connection between these 1,000 years of crusading spirit that has been governing Western Christianity and today?

#Adnan Husain

Yeah, this is... There's so much that one could say, so I will try and kind of focus on a couple of, I think, really important components of this. And also to say that maybe in some ways the best example of the perduring of the crusading spirit is Marco Rubio's recent speech at the Munich Security Conference, which most people interpreted as a call for recolonization, as it were, of the

world—the reversal of the last 500, the decline or the ending of the 500 years of hegemony that Europe had with colonialism and capitalism, and the reversal of the decolonization that has taken place after World War II and so forth.

But what I heard when he was speaking about it was on behalf of Western Christian civilization, and I think, you know, there is embedded in his view a way in which this whole civilizational approach or perspective is sometimes secularized in language, you know, as just like Western culture, European culture. But in fact, actually, the secularization of Christian culture and the structures, you know, of thought and of politics and so on, even if they're secularized, there is a kind of continuity there that now is being called forth to revive. And so that might be, in some ways, the more secular-sounding version of the same sort of crusading spirit.

But the groups that you're talking about, making their obeisance and their pilgrimages dutifully on behalf of this new concept called Judeo-Christian civilization or Judeo-Christian culture or tradition, you know, this is a totally modern invention that has everything to do with some sort of post-World War II, post-Holocaust absorption of Jews into Christian society that is affected essentially by Zionism and the settler-colonial construction of a new, what I would think of as a crusader state. In my period that I study, where this was formed initially, the Jew was, of course, an object of total hostility, you know, violence, suppression, and subordination, and interestingly, was very closely connected as a potential ally of the Muslim.

And so I would argue that the roots of Islamophobia and antisemitism are actually intimately connected in the development of this crusader logic, and the internal persecution, you know, that unfolded from it, because every single major crusade was connected to and accompanied by intense, major violence against the Jews. In fact, you could say the first wide-scale, European-wide crusade—Latin Christendom-wide—massacres of the Jews en masse took place as a result of the First Crusade, the preaching of the Crusade. It happened again during the Second Crusade, and even in the Third Crusade in England, there were harsh restrictions put upon Jews and violence. And so what we have is a kind of pattern whereby crusading actually connected the enemies of Christ together.

The Jews were enemies of Christ, and so were the Saracens, as the Muslims were called. And in fact, actually, they might even be in league with one another, which only advanced the fifth-column kind of danger that transformed. And I would argue that the discovery of Islam as a religion, rather than just as a pagan religion, you know, kind of, you know, one among the pagan peoples, but actually discovering that it was a monotheistic religion with a scripture and, you know, had, you know, many things that would be parallel to the development of Judaism and Christianity as full religious confessional religions, as we might think of them, that that discovery actually really raised the stakes of the geopolitical and theological rivalry, where Islam and Muslims become a rival civilization.

And likewise, it had deep consequences for the treatment of Jews inside of Europe, because the discovery of Islam, in some ways, and some of the ways in which they understood Islam as a kind of Christian heresy mixed up with Judaism, basically, is how some of the people who wrote about Islam, like Peter the Venerable, who was the first person to sponsor the translation of the Quran into Latin, as well as some other Arabic texts into Latin that could be used for polemical purposes. And he himself wrote a polemic against Islam. He is among the first to really decide that Islam is—you know, he asks the question, are the Muslims, are the Saracens heretici vel ethnici?

Are they, you know, heretics, or are they, you know, just a kind of pagan people? You know, an ethnos, right? A pagan people. And he says, I think they're heretics. And not only are they heretics, it's the summa totius haereseon. It's the sum total of all of the previous heresies in one horrific, monstrous, you know, kind of force that he argues is really oppressing the Christians, the Latin Christians, because, like, most of Asia and even a part of Europe, they haven't even left a bit of Europe to us. They've taken part of the Iberian Peninsula, and so we're totally beset by the Muslims.

And likewise, so that transforms into this view of the Jews now as, in fact, actually treated as heretics, and the abandonment of the Augustinian doctrine of witness that had said, yes, Jews are wrong, they can't see the truth, but, you know, they actually bear witness to the truth by keeping the holy texts of the Old Testament, as the Hebrew Bible was called. And they preserve all of the evidence that shows the truth of the coming of Christ, you know, as prefigured in the whole Old Testament. So, you know, don't molest them, slay them not. They should be subordinate in Christian society, but they have a place and a function in the world until the end of time, when, of course, they will be converted or killed. And, you know, that's one of the signs of the return of Christ—the appearance of Antichrist and the second coming of Christ. One of the things that will happen in the signs of these end times is that there will be mass conversion of the Jews. But until that time, they can keep their religion because it serves the project of demonstrating Christian truth.

Well, by the 12th and 13th centuries, that kind of form of tolerance, if you want to call it tolerance, I mean, but at least they could exist—that form of tolerance was itself kind of disappearing. And you have, under the pressure, I would argue, of this geopolitical series of wars and emergencies and so forth for mobilizing in the Crusades, that it ends up leading to massacres of the Jews. And so what's so strange is, later in history, that we have, as a result of modern history and the establishment of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel, we think today that Muslims and Jews, they've just always had this kind of animosity. There's no way they could ever be reconciled. And, you know, this has nothing to do with us Christians or Westerners.

It's this, you know, internecine, you know, difference of these states when, in fact, this is a very recent phenomenon. Nobody in the 12th, 13th century, nobody until, you know, the 1950s ever talked about Judeo-Christian civilization because the Jews were anathema to Christian civilization. They were a danger, you know, that had to be dealt with. So, I find it kind of strange and interesting the way in which this has been reversed. So we have to ask, how did that happen? What has

happened? And my argument for what has happened is essentially that the crusading—you know, the crusading narrative was basically saying we Christians in the Catholic kind of tradition need to interpret, you know, these kind of biblical narratives with us now as the subject and the center, right?

We are the Israelites. And so we will go and establish, you know, a kingdom, reconstitute, you know, a holy kingdom, right? And you find this, you know, where the Franks, in one of the versions of the speech or the sermon of Urban II, celebrates the Franks as like the chosen people. You are a chosen people given this special dispensation by God to carry out this mission, to establish, you know, the second, you know, the true holy kingdom of Jerusalem. And what happens with Protestants is that they play with this narrative, like so many things, but they don't transform the entire structure and the narrative.

They substitute different—they have a different critical view—and they de-center this idea of the Church, you know, now being the inheritors and superseding, and, you know, develop a doctrine of restoration of the Jews as necessary, actually, as part of the events in the final, you know, in the final events of history. And so what happens is that Christian Zionism, as you well know, precedes and is much more multifarious. But what's interesting is that for the Jewish populations, the creation of Zionism, you know—and I believe, you know, you're aware of this as well—is that, you know, Herzl first is just looking for assimilation. That's what he was always looking for. And it's like, oh, well, maybe if we convert, we can be assimilated.

#Pascal

That doesn't... Yeah, he wanted to convert them to Catholicism and said, that's the solution. And then he went back to his flock and they said, like, what? Hell no. And then, ah, okay, need a new plan.

#Adnan Husain

Exactly. And the new plan... The new plan is, how do you become a European if you're one of these despised, oppressed, marginal populations? So you're a, you know, dissident, you know, apocalyptic Protestant who doesn't belong. You're not wanted. Well, we send you to the New World, and you can be a settler colony. You can create the New Jerusalem there. Or if you're an undesirable, you're a criminal, we also want to get rid of you. We'll send you to Georgia. And when the United States becomes its own independent country, the British will send them to Australia. So these unwanted populations... you know, they can be transformed. And that's what I think Zionism does, is it says you can become a European as long as you leave Europe and become a colonizer, a settler colonizer elsewhere. Then you will be redeemed. You can transform.

#Pascal

Yeah, we now have good news for you. You can be one of us if you leave us and continue the project, and then we will embrace you, and you will be part of the family of the good, right? Plus, also, by the way, you need... I mean, your religion, I mean, just don't take it too far, right? So that's why also, like, all of the actually believing Jewish, the real Jewish believers, are either opposed to Zionism or they use it in order to be there and do their studies, right, in Israel. But they do not support the Zionist project itself, which is a secular project. And that plays so well into evangelical Zionism, which also wants to use them in order to get to the end days, in which they will all die or go to hell, and they themselves go up there. So it's a huge exercise of using.

But one more thing, and feel free to react to this however you want. We look at Israel today, a lot of us, as a settler colonial state. But if we extend this discussion to the Crusades, one might argue that it is an extension of the Crusades. And not that the settler colonial aspect is the most fundamental thing. The fundamental thing is the drive of the Europeans to the east. And ultimately, having failed to do so, then changing directions and going west. And as you said, New Jerusalem in the west. It's still the whole colonial enterprise. We could break it down and could make the argument it is actually a crusading, an extension of the Crusades, not east but west, where they could go and in the end succeeded because over there they could genocide everybody. They failed to do so in Jerusalem, didn't they?

#Adnan Husain

Well, yes, because there was resistance. They were incapable. I mean, they tried, you know, let's be honest, like, you know, in Ma'arrat, they slaughtered the population, and they even, you know, ended up having incidents of cannibalism that they themselves reported when they conquered Jerusalem. It was an orgy of blood. You know, it's even celebrated in some of the sources as a wonderful thing. **Mirabile dictu**—marvelous to say. It's like a miracle, a miraculous kind of event. The blood from the temple, you know, is flowing down. It's like a river of blood from the slaughter and the massacre.

So, you know, there was a genocidal kind of orientation, however, it was impossible for them to succeed in that, in doing it. And there was resistance, and there continued to be resistance. 1291 is the last of the, you know, Acre falls, and it's the last of the Crusader polities. And so they, in fact, do go west in precisely the way you're saying. I mean, let's think about this: the Mediterranean was the crucible in which they learned and practiced many of the techniques that would then become successful in the Atlantic world system and the creation of the modern kind of world. What were they doing? The Crusaders were trying to establish sugar plantations in Palestine. They also tried it in Cyprus. The Genoese were very closely connected with supporting Crusades as part of their commerce, the transport, etc. They were the biggest slavers in the entire Mediterranean.

I mean, some people think 40 percent of the Genoese population in the 14th century were enslaved peoples from all over, you know, from Asia to parts of Africa, etc. So when it comes time for

conquest, colonization, the plantation economy, is it any wonder that Isabella and Ferdinand turn to a Genoese who is the product of two, three hundred years of experimenting in how we might, you know, be able to establish these settler colonies successfully with enslaved labor and genociding indigenous people, when it's just that it ends up being successful? And I would say if you study Columbus, it's well known.

I mean, people have done very serious studies of his writings, diaries, what he read, who he was informed and influenced by. And he was influenced very closely by Joachimite spiritual Franciscans, which is this tradition from the late 12th and the 13th centuries of apocalyptic imagination. You might say it's an apocalyptic interpretation of scripture as a history of the future. Okay. It's like using a system of interpreting the predictions or episodes in the biblical text as an analogy for what is to come — the seven stages of history, the seven antichrists that Joachim of Fiore talks about in his writings — and he identifies Salah ad-Din as maybe the sixth.

You know, there's always seven, and everybody always understands that they are at the cusp of the final, right? Nobody thinks, oh yeah, it's very far away — or at least, unless you're Augustine, who was happy to say, yeah, maybe it's far away. But anybody who's interested in the apocalypse always thinks we're on the cusp of it right now. And so likewise, these ideas keep getting updated, like, oh, they look at history and they think these are the signs of the end that will give us access and understanding to fulfilling the goal of restoring Jerusalem to Christian hegemony by going in this other direction.

And we know Christopher Columbus had that as a very serious goal, and that he was informed by this kind of crusader Christian apocalyptic imagination. It wasn't just—I mean, that's the thing. We often think that the plunder and the material components, that you have to choose, that it's one or the other. What I would argue is that the crusading nexus is not just ideas, but it's structures, it's institutions, it's practices forged in history that become a paradigm for how you pursue, you know, material gain and expansion of Christendom in the world through conquest and profit. You know, that these things very much go...

#Pascal

It's a civilizational project. It's civilizational. It's an all-of-society movement toward certain—I'm not sure if we should call them goals—but a certain endpoint.

#Adnan Husain

Yes, yes. I mean, we have to say, like, I think, you know, it's hard to say these things sometimes, but you have to say, when you look at this history, that genocide became a Western value. I mean, you know, because, look, we've all been struggling. How is it possible that, like, the entire Western elite has looked on with indifference at the Gaza genocide? Like, how is that possible? How is it willing to abandon, in fact, even destroy Gaza, the liberal order, international law? I would argue

that it's because Israel is like those crusader states. You know, it is. And it's the last settler-colonial project of Europe. And in fact, the crusader states were, in some sense, the first Europe-wide settler-colonial project. And they share that in some respect. And it's very different from the projects that were sponsored by nation-states. This is a project of the West as a whole. And I think that's why you see the commitment is so broad across different polities among the Western elite. Yeah.

#Pascal

And that would explain it. Actually, that kind of framework would finally give a little bit of sense to these things that, under the nation-state framework, make no sense. Just take what happened this week with the Israeli army and navy going all the way to Greek waters, apprehending 170 sailors, bringing them to Greece, and then the Greeks take over and make them walk a good old barefooted walk of shame to the airport. And two of these people were abducted to Israel and are now on trial in Israel. It's like, you know, the way that these systems interlink, they make much more sense if we think of them as a common project and a long-durée project rather than just, like, narrowly this government and that government and the interests of this or that politician. No, it's these interlinking institutions, and within them, genocide—rather than a value—we'll call it a method.

It's a methodology. And Western Europe is the only civilization on Earth that managed to genocide three entire continents. I mean, the tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of people that were killed by that very spirit that we just described in the last hour is insane. And it's something that no other civilization has ever done or ever managed to do to any one of the others. So, in a sense, we're now coming full circle. There were the Crusades that went east, failed, went west, succeeded, and then are coming back to the original project. And they seem to be pretty close by now to maybe getting what they want, although it seems currently, again, they are running into the same wall that they ran into 800 years ago, and that is the resistance of the East.

#Adnan Husain

That's right. And I mean, I find it kind of interesting. You know, of course, during the global war on terror, right after 9/11, announcing this new project, Bush gave the speech early on where he called it this crusade, this new crusade. And then, of course, he had to take it back and apologize. You know, he meant it. It's not about—it was very hard. He did mean it. But what's interesting is that was a time where it seemed like it was important not to appear to mean it, whereas now we're in an age where you can mean it and you can say it. It's OK. I mean, basically, it's what Netanyahu has been advertising—that we're your crusader state. We're on the front line in this war against Islam. And so we're doing—and even, didn't Chancellor Merz say so?—they're doing our dirty work for us.

#Pascal

They're saying it out loud. And they say it in the same terms as they said, like, you know, against the Orthodox heretics. Ukraine is the forefront. Israel is the forefront against the Muslim heretics. It's like we're fully back. We're fully back in it. So it's a millennium of obsession.

#Adnan Husain

Yeah. And Reza Shah Pahlavi just, you know, there were those pranksters, those German pranksters who were interviewing him to try and pretend as if they could help secure Germany's support militarily for the coming war, before the start of the war. And he said, oh, it would be really helpful if they would join this crusade. I mean, so I think my point with this is that, you know, I don't want to make it seem as if this thousand years of history means that we are trapped in it. But clearly, unless we really take into account what's at stake and what's at the root of it, there's no chance that, you know, we will be able to change and make a difference. We'll be caught in this pattern. Yeah.

#Pascal

Yeah, but, you know, sociologically, it's absolutely beautiful, isn't it? When the true motivation that underlies the entire civilizational approach is so well hidden that the people who are under its spell even believe that they overcame this 300 years ago, right? It's not religion. No, no, we are secular. We're secular societies, enlightened, right? We are not religious. But in fact, everything that is happening, that is of any kind of importance in world history, is deeply rooted in religion. I mean, you cannot actually, you cannot even attack it because you first need to peel away so many layers until you get to the core that it's very well protected in terms of an underlying motivation, isn't it?

#Adnan Husain

Yes, and I mean, I think that's a very important observation because it also helps explain why, for me, in this moment, you can't understand the politics of the West without understanding Islamophobia as a structuring paradigm. All of the anti-immigrant narratives and so forth, they make sense if you understand that there's this larger frame where historically Islam, the political culture, is used to framing its own existential combat and rivalry with the Saracen, the Muslim, and that it is somehow irreconcilable. It's impossible for there to be...

Unfortunately, they only seem to pay attention to the crusading history and not maybe Al-Andalus and medieval Spain and other places where, well, also, in fact, actually throughout the Islamic world, these were diverse, cosmopolitan places where it wasn't what we would be, in the modern world, happy with in many ways, obviously. But because nobody was a citizen—everybody was a subject and a subordinate of one kind or another—and there were, you know, depending on religious status, you had a higher social status theoretically, and so on. But there was respect for life, property, your religion. You maintained those things in a way that we find was not possible as Europe developed into becoming the crusading society.

#Pascal

The crusading society. I think that's... it's a very, very important and fundamental concept. I would like... maybe we can do another talk, and I would like to add, you know, others, maybe Radhika Desai. You know, people who... you have a fundamental concept in order to look at what is happening. Radhika Desai, of course, uses Marxism and the capitalist structure of the political economy as a way to explain all of the movements that are coming out of it. That kind of strikes me as separate from what we've been using in this talk, but it's very fundamental to understand the drivers, because otherwise we're not going to be able to escape them again. Is there anything that we didn't cover yet that you would like to point out? And if yes, please say so. If not, please let us know where people should go to find your writings and your publications.

#Adnan Husain

Well, I want to thank you so much for a really fun conversation. I love talking about this history and trying to relate it to the world we're in, so I really appreciate it. People can follow my work on Twitter at Adnan A. Hussain. I also have a YouTube channel, a show called—pardon me—the Adnan Hussain Show. And I'm also co-host of Guerrilla History podcast. And so people can find, you know, kind of what I'm thinking about and talking about—a lot of geopolitical analysis, history, religion, politics—on all those platforms.

#Pascal

I will link to them in the description box below, and we will certainly have you back for our next talk. Adnan Hussain, thank you very much for your time today.