

What Mamdani Never Learned at Bowdoin College

By Geoffrey Clarfield

Everyone is talking and fretting, justly so, about Zohran Mamdani.

What kind of ruler will he be? Here is one attempt to describe what he is and represents.

I spent a week in Manhattan just before Zohran Mamdani got elected. It was clear to me that the tide was moving in his favor.

Despite all the hustle and bustle and robust capitalism of the place, New Yorkers have been moving to the left for decades. Cultural Marxism and its alliance with radical Islam are growing rapidly in the minds of more and more New Yorkers. (Read about the [Red-Green alliance](#)).

And now, just like that other capital of the Anglosphere, London, New York has a Muslim mayor who is, in this case, an advocate of radical Shia Islam. We must expect arbitrary authoritarianism, masked as inclusivity, from his new government.

None of this should be surprising as Mamdani is a graduate of Bowdoin College, which was, not so long ago, one of America's most prestigious and historic private liberal arts colleges.



Over the last few decades, Bowdoin's once old-fashioned curriculum of Great Books has been hollowed out and replaced with multicultural garbage courses. You can read all about it in a marvelous report commissioned by the National Association of Scholars called "[What Does Bowdoin Teach?](#)" But let me give you some advanced reading notes. The curriculum is not friendly to Western Civilization or American patriotism.

And so a young Mamdani would not have studied the ups and downs of classical civilization as did the founders, in the hope that America would incorporate the best of the classical world while avoiding its failures, such as the resort to barbarian tyrants when things go south. And so I submit that Mamdani is acting like one of those old Hellenistic barbarian tyrants that he may not have read about when an undergraduate, for after all, they were just dead white males practicing "white on white" violence.

What do I mean by Mamdani being a modern-elected-barbarian tyrant? Let us first go back to the world of the Greeks. During the period when the Greek cultural world was divided into a whole range of states with different forms of government, when a city-state failed, it either welcomed or endured a tyrant who gained near absolute power over its

citizens.

The tyrant was often an outsider of some sort, with no hereditary power. He was a champion of the people, a patron of the arts, a sponsor of the local religion, and often a temple builder.

The classical tyrant was against the establishment, the oligarchs, and the kings. He gained power by championing the simple folk. Although for a short period of time all went well, tyrants eventually became brutal, tyrannical, arbitrary, and oppressive. And so one does not have to be a professional scholar of classical civilization to see the outline of a tyrant in Mamdani. But what about the label barbarian? Allow me to explain.

Mamdani is a privileged Ugandan of Indian descent who came to America not long ago. He is the son of wealthy parents and has not worked for a living. He is a charismatic speaker for those on his side, and an identity politics injustice collector who likes to perform variations on the impossible-to-define Islamophobia theme. He plays the victim. He despises the private sector, but like any competent tyrant, he'll make peace with the New York banks right up until he's ready to come for them.

To answer that question, one must consider the intellectual milieu in which Mamdani's academic father and film-making mother worked—a world shaped by what is often called “third-worldism.” I saw it up close during the twenty years I lived in East Africa.

The first thing to understand about this milieu, which includes many Asian (particularly Indian) and African intellectuals, is its limited engagement with the major thinkers of Western civilization. In that environment, these writers are frequently dismissed as “dead white males,” blamed for the transgressions of slavery and imperialism in Africa

and the developing world. What rarely comes up, however, is the longstanding Islamic slave trade that profoundly “underdeveloped” the continent.

And these kinds of intellectuals do not believe that there were any saving graces to be considered about the British or the French in their colonial empires. Westerners were bad, and tribal Africans and Indians, or Far Eastern civilizations, were and are morally superior. Yet, at the same time, they have often argued for the radical transformation of these societies through violent, Marxist-inspired (Western!) revolution. Remember Cambodia?

Nevertheless, these third-world elites all learnt and argue in fluent French and English. No tribal languages for them. They want their children to go to private, independent schools. No oral wisdom for them. They want to live in wealthy expatriate neighborhoods. No village life for them. They only go to private hospitals in contact with Western centers of medical expertise and excellence. No curanderos or barefoot doctors for these types!

They want to be well funded by Western NGOs—Clinton, Soros, Rockefeller, Ford, and others—and they want their children to join the transnational class. They want to either work for or implement the policies of that anti-Western, cynical, Marxist-inspired ally of radical Islam that we now call the United Nations.

So, a strong argument can be made that Mamdani is an elected barbarian tyrant, for he knowingly rejects the fundamentals of Western civilization with its roots in Athens and Jerusalem. And having not grown up in America, any possible lingering notion of patriotism, of belonging to something called the American political and intellectual tradition, is conspicuous in its absence.

Mamdani got elected with a majority of the vote. His program

is clear. He will give the poor as much free stuff as possible. He will scare away investors. He will entrench “diversity, equity, and inclusion” more deeply within the city administration, and he will endorse and encourage the boycott, divest, and sanctions movement, for every tyrant needs a minority to beat up upon, and his minority of choice is Jews (mostly) and the State of Israel.

And please note, politely, that as he is a recent convert to the latest version of Iranian Shia Islam, he has said nothing critical about that dangerous theocracy that persecutes its own people in a police state.

Mamdani wants to tax and punish the rich, empower the unemployed and underemployed, give free transportation to everyone, as well as free day care to those in need, and provide discount groceries from state stores, as the Russian Communists once tried to do before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He also wants to redefine and weaken the police, so one must expect a rise in violence in New York City soon. Jews are scared because they know that every tyrant needs a scapegoat, and they have been chosen to serve this function.

Part of Mamdani’s “third worldism” can be seen in his acceptance speech, in which he quotes the failed Indian socialist Nehru.

Nehru’s Marxist-inspired policies brought economic ruin and misery to that newly independent country, while creating a predatory bureaucratic class of obstructive socialist administrators who lived well during times of economic hardship. You do not have to trust me in this.

You can read an article about it by the Indian-born, Columbia University economist, Arvind Panagariya, who [wrote](#) in a 2024 *Indian Times* article that Nehru’s policies spelled economic failure for India and did not alleviate massive poverty.

Nehru is not a leader to imitate. His policies did not alleviate poverty. They amplified poverty. And here is an aspect of Nehru that few people would like to remember. No doubt he picked this up while a student at Cambridge in the 1930s. Let me quote from one of his letters written in 1951.

In a letter to BC Roy dated April 24, 1951, Nehru wrote: "Hindus are isolationists & not good mixers. The result is that the Hindu, like the Jew, rather stands out in the world and does not easily get on with others."

Sadly, for those familiar with India and its recurring pre- and post-independence famines, one must remember that it was only and solely Yankee ingenuity and the American science of the Green Revolution that finally saved India from famine. Nehru's Indian socialism failed massively there. But he is still Mamdani's hero.

Mamdani has a winning smile. He looks like the 1960s rock star, Cat Stevens. He dresses well, and he is full of anger. We should not be surprised if we soon discover that both George Soros and Muslim Brotherhood-related organizations' donors back him. Let the investigative journalism begin! And let us see what they can do.

A barbarian tyrant who hates the West and America will soon be in power in New York City. Let us hope that somehow, his project is stumped. If it is not, he will make the many miserable and the few around him wealthy and privileged, just as his hero, Nehru, once did in India.

Can we blame Bowdoin for creating Mamdani? Not directly, but his parents certainly chose the college that gave them the results that they desired. We must ask, who will Bowdoin graduate next? I shiver to think of it.

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