The LongView

Quarterly Magazine

Moving Beyond the War on Terror

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In the Name of Allah,
the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

There is a tendency or temptation to view September 11, 2001 as a watershed moment in international relations. It defers to the narrative woven by politicians to legitimise the subsequent "war on terror" by seeing the deployment of unbridled force, lawful or otherwise, as a necessary tool to preserve a putative rules-based order. Even the unquestioning ease with which the abbreviation 911 and the phrase "war on terror" have slipped into the popular vocabulary and consciousness speaks to the ability of hegemonistic powers to shape discourse as a means of legitimating their abuses.

Yet scratch beneath the surface and it quickly becomes apparent that there was nothing defining about it. It marked no departure from the projection of colonial power at home or abroad. Despite oft-quoted cliches, neither the rules of the game nor the world changed on that day. The domestic and foreign policies of global powers continued along the same well-hewn channel, the only difference being that the gloves came off and the mask was peeled back. A retaliatory attack on a global power for its overseas excesses became a pretext for governments everywhere to brazenly double down on anyone that dared oppose their injustices.

The crushing force and scale of the "war on terror" has with impacted Muslims in every imaginable sphere of life. It unleashed a tsunami of Islamophobia that served as a prerequisite to selling the atrocities carried out in its name. It has sought to re-educate believers in their own religion, to save Muslims from themselves (read rewriting Islam) in order to ensure political consent. Without a "war on terror", it is doubtful Britain would have established the Prevent programme, designed to produce a politically emasculated, compliant Muslim population. Nor is it likely that China would have set up concentration camps to scale up its erasure of the Uighurs' religion and culture, nor that anti-Muslim Hindu supremacy would have spread so much in India. The casting of Muslims as the world's bogey men has made them targets of discrimination, set back liberation and civil rights movements, and set off a rampant cancel culture that seeks to blot out their very existence as political actors.

Reeling under such blows, bitterly divided and facing a seemingly irretrievable imbalance of power, Muslims have grappled with the question of what should be our response. In our lead article, **Arzu Merali** highlights the fact that the war on terror has its origins in the same US playbook that gave us the "war on drugs" in the 1970s and the war against various movements and causes before that. She castigates the community for not heeding their lessons and adopting a defensive posture.

In order to rethink and plan our future outside the boxes into which we have been forced, Merali argues that Muslims need to come up with alternative models that are not merely poor imitations of neo-liberal democracy or socialism but which are rooted in values which offer genuine hope for a better future. We need to reject outright the 'us versus them' divide and rule rhetoric employed to dress up a war whose motives are more about power, resources and our own subjugation than any professed altruism.

The first military casualty of the last twenty years was Afghanistan. Known to be the hideout of the alleged perpetrators of the attack on the US it became the locus of another US war and occupation. Having overthrown the ruling Taliban and installed a client regime the US would stay for 20 years in a move viewed by **Shah Mahmoud Hanifi** as falling on the same colonial continuum as the British and then Russian invasions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Hanifi shows how Afghanistan became a dark ops site and military testing ground where the US indulged in systematic atrocities. Critically, it cemented ethnic rivalries and made ethnicity the currency of politics, locking in conflict into the political system. With international sanctions now starving its people and squeezing its economy, Afghanistan faces a mammoth struggle to undo the legacy of successive colonial occupations.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has once again exposed the double standards governing international politics. The rush to sanction and isolate Russia is a stark contrast to the complicity of nations in the subjugation of Palestine. In our third piece, **Ramzy Baroud** looks at the devastating impact on the Palestinian struggle, particularly in how it is popularly viewed. Barely had the dust settled on the site of obliterated World Trade Center than Israel launched a comprehensive media campaign conflating the freedom fight and so-called 'Islamic terror', presenting itself as an ally in the "new" global war. Meanwhile, Palestinian leadership fell into the trap of assimilating itself into the prevailing narratives, even when clearly detrimental to the long term aims of the liberation struggle. Palestinians in parts of the diaspora fared little better. As US forces invaded Iraq, the Palestinian community there faced reprisals from resurgent with impacted forces who perceived them as being complicit in the erstwhile strongman's persecution of the Shia community.

Atrocities committed in the name of freedom and democracy were also answered with reprisal attacks on western soil, vindicating (and justifying the acceleration of) governments' erosion of civil liberties. In the US, the centrepiece of this was establishment of the Department for Homeland Security, one of the largest federal agencies, boasting close to a quarter of a million employees. In the final piece in this issue, **Richard Sudan** argues that the DHS has been an unmitigated disaster for Americans from the way it handled the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 to its spying on civil rights activists, Muslims and blacks, its mistreatment of migrants and its abject failure to prevent the rise of white supremacist groups that ultimately led to the storming of Congressional buildings in Washington in 2021.

All the contributors to this issue challenge not just the conventional thinking of the so-called war on terror, but also those who have been marginalised and oppressed by it. Finding ways out of the various sectarianisms – ethnic, religious, political – is critical. By continuing to see the world in the partisan way fashioned by colonial powers, old and new, we are simply perpetrating violence on ourselves. Let's rewrite the script and move beyond the "war on terror".

Decentralising US / Western Violence from Muslim Expectations:
Notes from a Future Reader

If we really want to get beyond the 'War on Terror', argues **Arzu Merali**, we need to stop thinking and acting within its narratives.

The history books need to be rewritten. In the meantime, a combination of the internet, knowledge production outside of Westernised settings, social movement networks and memory (false and true) may help us understand our recent history and place it within longer and broader contexts. A future reader may make some observations that in truth should have been made by us now. It's just a thought. As the world discussed the 20th anniversary of 9-11 last year and activists tried to reframe the debate into one about 20 years of the 'war on terror', maybe we are in the process of missing an opportunity to cast off the narratives of the last two decades. We – the marginalised peoples of the world - have no military might. Our need to respond to the structural and physical violence meted out over two decades understandably left us with little time to think of or promote the existing ideas for a different world so many of us aspire to. But it is time to think, read, speak. By doing so we can start to cast off the hold that violent narratives have on us, a grasp that is sometimes so tight we even become the perpetrators of the very thing we decry.

Whose War?

Once up a time there was a war. Waged by the US which invaded countries in the name of eradicating the menace it set itself against. Alongside, the powers that be created a mass incarceration scheme and set a tranche of laws designed to target, disadvantage and criminalise a specific segment of the population. It was called the War on Drugs and took place from the 1970s onwards. Sounds familiar? It wasn't even the first such war, where 'war' was declared on an abstract concept with very real-world consequences: the (further) aggrandisement of bankrupt political elites; the enrichment of big business; the entrenchment of the US military industrial complex. Set against this, mass death, destruction, imprisonment and misery were inflicted on millions worldwide. Glossed over or justified as the only moral response to the menace of drugs / terror, the endless violence is now just a footnote in history.

The US is now the self-styled representative of the West.

The War on Terror is / was not new. This is now the US Playbook. It's time to read it.

Crushing dissent from the inside

It is one of the most insidious parts of the COINTELPRO program that was set to crush the Black Panther Movement in the 1970s, that alongside provocateurs and infiltrators, the authorities flooded poor black communities with drugs. It is the British in Hong Kong reworked for a domestic audience. Unlike the British in China the US policies and practices are not just now well documented, they are well known and not particularly taboo as a fact of history in the US.

What is the Muslim COINTELPRO writ large? For infiltrators and provocateurs, in the domestic US context, Hatem Bazian points to the FBI entrapment cases, of which there are hundreds. In the context of the 'Arab Spring' we see instead both overt support for 'some' fighters, and covert support for others. Both are instrumentalized in the service of (in)advertently defending Israel by undermining the resistance axis. There isn't any way around this.

But what about the 'drugs'? Is there an equivalent? Well aside from the CIA / 1990s onwards Taliban / Northern Alliance / post-occupation drug collusion, maybe not. But there is something insidious that has been also been a type of infiltration – the controlling of and manipulating of ideologies, including those that consider themselves variously 'Islamic'.

When the US Army / Pentagon Think Tank RAND wrote about supporting some of the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as secular groups in both Muslim majority countries and in minoritized situations, as part of the US' foreign policy strategic aims (including to bolster Israel and bring down 'Islamist' governments in Iran and Sudan, pro-Palestinian governments in the region, including and especially Syria and movements in Lebanon and Palestine), more attention needed to be paid.

At the level of minoritised civil society – whether it is undercover cops in Animal Liberation Movements or not-so-covert, turncoats, or the divide and rule and gatekeeping of NGOs and movements, US strategic aims tend to trickle down into fomenting different petty and or violent sectarianisms in different national and international contexts.

It has been written about extensively, not least on these pages, the need to shake off the terms of engagement: 'terrorists', 'Islamists', 'radicals' and so on, and with them the false need to have laws and policies that simply demonise. There is plenty to read too on the revolving door between the media, think tanks and governments in the last fifty years in Westernised settings as the place to locate the world's current woes. The writings of think tanks like RAND are literally the US Playbook. Reading Randa Abdel-Fattah's 'Coming of Age in the War on Terror' we should be reminded that this is beyond an urgent task. Yet, we haven't even begun reading, let alone writing a different script.

We have the physical infiltrators, one moment shouting at demonstrations and decrying all things in the most unsavoury terms as un-Islamic, before becoming the mirror image of themselves, this time on a crusade against Muslims. But we also have the infiltrated ideas, and some of those ideas is as Baqir Al-Sadr in Iqtisaduna (Our Economics) puts it:

"The first is political subordination which found visual expression in the economically advanced European nations exercising of direct rule over the backward nations.

"The second is economic subordination which went hand in hand with the rise of politically independent governments in the backward countries. This subordination found expression in the European economy being given full scope to play on the scene of these countries in different ways: to exploit their chief resources, to fill their vacuum with foreign capitalism and to monopolize a number of economic conveniences on the pretext of training the natives of the various countries to shoulder the burden of the economic development of their countries.

"The third is subordination in method which was practiced by the people of the Islamic world in numerous experiments. Through these experiments, they tried to gain political independence and get rid of the domination of the European economy. They began to think of reliance on their own power to develop their economy and overcome their backwardness. However, they were only

able to understand the nature of the problem shown by their economic backwardness within the framework of the European understanding of it.

"Therefore, they were forced to choose the same method the Europeans had adopted in building up their modern economy."

Ustasha or Chetnik anyone?

At the time of writing Russia has invaded Ukraine. Trying to ignore the hypocrisy of politicians and media in the West is difficult, but can in many cases be avoided. Don't turn on the TV, curate your social media. But listening to Muslims living in the actual or virtual West is a different level of excruciating. Often using the maxim "my enemy's enemy is my friend", and occasionally invoking Islamic thinking about the oppressed, Muslim voices are in the main, supporting the Ukrainians. Just as the BBC declared jihad in Syria ten years ago, Muslims go with the flow of the media narrative, even those who will otherwise berate the mainstream western media as Islamophobic. Muslim shows on different social media platforms see talking heads explaining earnestly how appalling Russia is and how bad they have been to Muslims. We – the global ummah - must support the Ukrainians, the voices demand. In one, a more educated host raised the issue of Crimean Tartars and Chechens fighting with the Russians. Well, came the response, I am talking about Muslims elsewhere. Muslims there need to make the choices they feel necessary.

At some point the Ukrainian National Guard put out a video of a soldier putting pig lard onto bullets, claiming they were being made ready to kill those "Kadyrov orcs".

It's like a Bosnian explained to me some years ago, when we were discussing the Ukrainian situation in the mid 2010s and the dilemma faced by Tartars in the Crimea. "We have faced this many times. Ustasha or Chetnik?" The former a term used for the ultra-nationalist, fascist Croatian Nazi collaborators. The latter, a term used for Serbian ultra-nationalist militias across various 20th century conflicts including the Bosnia war of 1992 – 1995.

It's not a choice is it? Just survival, maybe with a small hope that in the long run something good can come of it. Sometimes in those situations you end up with Stockholm Syndrome. Sometimes you just need to make the best of it. The latter, as disillusioning as it may be, if done honestly, needs to be understood by activists who hold the minoritized and marginalised (including governments and political players) in the world system, to a higher standard than the powers that minoritize and marginalise them.

Meanwhile the fight to transform the world leaves aside current and historical examples of radical breaks from the European method – Haiti, Cuba, Iran, the Zapatistas, the different manifestations of the Bolivarian revolution. They are pigeon-holed while the West-centric infiltrates hearts and minds in some way or another.

Rebooting the war

Whilst there are many historic reasons for the Stockholm Syndrome of civil society and global movements, notably the destruction of knowledge and history by colonising powers over five centuries of near Western hegemony, none of us can afford another generation of using this as an excuse for (in)action. Literally. With the climate crisis threatening the very existence of life as we know it, as Ramon Grosfoguel highlights, Western civilization is a civilization of death. We need to plan for life.

As this is being written, a link is being circulated among friends. It is of the report 'Overextending and Unbalancing Russia' by the RAND Corporation from 2019. In its summary of its report that ' comprehensively examines... options that the United States and its allies could pursue across economic, political, and military areas to stress—overextend and unbalance—Russia's economy and armed forces and the regime's political standing...' it states:

"**Providing lethal aid to Ukraine** would exploit Russia's greatest point of external vulnerability. But any increase in U.S. military arms and advice to Ukraine would need to be carefully calibrated to increase the costs to Russia of sustaining its existing commitment without provoking a much wider conflict in which Russia, by reason of proximity, would have significant advantages."

RAND hasn't forgotten about Muslims (even if we may have forgotten about ourselves). In the next paragraph they now suggest that the US scale back its support for Syrian rebels, going against RAND's previous (heeded) call for support for the rebels /opposition: 'Increasing [further] support to the Syrian rebels could jeopardize other U.S. policy priorities...' The US Playbook notes in every edition that your inclusion is contingent, liminal and you are at risk of expulsion at any time. Ukraine take note.

The South Caucasus, as a site of possible US economic ties, is also namechecked on the same page (though not deemed of high benefit). The South Caucasus (and again Ukraine) take note.

Meanwhile, the pig lard events multiply as a 'displaced' latter-day fascistic rhetoric is thrown at Muslims, instead of and occasionally with Jews as the targets.

Ukrainian leaders give interviews with pictures of war criminals in the background, supporters of open borders for Ukrainian refugees in Europe range from the most powerfully right-wing in the UK government, to senators in Spain. And parliamentarians in Poland. Israel has taken in upwards of two thousand Ukrainian Jews. Few 'Western' states hide the fact that they do not want any Muslim refugees when challenged on the hypocrisy of their stance.

Meanwhile the Syrian National Coalition is amongst the many Muslim voices, whose uncritical stand in solidarity makes them bedfellows once more with the very powers who even in a myopic 20-year history of the world, have been the greatest oppressors.

We can and should of course support the oppressed whoever and wherever they are. But we need to be weary of fellow travellers en route. Scratch that. Better still, go a different way. If we are concerned about the Ukrainians in the West of the country since Russian soldiers invaded on 24 February 2022, we should genuinely be concerned about those in the East under fire from Ukrainian government and right wing militia forces for the last eight years. We should have been concerned for all the Syrians. But there we are. We have learned nothing.

A note on Chechnya

Doubtless a combination of brute force and massive hearts and minds operations has worked on many Chechens to push them to support Russia. Here, there is little space to unpack what happened in the 1990s and the choices made subsequently by an embattled and besieged people. It is worth noting the US Playbook has some bearing here too, as Putin in his early days was also accused of creating Chechen rebel puppets, manipulating, infiltrating and even creating some of the insurgencies - brutal fighters, often former GRU operatives, who would discredit those fighting for more autonomy. The theories proliferated in the 1990s in Russia, are still the talk of Eastern European observers, and even liberal post-revisionist historian Robert Service claims that the relationship exists until today, with Chechen rebels being given free and unfettered passage to Syria during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics by Russian authorities in order to keep the games peaceful. We saw the same use of GIA in Algeria at the hands of the Algerian secret service and a dose of the French either in actual support or historical inspiration. The CIA's dirty wars in South America should need no further elaboration on relevance here. The descent into idiot usefulness of many erstwhile liberation movements needs to be a salutary lesson, not an exercise in never-ending excuses.

Another Civilisation is Possible – Decolonising our expectations, creating our own narratives

In response to current events in Ukraine, Sandew Hira overviews how anti-imperialist movements have internalised

mainstream Western narratives. In the current moment he states the narrative runs: "If you are not with me, you are with Putin. And as Putin is evil so you are also evil. And evil person should be dealt with." It is of course reminiscent of George W. Bush's statement at the outset of the 'war on terror': "If you are not with us, you are with the terrorists." Go back somewhat further, and the US playbook reveals many such narratives and images, Benjamin Franklin's woodcut, 'Join or Die' being one of the earlier examples of managing 'Indian relations' in order to further entrench British and subsequently American colonialism on Native land.

Sometimes, as activists we are also victims, and our struggles and politics are subsumed in the need to survive. In so doing, the aspirations for a different and better world, based on something other than the tried and failed methods of the Enlightenment are pushed off our agendas as we are forced to regurgitate the current language of progressive (read conformist) narratives to prevent the further escalation of our woes. Other times we just end up believing it. Worse still, we end up promoting it. Shadi Hamid at the Brookings Institute tweeted:

"If there was any doubt before, we now know the answer. A world without American power is not a better world."

before launching into a critique of anyone departing from the narrative as "tankies" (as in apologists for the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, usually a label for left activists). There are apologias aplenty. Like Hamid's. Especially for neo-Nazi political and military players in Ukraine.

Hamid's comments should appear insidious enough, even without the context of what the Brookings Institute – where Hamid is a senior fellow – is, and in particular its programs on West Asia, and the Muslim community worldwide. Yet, a brow-beaten, anti-war movement, a wavering left yet unable to call out the fascism in Ukraine whilst readily calling out Russian violence, cannot bring itself to oppose such views.

In her book, Political Islamophobia at American Policy Institutes: Battling the Power of Islamic Resistance, Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria highlights the social engineering projects of the think tanks Brookings, WINEP and the RAND Corporation. Seeking to mould Muslim societies in majoritised and minoritized situations, these think tanks provide the updated instructions for a playbook that seeks the same ends: enrichment, aggrandisement and entrenchment of military, political, social and structures that disadvantage the many.

One of those key aims is the normalisation of Israel – a process that is well underway vis a vis Arab states, and increasingly amongst Muslim civil society. This normalisation exists in less obvious loci too. When Syrian 'rebels' aligned themselves against a government that for all its ills was one of the few providing assistance to Palestine, and the only Arab state that gave Palestinian refugees legal status, something was and continues to be very wrong. As Ukraine post the Orange / Maidan moments stalwartly supports Israel, and is supported in turn by the Syrian National Coalition, things feel worse and worse.

The same voices citing Russia's previous atrocities against Muslims – whether Soviet, Putinesque or Romanov – as justification for support any of the Great Bear's foes, seem unable to see where the enemy of my enemy argument is leading them. For clarification, it leads them to Tel Aviv.

The end is nigh?

What can we do then to start the process of self-reflection enough to start the process of thinking? What about the new narratives. It's not as easy as it sounds. Take economics. Part of the bind, the failure to see a new world is the failure to integrate any idea of deoclonised economic model(s). Liberal Democracy didn't work not because it allows capitalism to run unchecked but because it is the product of capitalism. But, rose tinted glasses notwithstanding, socialism didn't work either. Muslim socialism lite or strong is not a solution either because both are based on uninterrogated theories of want and need.

Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr's 'Iqtisaduna' should be required reading in this regard, yet it exists simply as a PDF here and there, whilst Islamic activists seek political systems that seem to equate to neo-liberalism plus hijab, or Muslim socialism with a beard. You don't have to agree with him, but if you want to decolonise you need to know what has already been said and done in the matter. Integration into an economic world system has done little favours for the post-colonial world. Why limit this to the Muslim world? What have indigenous groups seeking liberation postulated as a means of economic development and disentanglement? Where they have borrowed from Marxist teachings, how have their forms differed from Westernised Marxist movements? And why?

The process of questioning the utility of Muhammad Abduh's fatwa allowing interest in business transactions on the basis of dire need, needs to move out of the realm of mudslinging and into the realm of possible futures. We can argue endlessly that the fatwa saw nothing except the greater impoverishment of the Muslim world after its adoption this last century. If we are to have another century at our disposal let's get some more and better *fataawa*. Yes *fataawa*. And *Ahkaam*. They are important words, like Jihad which need to be brought back into the control of the people for whom they have meaning beyond the caricatures assigned to them by the 'war on terror.' A future reader can also then look back with some pride that in the end – before it was nigh – we, of whatever confession and ilk, did at least try and manage maybe even, to rewrite history.

Arzu Merali
is a writer and researcher based in London, UK. She is one of the editors of The Long View and was a founder of Islamic Human Rights Commission. Follow her on Twitter @arzumerali.

Colonialism, War and Governance in Afghanistan

For Afghanistan to break the cycles of violence and impoverishment it has been caught up in, the new and subsequent governments need to let go of its colonial past and the internalization of colonial thinking, argues **Shah Mahmoud Hanifi.**

It is useful to begin this discussion of colonialism, war and governance in Afghanistan with reference to the varieties of *jihad* or struggle in Islam. The relevance is that jihad takes many forms (greater or internal vs. lesser or external, offensive or defensive, etc.) of which military activity equating to war is only one. Islam contains sets of rules for war, and these rules are grounded in the *sharia* or Islamic law. The sharia in turn contains multiple *madhabs* or schools of law resulting in competing juridical principles for how war is supposed to work. This is to say there are laws that govern warfare in Islam, and these laws are sometimes in conflict. We can similarly outline laws for *hukumat* or governance in all its complexity, while also noting that governing principles can also be at odds within the *umma* or Muslim community, among Shia and Sunni populations, for example.

These generic statements regarding the legal bases and historical complexities of war and governance in Islam can guide our approach to these issues as well as colonialism in Afghanistan by helping us focus both on norms and precedents, on the one hand, and deviance and innovation, on the other hand. One effect of colonial warfare in Afghanistan is that historical facts and realities compete with historical imaginings and mythologies for discursive space in Afghanistan and warmaking metropoles. This essay will not erase the difference between competing narratives over colonial wars and their impact on forms of governance in Afghanistan, rather, it is designed to refine and expand discussion of them by focusing on mobility and its limits.

Mobility through the Hindu Kush as the Historical Predicate of Modern Colonialism

The geographic space of Afghanistan is defined by the Hindu Kush mountain range that frames a very deep multi-millennial record of human settlement and cultural production. The *longue durée* history of mobility through the Hindu Kush established a historical predicate of wide-ranging connections within and beyond this unique geographic space that modern colonialism dramatically transformed. We can very briefly note the following pre-colonial historical episodes and eras in this space.

Aq Kupruq is (at least) a Neolithic archaeological site north of Hindu Kush, Alexander the Great established settlements in and around the Hindu Kush in the third century BC such as Bagram in the Kabul valley, and less than a century later the Mauyan King Ashoka bequeathed an imperial monumental inscription legacy south of the Hindu Kush in Qandahar. By the second century AD, Buddhism was flourishing in and round the Hindu Kush, with Bamiyan and its two giant montane Buddhas becoming most notable as a global pilgrimage site as we learn through Chinese travelers' descriptions later in the first millennium.

A Hindu kingdom ruled in Kabul when Islam arrived in the Hindu Kush in the tenth century AD via the Ghaznavids and their Ghorid dynastic successors. The most consequential aspect of this period is the origin of the modern Persian language written with a modified Arabic script that fueled a rich historiographical tradition and sphere of Persianate cultural production within the Islamic World. The historical geography of Persian as a literary and broader cultural force expanded considerably in Central and South Asia over the next two centuries.

The thirteenth century Mongol invasions destroyed cities, villages and irrigation works in geographic Afghanistan, particularly Ghaznavid and Ghorid architecture and infrastructure in the very well cultivated Helmand river valley south of the Hindu Kush. The fourteenth and fifteenth century Timurid renaissance involved sophisticated urban development and a remarkable surge in artistic and literary production north of the Hindu Kush in Mazar-e Sharif and on the western fringe of the Hindu Kush in Herat. The founder of the Mughal empire, Babur, came of age during the two decades he spent in and around Kabul before following the well-established five hundred year-old historical trail of Muslim migration through the Hindu Kush to north India debouching on the political center of gravity of Delhi, where he established the Mughal empire in 1526. For the next two centuries, the Mughals, Safavids, and multiple Central Asian dynasties competed over urban nodes

in and around the Hindu Kush.

The early-eighteenth century nomadic imperial surge of Nadir Shah Afshar through the Hindu Kush laid the foundation for Ahmad Shah Abdali's emulation of Nadir Shah's culturally and geographically fluid system of authority and power built upon wide-ranging nomadic cavalry. Ahmad Shah is the apocryphal founder of the Afghan polity, and he established a political center in Qandahar in 1747 where his enterprise took shape under the innovative imperial guise of *Durrani*. The Durrani political center shifted to Kabul during the reign of Ahmad Shah's son and successor Timur Shah (r. 1772-1793) when the historical pattern of mobile royal warfare and migratory governance dramatically decreased. Competing imperial sovereignties in Qandahar and Kabul developed under Timur's sons and other Durrani competitors, while relatively more autonomous local sovereignties emerged in Mazar-e Sharif and Herat.

Colonial Boundaries of Violence in Afghanistan

Modern colonialism dramatically transformed pre-modern and early modern patterns of mobility through the Hindu Kush region. The historical developments in this regard involve a shift from vaguely defined frontiers and peripheries where little was known, to boundary regions where colonial knowledge and power accrued unevenly, culminating in a regime of more scientifically precise and industrially militarized borders inherited by nation-states including and surrounding Afghanistan. The British interest in the Hindu Kush was routed through imperial anxieties about a potential French invasion of India through this remarkably porous montane zone and a commercial de-

sire to capture and link the Indus river trade with an emerging, increasingly violent and predatory imperial political economy. The first 1808 British emissary, Mountstuart Elphinstone, was dispatched to the Kingdom of Kabul within the Hindu Kush but made it only to the primary eastern gateway of the Hindu Kush, Peshawar, where the Durrani ruler Shah Shuja signed an imperial treaty of alliance and promptly fled from his dynastic opponents in pursuit of his colonial suitors to British India.

Shuja remained in British India (Ludhiana in the Punjab) as a political refugee-pensioner for thirty years before being installed at the pinnacle of what became colonially effected Durrani dynastic politics in Kabul. To secure the city as a node in a wider series of imperial commercial circuits within and beyond South Asia, the British occupied Kabul from the summer of 1839 to the late fall of 1841 when local resistance took shape around the assassination of a bombastic whore-mongering spy, Alexander Burnes, and culminated in the infamous retreat and legendary destruction of the imperial Army of the Indus in January of 1842. In the fall of 1842 an imperial Army of Retribution sacked and looted Ghazni, bombarded and set fire to the renowned Mughal-era Chahar Chatta bazaar in Kabul, mass-raped, murdered and pillaged ruthlessly north of Kabul in Charikar, kidnapped thousands of women and relocated them in British India, and committed many other known and unknown atrocities upon innocent local populations before installing Dost Mohammad, the same Durrani potentate they deposed in 1839. What is commonly referred to as the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-42 did not involve sustained conflict between two comparable forces suffering and inflicting similar hardships for multiple years. Rather, it involved discrete episodes of a swift military oc-

cupation of Kabul, the unexpected expulsion and destruction of an imperial occupation army, followed by a vengeful punishment exercise. This war-not war resulted in the global circulation of occupational experiences that became a form of social capital for European, Indian and Afghan actors throughout the British empire well beyond England and India, in Australia, for example.

The British subsidized Shuja both as a political refugee and occupational prop, and they increasingly subsidized Dost Mohammad during his second tenure as the colonially determined Durrani ruler in Kabul. The colonial subsidization of Kabul rulers was amplified and became structurally entrenched during the imperial bordering process that resulted in the territorial unit of Afghanistan. The bordering of what became Afghanistan from the late 1860s to the early 1890s was an episodic process driven primarily by British imperial geo-strategizing in relation to Russian expansion in Central Asia and Russian influence in Persia. These inter-imperial concerns account for a brief British occupation of Kabul and a handful of relatively small and brief battles that have been exaggerated and mythologized to become the 1878-80 Second Anglo-Afghan War. British imperial anxieties generated this conflict that concluded with the self-nomination and practically instantaneous colonial authorization of a Durrani dynastic claimant (a grandson of Dost Mohammad) who clearly understood that imperial patronage had become a prerequisite for holding power in Kabul.

The most impactful subsidization and bordering processes that resulted in the unit of political economy known as Afghanistan occurred during the 1880-1901 reign of Abd al-Rahman when the final and most contentious 1893 Durand Line boundary was agreed to, which in turn further elevated an

already substantially enlarged Durrani colonial largesse by 50%. This contentious boundary reconfigured historically very well-established patterns of seasonal commercial mobility from and through the Hindu Kush to South Asia, that further distinguished the economic spaces of Afghanistan and British India *cum* Pakistan while also politically reconnecting them in new ways that privileged rulers in Kabul as locally legitimizing agents for national borders desired, paid for, and surveilled primarily by imperial actors. Afghanistan's imperial borders inaugurated the structural dependency of Durrani rulers in Kabul on the international system that became the primary yet opaque arbiter of new forms of and purposes for Afghan mobility beyond these historically brand new national territorial confines.

The Quest for Modernity: New Global Dependencies and Migrations in the Twentieth Century

The Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 is the least warlike of the three so-called British colonial wars in Afghanistan. It involved minor border skirmishes and an ominous aerial bombardment of Kabul that established an imperial precedent for the twenty-year American tempest of bombs imprecisely and indiscriminately layered upon the innocent Afghan people who had absolutely nothing to do with the events of 11 September 2001. The 1919 war-not war resulted in Afghanistan's formal independence from British India that ended the subsidy and began a metaphorical feeding frenzy by a wide assortment of international actors eager to extend patronage to the Kabuli political elite whose ready acceptance of these offerings intensified their dependence on a widening range of increasingly unfamiliar resources. A new set of global economic and political opportunities impacted patterns of mobility for the political, administrative and intellectual elite, while ordinary Afghans faced new obstacles in crossing national and international boundaries.

Rather than evaporating upon Afghan independence, British influence on the Kabuli political elite was amplified in many ways after 1919. The difference was that British influence and connections in Kabul were now joined by many other competitive suitors, particularly the French and Germans. From the 1920s through the1940s hundreds of Afghan state elites studied or trained in France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and other locations in Europe, while hundreds of Europeans diplomats and bureaucrats, many with their families, as well as independent capitalists and entrepreneurs, plied their material, scientific, and ideological wares to commercial, administrative and intellectual elites in Kabul.

During the Cold War, the circuitry of international relations involving Afghanistan structurally shifted in accordance with the bipolarity of the global system after World War II. In this period, thousands of Afghans were sent for various forms of education and training throughout the world but mainly to the United States and the Soviet Union and its favored eastern European allies. The Afghans sent abroad now included proportionally more students than professional classes, and some of the fields involved were political and military sciences, education, engineering, medicine, dentistry, hydrology, and police administration. In broad measure, it may appear that Afghans gained military and ideological training primarily in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and economic and scientific training primarily in the US and western Europe. However, the reality was much more complex with, for example, Afghans studying in the US adopting progressive socialist political principles rather than a capitalist ethos.

The international presence in Afghanistan during the Cold War revolved primarily around major economic development projects with, for example, the US funding hydroelectric dams and related infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, airports) construction in the south, and the Soviet Union doing the same in the north. In addition to this official presence, the US and USSR were also developing and practising new forms of espionage over one another in Afghanistan, and international studying and training opportunities became a major component of superpower surveillance and covert influence over the elite classes in Kabul.

International Occupational Violence, Global Migrations and Local Im/mobility

The global patronage of Afghan political, military and intellectual elites during the Cold War is a key aspect of both the April 1978 socialist revolution and December 1979 Soviet invasion. During the nine-year Soviet occupation, Afghans became the world's largest refugee population with between four and six million primarily economic migrants in Pakistan and Iran, and multiple hundreds of thousands more in Europe, Australia, and the US where a large portion of the Kabuli merchant class relocated. This massive outward migration paired with a large and significant inward migration organized around the US response to the Soviet invasion. The US response was an increasingly expansive and expensive covert operation with global range that was locally centered in Peshawar, and it generated a global flow of Muslims toward Afghanistan in service of a CIA-funded anti-Soviet jihad. The diverse demography (upper, middle and lower-class African, American, Arab, Asian, European Muslims) of mujahideen ideologically gravitating or financially lured to the Afghanistan battlefield reflected the cosmopolitanism and varied personal motivations and collective aspirations comprising the Muslim world.

On a local level, the Soviet and mu-

jahideen landmining of the Hindu Kush mountain passages and valley pasturelands impeded and continues to restrict mobility around Kabul, in borderland areas of the eastern Afghan provinces Nangarhar, Logar, Khost and Paktiya, and across the Durand Line. The 1980s Cold War conflict in Afghanistan also generated major new intertwined global commodity and social flows, outwardly related to opium and inwardly related to armaments. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan was much more than a military conflict between Soviet and Afghan forces alone as conveyed by the Soviet-Afghan War label. Rather, it was a superheated local flashpoint of a multifaced overt and covert global Cold War between the US and USSR and their respective blocs of allies, clients and customers that complexified and militarized patterns of human and resource mobility to and through Afghanistan.

The Soviets departed in 1989 and the progressive government of Afghanistan headed by Dr. Najibullah remained in place until he voluntarily relinquished power to a consortium of mujahideen parties in 1992, before being betrayed by them and taking refuge in the United Nations compound. For the next four years Kabul and the country as a whole was decimated by intra-mujahideen party violence that involved profoundly more dire consequences for Afghan civilians, especially women and children. Wide-ranging human rights violations, including rampant sexual violence against women and children, partially account for the emergence of the Taliban out of and in opposition to the lawlessness of the CIA-spawned Afghan mujahideen. The Taliban came to prominence in Qandahar in 1994 and captured Herat the next year. In 1996 the Taliban assumed control of Kabul where the limited infrastructure had been thoroughly decimated and the population terrorized by constant shelling, abductions, assassinations and rapes since 1992. The Taliban and their Pakistani ISI collaborators inaugurated their own misdeeds in conjunction with a demonstration of impotence by the international community that resulted in the execution of Dr. Najibullah which created a deep and damaging chasm in the national body politic. The Taliban gained control over Mazar-e Sharif in 1998 and continued in power until October 2001.

CIA and ISI collaboration also attracted Saudi ideological and material resources, and this symbiotic covert consortium courted Afghan, Pakistani and global mujahideen bent on cannibalizing the Afghan state corpse. The seven primary mujahideen parties inflicted highly ethnicized violence against one another, while rogue factions and individuals perpetrated increasingly wanton violence against innocents in Afghanistan and in the sprawling refugee camps in Pakistan. Taliban rule in Afghanistan emerged out of this trans-border epidemic of covertly funded violence produced through CIA, ISI and Saudi collusion with the mujahideen. In structural terms, the Taliban relied more di-

rectly on Pakistani ISI and Saudi patronage and influence, but their CIA support continued. In practice, the Taliban operated on a different set of coercive principles that inflicted far lesser doses of lethal force and much more public symbolic violence in urban areas especially. By amplifying the visibility of Qandahar as a locus of cultural and political power, Taliban rule de-centered Kabul and highlighted the strength of the rural zone, thus inverting colonial and mimetic national projections of power from Kabul to its peripheries and regional provincial capitals. The Taliban governed through tiered collective leadership councils rather through singular, scattered authorities voicing state policies. Most significantly, Taliban governance involved a high level of mobility in the dispensation of law, and this modern feature bears some historical resemblance to much older forms of mobile kingship practiced over millennia in and around the Hindu Kush.

The US-led international invasion and twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan involved an unprecedented level of indiscriminate aerial bombardment, an awkward series of crudely staged experimental political shadow puppet theatrics involving national elections and other forms of political representation, and a litany of war crimes and human rights abuses perpetrated against Afghan civilians. The most notable features of governance during the American imperium in Afghanistan were a hyper-fixation on Kabul, the fetishization of ethnicity as the singular political currency, and the outsourcing of governing responsibilities through the yoke of military occupation to international humanitarian organizations who objected to their civil society work being subjugated to the military and political logics and exigencies of the Global War on Terror.

The US presence in Afghanistan involved systemic illegalities (e.g., drone assassinations, night raid abductions, a torture regime utilizing local and global black sites resulting in an International Criminal Court indictment for War Crimes), constant military experimentation (e.g., new counterinsurgency theories organized around the Human Terrain System and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, new munitions such as the Mother of All Bombs, sound and pain rays for crowd control, biometric and electronic surveillance technologies, etc.) that brought exorbitant profits to the US military industrial complex (especially its corporate conglomerates such as Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, MacDonald Douglas, and Raytheon), an increasing reliance on military contractors (e.g., Blackwater-XE-Academi and DynCorps) and, most perniciously, covert operations involving the CIA and as many as fifteen other US intelligence agencies. The 2001-2021 US presence turned Afghanistan into a testing ground for drone- and intelligence-based covert warfare by executive fiat alone that has become routinized and now increasingly serves as foreign policy while remaining fully veiled from US public view and US Congressional oversight.

Regarding patterns of mobility during the American occupation of Afghanistan, the basic structure was that international military and humanitarian actors could move when and where they wanted, while Afghans faced increasingly hard choices and often faced mortal consequences when practising ordinary forms of mobility, such as economic movements related to the spatial distribution of markets or ritual mobility related to life-course events, especially weddings and funerals. These conditions produced continuous large-scale out-migration and the development of a further layer of Afghan refugee populations around the world from Asia and the Pacific to Europe and the Americas.

The Future of War, Governance and Mobility in Afghanistan

Afghanistan was co-produced by Durrani political elites in Kabul eager to accommodate expanding British imperial desires to reconfigure historic patterns of mobility through the Hindu Kush in exchange for financial and military subsidies. A counter-intuitive form of independence from British India in 1919 allowed Durrani leaders in Kabul to avail themselves of a much greater range of international patrons and forms of patronage such that state elites became increasingly desirous of and dependent on the global system. Since 1979 Afghanistan has been subjected to competing sets of overt and covert international military and political influences that have resulted in seemingly unlimited access to and mobility through Afghanistan for non-Afghans and increasingly perilous movements for Afghans inside and outside the country. The unjust spatial disparities of external access and exploitation in relation to internal poverty and escape require radical inversion if Afghanistan is to survive as a territorial unit of political economy in its current form.

The overt and covert internationalized violence inflicted on the people and territory of Afghanistan over the past two centuries represents less a pattern of state-on-state war than a series of imperial occupations, dispensations of extreme, often vengeful coercion, organized criminality involving theft and rape as well as material and environmental destruction. These episodes of imperial violence have created and exacerbated ethnic

tensions in Afghanistan. As such, moving forward for the benefit of the innocent Afghan people who have been decimated and eviscerated by the global nation-state system, the Taliban and all potential future governments of Afghanistan should immediately take the following steps.

The first priority is to recognize the imperial production of ethnicity as the primary tool for the domination and exploitation of the Afghan people and the manipulation of state politics. Relatedly, Afghan political leaders must recognize the full historic depth and range of their colonial heritage and imperial dependencies. An objective and candid appraisal of the historical record leads to an irrefutable crypto-colonial situation where self-proclaimed national elites of all ideological persuasions who wield power in Kabul reproduce and amplify colonial representations of themselves and perpetuate intellectual, economic, political and military dependencies and race-based inequalities that characterize colonial encounters and imperial relations. Critical awareness of ethnicization and other crypto-colonial processes at work in the consciousness of Kabuli elites will be liberating and, more importantly, open up avenues of political and cultural resistance to empires and imperial pretentions no matter their metropolitan points of origin.

Once released from the intellectual shackles of false historical consciousness it then becomes immediately imperative for rulers in Kabul to embark upon a sustained commitment to disseminating their new-found awareness of deleterious imperial effects to Afghan society at large. This crucial second step will require innovative pedagogical strategies that must cohere across localities and throughout the educational system and institutional infrastructure to achieve their liberating potential. In this regard, the Taliban model of information and personnel circulation through an organizational structure appears better attuned to the rural zone and inter-urban communication and may hold more promise than political models that concentrate information and power in a singular and exclusive centripetal manner.

Political elites in Kabul typically 'jump-scale' and look to international patrons to supply information and resources that keep them in power. Future governments need to look inward and rigorously cultivate local knowledge and resources. This agenda can begin with existential realities, particularly food shortages and the catastrophic environmental impact of the American military presence in Afghanistan. How is it that Afghanistan went from exporting food to importing food in the twentieth century? Any answer to that question must confront the role of international actors promoting development by providing technologies and resources to the political elites in Kabul who are, in the last instance, responsible for the failure of economic and political development technique and technologies, and the resulting hunger and starvation that has impacted ordinary Afghan lives and communities for generations now.

Future governments must also work hard to gather and circulate information about the environmental impact of the American military presence in Afghanistan. American bombs have left depleted uranium in the groundwater that has poisoned all life forms and led to birth defects among humans and animals. Burn pits at American bases have left toxins in surface soils, and military vehicles have polluted air in the Kabul valley especially. No food, poisoned soil, polluted water, and genetic deformities, these are the conditions Americans bequeathed to future rulers in and the people of Afghanistan. The cumulative environmental impact of the American imperial experiment in Afghanistan impedes not only future agricultural self-sufficiency, but the very habitability of the territory. Future governments in Afghanistan must aggregate this calamitous environmental information and circulate it to the Afghan people. This will build local popular knowledge and political consensus around the shared historical experience of natural resources depletion. In this effort, it will be important for future governments in Afghanistan to maximize the value of Islamic environmental ethics involving, for example, the democratic bases of water consumption and the sanctity of trees. With a popular national political consciousness organized around how imperial conduct and imperial dependencies have imperiled the environment and human habitation throughout the country, future leaders and governing agendas will be in a stronger position to engage the people of Afghanistan and mobilize the international community for large-scale, immediate and sustained collective advocacy and action for the remediation of Afghanistan's natural resource base involving most importantly the water supply, forest products and top soil fertility.

Shah Mahmoud Hanifi
is Professor of History at James Madison University where he teaches courses on the Middle East and South Asia. Hanifi's publications have addressed subjects including colonial political economy and intellectual history, the Pashto language, photography, cartography, animal and environmental studies, and Orientalism in Afghanistan.

Palestine Beyond the War on Terror:
Mistakes, Challenges and Prospects

Palestinian leadership's adaptation to a world where the claims to US hegemony are decentralised is an urgent and overdue project, argues **Ramzy Baroud.**

Linking Palestinians to terrorism is arguably one of Israel's greatest hasbara successes. Long before the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington DC, various Palestinian groups were labeled as 'terrorists' by several US administrations and all of the corporate mainstream media. In 1987, for example, the Ronald Reagan Administration labeled the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - recognized internationally as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - as 'terrorist'. It has done so under immense pressure from the pro-Israel lobby and despite the fact that Washington, shortly after, facilitated some kind of diplomatic contact with the Palestinian leadership in Tunisia.

In November 1988, Washington refused to grant PLO President Yasser Arafat a visa to deliver a speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, in violation of its commitment to the international community. At the time, American pressure on the Palestinians was not entirely motivated by the Israel lobby alone or the mobilization of the pro-Israel Christian fundamentalists throughout the US. The Palestinians were seen as allies of the Soviet Union, its Warsaw Pact and various national liberation struggles around the world. Thus, demonizing and isolating the Palestinian leadership served the American agenda, as well as that of Israel.

The designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization by the Bill Clinton Administration in 1997, served a similar purpose, although with regional, as opposed to global, political priorities in mind. The US was deeply involved in Middle Eastern politics. It had invested numerous financial and diplomatic resources to ensure the Middle East remains an American geopolitical space. Every political player within that space had, therefore, to be qualified as friend or foe, a moderate or an extremist, a pro-American or a terrorist.

By then, the Palestinian leadership, now operating under the title of the Palestinian Authority - as opposed to the practically-defunct PLO - played along. When Bill and Hillary Clinton visited Gaza in 1998, the PA put on a show to demonstrate that Palestinians have changed in every way possible to meet American expectations. Even the Palestinian Constitution was rewritten. A vote on the new language took place when the Clintons were in the audience in the Gaza-headquartered Palestine National Council (PNC).

For the Americans, behaving either jointly with Israel or at the behest of the Israeli government, Palestinian politics, language, media coverage, even school curricula had to be reorganized, revamped or rewritten in ways that would not offend Israeli sensibilities. Any Palestinian who dared disagree was labeled, shunned and, at times, even imprisoned or assassinated. For the most part, the PA, which largely survived on American handouts, complied with American diktats.

Unlike Israel, Palestinians had no powerful lobbies in Congress and few friends in mainstream corporate media. Negative images and the constant linking of Palestinians to violence were - and largely remain - omnipresent in US TV networks and newspapers. Therefore, as the US continued to pressure Palestinians, fund Israel with billions of dollars in mostly military hardware while conditioning its meager support for Palestinians on their willingness to comply with Israeli demands, US media lauded the government's efforts and demanded more.

The tragic events of September 11 took place almost exactly one year following the tragic events of the Second Palestinian Intifada. While the American interpretation of the Intifada was marred by the expected and traditional US bias towards Israel, 9/11 ended any possible conversation that could potentially include Palestinians. Almost immediately, Israel's hasbara experts launched a comprehensive media campaign, purposely conflating the Palestinian struggle for freedom and the so-called 'Islamic terror'. Palestinians were no longer allowed access to US media. Those who were allowed partial access merely served the role of apologists, as opposed to the intellectual demanding freedom for his people. Moreover, Israel had succeeded in presenting itself as a 'partner' in the US so-called 'war on terror'. By doing so, it was given a much greater space in shaping the American narrative, not only regarding Palestine alone, but the entirety of the Arab and Muslim world as well.

In April 2008, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reflected on all of this at a speech at Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv. "We are benefiting from one thing," the Israeli newspaper, Ma'ariv, quoted Netanyahu as saying, "and that is the attack on the Twin Towers and Pentagon, and the American struggle in Iraq swung American public opinion in our favor."

Netanyahu was correct, as he had personally ensured the complete demonization of the Palestinians in the eyes of the American public, along with the deliberate confusion between Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

In truth, the American agenda in Palestine, which resulted in the Oslo Accords of 1993 and the Oslo interim agreement of 1995, has adopted the Israeli language regarding the Palestinian need to end 'incitement', 'violence' and 'terror'. The latter agreement, in particular, has called on organizing the Palestinian police force around a mission that would allow it to "act systematically against all expressions of violence and terror."

When the 2000 uprising temporarily liberated Palestinians from the confines of 'security coordination' with Israel - as many of the PA police directly took part in the popular rebellion - the US felt the need to take decisive action. Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, Washington's military envoy in Palestine, was dispatched in 2005 to completely overhaul Palestinian security, so that Palestinian police and troops may never challenge the Israeli occupation again. Thousands of Palestinians were, more or less, forced to early retirements while new recruits were brought in to join an entirely different structure.

"Dayton focused on the 'gendarmerie style training' of West Bank-based security personnel," Emad Moussa wrote in the "New Arab". Four different intelligence agencies were involved in the processing of applications, lead amongst them being the American CIA, the Israeli Shin Bet, along

with the Jordanian intelligence and the PA. Applicants, according to Moussa, were mostly checked for any "terrorist links", which, per Israeli definitions, include any act of resistance, be it violent or otherwise against the Israeli occupation. Since then, the PA security has duly been used to crack down on Palestinian protests, plot with the Israeli army, apprehend Palestinian resisters and ensure the American-Israeli agenda in Palestine is well served.

The harm inflicted on Palestinians, as a result of the succumbing of the Palestinan leadership to the American agenda, has exceeded the geographic boundaries of Palestine into the Middle East region as a whole. Mohammed Dahlan, a former ally of current PA President Mahmoud Abbas, is one such character who has been linked to various conspiracies and crises in the region, especially since the start of the revolts, upheavals and civil wars of recent years. Following the split with Abbas in 2011, Dahlan has re-established himself as the middle man between Israel and various Arab countries, eventually leading to the wave of normalization of ties between Tel Aviv and various Arab capitals. Though Dahlan is often derided by his PA detractors for cooperating with Israeli and American intelligence agencies, the irony is that cooperating with Israel and the US has been the modus operandi of the PA since its establishment in 1994.

Unlike the PLO, which at least attempted to play the role of the unifier of all Palestinians everywhere, the PA remained limited in its interests and representations.

The American 'war on terror' wrought unprecedented devastation to the Middle East, with Palestinians paying a particularly heavy price wherever they resided. Even the small Palestinian community in Iraq was targeted as soon as the American invasion of that country commenced in March 2003. Hundreds were killed, quite often murdered in cold blood, according to a Human Rights Watch report in 2006. HRW accused the US-installed Iraqi government of "arbitrary detention, torture, killing, and 'disappearance' of Palestinians". Due to the mass killings and subsequent civil war resulting from the US invasion, the plight of the Palestinians went largely unreported. As a result, the Palestinians of Iraq were largely expelled or fled. After amassing for years at desert refugee camps at the Iraq-Jordan and Iraq-Syria borders respectively, the refugees were eventually evacuated, landing mostly in South America and other far-away regions.

Even in Iraq, the US was still motivated by its pro-Israel agenda. The likes of Abu Abbas, a Palestinian militant leader, accused of masterminding the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship, "Achille Lauro", in 1985, was found after an extensive search and apprehended by US Special Forces in Baghdad. A senior US Administration official used that opportunity to "send a strong message to the terrorists," CNN reported that "you can run but you cannot hide". Abu Abbas was eventually found dead in

his cell in 2004, allegedly as a result of 'natural causes'.

Back in the US, the collaboration between the American and Israeli governments had reached unprecedented levels. Not only did Israel continue to be the recipient of the most sophisticated US military aid and technology, US-funded Israeli technology circled its way back and was sold to the US government at exorbitant prices. Israeli 'technology' was first introduced to US-run Iraqi prisons in the form of the 'Palestinian Chair' and other torture techniques, but eventually became a prominent feature in the American security apparatus

> **The chaos that Washington left in the wake of its wars in the Middle East will continue to haunt the US reputation and credibility for decades to come**

at home.

The refashioning of the American police, in recent years, to fit some kind of a military model is a subject that requires a better understanding than the one currently offered by mainstream US media. Certainly, US racism and police violence are intrinsically linked and date back many years, but the militarization of the US police and its use of deadly violence against suspected petty criminals, or even non-criminals, is a relatively new phenomenon that has been largely imported from Israel.

Writing in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz in 2016, Rachel Stroumsa argued that the 'Palestinian Chair' is "but one of many examples of ties and seepages between the security practices of Israel and America," adding that "the CIA explicitly justified its use of torture in depositions to the Senate Intelligence Committee by citing High Court of Justice rulings."

The political, military and intelligence marriage between the US and Israel in Iraq quickly spread to include the US global 'war on terror', where Israeli weapon manufacturers cater to every American need, playing on the country's growing sense of insecurity, offering products that range from airport security, the building of watchtowers, the erection of walls and fences, to spying and surveillance technology.

Elbit Systems, Israel's largest military company, made a fortune from building surveillance towers and sensors, in addition to many other products, across the US-Mexico border. The company, like other Israeli companies, won one bid after another,

because its products are 'combat-proven' or 'field-proven', because these technologies have been used against, or tested on real people in real situations; the 'people' here, of course, being Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians.

Former US President Barack Obama's partial withdrawal from Iraq and general retreat from the Middle East in 2012, a strategy that was branded as part of the Administration's 'Pivot to Asia', was meant to usher in a new political age. But the repercussions of the US 'war on terror' continue to shadow US foreign policy, not only in the Middle East region but globally as well. For nearly a decade, US foreign policy became noncommittal, operating largely without specific 'doctrines', with which successive US administrations are linked.

The chaos that Washington left in the wake of its wars in the Middle East will continue to haunt the US reputation and credibility for decades to come. Writing in the Cairo Review in 2016, Hisham Melhem commented on Obama's legacy:

"What makes Obama's failure more salient, as he struggles in his final year in office to shape his legacy in the Middle East, is the catastrophe in Syria. The civil war has led to the disintegration and radicalization of the country, the destruction of Syrian society, and contributed to the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. All of this was brought on in no small part by Obama's indecisiveness, tepid actions and about-turns."

In all fairness, Obama's obvious failures notwithstanding, US foreign policy has been in complete shambles long before Obama's ascendency to the White House, and remained long after his departure. Former US President Donald Trump, for example, tried desperately to rebrand his country's relation with the Middle East with his announcement of the now largely defunct 'Deal of the Century', which merely divided the Arabs in order for the US and Israel to isolate Iran. True to form, the current Biden administration continues to follow the same predictable path, supporting Arab-Israeli normalization, paying lip service to peace and occasionally utilizing and recycling old 'war on terror' terminology.

However, the US desire to control regional and global politics has proven insufficient in the face of circumstances that fall entirely out of US control; nor did Obama succeed in executing a meaningful shift of his country's foreign policy epicenter to the Asia Pacific. Biden's disastrous and chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 capped two decades of a pitiful US 'war on terror', that was never truly defined from its violent beginning to its equally violent end.

What the US ignored, at its own peril, was the fact that Washington was never, even at the height of its self-tailored wars, the only political actor that determined regional or international outcomes. Russia is now emerging as a major player in the Middle East, where it carries greater political weight and influence in some coun-

tries, including Syria, Libya and Iran. China, on the other hand, which is now expanding beyond its traditional geopolitical confines of the Pacific and the South China Sea regions, is ironically Iraq's biggest trading partner. The irony is complete when one considers that the US invaded Iraq in 2003 so that it may control and direct the future of the region, economically, politically and strategically. Less than 20 years later, it finds itself increasingly isolated, as its largest global competitors are staking claims over a region that was, till recently, almost entirely floating in the US sphere of influence.

However, as the Middle East actors are realigning politically to accommodate the major political shifts underway, the Palestinian leadership and the various political groups are either stuck, because of their own folly and mistakes, or are forced to operate within limited political margins. Take the Palestinian Authority, for example. The very creation, funding and political validation of the PA are situated within an American strategic framework. When the Trump administration withheld US funds in August 2018, the entire Palestinian economy was on the verge of collapse. Within that period, in February 2019, the PA's dominant political party, Fatah, agreed to participate in a Russian-sponsored conference, which attempted to bridge the gap between Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian groups. Fatah's participation was clearly opportunistic and was meant to send a message to Washington that the Palestinian leadership is willing to explore the possibility of finding new benefactors if Washington continued to withhold funds. No sooner had the US resumed its funding of the PA in April 2021, than Fatah rejected another invitation from Russia to return to the inner Palestinian dialogue.

Hamas, on the other hand, is desperate for allies. Due to circumstances that, by far, exceed Hamas' ability at political maneu-

verings and due, in part, to Hamas' own miscalculations, the so-called 'Arab Springs' have represented the greatest challenge to Hamas' regional politics. Whether Hamas' decision to abandon the 'axis of resistance', as a result of the Syrian civil war, was driven by moral considerations or by political opportunism, it matters little now, for the political group found itself more isolated than ever before. With the gradual return of Hamas to its former allies in Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon and, possibly, Syria as well, the Islamic group is finding its way back to its former position and alliances in

> **Unfortunately, the political split in Palestine, which is dividing Palestinian groups between two camps that stand in direct opposition to one another, is further squandering Palestinian political energies.**

the region. By reorienting itself once more, Hamas is no longer operating without a safety net, as was the case in the previous decade.

However, the consequences and benefits from Hamas' return to the Iran-led regional bloc will all depend on Iran's ability to withstand pressures from the US-led Israeli-Arab configuration. Additionally, Russia's future relationship with the region, its willingness to sustain its presence as a major geopolitical actor in the future is likely to serve as a buffer between an Amer-

ican return to the Middle East and Israel's military adventurism, whether in Iran, Syria or Lebanon.

Though Palestinians have the least influence on the region's political outcome - due, partly, to the fact that they are an occupied nation, which has no control over its resources and strategic location - they still have opportunities that can be exploited in order for them to maintain their resistance against the Israeli occupation. Unfortunately, the political split in Palestine, which is dividing Palestinian groups between two camps that stand in direct opposition to one another, is further squandering Palestinian political energies.

Chances are Palestinian disunity will continue as long as the Middle East region is itself split between regional camps and global competition. This reality can be understood as part and parcel of any geopolitical conflict since time immemorial. However, it is most unfortunate in the context of the Palestinians, who are fighting against common enemies—Israeli military occupation and apartheid on the one hand, and US political hegemony on the other. For now, Palestinian politics will remain tied to the politics of the region. A glimmer of hope comes from the fact that the US is no longer the only dominant power in the Middle East, creating unprecedented space for the Palestinians to maneuver politically beyond their traditional confines, which could be of great benefit to the Palestinians. Whether they are able to use this opportunity or not, is to be determined.
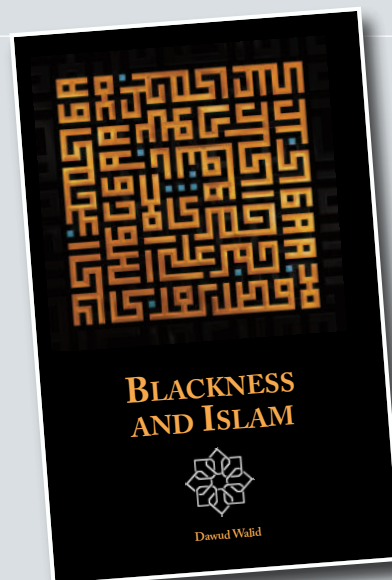
Ramzy Baroud
is a journalist and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of six books. His latest book, co-edited with Ilan Pappé, is "Our Vision for Liberation: Engaged Palestinian Leaders and Intellectuals Speak out". Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

The DHS is an Out of Control Relic from the post 9/11 Era. It's Time to Abolish it

Richard Sudan looks at the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in the US, its overreach and its impact on security models. He argues it was never fit for purpose and needs to go.

9/11 and the Climate of Fear

This year will mark the 21st anniversary of the September 11th terror attacks on New York City in the United States. This tragic event which cost the lives of thousands of Americans of all faiths and backgrounds became a seminal event and turning point, not just in American history, but world history.

The single most devastating domestic attack on American soil began a chain of events that continue to shape the world decades later.

And, of course, the attacks gave birth to perhaps the most universally famous political phrase repeated countless times since 2001 as a justification for a catastrophic foreign policy by the United States, Britain and their allies; 'The War on Terror'.

The climate of fear created in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks was palpable. The seemingly impenetrable defences of the world's most powerful nation had been breached, and with devastating consequences. And it didn't take long for those fears to be exploited for political expediency.

Indeed, no sooner had the dust begun to settle over New York, where the Twin Towers had once stood, then President George Bush began spinning the 'us against them' narrative. "You're either with us, or with the terrorists" he famously quipped to an already fearful American and global public. Pick a side. There was no room for serious analysis. No room for nuance. No time for pause, reflection and consideration. No serious forensic look at the available evidence as to who and what entities were behind the attack. Iraq, it was decided, despite no evidence, and with no link to the attacks, needed to be invaded to eliminate its purported weapons of mass destruction, a claim we now know was a complete fabrication.

Politicians are said to 'never let a crisis go to waste'. The attacks provided the American neocons with a pseudo justification to once more occupy Iraq, and as it would turn out, attempt to begin wars of attrition and conquest against a number of other sovereign nations in the years that followed.

But it wasn't just Black, Brown and Muslim countries that would feel the brunt of American militarism, fanaticism and exceptionalism in the wake of the September 11 attacks. In addition to the gung-ho rallying of American troops sent abroad to occupy Iraq, in the name of security, naturally, the fortification and shoring up of so-called defense at home also took another turn which would have a direct impact on ordinary American citizens.

The American government needed to be seen to be doing something at home. The attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center represented an assault on the United States security apparatus and economic base in one sweep.

The imagery of both the Twin Towers and the Pentagon damaged and destroyed created a lasting and searing image in the minds of Americans; two of the most powerful symbols of both the American military and the country's economic powerbase in New York had been deeply compromised and proven vulnerable. Something would be needed to quell anxieties, in addition to sending soldiers and bombs to other countries, to restore confidence in the American public, that Washington was back in control, and that further attacks like those which took place on September 11, 2001 could never be repeated.

The US administration's first counter-terrorism measure was the announcement of plans to establish the Department for Homeland Security in October 2001. It was soon followed by the Patriot Act, passed 45 days after the September 11 attacks. It drove a horse and carriage through civil liberties making it easier for the federal government to monitor citizens in the search for domestic threats. In the name of national security officials could gain access to phone and bank records and other personal information without the need for a court-approved warrant.

Creation of a Rogue Organisation?

When former President George Bush announced the creation of the Department for Homeland Security he said the new agency's primary role was the formation of "one department whose primary mission is to protect the American homeland."

As we approach the 21-year anniversary of the birth of DHS, it's perhaps worth reflecting on those two decades, in order to assess how much safer America now is, since the formation of it.

Surely, one of the largest federal agencies, boasting close to a quarter of a million employees, funded to the hilt, would herald nothing but success?

Traditionally in the United States, it was the FBI and CIA which were tasked with US security, providing a bulwark against national security threats from terrorism.

Now, the introduction of the executive body of the DHS sought to complement this work, in theory making the work easier under the umbrella of one department.

Whereas in the past the CIA and FBI might have been at odds, not necessarily known for cooperating with each other, sometimes even at war with each other, something like the DHS, whose sole purpose was security, was thought to make natural sense.

Early warning signs however, were indicative of what would follow in the years which lead us to the present day. Instead of making things operationally easier, critics have argued that the DHS simply created more confusion, unnecessary layers of communication and ultimately, more bureaucracy.

Hurricane Katrina

One of the DHS's first significant tests was its response to hurricane Katrina in 2005. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) was the body responsible for dealing with disasters on home turf. It fell under the control of DHS.

But, according to most serious accounts, ultimately, George Bush's focus on the DHS meant less funding was available for FEMA, and that resources were spread thinner. FEMA's cutbacks saw the numbers of experienced field operatives deplete. The DHS was new, and although there had been plans and preparations to deal with a disaster like Hurricane Katrina, when the disaster hit it became apparent that the management of the crisis was an unmitigated disaster. Close to 2000 people died from Katrina, but countless papers and studies since have suggested that the human and financial loss incurred could have been reduced.

Poor infrastructure and weakened dam

levees in New Orleans were already a disaster waiting to happen, but by all accounts the federal government and George Bush's DHS had failed miserably in controlling and overseeing the various organizations which stepped in to help those affected by Katrina. There was no oversight, leadership or responsibility, despite the DHS having ultimate control. Watching news items, even from the other side of the world, it was obvious after several days of apparent paralysis from the government, that not only was the DHS failing to manage the crisis, but in actuality, it seemed to be making it worse. Might a sufficiently funded FEMA have done a better job without the DHS in charge? And had DHS's baptism by fire already proven the department to be problematic to say the least?

To their credit, the Coast Guard, Red Cross local charities and other faith organizations provided support for some of those affected, but the DHS had only exacerbated the suffering according to critics. Part of the criticism was that they took too long to respond, to form a coherent plan and were staffed with too many people who were appointed for political reasons while lacking in experience. This miscalculation and evasion of responsibility cost lives.

And to be clear, the lives that were cost and the lives which were devastated were predominantly African Americans. Thousands of Black people were stranded as a result of the government's lack of preparedness, many of whom were simply left abandoned and to their own fates. Around 25% of New Orleans residents lived in poverty at the time, and around 85% of that number were Black.

In fact, DHS's response to the suffering of predominantly Black people in New Orleans was so bad, that rapper Kanye West famously declared that George Bush "doesn't care about Black people".

West's comments echoed how many at the time felt. Poor Black residents from New Orleans spent days packed into the New Orleans Superdrome and the city's Convention Centre, having travelled there in desperation seeking safety and survival for their families. While they waited to be evacuated, reports of suicides, abuse, a lack of food water and med-

ical supplies took a serious toll on those who had already lost loved ones and/or their homes. Also at the time, state police were drafted in to prevent people from leaving the Superdrome and to control their movement. Hurricane Katrina had exposed the deep social fissures of inequality in America. But rather than helping some of the country's most vulnerable people in dealing with the impact of a national disaster, the DHS hampered efforts to help them.

Some have suggested in the years following hurricane Katrina that were the racial and social demographics of those affected in the disaster different, the government might have offered a better response to the disaster. The victims of Hurricane Katrina became casualties of systemic white supremacy which failed to protect them. People died because they were poor and Black and living in a dangerous area susceptible to the impacts of natural disaster and because of a system which wilfully failed to ensure residents were protected with proper safety measures. The Bush administration's DHS had the legal responsibility for rescuing and saving those lives following the impact of the hurricane and it failed in its duty.

Spying on Activists, Immigrants and Black People

Over the years following its creation the DHS has faced some of the most serious accusations regarding the alleged abuse of surveillance powers, and the gathering of personal data and information, that has nothing to do with national security but which might have everything to do with an increasingly authoritarian government keeping tabs on anyone considered to present a threat to its power.

Of course this is nothing new for many communities in America, particularly for Black, and more recently Muslim people, whose political activity has always been monitored by the state.

But an organization like the DHS facing little or no congressional oversight or scrutiny, while able to monitor people on a whim, is a far cry from an organization purported to head up and lead on national security. With no oversight, the DHS is known to have

abused its power by monitoring Muslims, Black communities, immigrants, journalists, and even politicians, people accused of no crime. This is why today, many describe the DHS as a rogue entity which must be greatly defunded or disbanded completely.

It's even been the case, that the DHS deployed predator drones, and airplanes to spy on Black Lives Matter protests.

Officially, the DHS contends that it supports the right of the first amendment which includes the right to assemble and does not allocate resources to monitor planned or spontaneous protests.

It does however, under section 515 of the Homeland Security Act admit to providing "situational awareness" to inform federal, state and local governments about potential threats related to terrorism and disaster related issues.

Many people believe that "situational awareness" is really just a code word for spying, something in which the DHS has been instrumental in relation to Muslim communities. Among the more prominent cases to be deemed violations of the US constitution by the Office of General Counsel at DHS, the organisation's watchdog, are a marriage counselling seminar put on by a Muslim organisation and a lecture on parenting delivered by a Muslim American speaker.

A programme known as "Countering Violent Extremism" (CVE), established in 2011 under President Barack Obama and renamed under President Trump, increased counterterrorism surveillance of Muslim Americans by allowing DHS, federal prosecutors, and FBI agents to work closely with local officials to infiltrate Muslim American communities. Like its British counterpart, the programme has been heavily criticised for selectively asking Muslims to take collective responsibility for political violence. It relies on the widely discredited premise that there are identifiable markers or warning signs of radicalisation - behaviours and beliefs - that launch people on an inexorable path to terrorism.

As in the UK spying exercises were dressed up as community outreach, and efforts made to enlist schools, Department of Children and Families, religious leaders, crisis

intervention staff, law enforcement and public health officials to report suspect clients. The programme's focus has always been overwhelmingly on Muslims despite the fact that far right terrorist attacks kill more people in the US than any other movements. According to the Anti-Defamation League, in 2020 far-right extremists accounted for 16 of 17 extremist killings and 41 of the 42 extremist killings the year before. Between 2009 and 2018 the far right was responsible for 73% of extremist-related fatalities.

Furthermore, according to a report published by the Senate in 2012, the DHS's fusion centres, gathering information on Muslim communities, while presented as outreach, have in reality produced very few outcomes actually useful to counter terrorism. Such programs are viewed as a significant waste of resources, singling out and alienating Muslims, while diverting focus from very real internal threats to national security.

Failing to Tackle Home Grown Terror

Post September 11, 2001, when the DHS first came into being, the biggest threat posed to national security was believed to be from foreign terrorists. In fact, it can be argued that the focus on Muslims has blindsided the agency to the far more real threat of home-grown white terror.

Twenty years on, the battleground has now shifted significantly. In 2021, FBI director Christopher Wray acknowledged that home-grown white supremacist terror was the greatest internal threat to the security of the United States, accounting for the lion's share of the FBI's resources. Just as in the UK, in the United States white supremacy is also the fastest growing form of terrorism.

We've seen the ramifications of systemic white supremacy in the United States manifested in disproportionately high numbers of state killings, arrests and incarcerations of Black people at the hands of the police. We've seen the steady rise of various white supremacist anti-government militia groups in the country, many of whom descended on the nation's capital on Jan 6, 2021. We even heard Christopher Wray, the director of the FBI, describe the events as an act of domestic terror.

Why then, has the DHS failed in preventing the rise of such groups, and failed to work with other federal and state agencies to prevent them carrying out acts of violence against Black and non-white people, as well as breaching the country's congressional buildings? Surely the ultimate litmus test for the DHS, is in protecting its own taxpaying citizens against white supremacist terror and protecting its own government's buildings.

Another answer might lie in the reason that the police often fail to prevent white supremacist violence. Aside from structural racism in the legal system which seldom punishes those police, many among the police themselves are often connected and affiliated with white supremacists. Similarly, the DHS and departments which fall under it, have

themselves faced questions about those among its ranks who might share racist white supremacist ideological thinking.

Racist Border Controls

The ethics and practices of the United States border officials were thrown into sharp focus during Donald Trump's presidency. Trump's dog-whistle politics and derogatory commentary about Muslims and migrants became a political norm, and his pledge to build a wall to barricade against the supposed existential threat to America from without fanned the flames of racial bigotry.

But the truth is that the border policies of the United States have always favoured immigrants classified as white, while being hostile to people of colour.

The US's customs and border officials and agencies tasked with securing the border are part of the DHS. Ironically, and maybe bitterly so, the current Secretary for Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas is the son of immigrants who fled Cuba and settled in the United States. Mayorkas' border officials, have presided over some of the most horrendous scenes of brutality and treatment of countless migrants and potential asylum seekers, seeking the safety of the US border and shores.

The barbaric and allegedly unconstitutional acts of border officials treating migrant men, women and children as less than human, has been well documented. There have been many accusations of abuse at many of the migrant detention centres in which migrants were held.

And it's the DHS which is responsible for repelling and turning away many at the border, even during the Covid-19 pandemic, exploiting Title 42 and Trump's use of public health regulations, to see migrants deported before they can be legally processed to determine their status, citing disease and national security as a justification. The legality and constitutionality of this has been challenged but remains in operation under the DHS.

Perhaps one of the most grotesque and egregious examples of the DHS and its border officials abusing their power happened fairly recently when thousands of Haitian migrants amassed at the southern city of Del Rio, having crossed from Mexico. Images were shared around the world showing white border agents riding horses and whipping Black Haitians to deter them from crossing. The recent natural disaster in Haiti, and the political turmoil created by the assassination of the Haitian president did not matter enough to either Trump or Biden to lead them to relax the border controls.

So bad is the repression at the border that human rights groups around the world and the United Nations have expressed concern.

Migrants fleeing war, chaos and poverty do not present a threat to national security. The racist clampdown on non-white people seeking the safety of a country which gains its privilege often by exploiting the homelands of those to whom it denies entry is part of the American story and social fabric.

DHS border officials have become little more than the thugs and foot soldiers acting on behalf of America's unfounded border fears and hysteria.

The warning signs were there and have been building. In 2020, Customs and Border Protection (CPB) agents, which are controlled by the DHS, essentially conducted a sting on Portland. Camouflage and unidentified officers were snatching protestors and bundling them into vans, arresting them miles away from any border without any explanation and apparently without them having committed any crimes. The CPB were also accused of firing tear gas at unarmed protestors alongside a long litany of accusations of systemic corruption.

With the DHS spying, monitoring and arresting people with no justification and oversight, the warnings about authoritarianism have now shifted to the grim reality of it having already taken root.

Since the formation of the DHS, it has morphed entirely from what it was purportedly meant to be. Its ineffectiveness in tackling national security is proven. It has become a vehicle for exploitation and is now little more than an overfunded tool of state oppression.

Some might say that the DHS' and border officials' disregard of freedom and targeting of non-white communities is an extension of American foreign policy. In an increasingly small and interconnected world, the distinction between neocon domestic and foreign policy is proving increasingly blurred.

No More Secret Police

The charges and accusations which the Department of Homeland Security stand accused of are serious and its rap sheet is long.

It is a failure of another era and a rogue organization which needs to be reined in.

It operates as little more than secret unaccountable police, unconstitutionally operating with impunity for whichever ends it chooses, consistently funded regardless of changing presidents. In 2022 it is the antithesis of freedom, fairness and democracy. If the DHS were formed to prevent terror 20 years ago, in 2022 it resembles more closely that which it claims to oppose than some might care to admit, however uncomfortable the truth might be.

Richard Sudan

is a journalist, writer and TV reporter and has reported from around the world. His writing has appeared in the Independent, Guardian and other publications. His focus is on a range of issues including racism, police brutality, immigration and global injustice. He has been a guest speaker at venues as diverse as Oxford University and the People's Assembly as well as appearing regularly in the media. He has also taught writing poetry for performance course at Brunel University alongside Professor Benjamin Zephaniah. In 2018 Richard was aboard the Freedom Flotilla, aiming to deliver aid to Palestinians in the besieged Gaza strip. Twitter: @RichardSudan

RAMADAN
APPEAL FOR THE OPPRESSED
— 1443AH - 2022 —

PALESTINE
ROHINGYA
NIGERIA
YEMEN

Allah the Exalted said: " O my servants, I have forbidden oppression for myself and I have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another." - Hadith

Let us work towards restoring justice, for wrongs to be righted and so that the destitute may no longer be in need.

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