

# The Long View

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**Revolutions  
Rising:**

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

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Cover illustration by St. Parastoo

The opening salvos in the US/Israeli war against Iran took out the country's Supreme Leader in an attack on his family home and obliterated 175 children in an elementary school in Minab.

The savage assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei, alongside other high-ranking politicians, was meant to advance the goal of decapitating the leadership. The triple-tap attack on the school was an unadulterated act of terror, intended to demonstrate power and instil fear.

Neither attacks served their purpose. In the manner of his death the Sayyid won the martyrdom he yearned while the slaughter of innocent children only succeeded in rallying the population behind the Islamic Republic. Instead of destroying the government or cowing it into submission it fortified and emboldened Iran into a devastating retaliation that has ultimately brought the aggressors to the negotiating table.

In the first essay in this issue, **Arzu Merali** looks at the implications of this historic war on the accelerating demise of US Empire, and within that, the end of the Zionist entity. The whole world has been galvanised by the example of a besieged, sanctioned and blitzkrieged nation not only standing up to but strategically defeating the mightiest military force the world has ever known. If the genocide in Gaza opened the people's eyes to the reality of the international political order, Iran's stand has inspired them to resist it.

But Iran is much more than just a model of resistance and resilience. Its hybrid theocratic-democratic polity is also a living ideological challenge to the prevailing model of the western nation-state. That's why, for the US and its ideological allies, it must be eliminated. An independent Islamic state is potentially disruptive to the post- World War 2 dominance enjoyed by the victors (and architects). Merali agrees with the late Imam Achmad Cassiem that what differentiates the 1979 Iranian Revolution from other uprisings is that its instigators had a plan and a vision.

Until the Islamic revolution, either collapse or capitulation had been the defining template for what happens when political Islam meets the modern state. "Demonised, overlooked, hidden alongside the understanding of colonialism is the model for decolonisation that is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its institution building, its models of governance, they all require analysis, and understanding", says Merali.

Our second essay looks at the views of the US/Israeli aggression of people from another country that has experienced occupation and genocide in recent history. Writing from his native Bosnia & Herzegovina, **Demir Mahmutćehajić**, says that opinion is largely divided, based on the demographic composition of the country. Nationalist Croats and Serbs who together make up approximately half of the population, have negative perceptions of Iran rooted in Tehran's military assistance for Bosnia during the 1992-1995 war of independence. At the same time, their political representatives enjoy strong relations with the Zionist state which has made no secret of its desire to prevent the emergence of an Islamic state or even a strong independent Muslim polity in Europe.

Despite Iran's historical assistance, views within the Muslim population are surprisingly not always sympathetic, something that the author puts down to the success of Saudi/Salafist anti-Iran and anti-Shia propaganda. These "Zionist agents", as he calls them, popularised takfir of Shias and popularised the notion that

Iran was engaged in a proselytising mission against the majority Sunni Bosniaks. This vilification was reinforced during the Syrian civil war in which Iran was presented as a sectarian genocidal anti-Sunni actor. Also, the retreat of Iran from its early revolution exporting foreign policy posture has meant that fewer Bosniaks, especially post 1979 generations, have been able to see or learn about Iran's role in the country or its resistance to western empire. "The unique and most important lesson that Iran can teach the world is the Islamic Revolution!", says Mahmut ćehajić .

Muslims who admire the Iranian political system, or any other alternative to the western plutocratic nation state model, are often accused of being unfaithful to themselves and indeed even of treachery. Why do we continue to live in westernised settings if we dislike their politics so much? Our third essay by **Zviad Jughashvili** grapples with this conundrum. Jughashvili sees such interrogations as a rhetorical device camouflaged as an intellectual position, that "collapses complex questions—power, citizenship, survival, conscience, and community—into a single insinuation: that residence equals endorsement, and that critique equals hypocrisy."

Jughashvili says the question is an evasive manoeuvre. "Residence does not erase conscience" and "criticism is not proof of hatred". People can legitimately remain within systems that discriminate against or oppress them while actively resisting injustice.

The question is an ad hominem response, meant to shut down genuine discussion. If anything, it exposes the hypocrisy of a system that claims tolerance of different beliefs and opinions as a civilisational pillar. The "relevant question is what happens when one confronts taboo interests—especially in the areas of foreign policy, policing, and national security. It is precisely in these domains that the limits of the supposed openness of western political systems often become most visible," he says.

The fallout of the attack on Iran has still more implications, not least for the dominance of the US in Western Asia. As the chief US/Israel ally and staging post for military attacks against Iran in the region the UAE has borne the brunt of Tehran's retaliation. Its carefully curated image as a tourist hotspot and financial centre have been damaged, perhaps irreversibly, by the ruling monarchies' attachment to US imperial aims. Abu Dhabi's poisonous tentacles are visible in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Somalia and Sudan among others. In the latter, it is accused of undermining the national government by providing military backing to the rebel Rapid Support Force.

Our final essay by **Muhammad Elamin** is the first in a series of instalments by the author explaining the war in Sudan. In this piece, Elamin explores the historical context of the crisis (this predates UAE involvement) he locates in the colonial reshaping of historic Sudan, more specifically the imposition of artificial borders, institutions and a sense of 'nation' as approximating to one ethnos, language and culture on the inhabitants. The author warns against employing Orientalised frames that simplify complicated conflicts into an Arabs vs African tribe dichotomy.

In times of extreme crisis such as we are living in now, it is easy to forget our dreams of the future, under the stress of today's violence. Nevertheless dream and plan we must, if we are to reimagine the world free from its current systemic injustices. We hope these words are a small contribution to that. Let us know.

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# Near Victory: The Promise we May Live to See

In this emotional polemic, **Arzu Merali** looks at the possibilities of a better world as a result of the US war on Iran and its allies regardless of immediate outcomes. The world she argues, will never be the same again.

**W**hat does the near victory look like? We recite the verse of Qur'an, 'Help is from God and a near victory', it is in our du'as, but can we actually visualise what it means, what it could be?

On 28 February, the US (the regime that occupies Turtle Island) and the Zionist Entity massacres some 170 children at their school, using Tomahawk missiles. This means of death is so brutal, not all the children's remains have been found. This was the opening salvo in the war against the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was meant to signal destruction. Later that day, numerous heavy ordnance (some say 30, other 100), eviscerated the Bait – the home and office of the leader of the Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei. These so-called bunker busters were used to kill a man, sitting not deep underground but in his office. He, along with members of his family, including grandchildren, attained martyrdom. Many days later, his son, soon to be elected the new Vali el Faqih. Mojtaba, reported that he had seen his father's body after the killing: his fist was clenched in defiance. Days before people had observed the inscription on the slain leader's Aqeeq ring: God is sufficient for me. This murder was meant to signify the end of the Islamic Republic, a resounding victory for the two foulest regimes in modern, arguably all history: genocidal in their foundation, and unredeemable in their continued violence. Instead, it has heralded a new age in the world where the US' hegemony is now in terminal decline, and so-called Israel is on the point of self-de-

struction. Whatever else happens, it has meant that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been victorious in the moment of the leader's assassination. Here's why.

## Little Revolutions Everywhere

I was expecting protests in Lucknow, there are always Shi'is who protest in the line of the Islamic Revolution there. Likewise Indian occupied Kashmir, where tens, sometimes hundreds of thousands attend Al-Quds Day rallies every year in support of the Palestinians. Maybe, I thought, some protests in Pakistan too. Instead, the sub-continent has exploded in ways I could not fathom, and of which as an Indian heritage woman, I am immensely proud.

The terror of the Islamophobic environment that has held [sway for decades](#) in political life, soon to turn also into violent social and economic control under the Modi regime, is rent. Sunnis and Shi'is marching together in protest as soon as the news of the martyrdom of Imam Khamenei broke. Indian occupied Kashmir is in open revolt. Meanwhile Samajwadi MP Anand Bhadauriya, is recorded, the video going viral, lambasting the Indian government in the Lok Sabha:

"We salute Ayatullah Khamenei Sahib, who never bowed down before America unlike you [Modi]! And embraced martyrdom! while you surrendered to America. The Bharatiya Janata Party government should be told. Which Prime Minister of the world visited Israel after

the Gaza-Israel conflict?... when the conflict was going on, has any Prime Minister of the world visited Israel?"

Why indeed has India bowed down before the US? Why indeed did India, and India only, provide diplomatic cover for the genocide ongoing in Gaza? As powerful as the speech is, it is the approbation you hear behind him in the chamber. It is the applause he gets online in ways I could not have imagined even a day before that bring hope. And so too the video of Hindu holy men, Sikh activists, standing side by side with Muslim protestors, at different locations, praising Ayatollah Khamenei, calling for an end not simply to the India kowtowing of the US, or even US hegemony, but in some cases an end to the US itself. What this latter means we can ponder below.

Protestors and politicians alike pick up the same theme, why has India become this toxic, hateful place? Meanwhile, with the advent of Eid, so many videos of Hindus throwing rose petals on Muslims attending Eid payers. Demonstrable solidarity after years of silencing: it is not that these things entirely stopped happening, it is that they are now celebrated when they had become shamed, now being normalised rather than demonised in social discussions. The hate is still there – the Indian Zionist trolls online celebrate, the real world BJP and RSS folk tear up pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei on the streets, and are in some cases widely subject to uproar in the Islamophobic troll fest that can be Indian X (formerly Twitter).

## ON OFFER

### Political Islamophobia at American Policy Institutes: **Battling the Power of Islamic Resistance**

by **Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria**

Available from [shop.ihrc.org](http://shop.ihrc.org)  
and [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



Looking at the RAND corporation, the Brookings Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Saghaye-Biria overviews these three think tanks' obsession with Islam and Muslims since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. She discusses the implications for Muslim societies of the direction of travel proposed.

**Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria**  
is an Assistant Professor at  
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Knowledge and Thought.

These are little revolutions. Decades of law and policy aimed at division, the marginalisation of Muslims to the extent of genocide in some cases, gone in seconds, eviscerated by a bunker buster dropped somewhere in Tehran.

The bombers thought they were eradicating their enemy. Instead, they have brought the beginning of the end of the hate they have so successfully exported. Whatever else happens, things will not go back to the way they were before.

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Pakistan, in the minutes after the killing of the leader: US consulates around the country and the embassy in Islamabad came under actual attack from protestors, as they tried to break down doors, smashed windows and demanded the US atone. US security shot and killed at least 8, injured dozens more. This is the seed for revolution within and without borders. People are no longer scared. Not even when their military government is historically the poodle of the US, rushing to nominate its Commander in Chief for the Nobel Peace Prize at a time he has supported, applauded, even directed the livestreamed genocide in Gaza.

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Meanwhile, Europe crumbles. Spain has [all but left](#), citing the illegality of the war on Iran, the EU's support for the genocidal entity. Threatened with ostracization and de facto sanctions by Trump, the Prime Minister negotiates with Algeria for gas (while the rest of Europe readies for the shortages caused by the war), lands in China for talks and reopens the Spanish embassy in Tehran. Even Italy's Meloni, whatever you think of her right leaning ways, sees which way [the wind is blowing](#) and bends accordingly.

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Even Scotland, or more specifically the independence movement, is invigorated. Is it my imagination, or is the [notice of intention](#) to leave the union (with or without Westminster approval and corresponding legislation for a referendum) the result of this freeing from the restrictions of political imagination that the US and its colonial allies have imposed on the world. The motion called on Westminster to be prepared for Scotland's exit; in other words, get ready to lose the North Sea oil money.

Thought to be down and out, the spectre of Scottish independence is rearing its head in ways that no longer consider Westminster's legislative control relevant. The law(s) of injustice no longer apply.

It was of course one of the contentions of the English media, just this last year, that Iran was in fact behind the last push for independence. It seemed a ridiculous accusation at the time. This time it may

be true, by force of the witnessing of truth by all those martyrs in Iran, Lebanon, Gaza and elsewhere.

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As I write, whole villages and towns are being erased from Southern Lebanon, the videos of their destruction being posted proudly by Israeli forces and their supporters alike. It is a rerun of Gaza. Likewise, the double tap attacks on buildings, hospitals, schools, civilian sites – all in violation of every internationally accepted rule, law and norm of war. All part of the Gaza genocide, now not only normalised but accelerated. In the space of the time it took me to start this piece and get to these words, there have been triple and now quadruple attacks. If you still don't know what these are, this is when after the first bomb hits people – civilians and medics alike – rush to rescue those who may have survived. The second hit kills them. Adding third and fourth layers to this is a level of evil beyond the capacity for description.

Yet, if you look at history this level of atrocity is not new. It is following the normal scale for colonial violence. The only difference now is that we see it for what it is. Ask any Native American activist and they will explain the incessant waves of violence, sometimes military, sometimes biological, sometimes cultural that murdered millions, and is keeping the native peoples of the Americas, especially in the USA, marginalised, besieged, in various states of precarity. Not that there has not been any fight back. Understanding what different iterations of colonial governance in what is now called the US has done to the native population is to understand the Nakba. Others have written about this better than I. Suffice to say here, that this on its own is enough of a reason to understand that when Islamic revolutionaries in Iran called the US the Great Satan and the Zionist entity the Small Satan, it was this model they referred to.

The cycle repeats everywhere. As Randa Abdel-Fattah [on these pages](#) noted in the kinship between indigenous communities in Australia and the Palestinians:

Silencing the overarching framework of settler colonialism accounts for why we continually see an inversion of responsibility in Australia and Palestine, whereby the white settler state of Australia, and the Israeli settler state, shift blame from the enactors of state violence to the victims. Palestinians are blamed for daring to refuse to acknowledge Israel's so-called right to exist as an ethno-religious state that privileges one ethno-racial group over all others; Palestinians are blamed for daring to refuse to acquiesce, accept, stop resisting. All attempts to shift blame are in effect an 'actively enforced silencing' of

those who continue to testify to ethnic cleansing, depopulation, dispossession, massacres.

In Australia we see the ongoing failure of the state to take responsibility for colonial harms against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for systemic and institutionalised state violence, systemic oppression, and brutality. Intergenerational trauma and poverty caused by Commonwealth, state and territory race-based welfare laws and policies of successive governments throughout Australia, land theft, [stolen wages](#) and [blackbirding—Australia's hidden history of slavery](#)—are never properly and justly accounted for. Poverty, shorter life expectancy, health disparities, [rates of incarceration](#), discrimination are not reckoned with as the ongoing effects of the violence of the settler state. Colonialism is forgotten and the language becomes one of 'lifestyle choices'.

Big Satan, Little Satan(s). The erasure of the crime and the criminals required the language used. Likewise, when revolutionaries chant, "Death to America, Death to Israel," it is the systems of colonialism they demand an end to. No more confusion now. Not that there ever should have been.

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How do we get then from the immense sacrifices of the people and their leaders, whether in Iran, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon or indeed anywhere else in the world that martyrs blood colours the soil, to the near victory? Surely there has been enough blood spilled? Is it enough just for people to be killed in the way of Truth and Justice, en masse, again and again? In an critical analysis of the Arab Spring, circa 2013/14, the late Imam Achmad Cassiem spoke brutally to leadership of many of these movements. Sitting on a podium in Istanbul and speaking after a senior Muslim brotherhood member from Egypt described the [Rabaa massacre](#), he stated that if you do not have a serious revolutionary movement, only a rebellion (which he contended all of the Arab Spring uprisings were), you will be simply leading your youth to be slaughtered. In other words, what is your plan? As the examples particularly of Egypt and Tunisia showed, in the words of [Reza John Vedadi](#), those movements represented:

"...collapse or capitulation,.. become[ing] the defining template for what happens when political Islam meets the modern state. Get power, then either be destroyed by the system or absorbed into it. There is, so the conventional wisdom goes, no third option."

Except of course there is and has been.

Demonised, overlooked, hidden alongside the understanding of colonialism is the model for decolonisation that is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its institution building, its models of governance, they all require analysis, and understanding. Some of it is case specific, some of it is consonant with other revolutionary movements. Helyeh Doutaghi's excellent piece on labor relations, and how class as a stratifying mechanism but also class tensions in a revolutionary society beset by sanctions and external attempts to overthrow it via colour revolutions (and since writing, war) work, is a case in point. Bucking the narrative of police brutality and suppression, she highlights from her fieldwork that the workers striking in the South Pars oilfield last December, did not see the police as their class enemy. To understand this, specifically as critical thinkers, activists aspiring for decolonisation requires us to ditch the universalising understanding of institutions and political and social cultures that exist in westernised, i.e. colonial centre societies. As she rightly maintains:

“In much of Western political thought and within organizing cultures and spaces shaped by settler-colonial policing, the police are correctly understood as inherently violent institutions designed to repress movements in sustaining the capitalist imperial order. This understanding, while grounded in material histories of racialized and class violence and colonial and imperial repression, becomes a-historical and Eurocentric when universalized.

In the imperial countries, the police function as the domestic arm of the empire. They suppress dissent, criminalize resistance, and enforce accumulation through violence particularly against Black, Indigenous, and other Peoples of Color.”

This cannot be stretched to fit resis-

tance and revolutionary societies. The ones which, as Imam Cassiem maintained, have a plan.

That plan in Iran, is as much to do with the cultural approach to social issues that the martyred leader Ayatollah Khamenei had. That approach can be seen everywhere. Its fruits are being, appropriately, witnessed on the streets of Iran, every night since the start of the war. People gather in defence of their nation, and crucially in support of Palestine and the wider axis of resistance.

Social media is flooded with the videos of women with little or no head covering, riding motor bikes, smoking, and in every way dispelling the hackneyed tropes of 'women in Iran'. All are standing in defence of the revolution of Palestine. Many have had run ins with the authorities over dress. Listen to what they say. They understand and many have said explicitly that they stand with the Islamic Republic against what is clearly evil and oppression, against their country, against Palestine, across the region, even world-wide. Whatever grievance they have, that is a matter for civil space, and that conversation and those struggles are ongoing: but they are between themselves and their government alone.

It is the incredible vision of the martyred leader that is being expressed here. I do not just mean his very public defence of women who wear no or 'bad' hijab. I mean his vision that the Islamic Republic but also the wider resistance that has developed around it, is for all who wish to join. In his letters to the youth in the west, particularly on the issue of Palestine you see this. He thanks all those in encampments and on demonstrations, congratulating them for choosing the right side of history. They too, he maintains, are part of the resistance.

You see it from the earliest days of the revolution where he advocated for the rebuilding of the armed forces, maintaining that those left after the departure and or prosecution of those in the Shah's upper

echelons responsible for the murder of protestors and activists, were in fact good and sincere people. This was 1979 / 1980. What a vision. It was not a popular one. But as he saw it, this war that is unfolding was always going to happen if the revolution stayed true to its principles. The Imposed War of 1980 - 88 was the first salvo in this battle. We are living through maybe the fourth, fifth, sixth iteration depending on how you count the actual and hybrid wars waged against Iran. The resistance axis, the resistance economy (sanctions ironically pushed Iran far down the road of self-sufficiency, knowledge production and future proofing), and the resistance culture (for want of a better word) that we currently see cutting through cultural barriers in the Lego videos, and other memes winning the propaganda war, are all in some way attributable to his vision.

That vision and those plans have energised the region.

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But victory, promised and near, is still not easy. I end with the caveat given by Sheikh Bahmanpour during the 12 Days War of 2025. He speaks of Surah Yusuf, and the lessons we must learn. Things will without a doubt get very bad before they get better, before the victory is complete. They will be so bad, that even the staunchest believers will be despondent. When after a few days the 12 Days war ended in what appeared to be a capitulation by the Zionist entity, as amazing this humiliation of the Israeli forces was, most of us knew this would not be the end. As I conclude this, a bizarre ceasefire not ceasefire exists, again asked for in moments of humiliation this time by Uncle Big Satan himself. But whatever happens, whatever happens, nothing will be the same again. Victory is nearer. Never let that belief go.

**Arzu Merali**

is a writer and researcher based in London, UK. Find her on X, Instagram @arzumerali and her website [www.arzumerali.com](http://www.arzumerali.com).

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# Aggression on Iran: “What is the Position of Bosnia and Herzegovina”?

Political activist **Demir Mahmutćehajić** looks at the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Bosnia & Herzegovina during the Bosnian war, and what it means for Bosnia today.

**O**n the 28<sup>th</sup> of February this year I wrote on my FB profile: “My prayers are with Iran! Without calculation and without fear! Resistance to the genocidal Zionist regime is an obligation! I can not do much, but with prayers and my heart, like a little ant, I want it to be known whose side I am on.”

Yes, I wrote this in Bosnian language. I wrote this while in my home town of Stolac, in the south of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I added #Iran and #FreePalestine, placed the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and then followed news and reactions to my post.

It was not immediately clear that Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (r.a.) had been killed. It was not clear that Islamic Republic of Iran was fighting back. The massacre of primary school kids in Minab had not happened yet, but the reactions to my post were immediate. Within a few hours there were hundreds of likes, heart emojis and supports. Currently, thirty-two days later, this post has 1567 reactions, out of which only 11 are negative (laughing), and it has been shared 38 times.

This is not an academic paper but rather, a simpler, first hand account of feelings from within Bosnia&Herzegovina. To me this is much more important than the collection of quotes, political statements, thin-thank opinions, political calculations and survivalist spins. I am presenting my personal views and experiences, observed street feelings

and expressions from ordinary Bosnians, but I will also touch on the “governmental issue”.

There is no united government in Bosnia&Herzegovina. We are not even a fully sovereign state, because we have an overseer, the high representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together with the Office of the High Representative (OHR), Bosnia and Herzegovina was created in 1995 immediately after the signing of the Dayton Agreement which ended the 1992 - 1995 Bosnian War. The purpose of the high representative and the OHR is to oversee the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement. The Bonn Powers give the high representative broad authority, including the ability to make and annul laws, as well as appoint and remove officials.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a free and sovereign state! The legitimate Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not allowed to liberate our country from the occupation, rebellion and aggression by, and from, Serbian and Croatian forces both from within Bosnia&Herzegovina and from neighboring Serbia and Croatia. Aggression by Serbia, and by Croatia, on the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina, an internationally recognized sovereign state, was stopped by the Dayton Agreement in 1995. This was an American imposed peace agreement that, basically, produced no winner and recognized no loser in the 1992 - 1995 war. The

Dayton Agreement created a system that is based on three constituent nations (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats). Bosnian Serbs leaned mainly on the neighboring state of Serbia, while Bosnian Croats leaned on the neighboring Republic of Croatia, an EU member. All Bosnian Croats automatically have citizenship of the Republic of Croatia with all the attendant perks and privileges. Similarly, most Bosnian Serbs have citizenship of the neighboring state of Serbia. And they also hold the citizenship of Bosnia&Herzegovina.

The Dayton Agreement created a division of power in the way that everything is decided on the bases of equal rights of three constituent nations. Therefore, representatives of both Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats are able to block the decisions of Bosniak representatives. So, to expect a clear and unified stance on any issue is simply foolish. I would compare Bosnia&Herzegovina’s political system to the political system of Lebanon.

As regards the people of Bosnia&Herzegovina we are a divided society. The main divisions are on nationalistic lines, but these nationalistic lines also closely track religious divisions. So, Bosnian Croats are mainly Catholics, Bosnian Serbs are mainly orthodox Christians, while Bosniaks are mainly Muslims. These are, therefore, doubled divisions. Bosniaks are the biggest single group

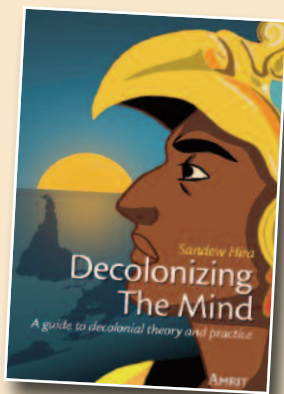
## FROM AMRIT PUBLISHERS

### Decolonizing the Mind - a guide to decolonial theory and practice

By Sandew Hira



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In different parts of the world a new decolonial movement is growing that challenges long time narratives in knowledge production and social struggle and transforms activism and social movements. It is driven by key factors such as the fall of the west and the rise of the rest, the collapse of the socialist bloc and in general the crisis of Western civilization.

Hira develops a comprehensive, coherent and integral theoretical framework that draws on different contributions in the decolonial movement, and deals with the practical implication of decolonial theory for decolonial activism.

(around 50%) but physically control around 23% of the territory of Bosnia&Herzegovina. Bosniaks do not have any friendly country bordering them and they fear that in the next war against Bosnia&Herzegovina's Serbs and Croats they will face renewed ethnic cleansing and genocide. This fear is ever-present, and regularly fanned by politicians who revel in inflammatory nationalistic discourse.

We live under constant stress and fear that war may start again. Even though it has been over thirty years since war stopped, unfortunately, war has never ended. For many of us these thirty years feel like yesterday, and the constant threat of war brings insecurity and mental immobility. Most of Bosniaks do not trust Croats and Serbs who live in Bosnia&Herzegovina, and even less so neighboring Croatia and Serbia. Most Bosniaks feel that we have no one to guarantee our survival as a collective, and at the same time we see that promises of entering EU and NATO are just hollow.

At the same time both Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs are developing very close relationships with Zionists and "Israel". In the Bosnian Croatian camp we witnessed the sudden arrival of Amir Gross Kabiri. He is an "Israeli" businessman, industrialist, publisher, and art collector. He is also the chairman of the M.T. Abraham Group, CEO of Aluminij Industries, and best known as the owner of The Art Newspaper Israel, President of the M.T. Abraham Foundation, Member at the Board of Patrons of the Conference of European Rabbis, and the President of the Hermitage Museum Foundation Israel.

In the year 2020, he became the owner of Aluminij Industries, an aluminum manufacturing company, with annual revenue of \$263 million (USD). The company is the largest exporter and importer of Bosnia&Herzegovina. Aluminij Industries currently employs 350 people, making it one of the largest employers of the region. In December 2021, Aluminij Industries and Glencore International AG signed a two-year contract for the supply of

300,000 tons of primary remelt aluminum.

In December 2021, Mr. Kabiri was appointed Chairman of the Board of HŠK Zrinjski football club and his M.T. Abraham Group became the general sponsor of the club. In August 2023, the Italian sports newspaper *Gazzetta dello Sport* alleged that Zrinjski Mostar had historical ties to the Ustasha.

The Bosnian Serb camp, headed by Milorad Dodik, has been trying for decades to develop a close relationship with "Israel" and Zionists. Milorad Dodik, President of Republika Srpska (RS), maintains strong, pro-Israel relations, branding himself as a key ally in the Balkans and voicing firm support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. His alliance focuses on shared security concerns regarding radical Islam, economic cooperation, and ideological alignment on sovereignty, with relations reaching a high point in 2025-2026.

Dodik frames Republika Srpska and "Israel" as facing common existential threats from radical ideologies. He has publicly supported "Israeli" actions in the Gaza genocide.

In early 2026, Dodik visited Israel, met with officials including Minister Zeev Elkin and Gideon Sa'ar, and received the Jabotinsky Prize for Liberty. Following October 7, 2023, Dodik ordered the RS presidential building in Banja Luka to be illuminated in Israeli colors, strengthening the image of the Serbian entity as a friend of Israel. Dodik frequently compares the struggle of the Serb people in Bosnia for autonomy with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, positioning his policies within a narrative of national survival.

So, what is the main uniting issue between Ustasha fascist, (ultra-nationalists Croats) Chetnik fascists, (ultra-nationalist Serbs) and the war criminal Zionists? It is a shared hatred of Muslims. And Bosnian Bosniaks are mainly Muslims!

As a Bosniak I very clearly remember that Islamic Republic of Iran helped us survive joint aggression from Serbia and Croatia. Form the Islamic Republic of Iran we

received money, arms, logistics, technical support when no one else dared to help us! These are facts! Also, these facts are very emotional. I know what my father told me. "If it was not for the help from the Islamic Republic of Iran we (Bosniaks) would not have survived."

The Islamic Republic of Iran was the first country to actually break the UN arms embargo and sent weapons to Bosnia&Herzegovina. Estimates suggest thousands of tons of weapons delivered. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard trained the Bosnia&Herzegovina army. This was crucial because in 1992 - 1993, the Army of the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina (ARBiH) was poorly armed and out-gunned. Western countries were enforcing an arms embargo that hurt the Army of the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina more than its enemies. So, in this critical early phase, weapons from the Islamic Republic of Iran helped the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina survive militarily.


Furthermore, operatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran helped build parts of Bosnia&Herzegovina's intelligence structures and trained selected units. This contributed to better coordination and gradual professionalization of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina.


Historians generally assess the Islamic Republic of Iran's role as the earliest and the most active supporter of the besieged, nascent Bosnia&Herzegovina. Once Bosnia&Herzegovina had survived the initial onslaught with the help from the Islamic Republic of Iran, other factors came to the fore

I agree with these historians. They claim that Western/NATO interventions (1994-1995) were crucial for ending the war. I agree but I do not think the war has ended. The Western/NATO interventions, especially when the genocide in Srebrenica had already happened, did not end the war. These interventions stopped the war! They stopped it when our army, Army of the Republic of Bosnia&Herzegovina, had gained the ascendancy and was on course to liberate whole of the Republic of

# MUSLIM UNITY

With struggles for liberation still ongoing around the world, the late **Imam Cassiem** provides some context for Islamic activism within all of them.





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Bosnia&Herzegovina! They stopped our army with the threats that NATO would bomb us if our army liberated Banja Luka. Our army was in the suburbs of Banja Luka and soldiers of the Serb army were running away. The only reason that our army did not liberate Banja Luka, and indeed the whole of Bosnia&Herzegovina, was because under western pressure, our political leadership ordered our military commanders to cease all military activities.

Despite Iran's historical assistance, views about the illegal aggression against Iran among Bosniaks are not always sympathetic. Around half of the population of Bosnia&Herzegovina are not sympathetic towards Iran, because of help that their enemies, meaning Bosniaks, received from the Islamic Republic of Iran. They would have won the war if it was not for that help. The other half of the population, Bosniaks, are lost, confused, frightened and misled by their politicians.

In my simple, non-academic, understanding why Bosniaks are lost, confused, frightened and misled by their politicians on the issue of our support of the legal and moral right of the Islamic Republic of Iran to resist Zionist/American aggression I will start with how I see an ordinary Bosniak's position.

Most ordinary Bosniaks remember and cherish the help and support that we got from the Islamic Republic of Iran. A large majority of Bosniaks support the IR of Iran, but many are lost because of thirty years of Saudi/Salafist rubbishing of the IR of Iran. These highly paid Zionist agents used immense wealth to influence some preachers, politicians, media and "intellectuals" to portray Iranians as non-Muslims. Their subversive activities were partly successful in destroying the notion that Iranians helped us out of brotherly duty. They presented that help as a calculated project of turning Bosniaks into Shias to serve Iranian interests in Europe.

Over these thirty years a number of events outside Bosnia&Herzegovina reinforced the suspicion and hostility that had been engendered. One of the most divisive events was the Syrian civil war and the involvement of Hezbollah and Iranian forces. These Zionist paid Salafist, and by then even some naïve ordinary Muslims started a very powerful propaganda drive that Iranian Shias were murdering innocent Sunnis in Syria. That misconception is still present, and it is very powerful anti-Iran tool.

Then there is a general fear within Bosniak community that we are isolated from the Muslim Ummah, that the Muslim Ummah is weak and that West is powerful, that we need to seek protection from NATO and the EU, that we are different from the rest of Ummah because we are European Muslims and that our Islam is different, normal, civilized... With these indoctrinations, from all sides, we, as a community, saw collective security within the NATO umbrella. Also, a very important

factor here is that Turkey, until recently the only Muslim country that we perceived as powerful, is also a NATO member. In contrast, the Islamic Republic of Iran was perceived weak, distant, foreign, different, alien... and fighting for its own national interests.

After the attempt of Palestinians to break out from the concentration camp called Gaza on October 7, 2023, there were certain shifts in the public perception of the IR of Iran.

What is the Islamic Republic of Iran waiting for? Why doesn't it intervene?

Yes, there were flashes of power, but then they quickly faded away. We started hearing of internal divisions, of struggles between "moderates" and "hardliners", of widespread mistrust and betrayals... Confusion, loss and fear increased. We saw genocide in Gaza slowly disappearing from our daily lives. Depression, desperation, hopelessness spread around. Many of those "preachers" loudly pointed that they were telling us that Iran will not fight, that they are negotiating, that they only care about their own interests...

Does this mean that Bosniaks are ungrateful? No, we are not ungrateful, but our situation is not simple and easy to explain. Do we see who the aggressors are? Yes, we do. What can we do about it? Well, it depends on many things, but if you are lost, confused, afraid then you cannot do much. Also, if your "leaders" are immoral, hypocritical, self-serving individuals than you are discouraged from doing anything. At the same time, it is important to realize that the Islamic Republic of Iran was absent from Bosnia&Herzegovina for almost thirty years.

When Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (r.a.) appointed Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati to establish and lead the Bosnia&Herzegovina Support Headquarters, that aid from the Islamic Republic of Iran was unconditional! This is very important. Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati framed the Islamic Republic of Iran involvement as part of defending oppressed Muslims (mostazafin). Iran asked for nothing in return for that help and support.

Shortly after the war the Islamic Republic of Iran left Bosnia&Herzegovina. I would need another 2500 words just to open up this claim of mine, but what I am aiming at is that revolutionarily elements left and diplomats replaced them. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran became, slowly and for a number of reasons, an embassy of Iran. The cultural center of the Islamic Republic of Iran, located in a prominent place in Sarajevo became an Iranian cultural center. Iran dialled down its revolutionary fervour. Bosniaks were left without an organized revolutionary educational process. In over thirty years we were not even able to establish regular Al-Quds Day march in Sarajevo. If we have had regular events such as the Al-Quds Day march in Sarajevo we would have been able to build a resistance attitude.

I am not trying to find excuses. We should be louder, clearer, braver in condemning Zionism, American terrorism, aggression on Iran, genocide in Gaza... and we should be fearless in the belief that life without dignity is not worth living. We should, because of everything we have been through. Who better to understand what Palestinians are going through than us, Bosniaks, who have survived genocide? Who better to understand resistance to genocidal Zionists than us, Bosniaks, who have resisted genocidal Serbs?

I have tried to explain to you that many hearts are beating for the Islamic Republic of Iran, but for those hearts to beat fast and furious they need to feel that it is a mutual connection. For some time that connection was lost, thinned, broken. The martyrdom of Imam Khamenei (r.a.) and the power of Islamic resistance to the American aggression has stirred them again.

The whole world needs, to learn about greatest revolutionary of all times, the Prophet of Allah, Muhammed ibn Abdullah (saw). We need to teach younger generations about his revolution. Imam Khomeini (r.a.) was the greatest revolutionary of our time. We need to teach our kids about him and the Islamic Revolution that he led. Imam Khamenei (r.a.) is the greatest, and the best, student of Imam Khomeini. He was a torch bearer, flag carrier, resistance builder, hope giver, and we need to get the whole world, not only Bosnia&Herzegovina to learn about him. We, the freedom loving people of this world are not in love with the culture of Iran, or the history of Iran, or the Persian language and literature. Many of us, Bosniaks specifically, also have a very distinguished history, many lost and won battles, cultural and linguistic masterpieces, and self-consciousness. The unique and most important lesson that Iran can teach the world is the Islamic Revolution! Imam Khamenei was an amazing teacher. Only when we lost him did we realize that we were very bad students and that we did not appreciate him. With his martyrdom everything changed. Iran became, again, the hope of the oppressed, the guiding light, the clear path, the fear breaker of all humanity, regardless of faith, or no faith, of skin color, of nationality, of age or gender, of ideology or creed. Iran became again the Islamic Republic, the home of the resistance.

### Demir Mahmutćehajić

is from Stolac in Bosnia. After some years in the UK where he helped found the Islamic Human Rights Commission in 1997, and later became the president of the London Islamic Community of Bosnians, he returned to Bosnia. Since 2005 he has been constantly engaged in the civil rights movement in the Bosnia and Herzegovina, at one time leading the DOSTA! (Enough!) movement. He has written and spoken about genocide in Bosnia, its causes and consequences over the last 25 years. Many of these speeches, reports and articles can be found on the IHRC website. Find him on Twitter @stolac92.

# “If You Hate the West, Why Do You Live Here?” — The Question That Collapses on Itself

Raised by right wing commentators, street racists and increasingly comprador Muslims, the question under discussion by **Zviad Jughashvili** obscures the lived realities of Muslims in westernised settings, and Islamic norms around seeking justice.

“If you hate the West, why do you live as a Muslim in the West?” is often presented as an “intellectual” challenge to Muslims. This slogan is put forward as a “challenge” by the so-called “liberal” and “conservative” political segments of the western political establishment, as well as by their rank-and-file members.

Firstly, very few people living in the West—or under any governing framework—hate those places in their totality. A Chinese person living in China who opposes some elements of the Chinese political system or disagrees with a particular policy of the Chinese government does not necessarily hate China itself. Similarly, a hard-core environmentalist living in the US may oppose the environmental damage caused by cut-throat capitalism, but that does not mean they hate the United States, let alone all Americans.

Or consider the many Westerners living in Oman, Malaysia, and other Muslim-majority countries who may dislike strict alcohol laws or other specific regulations. Most of these western individuals do not dislike Islamic law or Muslim societies in their entirety. Otherwise, they would not be living there.

Thus, the slogan not only lacks linguis-

tic precision but is also detached from reality.

However, even if we accept the slogan at face value, this slogan, camouflaged as an intellectual position, collapses complex questions—power, citizenship, survival, conscience, and community—into a single insinuation: that residence equals endorsement, and that critique equals hypocrisy.

The question matters because it is not really about geography. It is about legitimacy: who gets to define what “the West” is, which critiques are permitted, and whether Muslims are allowed to distinguish between ordinary people in western countries and the power-elites who claim to represent the west. It also matters because many Muslims today face practical pressures—legal, economic, and social—that cannot be answered by slogans, nor by romanticizing migration/Hijra as a cure-all. The deeper issue is that those using this slogan manifest a deep misunderstanding of their own supposed intellectual framework and, most importantly, the elementary realities of contemporary western societies.

This article argues four linked points. First, those who make this argument contradict their own worldview and elementaries of their supposed intellectual framework. Second, the slogan misidenti-

fies the object of critique: living among Western societies does not mean loyalty to western power-elites. Third, migration greatly benefits western regimes and western societies. Fourth, the “just move” answer—whether to the west or away from it—often ignores that practical Islamic life can be constrained in both settings, and that many contemporary obstacles are political and structural rather than simply “civilizational.”

## The Ultimate Contradiction

The first contradiction in this argument lies within the very intellectual framework that many self-described liberals claim to defend. In classical terms, liberalism is supposedly built upon the acceptance of opposing views, the protection of dissent, and the idea that societies become stronger through open debate rather than ideological conformity. Western regimes and societies are often presented by their defenders as superior precisely because they allegedly allow competing intellectual traditions, political disagreement, and freedom of conscience to coexist.

Yet the moment Muslims challenge dominant liberal narratives—whether on foreign policy, secularism, social norms, or

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the conduct of western power-elites—the response frequently shifts from argument to ad hominem dismissal: “If you do not like it, then move.” This is not an argument, it’s trash talk.

The contradiction is therefore clear. If a society genuinely believes in pluralism, then criticism from within must be regarded as a legitimate exercise of that very principle. To demand that dissenters leave the country simply because they hold opposing views undermines the foundational liberal claim that disagreement is both permissible and valuable. It suggests that acceptance is conditional—not based on principle, but on submission.

Add to this weaponization of the legal system and securitization of the wider Muslim community via draconian “terrorism” laws and narratives, it becomes very clear that those throwing around the slogan “if you do not like it, then move” lack an elementary understanding of realities of their own societies.

In short, a society cannot simultaneously claim moral superiority for tolerating dissent while demanding that dissenters remove themselves the moment that dissent becomes uncomfortable.

The use of this slogan by the so-called “conservatives” is even more ridiculous, as the very systems they claim to protect often view them as backward, irrational, and politically expendable. Their argument frequently rests on the assertion that the West—Canada, the US, the UK, and others—are fundamentally Christian in character, and that those who criticize it should simply leave. Yet this claim collapses under the reality of the modern western state itself. These nations no longer present themselves as Christian state systems in any meaningful legal or constitutional sense; rather, they define themselves through secular liberal institutions, pluralist legal frameworks, and civic nationalism.

The contradiction is therefore obvious. On the one hand, conservatives invoke a Christian civilizational identity to exclude Muslim critique. On the other hand, the laws, practices, and moral frameworks of

these same states often sharply contradict core Christian teachings on family, morality, economics, and public life. If the state itself has consciously distanced itself from Christianity, then to invoke “Christian nationhood” as a gatekeeping slogan is intellectually hollow.

**The real question is what happens when one confronts taboo interests — especially in the areas of foreign policy, policing, and national security. It is precisely in these domains that the limits of the supposed openness of western political systems often become most visible.**

A practical example is the routine legalization and normalization of policies that many traditional Christians themselves publicly oppose. In such cases, conservatives are not defending a Christian order, but a secular state that frequently marginalizes their own worldview while selectively using it as a rhetorical weapon against others.

### “Where would you rather live?” is a dodge

A common rhetorical move that follows the slogan—“If you hate the West, why do you as a Muslim live in the West?”—is the question: “Where would you rather live?” This is not an answer; it is a redirection. It shifts the discussion away from the substance of the critique and converts a challenge to power into a forced-choice comparison, as if the only meaningful response to injustice is relocation. In doing so,

it falsely assumes that criticism of a political system must be accompanied by an alternative place of residence, rather than being understood as a legitimate moral and civic response.

But the relevant analytical question is not where life may be more comfortable in general terms. The real question is what happens when one confronts taboo interests—especially in the areas of foreign policy, policing, and national security. It is precisely in these domains that the limits of the supposed openness of western political systems often become most visible.

The so-called “anti-terrorism” frameworks further illustrate this reality. As long as one submits to the prevailing narratives and does not challenge the establishment, life may indeed appear smooth and comfortable. However, the moment a serious challenge is presented—particularly by a Muslim voice questioning foreign-policy assumptions, securitization regimes, or state overreach—the full machinery of the state apparatus moves into repression, surveillance, and exclusion. This reveals that the issue is not comfort or geography, but the conditional nature of tolerance itself: acceptance often persists only so long as dissent remains within boundaries set by the establishment.

In the US the earlier No-Fly redress system was ruled unconstitutional for denying meaningful notice and a fair chance to challenge inclusion.

Germany’s domestic intelligence explicitly relies on covert surveillance tools.

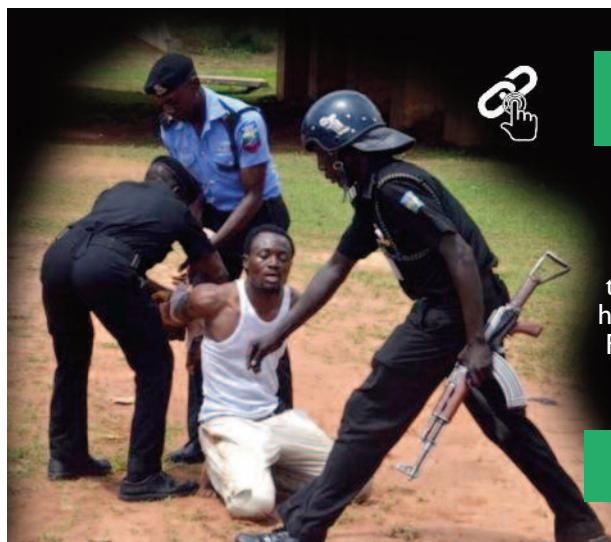
Australia mandates telecoms retain certain metadata for at least two years.

France has normalized “exceptional” counter-terror powers; such tools can punish people without charge or trial.

These are not marginal details.

They show a governance logic: when strategic interests and fundamental aspects of western superiority are challenged, courts, intelligence agencies, financial institutions etc. get weaponized in a dictatorial manner.

For Muslims, this matters because the pressure points are often practical: travel



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disruptions, surveillance, institutional penalties, and “selective enforcement” that cannot be resolved by winning a theological debate.

The “Where would you rather live?” retort avoids this by pretending the only relevant metric is relative comfort.

Importantly, the idea that only the West can tolerate nonconformists also does not withstand basic scrutiny.

Russia has figures like Maxim Shevchenko; Edward Snowden found refuge in Russia rather than Germany or the UK.

Iran has transnational clerical networks (such as the Shirazis) openly contesting the ruling Islamic doctrine.

Anti-secular Islamic scholars like al-Albani built influence out of Damascus under Baathist rule.

None of this romanticizes Muslim governments; it simply punctures the simplistic civilizational premise that tolerance is a western monopoly and critique is therefore “ingratitude.”

### Migration is not a civilizational trophy

Even if one concedes that western institutions often provide tangible benefits, that does not make migration a civilizational award ceremony.

People move primarily for survival and opportunity—income and employment gaps, and family reunification.

OECD reporting has repeatedly ranked family among leading reasons for permanent migration, and the World Bank highlights large income gaps and other push-pull drivers. That is the baseline reality: migration decisions are usually personal, not ideological.

The slogan also ignores the lived reality of Muslims in western societies. Many live as minorities navigating shifting policies, cycles of public hostility, surveillance regimes, and periodic legal or cultural restrictions. Residence, therefore, is not proof

of approval, just as criticism is not proof of hatred. A citizen may remain in a country for work, schooling, or family obligations while simultaneously criticizing its foreign policy, domestic discrimination, or political elites. That is not hypocrisy; it is the ordinary exercise of conscience within a modern world.

Additionally, it must be acknowledged that migration from many Muslim-majority countries is often shaped by political conditions in which western regimes have themselves been deeply implicated.

Western regimes have repeatedly supported despotic and corrupt regimes across the Muslim world in the name of “stability,” while western financial systems have frequently enabled elites from such regimes to transfer wealth abroad through banks, shell companies, and real estate markets.

When national wealth is extracted, protected offshore, and political repression is sustained, it is hardly surprising that many people seek opportunity elsewhere. In that sense, the slogan ignores not only personal realities but also the structural and geopolitical forces that often help produce migration in the first place.

### A God-Centric Conclusion

So why do Muslims live in the West if they “hate the West”?

The clearest answer is that the question is built on false premises.

Living in the West does not equal endorsing western power-elites, foreign-policy adventures, or securitization regimes.

Residence is not a confession. It is a circumstance—and circumstances do not cancel moral clarity. The Islamic, Christian and Jewish intellectual traditions offer a profound example in the life of Prophet Musa (AS).

Musa was raised within the palace of Pharaoh, the very symbol of tyranny, arrogance, and shirk, yet his residence there did not make him a supporter of Pharaoh, nor did it compromise his commitment to truth. On the contrary, the Qur’anic narra-

tive presents this as part of the divine unfolding of justice: he lived within the system while remaining morally and spiritually distinct from it, and eventually confronted it directly. This establishes an important principle within the Islamic paradigm: physical presence within a political order does not imply ideological allegiance to it.


Importantly, this is not only an Islamic approach; it is equally rooted in the Jewish and Christian traditions, which share the same prophetic heritage. In the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament, Moses is likewise raised in Pharaoh’s court yet remains the liberator of the Israelites and the direct challenger of Pharaoh’s oppression. His presence in the palace is never interpreted as loyalty to the injustices of the regime. Rather, it underscores the moral distinction between living within a system and endorsing its injustices. The Christian tradition inherits this same prophetic paradigm through the Old Testament and further reinforces it through the teachings of Jesus, who lived under Roman imperial rule while openly challenging religious hypocrisy and moral corruption. Neither residence under empire nor participation in its civic space was taken as proof of moral approval.

Residence does not erase conscience. In the secular-western paradigm, the same principle applies, as countless citizens remained in the United States of America while opposing the Iraq War, just as civil rights activists lived within systems that discriminated against them while actively resisting injustice.

The principle is therefore universal across both religious and secular traditions: one may reside within a society while retaining the full moral right—and indeed the moral obligation—to challenge its injustices.

### Zviad Jughashvili

has been writing about issues about Muslim geopolitics mainly covering the former Soviet Union, for over eight years. He has studied International Relations and taught Business Studies at college level.



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There is no dearer deed of Ibn Adam in the days of sacrifice than flowing the blood (doing Qurbani) and that animal will come with its horns, hairs, and hooves on the day of Judgement. The blood of the sacrifice reaches the stage of acceptance before it reaches the floor - **Hadith**

# Decolonising Sudan in the Political Imagination

Commentator **Muhammad Elamin** begins a multi-part discussion on the background of the war and genocide in Sudan. How do narratives fuel continued neo-colonial control of Sudan's polity, and can unpacking Sudan's history through a non-Western paradigmatic view bring about a politics of transformation?<sup>1</sup> In this first of a series of pieces, the author looks at the rise of 'modern' Sudan, colonial control, political decolonisation and the role of the post-colonial Sudanese elite in reproducing neo-colonial control over Sudanese resources whilst simultaneously collapsing the functioning state.

There are a number of the problems about the understanding of the current war in Sudan and advocacy around it: one is the failure to look at the deeper roots of conflict, not just the relationship to what has happened in Darfur in early 2003. This requires understanding where the modern borders of the state came from, how colonialism has disrupted previous forms of governance and kinship across the region. It requires some sort of acknowledgement of the geography of the state, of environmental factors, some natural, some exacerbated by colonialism and neo-colonialism, regional instability and the failed state. It also requires the removal of 'westernised' frames of analysis around ethnicity, religion, political affiliation and aspiration in the 'Sudanese' context.

The myopia around Sudan analysis is not just a matter of people from outside Sudan or non-Sudanese finding it difficult or struggling to grapple with what this all means and how it has all come to be. Arguably even many of Sudanese themselves struggle to understand much of what's been going on, even though it's been a crisis in the making for decades, the roots of which even

precede the independence of Sudan in 1956.

This is not a critique of ongoing advocacy inside Sudan or the sincere and moving support of people worldwide for the victims of genocidal and extreme violence in Sudan. It is about opening a space wherein narratives of genuine liberation, without resort to imposed discourses of sovereignty, liberation, and governance, can operate. It is a call to accept that imposed narratives, whether as ways of understanding or as ways of conflict resolution, have not been effective in the context of Sudan and the wider SWANA region (indeed across Africa), but have also actually hindered peace and prosperity.

What follows is a list of terms and narratives to problematise if we are to rethink Sudan and the region's future.

## Borders and geography in the *longue durée*

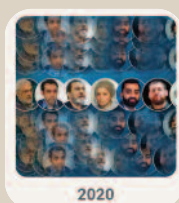
Until 2011 Sudan was the largest country by area size in Africa, in the Arab world, and pretty much in the SWANA region.

If you look at a non-political geography map that focuses on the land and terrain of Africa, you will find that there's a very broad

and long belt extending from the shores of the Red Sea all the way to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in Western Africa, which is called the Sudan. And literally, this is what historically Sudan was what was. And that's what the word Sudan means. In Arabic, it's just the land of the blacks, Bilad al-Sudan. It just means the land of the blacks based on the colour of their skin. And this is why you have what came to be known as Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which is basically modern-day Sudan: it wasn't the typical colonial administration that was in all the colonies. It was a unique condominium between Egypt and Britain (1899-1956), although Egypt was effectively under British military occupation for much of this time. You also have the French Sudan, which is modern-day Mali.

Imbalance or inequity in the distribution of resources and power via this 'bordering' process not only disrupted long held ties of kinship, they also impacted the development of the new state. Development in Sudan was concentrated initially (particularly the civil service, and the railway system built to facilitate the export of cotton and natural resources by the British) along the banks of the Nile Valley, coming down from

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Keep apprised of the latest conference details by visiting the [events page](#). The conferences usually take place on the second Saturday of December or thereabouts.



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Egypt until you get to Khartoum where you have the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile. This route was mainly influenced by the [advance of the British army](#) in the campaign of the reconquest of Sudan in 1897-99<sup>2</sup> by Lord Kitchener after the death of Gordon Pasha in Khartoum.

This colonial legacy – borders, institutions and a sense of ‘nation’ as approximating to one ethnos, language and culture – carried on into the independence period<sup>3</sup>. As with many post-colonial states, after independence, there was an educated Sudanese elite who were educated so as to inherit and run the civil service put in place by the British, ensuring that economic, political and governance ties continued into the post-independence period, often if not always favouring the former coloniser. If we want to be kind to this new civil service, we can say that their vision was very centralized and did not take on board the hinterlands and peripheries of Sudan. It was a very Khartoum-centric government and it left much parts of the countryside and the other areas very underdeveloped.

The sheer mass of Sudan itself – which could have been of immense benefit to a nascent state – was instead part of its downfall. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, Sudan was the eighth largest country in the world area-wise. It is equal to the area of the US, east of the Mississippi River. Instead the old colonial architecture of institutions and infrastructure continued to inform political and economic organisation contributing to huge underdevelopment in large swathes of the country e.g. Sudan has very poor transport ties and other infrastructure inequalities with Khartoum and its surrounds along the Nile Valley. Therefore, with time these grudges against central authority grew; non-violent initially.

## Kinship

Muslims inside and outside Sudan are as confused as others and cannot explain the narratives of what has happened and is happening in Sudan because atrocities are

being committed by people dressed in Islamic garb, sometimes literally, always metaphorically.

At the moment we hear a lot about the Rapid Support Forces, but understanding where they came from, the personalities involved and the machinations that led to their incorporation into the Sudanese Army is important if we are going to develop a framework of analysis and conflict resolution that will break the cycle that has developed in intra-Sudanese relations.

The usage of terms relating to ‘tribe’ abound in discussions around Sudan and feed into simplistic narratives of racism that ignore the foregoing. Their focus instead tends to be on tribe or ‘race’ exclusively as a cause of conflict, and in the narratives around the Darfur war the focus is on Arab v African tribes. These narratives tend to take on the Islamophobic hue of Arabness as intrinsically violent and ‘Islamist’, and ‘African’ as victim or victimised. Sudan’s geography and its interconnectedness to its own and the region’s history needs to be understood outside of Westphalian nation state narratives. However the question of how the country was drawn up we do not ask who drew the map of modern-day Sudan, who drew the borders. In other words, we do not look at the impact of the colonial portioning of different parts of Sudan. Thus, every issue under discussion – economic, political, civil, neglects the tensions, impact and future potentials and problems caused by the colonial instrumentalization of borders, which are under 200 years old in the context of civilisations sometimes thousands of years old. Modern-day Sudan is a young state, and its colonial borders, are as much a creation of Muhammad Ali Pasha<sup>4</sup> around 1820-1824, as the British colonial powers.

Understanding those described as Arab and African as tribes in the Darfur conflict beyond this flattening narrative is crucial if Sudan is to create a sense of nation and citizenry that bucks Europeanised notions of nation. Before the breakup of Sudan in 2011, it had somewhere in the region of

about 560 tribes and ethnic groups with about nearly 114 indigenous languages and more than 500 dialects, many of them unwritten, although Arabic is the lingua franca of the country. Embracing that diversity has always been a challenge for whichever part of the political spectrum has held power, whether the leftists or the centralists or the Islam oriented group.

What are the Arab tribes? In the context of Sudan, Arab is really a term (although it comes across as ethnically Arab) that is quite loosely used to describe Bedouin tribes because of the Bedouin nature (desert dwellers with pastoral lifestyle) of their living or anybody who lives out in the countryside and has a ‘Bedouin’ lifestyle. This is where these groups hail from and they have these relationships extending from Western Sudan all the way to Mali, Niger, Central Africa, Chad, Southern Libya, and some of them hail afield as Algeria and beyond. So these are ties of kinship which were disrupted by modern day borders: and they don’t necessarily conform with the borders and workings of the modern nation state.

The other component that we have is the settled communities in Darfur, many of whom are farming communities which are largely described as African tribes.

These are settled. They have their centuries old kingdoms and sultanates. And one of the important conditions for having recognized sultanates in Darfur was that these tribes or groups had rights to land. So they owned the land and they were largely subsisting on farming. For decades, if not centuries, there would be regular clashes, seasonal clashes between the ‘Bedouin’ or ‘Arab’ nomadic tribes migrating on a seasonal basis from north to south during Summer and the rainy season or in Autumn. They would take their cattle and their animals and head south towards the more fertile areas of modern-day South Sudan. So clashes would happen over crop disruption by Bedouin groups. There existed traditional mechanisms and means of sorting out these issues, even paying compensation or blood money if there were any



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deaths from these seasonal clashes.

Inter-marriage and a lot of inter-tribal relationships existed over the years and Darfur had its own Sultanates: one of the largest was the Fur Sultanate or the Darfur was named after: Dar meaning the abode of the Fur; and there was also Dar Masalit in Western Darfur which was part of the ancient Wadai Islamic Sultanate, which was broken up by the French with part of it ending up in Sudan, part in Chad. So there is a kind of crucible here in which all this current conflict begins: the wholesale disruption of these movements, cultures, ethnicities and traditions with the advent of the modern day state and borders imposed or drawn up by the different French and British colonial powers. The idea of the nation state is imposed on peoples who have ways of living together and apart, as coexisting but also conflicting, in ways that do not conform to nation state criteria. Thus existing problems between groups are exacerbated, while traditional mechanisms for resolution and or management of conflict disrupted and even eviscerated by the advent of new borders and also new forms of governance that destroyed existing political structures.

Those new political structures, raised by colonial powers, did not have as a *raison d'être*, concern for social and political issues pertaining to the societies contained or disrupted by these borders. The main strategic concerns for Britain were access to the Nile and preventing French expansion, the use of land for cotton plantation as another powerhouse for British industry, and of course as and when resources were discovered [their extraction](#), a matter that has outlasted the British colonial administration and which continues to be a major factor today.

Regional conflicts and instability plagued the region, particularly in Libya and Chad with Muammar al-Qaddafi. He created what was known as the Islamic Legion in 1972. This contributed to a proliferation of weapons in the region. When war broke out between Libya and Chad (1978-1987) over the Aozou strip, this led to a displacement of many tribal groups, but also his arming of a broad range of groups. This instability was another factor which led to the displacement of different Arab Bedouin tribes.

Displacement was also exacerbated by desertification, famine and drought, particularly the drought of the 1970s and the 1980s, which pushed many of these tribes towards the more fertile areas of either the Nile Valley or South Sudan, which also meant that they went over the lands, the farming areas, which belonged to the settled groups in Darfur. The instability caused by the proliferation of weaponry and environmental factors were instrumentalised by a number of local and regional political figures who had their own aspirations and agendas. These ingredients created the perfect recipe for the war that we saw at the turn of the century in Darfur.

Those players included Libya and Chad but as the years passed, and particularly in this iteration of the war, we witnessed the deep involvement of the UAE. But there are other actors depending on which side of the equation or what side of the conflict people stand including Libya, particularly General Haftar; Egypt with its ties with the Sudanese army; Saudi Arabia and as discussed the UAE. The mix will include [Iran](#), [Qatar](#), [Turkey](#) and [Ethiopia](#). It is now a huge mixing bowl for nearly everybody. Even arguably [Ukraine](#) and [Russia](#) are involved to varying degrees because of the stakes. And

**As outside observers we need to have an honest understanding of who the people in the country are, their histories and cultures. As those involved within Sudanese politics, we need to stop pandering to external narratives**

of course we have the issue of the US and Israel involved separately and in confluence with some of these actors (a matter we will develop later).

## Who are the Islamists?

In the early 2000s the Western world was in outrage over the genocide being perpetrated in Darfur. This is not to dispute the genocide, but to explore the narratives in the West, which focused on the idea of this being driven by Arabs against Africans on the basis of ethnicity, how this was a narrative that played into pre-existing stereotypes against Islam and Muslims and their association with Arabness. The violence became another 'example' of Muslim barbarity. The initial facts are more complicated, and often belie the narrative. However, the prevalence of these narratives has also become self-fulfilling in their internalisation by the Sudanese state and the various actors within it<sup>5</sup>.

Before the genocide in Darfur came to be a cause taken up in the west, key parties of the rebellions in the restive region were often portrayed by the Khartoum government and in western political and civil society arenas as Islamist in nature. Darfur is unique, even within Sudan. Darfur is 100% Muslim, despite the ethnic differences. I remember speaking to many people from Darfur, and they would always say, we never saw a non-Muslim place of worship, a church, until we went to Khartoum. This is because of the diversity in the more central part of the country. So the first tragedy here is that this was a war between and a genocide committed by Muslims against each other, all from the same Sunni Maliki mad-

hhab. Secondly this instrumentalization of 'ethnicity' while at play in the war and instrumentalised further in the West, decimated the centuries of coexistence and intermarriage that make such boundaries of ethnicity nonsensical. This latter point, the idea of ethnos in the Sudanese nation state, can be blamed in part on a failure of the Sudanese elite since, before and after independence to even want to comprehend the diversity of Sudan and use it as a source of strength rather than the spiral into disaster we see at the moment.

The Islamic movement split in 1999-2000 between the President General al-Bashir and between Dr Hassan al-Turabi. The National Congress Party stayed with al-Bashir, and Turabi formed the Popular Congress Party. The Popular Congress Party was accused of instigating or encouraging some of the armed revolts in Darfur and certainly one of the two major Darfuri movements, e.g. the Justice and Equality Movement was seen as the military wing of Turabi, a matter which was often entirely ignored or simply not understood in westernised narratives of events.

In Darfur, the embeddedness of Islam, and long history of 'political' Islam / centuries of Islamic governance, is perhaps more profound and indigenous than anything associated with the 'Arab' tribes.

If we are to break the cycle of violence in Sudan, as outside observers we need to have an honest understanding of who the people in the country are, their histories and cultures. As those involved within Sudanese politics, we need to stop pandering to external narratives however much external assistance may depend upon them, as they carry with them at best meaningless and harmful colonial cultures, and at worst are cynically designed to skew the development of the country and manipulate its political and civil spaces.

## When armies are welcome to rule

At this point it is worth noting some significant points about the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), particularly its role as a political player in Sudan, and again the need to resist the urge to make comparisons with other militaries in the region, especially Egypt. Arguably each area where there has been military interference in civil government has its own trajectories, and again Westernised narratives regarding African strongmen and militaries flattens the specificities of these experiences.

In Sudan it is worth noting that despite (and analogous to intent but not reach) the SAF having huge reach within the economy of the country, it is not the sole such player. The embeddedness of the RSF in the economy and the speed with which it was able to get there belie the idea of Sudan and the SAF being Egypt lite regarding the economy. More distinct in the Sudanese experience is the embeddedness of the SAF in the

everyday life of the country. Unlike in Egypt where the military are a class unto themselves, with their officer class even living in segregation from the rest of society, the Sudanese Armed Forces are dispersed within society. Their makeup in fact reflects some of the diversity which has otherwise eluded successive governments. This diversity has interesting outcomes when looking at military and political developments.

Part of al-Bashir administration's impetus to use the Janjaweed in Darfur, and later to recognise the RSF as a de facto second army in Sudan, stems from the prevalence of West Sudanese non-commissioned officers and soldiers within SAF. When Darfur erupted into rebellion, not only were there military strategic issues around the slow response of the regular armed forces, but also a suspicion in Khartoum about the loyalty of this group of soldiers.

Secondly and throughout the modern history of Sudan, the armed forces have been very involved in the popular uprisings (three in total) that have toppled both civilian and military (Aboud in 1964, Numeiri in 1985 and al-Basir in 2019) regimes.

It is true on face value that the military have ruled more than civilian regimes in Sudan, and it was hoped that this third attempt at civilian rule in 2019 would last. But it is also crucial to note that these "military governments" were not purely made up and drawn from the ranks of the army but also enjoyed considerable support and participation from both partisan and non-partisan civilian figures and technocrats. In the previous two experiments, or the civil revolts, there was a short period of maybe one year's transition, and then general elections and 'democratically' mandated governments came in. But these governments were always marred by extreme and unstable inter-party politics and were very weak. And thus we have a cycle in which the military would take over again. The army in Sudan can be understood to be a political institution. I would argue that the military taking over was more a symptom rather than the illness. It was a symptom of the political incompetence of the civilian par-

ties. But their stepping in is a sign of the symptoms of Sudanese civil political failure e.g. in 1958 when General Ibrahim Aboud came in, he was actually ordered by the prime minister to take power as the country was gripped in a political crisis at the time and economic pressure due to the 1958 cotton crisis. When Numeiri took power in 1969, it was a result of the plotting by the communists and the Arab nationalists against the background of the dissolution and banning of the Sudanese Communist party in November 1965. In 1989 Al-Bashir came to power against the background of the incompetence of Sadiq al-Mahdi's successive coalition governments and threats including a memorandum and ultimatum by the army command which effectively led to the expulsion of the National Islamic Front from government in March 1989.

So we can see in Sudan that it is the civilian component who really push the military to intervene. This does not mean that the military once in power have not benefited from the dynamics of ruling, gaining the upper hand over civilian political life and subsidising it; but it is also part of the dynamic for change, often demanded. We saw this in the popular revolts in 1964 and 1985 and certainly 2019, there's a certain pattern here as well where the revolts taking place reached a certain critical mass: at that point, the military intervened, to push whoever is in charge out, either in the name of stability or of preventing bloodshed. In December 2018 the revolts started and became widespread. By April 2019, the demonstrators had a huge sitting in front of the general headquarters of the Sudanese army, specifically on 6th April, which was the anniversary of the April revolt of 1985, which overthrew the Numeiri regime. Their message was clear. We want the military to dislodge al-Bashir now.

## Next steps

These are some introductory terms and thoughts to reimagine what has happened in Sudan and create a space for an imagined future. In the next piece we will look at

inter alia, the failures of civilian administrations (how much of their own making and how much is due to external interference), the rise of the RSF, the role of the US in the political, civilian and economic life of the country, the role of the international community in reproducing dedevelopment policies. Some of the matters are Sudan specific, others will be familiar to readers in the wider politics of the region and modern day neocolonialism more generally. In all events, understanding Sudan or indeed any other country pathologized in western narratives is essential for creating a better future for all concerned.

## Muhammad Elamin

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<sup>1</sup> These essays are based on an interview between the author and one of The Long View editors.

<sup>2</sup> Both Pashas' conquest and subsequently the British colonisation broke up these ties of kinship that characterised the Sahel or the Sudan without borders.

<sup>3</sup> Sudan achieved political independence on 1 January 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Ali Pasha (the governor of Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman Caliphate) pushed into the region in search of slaves to employ in his armed forces, and on industrial and agricultural projects. The borders created by his governate are more or less those that the British concretised as tehor colony and as the post-colonial state of Sudan, granted independence in 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Fast forward towards the end of General al-Bashir's regime. When we go back to 2003-2004, the genocide or the crimes perpetrated against the African groups, what comes to mind is the infamous Janjaweed groups which were made up from some of the Arab Bedouin tribes and these are essentially the precursor to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The difference was the Janjaweed then is that then they were militias, today the RSF is a formalised military force, at one time before the schism with Burhani, arguably a second (semi)official Sudanese army, which I will discuss elsewhere.



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