



MAGAZINE

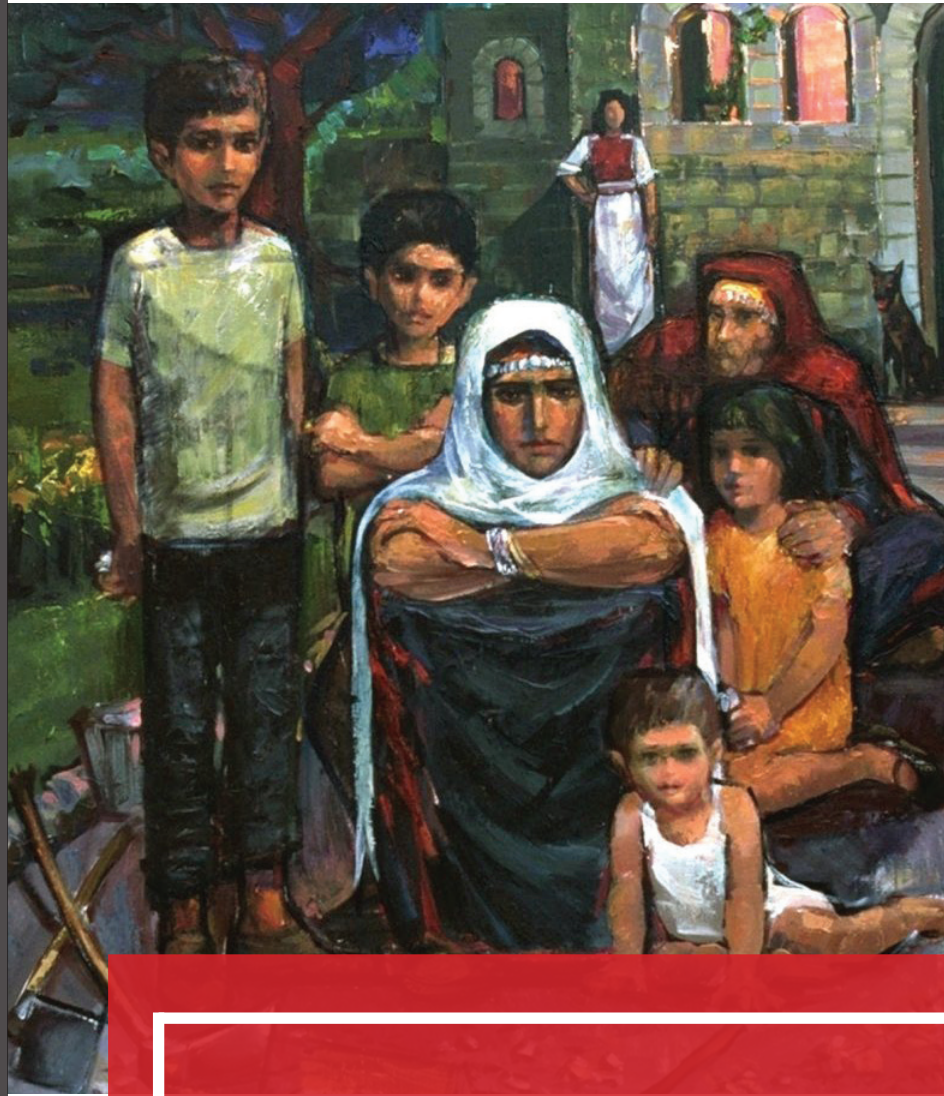
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*“The courage of
the Palestinians in
Gaza has roused
the conscience
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- M. Reza Behnam



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Title image by: Ismail Shammout (Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory),
We Will Not Leave, 1987.

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“We Will Not Be Silent:” Hearing Stilled Voices of the Gaza Genocide

Kathy Kelly

In his last minutes of freedom before Israeli Defense Forces arrested him, Dr. Hussam Abu Safia, clad in a medic's white coat, walked alone toward two Israeli tanks. His captors awaited him amid the rubble of Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital. An artist swiftly created a dramatic poster showing Dr. Safiya striding through the ruins of the hospital he directed. The artist, David Solnit, recently updated the poster's caption. It now reads: Free Dr. Abu Safiya Eight months in prison Dec. 27, 2024 – August 27, 2025.

Dr. Safia had already endured agonizing losses at the Kamal Adwan hospital. In late October 2024, an Israeli drone attack killed his son, also a doctor. In a November 2024 attack on the hospital, Dr. Safiya was wounded by shrapnel, but continued working, insisting he would not close the hospital. He witnessed his colleagues being humiliated, beaten, and marched off to prison. By December 27, 2024, when Dr. Safia's ordeal as a prisoner began, most hospitals in Gaza were non-functional.

On August 28, 2025, Dr. Safiya's lawyer, Ghaid Ghanem Qassem, visited him in the Ofer Prison. She reports he has lost one third of his body weight. While imprisoned in the Sde Teiman military Detention Center, located in an Israeli military base in the Negev desert, he showed signs of torture. Subjected to beating with electric shocks and batons, he sustained blows which may also cause him to lose his right eye. Yet his message remains intact:

“I entered in the name of humanity, and I will leave in the name of humanity... We will remain on our land and continue to provide healthcare services to the people, God willing, even from a tent.”

Regimes conducting a genocide have more than one reason to eliminate brave professionals attempting, life by precious life, to undo their inhuman work: doctors not only seek to slow down the dying, but they, like the journalists the Israeli regime so frantically targets, are specially positioned and specially qualified to accurately report on the intensity and nature of Israel's extermination campaign. Silencing the citizens most capable of reporting on genocidal savagery is a key objective of genocide.

In one of the most egregious efforts to eliminate a key eye witness, Israeli naval forces, on May 9, 2025, killed twelve-year-old Mohammed Saeed al-Bardawil, who, as a passerby alongside his father, had witnessed Israel's March 23rd pre-dawn execution of 15 unarmed emergency rescue workers. The murdered paramedics had driven their clearly marked ambulances to a spot where they intended to retrieve victims of an earlier attack. The bullets that killed them were fired over six minutes as Israeli soldiers advanced to shoot directly into the survivors' heads and torsos, afterwards using earth-moving equipment to bury their corpses and vehicles.

On that day, Mohammed and his father were detained and made to lie face down near a burning ambulance. He is listed as a source in a well-documented NYT video on the massacre, dated May 2nd. Eleven days later, an Israeli gunboat fired on his father's fishing boat, killing Muhammed in his father's presence off the coast of Gaza's southern Rafah governate.

It was less than two weeks ago, on August 25th, that Israel killed Reuters camera operator Husam Al Masri and nineteen others, four of them

also journalists, in a series of double-tap precision guided aerial attacks on buildings and a stairway of the Al Nasser Hospital. Al Masri was easily targetable as he broadcast a live video feed from a Reuters outpost on a top hospital floor. Describing the second wave of the attack, Jonathan Cook writes: “And when Israel struck 10 minutes later with two coordinated missiles, it knew that the main victims would be the emergency workers who went to rescue survivors from the first strike and journalists — al-Masri’s friends — who were nearby and rushed to the scene ... Nothing was a “mishap.” It was planned down to the minutest detail.”

Snipers and weaponized drone operators routinely kill Palestinians who courageously continue to don bullet proof press jackets, set up cameras, and report on Israel’s atrocities. Israel refuses entry to foreign journalists and when brave, grieving, impassioned young Palestinians insist on carefully documenting their people’s agony for Western news outlets, Israel carefully targets them using the traceable phone and broadcasting equipment necessary to their work, before posthumously branding them Hamas operatives. Craven Western officials watch from within Israel’s patron states, discounting brown lives on whatever flimsy pretexts white authorities offer them. Almost daily, new faces appear in an assemblage of photos showing hundreds of journalists Israel has killed.

Health care workers and journalists who are still alive do their work amid struggles to prevent their families, their colleagues, their neighbors, and of course themselves, from deaths not just by direct massacre but by militarily imposed starvation and its handmaiden, epidemic disease. Surgeons speak of being too weak to stand throughout an operation. Reporters document their own starvation.

Palestinians long for protection, but even the prospect of UN mandated protective forces carries terrifying possibilities. What if “peacekeep-

ers” assigned to monitor Palestinians collect data the Israelis will use to control them? Weaponized “stabilizing forces,” equipped with U.S. surveillance technology, could be used to target, imprison, assassinate, and starve even more Palestinians.

In the summer of 1942, in Munich, Germany, five students and one professor summoned astonishing courage to defy a genocidal regime to which we, reluctantly, have to look if we want to find a racist cruelty comparable to that currently seizing not just Israel’s leadership but, in poll after poll, strong majorities of its non-native population. The students’ collective, called The White Rose, distributed leaflets denouncing Nazi atrocities. “We will not be silent” was the final line of each leaflet. Hans Scholl, age 24, and his sister, Sophie Scholl, age 21, hand-delivered the leaflets to their university campus in February of 1943. The Gestapo arrested them after a janitor spotted them disseminating the leaflets. Four days later, Hans and Sophie, as well as their colleague Christopher Probst, were executed by guillotine.

With Israel’s nuclear arsenal capable of out-killing the Nazi regime over the course of a few minutes, and in the process inciting humanity’s final war; and with its leadership and populace radicalized through decades of fascist impunity to the point of endorsing not just a genocide but multiple, preemptive military strikes upon most of its neighbors at once, we may well be arriving at the moment when, as a result of our having let Israel assassinate, with impunity, the reporters of its crimes, there will be no-one in the outside world left to receive reports.

The silence we allow ourselves today may soon be involuntary, and absolute. Let us summon up a fraction of Dr. Safia’s, of young Mohammad’s, of Sophie Scholl’s and Hussam al-Masri’s courage and speak while we can.

Neither Imperialism, Nor Zionism: Reclaiming Palestine

M. Reza Behnam

As he exited the presidency in 1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the country that “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

Responding to the escalating war in Vietnam, American troubadour, Bob Dylan, composed his “Masters of War,” which is as much a call to the conscience of America today as it was then.

When it was written, Palestine was not on the minds of most Americans. Israel’s violent theft and ethnic cleansing of Palestine’s indigenous population, well underway, went largely unseen and uninterrupted.

Israel, linchpin of U.S. supremacy in the Middle East, has been instrumental in effecting the havoc and chaos inflicted upon the region by the “misplaced power” warned against.

After more than five decades of political, economic and military collaboration, American imperialism and Israeli Zionism have become indistinguishable.

They have grown ever more alike, more ruthless and lawless, since the

11 September 2001 attacks that targeted America’s institutional pillars; and since President George W. Bush declared an indefinite and undefined “war on terror.”

Israel’s significant influence over American institutions has expanded as well. Essentially, it has become difficult to tell where “Greater Israel” begins and where it ends, since its ideology and influence

have seeped into the political, economic, military and social life of the United States.

Both countries share a well-deserved distinction. They are widely viewed by many across the globe as bullies and rogue nations.

While distinct, the United States and Israel share similarities; elements that have made them the threat they are today; specifically:

- The centrality of militarism and veneration of the soldier
- Use of extrajudicial or targeted killings
- National identity based on supremacist ideology
- Attacks on institutions, the rule of law and human rights
- The manipulation and erasure of history.

Centrality of Militarism and Veneration of the Soldier

Militarism and jingoism function as central values in both martial cultures.

The military, through mandatory conscription of Jewish citizens, has been deeply integrated within Israeli society, creating a society deeply connected to the state. Participation in the military not only defines national identity, it is considered by many young Jewish Israelis as a rite of passage.

The warrior ethos can be traced to the secular Viennese founder of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) and to Russian-born Vladimir (Zéev) Jabotinsky (1880-1940), founder of the Zionist Revisionist Movement (precursor to today’s Likud Party).

For Herzl, building a modern secular European homeland for Jews in Palestine required shedding the centuries-old image of Jews as powerless, weak and passive, creating instead a new national identity based on physical strength, ruggedness and productivity, rather than one centered on religious identity based on the Torah.

Jabotinsky, too, emphasized that building and maintaining a “Jewish” state could only be accomplished through military force; that a metaphorical “Iron Wall” would be required to successfully colonize the native land of the Palestinians.

The physical transformation Herzl imagined in 1896 and Jabotinsky pushed for in the 1920s sowed the seeds for the brutal militaristic entity Israel has become. The manufactured image of the “most moral army in the world,” of the virtuous, noble soldier, has been exposed by the ignoble videos posted by Israeli soldiers routinely committing war crimes in Gaza.

In the United States, as well, the military has been looked upon as the most trusted public institution and granted prominent status. Soldiers—judged as the best among us and the embodiment of loyalty, sacrifice and strength—have been central to the militaristic myth that has made Washington’s failed wars palatable to the public.

The military has been increasingly conjoined with corporate-owned sports teams and events, blurring the lines between sports and war as entertainment. It is celebrated at most sporting events with the required singing of the national anthem, military aircraft flyovers of stadiums, and other displays of patriotism. It has become essential for American politicians, particularly for presidents, to pay verbal respect to the armed forces by concluding speeches with: “May God bless our troops.”

Department of Defense (now Department of War) budgets are considered sacrosanct in the United States. From 2001 to 2022, an estimated \$8 trillion was spent on the military; with over a trillion dollars budgeted for the Pentagon in 2026.

Use of Extrajudicial or Targeted Killings

Violence as the solution to problems has become normalized in the militaristic political cultures of the U.S. and Israel. Both act on the imminent threat doctrine, that they must always be prepared to attack or wage war against those who would rebel against or challenge their hegemony.

Consequently, anyone who opposes them or fails to capitulate is subject to extrajudicial killing—targeted execution outside of any legal framework.

Designating countries and groups as “state sponsors of terrorism” or “terrorists” have been instrumental in the execution of the imminent threat doctrine, allowing Washington and Tel Aviv to carry out their own horrific acts of state terrorism with impunity.

Israel has a long history of executing unlawful killings. In 2000, it officially acknowledged that, during the first Intifada in the late 1980s, it had instituted a policy of preemptive, targeted killing against Palestinians.

The Zionist regime carried out one of its earliest assassinations soon after declaring statehood and entering into war with its Arab neighbors in 1948.

On 17 September 1948, for example, the terrorist Zionist group Lehi (Stern Gang) assassinated the UN Mediator for Peace, Swedish diplomat, Count Folke Bernadotte, who was in Jerusalem to help resolve the Arab-Israel War. He was murdered because the Stern Gang opposed his peace proposals, particularly the right of return for Palestinians who had been made refugees by the war.

Since 1948, Israel has assassinated more people than any Western country. Assassinations are often conducted covertly and rarely admitted to.

Ronen Bergman, investigative journalist, in his book (2018), *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel’s Targeted Assassinations*, documented that, “Over the past seven decades, Israel has conducted some 2,300 targeted-assassination operations, killing several thousand people.”



Palestinians try to go about their daily lives amid the rubble of buildings or their makeshift tents during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip on March 31, 2025. (Photo: Omar Ashtawy/APA Images)

The numbers have drastically increased since the October insurrection. Israel continues to systematically target and kill Palestinian resistance leaders and fighters in Gaza, the West Bank, as well as supporters in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran.

Israel respects no country's borders or sovereignty, as demonstrated by its recent air strike (9 September 2025) on the residential headquarters of Hamas mediators in Doha; an unprecedented attack on Qatar, a non-NATO U.S. ally. Five Palestinians involved in ongoing ceasefire talks and one Qatari citizen were killed. Qatar hosts the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East. It also is headquarters of U.S. Central Command, and plays a crucial role in ceasefire talks.

The Doha attack was the latest of Israel's many targeted executions and disregard of national borders. Other fateful examples include:

- Targeted killing of Ismail Haniyeh, political leader of Hamas, in Tehran, Iran, 31 July 2024.
- Targeted killing of Hezbollah members in Lebanon and Syria using exploding pagers and walkie-talkies (killing 30 and injuring thousands of civilians), 17 and 18, September 2024.

- Assassination of Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of Hezbollah in Beirut, Lebanon, 27 September 2024.

Since 9/11 and America's "global war on terror," Washington has taken Israel as a model, instituting a lethal program that has opened the ongoing floodgates of violence.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush, in January 2002, adopted a "capture and kill" strategy against suspected terrorists. By 2006 the strategic choice between capturing and killing suspects began to shift as legal and political factors moved the balance toward lethal force.

President Barack Obama (2009-2017) fine tuned and escalated Bush's program, rapidly expanding drone strikes and illegal executions into countries like Pakistan, Yemen, Libya and Somalia.

One of his most controversial policies was the establishment of a "kill list," a formal process where targets for drone strikes were decided. At weekly meetings, which came to be known inside the White House as "Terror Tuesdays," President Obama, with national security and counterterrorism officials, would discuss the "kill list" (described



Palestinians displaced from Jabalia, Beit Lahiya, and Beit Hanoun shelter in tents at Al-Yarmouk Stadium in Gaza City, November 1, 2024. (Omar Al-Qataa)

as a “disposition matrix”) and approve drone strikes on “suspected terrorists.”

During Obama’s tenure, an estimated 3,797 people were killed, including 324 civilians, and three American citizens. As he reportedly told senior aides in 2011: “Turns out I’m really good at killing people. Didn’t know that was gonna be a strong suit of mine.”

When he took office in 2017, President Trump dropped all pretense regarding the use of extrajudicial killings. In the first two years of his presidency, his administration carried out 2,243 drone strikes, while during Obama’s eight years in office there were 1,878 strikes.

The policy of the Trump administrations is succinctly described by the American Civil Liberties Union: “In short, the Trump rules served as open-ended authorization for the United States to kill virtually anyone it designates as a terrorist threat, anywhere in the world.”

Trump’s faith in America’s license to kill was evi-

denced when, in violation of international law and Iraq’s national sovereignty, he ordered the assassination of a prominent senior official of the Islamic Republic of Iran, General Qassem Soleimani, in January 2020. In the same drone attack at the Baghdad airport, nine other people were killed, including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces.

In Trump’s White House, the war on drugs has been integrated into the war on terror, with criminals (suspected drug traffickers) designated as terrorists and targeted for assassination. In a display of American arrogance, Trump recently (2 September 2025) ordered a drone strike on a small unidentified boat in the Caribbean; 11 people were killed in the attack.

National Identity Based on Supremacy

Although they have different outcomes in mind, the national aims of Washington and Tel Aviv are disturbingly similar.

While Israel exists to fulfill the Zionist ideology of Eretz Israel (Greater Israel): to expand the Jewish enclave on stolen Palestinian land through force, propaganda and reliance on Old Testament tales for authenticity, the Trump administration exists to fulfill the right-wing conservative ideology outlined in Project 2025.

The document, authored by former Trump staff in partnership with the conservative Heritage Foundation, outlines an agenda and strategy to radically restructure the executive branch and the federal government to consolidate power favorable to right-wing policies.

Furthermore, in creating an executive with sweeping powers to reshape the country, Project 2025 has been described as a blueprint for the creation of a Christian nation, a homogenous national identity imbued with biblical principles and values.

It is important to note, that in order to move their national agendas forward, both regimes have weaponized the fear of antisemitism.

For decades, Israel, to garner and maintain support, has successfully used the antisemitism stratagem—blurring the lines between criticism of Israel with hatred of Jews—to further its apartheid Greater Israel project.

Like Israel, Trump has adopted similar tactics. Feigning concern for Jewish safety and under the banner of combating antisemitism, he has threatened and cut funds to universities that refuse to follow his directives, revoked student visas and suppressed pro-Palestinian activism on campuses nationwide.

Inevitably, the exploitation of antisemitism, however, has made Jews in the United States and worldwide less safe. Fear of the accusation, however, has begun to wane because of Israel's savagery in Gaza and because it has lost control of its decades-long narrative.

Attacks on Institutions, Rule of Law and Human Rights

To consolidate power, both Washington and Tel Aviv have acted illegally to weaken national institutions, undermine the rule of law, and turn back the clock on civil and human rights progress.

Israel's prime minister has pushed reforms aimed at weakening the country's Supreme Court to further commandeer power and impede his ongoing corruption trial. Absent a unified written constitution, the Supreme Court is the only check on the executive and legislative branches (controlled by the same governing coalition) of the Israeli government.

Like Netanyahu, Trump has been working to assert executive dominance over the judiciary and to undermine the rule of law. Unlike Netanyahu, however, Trump depends upon the Supreme Court—whose conservative majority are proponents of the unitary executive theory—to rule in his favor on controversial issues.

There is no rule of law for Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. For more than five decades, Israel has denied them basic legal due process rights. They have been arbitrarily arrested, detained and imprisoned indefinitely without charge or trial. Often, after arrest, they have been disappeared to undisclosed sites, subject to abuse and torture.

Much like Israel, the Trump administration has flouted due process and decency to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history. And just as Israel uses troops to occupy, patrol and control the West Bank, the Trump administration has also begun using the military for domestic purposes.

In service of his anti-immigrant agenda, Trump has ramped up efforts to federalize the National Guard and to deploy them to American cities he views as oppositional. Masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have also been let loose into communities across the country. Suspected illegal immigrants have been arrested and detained—often

arbitrarily and violently—with others disappeared to undisclosed sites or illegally deported.

National Guard troops now occupy and patrol Washington, D.C.; and in violation of a district court order, illegally occupy Los Angeles. Trump has also threatened military occupation of Chicago, Baltimore and other largely Democratic-leaning cities.

Manipulation and Erasure of History

What Washington and Tel Aviv want is the erasure of difficult shameful history and the construction of hegemonic narratives.

For decades Israel has worked mightily to sell its idealist narrative to justify the establishment of a settler-colonial Jewish state on already inhabited land. It has used empty-land and victimization myths to make its violent dispossession and apartheid occupation of Palestine palatable, largely to the American public.

Until Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, the empty land waiting to be colonized fable was the only story that received a hearing or that was deemed credible by many Western governments and media.

Similarly, President Trump, in an effort to move the country toward a Euro-centered narrative, has been advancing a selective sanitized version of history. His administration has taken steps to curtail academic freedom, particularly around discussions of race, gender and systemic oppression.

In March 2025, for example, he arbitrarily issued an executive order titled, "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History." The directive singles out institutions devoted to preserving heritage and to enhancing knowledge: the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smithsonian Institute. Under the category "Saving our Smithsonian," Trump ordered Vice President J.D. Vance to seek to "remove improper ideology from such properties."

Conclusion

The global community has suffered from the unholy liaison between U.S. imperialists and Israeli Zionists; none more so than the Palestinians.

Today, the soil of Gaza is drenched in the blood of 200,000 Palestinians because on 7 October 2023, they refused to spend any longer under Zionist-imperialist domination. On that momentous day, Palestinians said, "no more".

Washington and Tel Aviv have grown ever more coarse, habituated to violence and committed to genocide. They are now using the tactics and force employed for decades against the Palestinians on their own populations.

The courage of the Palestinians in Gaza has roused the conscience of much of the world. It has left the global community with lingering consequential issues:

- Will Israel's genocide against the Palestinians go unpunished?
- Will Israel and the U.S. be allowed to conduct business as usual and remain within the family of nations?
- Will Palestine and the world recover from the nightmare Israel and its U.S. reinforcer has thrust upon us?

The past cannot be recovered, but the future may be salvageable if the visionary question asked and answered by Bob Dylan sixty-two years ago is finally confronted:

*"Let me ask you one question; is
your money that good?"*

*Will it buy you forgiveness; do you
think that it could?*

*I think you will find, when your
death takes its toll,*

*all the money you made will never
buy back your soul."*

How People Power is Reshaping Western Policy on Palestine

Ramzy Baroud

Is it finally happening? Is the West turning against Israel? Or are we, whether motivated by hope or driven by despair, simply engaging in wishful thinking? The matter is not so simple.

Last July, a significant number of countries and organizations signed the 'New York Declaration,' a strong statement that followed a high-level meeting titled, "Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine."

The conference itself and its bold conclusion warrant a deeper conversation. What matters for now, however, is the identity of the countries involved. Aside from states that have traditionally advocated for international justice and law in Palestine, many of the signatories were countries that had previously supported Israel regardless of context or circumstance.

These mostly Western countries included Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, among others. Some of these nations are also expected to formally recognize the state of Palestine in September.

Of course, one has no illusions about the hypocrisy of supporting peace in Palestine while still arming the Israeli war machine that is carrying out a genocide in Gaza. That notwithstanding, the political change is too significant to ignore.

In the case of Ireland, Norway, Spain, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal, among others, one can explain the growing rift with Israel and the championing of Palestinian rights based on historical evidence. Indeed, most of these countries have historically teetered on the edge between the Western common denominator and a more humanistic approach to the Palestinian struggle. This shift had already begun years prior to the ongoing Israeli genocide.

But what is one to make of the positions of Australia and the Netherlands, two of the most adamantly pro-Israel governments anywhere?

In Australia's case, media accounts argue that the friction began when the federal government denied an Israeli extremist lawmaker, Simcha Rothman, a visa for a speaking tour.

Israel quickly retaliated by ending visas for three Australian diplomats in occupied Palestine. This Israeli step was not just a mere tit-for-tat response but the start of a virulent campaign by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to wage a diplomatic war against Australia.

"History will remember Albanese for what he is: a weak politician who betrayed Israel and abandoned Australia's Jews," Netanyahu said, again infusing the same logic of lies and manipulation tactics.

Israel's anger was not directly related to Rothman's visa. The latter was a mere opportunity for Netanyahu to respond to Australia's signature on the New York Declaration, its decision to recognize Palestine, and its growing criticism of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Though Albanese did not engage Netanyahu directly, his Home Affairs Minister, Tony Burke, did. He answered the accusations of weakness by boldly arguing that "strength is not measured by how many people you can blow up."

This statement is both true and self-indicting, not only for Australia but for other Western governments. For years, and numerous times during the genocide, Australian leaders have argued that "Israel has the right to defend itself." Since blow-



ing people up hardly qualifies as self-defense, it follows that Canberra had known all along that Israel's war is but an ongoing episode of war crimes. So, why the sudden, though still unconvincing, shift in position?

The answer to this question is directly related to the mass mobilization in Australia. On a single Sunday in August, hundreds of thousands of Australians took to the streets in what organizers described as the largest pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the country's history. Marches were held in more than 40 cities and towns, including a massive rally in Sydney that drew a crowd of up to 300,000 people and brought the city's Harbour Bridge to a standstill. These protests, which called for sanctions and an end to Australia's arms trade with Israel, demonstrated the immense public pressure on the government.

In other words, it is the Australian people who have truly spoken, courageously standing up to Netanyahu and to their own government's refusal to take any meaningful step to hold Israel accountable. If anyone should be congratulated on

their strength and resolve, it would be the millions of Australians who relentlessly continue to rally for peace, justice, and an end to the genocide in Gaza.

Similarly, the political crisis in the Netherlands, starting with the resignation of Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp on August 22, 2025, is indicative of the unusually significant change in European politics toward Israel and Palestine.

"The Israeli government's actions violate international treaties. A line must be drawn," said Eddy van Hijum, the leader of the country's New Social Contract Party and deputy prime minister.

The "line" was indeed drawn, and quickly so when Veldkamp resigned, ushering in mass resignations by other key ministers in the government. The idea of a major political crisis in the Netherlands sparked by Israeli war crimes in Palestine would have been unthinkable in the past.

The political shift in the Netherlands, much like in Australia, would not have happened without the massive public mobilization around the Gaza genocide that continues to grow worldwide. While pro-Palestine protests have occurred in the past, they have never before achieved the critical mass needed to compel governments to act.

Though these governmental actions remain timid and reluctant, the momentum is undeniable. People's power is proving more than capable of swaying some governments to impose sanctions and sever diplomatic ties with Israel, not only through pressure in the streets but also through pressure at the ballot box.

While the West has not yet fully turned against Israel, it may only be a matter of time. The precious blood of hundreds of thousands of innocent Palestinians in Gaza deserves for history to be finally altered. The children of Palestine deserve this global awakening of conscience.

How the UN Can Act Decisively to End Genocide in Gaza

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies

One year ago, the UN General Assembly demanded that Israel must end its occupation of the Palestinian Territories within twelve months.

The General Assembly voted, by 124 votes to 14, with 43 abstentions, for a strong resolution that not only “demanded” an end to the occupation within a year, but called on all countries to refrain from trade involving Israeli settlements and from transfers of weapons “where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they may be used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

The General Assembly was meeting on September 18th, 2024, in an Emergency Special Session, invoking the “Uniting For Peace” principle to act where the UN Security Council has failed to do so. The General Assembly had asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to rule on the legality of the Israeli occupation and the legal consequences arising from it, and the new resolution was triggered by the court’s ruling, on July 19th, 2024 that the Israeli occupation is unlawful and must end “as rapidly as possible.”

A year later, Israel has failed to comply with any of the demands of the 124 states. On the contrary. It has escalated its genocide in Gaza by cutting off nearly all food, medicine and humanitarian assistance, launching relentless bombardments, expanding ground incursions, and displacing virtually the entire population. All over the world, people are calling on leaders and politicians to do whatever it takes to put a stop to this holocaust before it goes any further.

As world leaders gather again in New York for another UN General Assembly beginning on September 9th, how will they respond to Israel’s ever-escalating genocide and continued occupation and expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem?

Grassroots political pressure is building on all of them to turn the strong words in ICJ rulings and UN resolutions into meaningful action to end what the vast majority of the world recognizes as the most flagrant genocide of our time.

Countries have taken individual actions to cut off trade with Israel and cancel weapons contracts. Turkey announced a total trade boycott on August 29th, and closed its airspace to Israeli planes and its ports to Israeli ships. Twelve members of the Hague Group, formed to challenge Israeli impunity, have formally committed to banning arms transfers and blocking military-related shipments at their ports. Sweden and the Netherlands have urged the EU to adopt sanctions on Israel, including suspending the EU-Israel trade deal.

But most of the 124 countries that voted to demand an end to the occupation have done very little to enforce those demands. If they fail to enforce them now, they will only confirm Israel’s presumption that its corrupt influence on U.S. politics still ensures blanket impunity for systematic war crimes.

In response to this unconscionable state of affairs, Palestine’s UN Representative has formally asked the UN to authorize an international military protection force for Gaza to help with the delivery of humanitarian aid and protect civilians. So has the largest coalition of Palestinian NGOs, PNGO, as well as pro-Palestine groups and leaders such as Ireland’s President Michael D. Higgins. There’s a growing global movement calling for the UN General Assembly to take up this request in another Emergency Special Session when it meets this month. That would be well within the authority of the General Assembly in a case like this, where the Security Council has been hijacked by the U.S. abuse of its veto power.



Whether or not this initiative for a protective force succeeds, the truth is that the governments of the world already have countless ways to support Palestine—they simply need to muster the political will to act. Israel is a small country that depends on imports from countries all over the world. It has diversified sources for many essential products, and, although the United States supplies 70% of its weapons imports, many other countries also supply weapons and critical parts of its infernal war machine. Israel's dependence on complicated international supply chains is the weakest link in its presumption that it can thumb its nose at the world and kill with impunity.

If the large majority of countries that have already voted for an end to the occupation are ready to back their words and their votes with coordinated action, a UN-led trade boycott, divestment campaign and arms embargo can put enormous pressure on Israel to end its genocide and starvation of Gaza, and its occupation of Palestine. With full participation by enough countries, Israel's position could quickly become unsustainable.

Two years into a genocide, it is shameful that the world's governments haven't already done this, and that their people have to plead, protest and push them into action through a dense fog of spin and propaganda, while leaders mouth the right words yet keep doing the wrong things.

Many people compare the problem the world faces in Israel to the crisis over apartheid South Africa. The similarity lies not only in their racism, but also in the western countries' shameful complicity in their human rights abuses and lack of concern for the lives of their victims. It is surely no coincidence that the United States, with its own history of genocide, slavery and apartheid, acted as the main diplomatic supporter and military supplier of apartheid South Africa, and now of Israel.

But it took over 30 years, from the first UN arms embargo and oil sanctions in 1963 to the final lifting of UN sanctions in 1994, before UN action helped bring down the apartheid regime in South Africa. It was not until 1977 that the UN even made its arms embargo binding on all members. In the case of Israel and Palestine, the world cannot wait 30 years for its actions to have an impact. What will be left to salvage of Palestine if the UN can only counter Israel's genocide and America's bombs with endless court rulings, resolutions and declarations, but no decisive action?

One initiative that will be debated and voted on in the General Assembly is the one advanced by France and Saudi Arabia. In July they hosted a high-level UN conference on the "Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the implementation of the Two State Solution." But its agenda is weak and it avoids any strong action to

pressure Israel to end the genocide or the occupation.

The first steps the declaration calls for are a ceasefire in Gaza, the restoration of the Palestinian Authority's control of Gaza, and then the deployment of an international military "stabilization" force. But Israel has already rejected the first two steps, and critics warn that a stabilization force would mean foreign troops deployed in Gaza, not to protect Palestinians from Israeli bombs and bulldozers, but to police them, contain resistance, and reinforce Israeli demands.

Moreover, the declaration contains no enforcement mechanism. Instead, it offers only carrots—promises of recognition, trade, and arms deals—while Israel pays no price for continuing its crimes.

And while the declaration could pave the way for more Western countries to join the 147 countries that already recognize Palestine as an independent state, without concrete pressure on Israel to agree to a ceasefire in Gaza and end the occupation, such recognition risks being symbolic at best—and, at worst, may embolden Israel to accelerate its campaign of mass killing, settlement expansion, and annexation before the world can act.

What is urgently needed is for the General Assembly to hold an Emergency Special Session to vote on a UN protection force, as well as a UN-led arms embargo, trade boycott and divestment from Israel, conditioned on ending the genocide in Gaza and the post-1967 occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The arms embargo and economic measures against Israel should be binding on all UN members, with the full support of the UN secretariat, which can provide staff to organize and supervise them, in coordination with UN members. China, the largest supplier of Israeli imports, and Turkey, which was the third largest before it cut off trade with Israel, should both be ready to take leadership roles in a UN boycott and arms embargo. The European Union collectively does even more trade with

Israel than China, and has failed to unite against the genocide, but strong UN leadership could help Europe to overcome its divisions and join the campaign.

As for the United States, its role in this crisis, under Biden and now under Trump, is to encourage Israel's crimes, provide unlimited weapons, veto every Security Council resolution, and oppose every international attempt to end the slaughter. Even as majorities of ordinary Americans now side with the Palestinians and oppose U.S. military support for Israel, the oligarchy that rules America is as guilty of genocide as Israel itself. As the world comes together to confront Israel's crimes, it will also have to confront the reality that Israel is not acting alone, but in partnership with the United States of America.

Aggressors and bullies get their way by dividing their enemies and picking them off one at a time, as the world has seen the European colonial powers and now the United States do for centuries. What every aggressor or bully fears most is united opposition and resistance.

Israel and the U.S. currently apply huge political pressure against countries and institutions that take action to boycott, sanction or divest from Israel, as Norway has by its decision to divest its sovereign wealth fund from Caterpillar for supplying bulldozers to demolish homes in Palestine. In a world that is truly united to end Israel's genocide, threats of U.S. and Israeli retaliation would isolate the United States and Israel more than those they target.

Recent UN General Assemblies have heard many speeches lamenting the UN's failure to fulfill its most vital purpose, to ensure peace and security for all, and how the veto power of the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council prevents the UN from tackling the world's most serious problems. If, at this year's UN General Assembly, the world can come together to confront the holocaust of our time in Gaza, this could mark the birth of a reenergized and newly united UN—one finally capable of fulfilling its intended role in building a peaceful, sustainable, multipolar world.

Are Two States Possible?

Guillermo Baretto

Haidar Eid is a Palestinian professor who used to teach postcolonial and postmodern literature at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza. That university no longer exists thanks to the missiles and the Zionist minds that fired and guided those missiles. His book *Decolonizing the Palestinian Mind* was recently published in Spanish by La Trocha publishing house in Santiago, Chile. I met Haidar earlier this year. His home was completely destroyed, and perhaps we could be ironic and say that he was lucky to have been warned by the criminals who gave him five minutes to evacuate.

Not everyone was so “lucky.” Since 7 October 2023, 60,038 people have been killed, of whom 18,592 are under the age of 18. These figures could be underestimated if we review the assessments reported in the journal *The Lancet*, which in June 2024 already estimated the death toll at 37,336, to which we should add 14,400 missing persons and so-called indirect deaths, that is, deaths from starvation, which have risen alarmingly in the last month. The aggression carried out by the state of Israel in the Gaza Strip has destroyed more than 70% of homes, displaced some 2.3 million people, and has been openly and selectively directed against the civilian population, attacking and destroying schools, universities, mosques, churches, hospitals, shelters, and even shooting at people at food collection sites. Journalists, health workers, humanitarian workers, UN personnel, and especially children have been killed as part of a plan aimed at wiping out the Palestinian people. This plan unambiguously qualifies as a crime of genocide.

The history of this aggression did not begin on October 7. The Zionist project dates back more than a century. It is a colonialist, racist, and supremacist project that has used murder and forced displacement as policy, all endorsed by a world that looks on with indifference at what is happening there.

The occupation of Palestinian lands by European Zionism began with the purchase of land in the early 20th century, supported by the British government. The process of dispossessing the Palestinian population before 1936 was described by the writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani in his book *The 1936-1939 Revolution in Palestine*, published by 1804 Books. Kanafani recounts that by 1931 some 20,000 peasant families had already been displaced from their lands. This interesting and fundamental text recounts the conditions to which the British Mandate subjected the Palestinian population, which included not only the loss of their lands but also the closure of their productive spaces and the imposition of disadvantageous labor regimes.

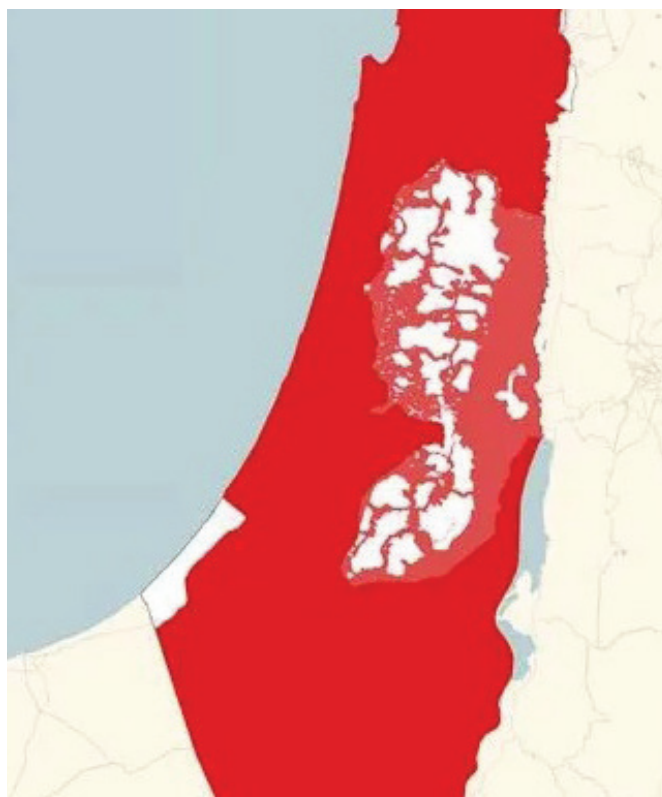
The use of terrorist tactics became the modus operandi of Zionism with the aim of displacing the indigenous population of Palestine. Many massacres were committed by Zionism, especially during and after the Nakba in 1948. On April 9, 1948, for example, squads from Irgun (a Zionist terrorist organization) entered the village of Deir Yassin, killing more than 100 Palestinians, including the elderly and children who were unable to escape. On July 11 of that year, commandos under the command of Moshe Dayan attacked Lydd, killing 426 people. Moshe Dayan would later become Israel's Minister of Defense. Between October 14 and 15, 1953, the infamous Battalion 101, led by Ariel Sharon, entered the village of Qibya, killing 69 people. Sharon himself, who would become Prime Minister of Israel, would oversee the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, in which at least 3,500 people were killed.

But it is not only massacres of this kind that Israel has committed. The selective assassination of individuals has been common practice and state

policy. These are murders planned and carried out anywhere in the world by Israel's secret service, the Mossad, known on the streets of Tel Aviv as "the Institute." Recent examples include the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, spokesperson and official negotiator for Hamas, on 31 July 2024, in Tehran, and the assassination of Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah in Beirut on 27 September 2024.

Israel is not a state, it is a European colonial project whose founders were not native to that land. Theodor Herzl was Hungarian, David Ben Hurion and Shimon Peres were Polish, Golda Meir was Ukrainian, Moshe Dayan was the son of Ukrainians, Ariel Sharon was the son of Belarusians, to give a few examples. The manipulated biblical account is just a convenient excuse that serves to create a mythical narrative that gives a foreign population rights of occupation over a supposed promised land. In practice, what we have is a state founded on massacres, murders, and forced displacement of the original population in permanent violation of international law. An apartheid state that distinguishes between first-class citizens who enjoy rights and second-class citizens with limited or no rights. The aggression that has been taking place since October 2023 is nothing more than the continuation of a project of dispossession, extermination, and replacement of an entire people, endorsed, sponsored, and financed by the US and carried out by Israel. This project is perpetuated because it is also generating extraordinary profits for a significant number of multinational corporations in the Global North, as recently evidenced in the report A/HRC/59/23 prepared by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Palestine, Francesca Albanese.

How is it possible that such horror can occur and cannot be stopped? How is it possible that the mere veto of the US in the Security Council is enough to prevent action from being taken? How is it possible that even those who support Palestine continue to uphold the "two-state solution" as a solution? Haidar Eid, in the book we referred to at the beginning, seriously questions this "solution." Two states means that we normalize the existence of a state



The remains of palestinian territories marked in white.

that uses death as a practice, a state that normalizes and teaches racism and hatred in its schools, a state that does not hide its desire for expansion through violence and the extermination of other peoples. World War II did not end by handing over part of Germany to the Nazis. The conflict will not end by handing over part of Palestine to Zionism.

A ceasefire is imperative, but not enough. A crime is being committed and those responsible must be held accountable. It is time for the money used to kill to be used to repair the damage and begin reconstruction. Palestine has a right to exist and it is obvious that a red line that makes a "two-state solution" unviable, has been crossed. Only a democratic and sovereign Palestinian nation can be considered a solution. A solution that respects the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and right to exist. A nation that allows coexistence, regardless of religion or ethnic origin. It seems like a utopia, but it is utopia that allows us to move forward. Let's make it our slogan! So far, there has been no progress. The United Nations is proving ineffective, and Palestine cannot wait.

Values to Institutions—Where Are We Without Vision?

Luke Alden

Hardly anyone manages to go through their formative years without society pressing them to “have a plan,” “know where you’re going,” “plan ahead,” “get ahead,” “save up,” “save time,” “set goals.” As a question it’s “what do you want to accomplish?” “how are you going to get there?” “when are you going to achieve this?” If you’re lucky you get these at least in the interrogative. But even if some are certainly valid questions in and of themselves, we can also reasonably say, if we give it some thought, that they tend to individualize all aims in life, separating both individuals from one another and decontextualizing the aims as if they existed in a vacuum outside of broader society. They also have a not-so-small blind spot – in context they take for granted that we are solely to fit into existing roles in current society and its institutions. This not only implies that society is the way it is, has always been and will always be – and that’s it – but that the values and institutions that form the foundations of society and the way we think or don’t think about them are to be left unexamined and untouched. Naturally, it follows that we are not to think about vision for a better world, let alone undertake investigations of what that better society might look like, what we might really want, or consider any logical outgrowths of our values into institutions.

These are surely not the kinds of tendencies we want to leave to the next generations. So, do these kinds of deficits in thinking have anything to do with the adverse outcomes we see in the world today?

Whoever we are, and whether in individual or collective terms, these points beg a lot more questions. Particularly, though, but not limited to, if we are considering the shape our reigning institutions are in today in the world and whether we deem it

worthy to intervene to make them better.

Working people. Students. Parents. Teachers. Renters. Social workers. Nurses. Faith leaders. Writers. Artists. Musicians. Professors. Activists. Organizers. Those participating or wanting to participate in demonstrations. Those at school. At work. Why engage? What are we really aiming to achieve? What the hell do we mean by achievement? By actual change? Is change possible or even imaginable? What changes would improve things? What about lasting change? What’s hard work and what’s it for? What’s efficiency and what’s it for? Motivation and commitment to what and why?

How would those changes align with our collective values? What the hell are our values? Most of them we know we’ve got in common. Are those values borne out in the society we see around us and in the structures of our day to day lives? If no – plainly not – then.. why not? What established bodies and structures in society – in our families, schools, workplaces, unions, movements, economies, governments – deny those values, or even prevent imagining let alone implementation of them? Conversely, which values on investigation manifest themselves logically into the institutions we don’t want around us? And what’s the use of having the values that on the other hand do stand up to examination if they’re only given lip-service in society?

Have we thought through the worth of not only today’s institutions in society but those current and traditional values ourselves, or just passively accepted their implications machine-like, as AI responses do according to pattern recognition? If so, what does that say about the state of our educational institutions, our cynicism, much less common orthodoxy?

Students, parents, teachers. Everybody. How can we avoid passing on deadly cynicism to the current youth before it's too late? What does it mean to be cynical particularly in the face of what's in front of us today? What is education for? How should it be carried out? Do we want our youth and the next generation only absorbing but not intervening? If the values we hope the youth of today will embody as adults – and that they and the following generations can teach us – are unfounded in today's societal institutions and outcomes, what is our responsibility as regards those institutions and the assumptions and concepts which underlie them? Why does it seem, by the way, that the more power one has and the closer one is to it, the more one is inclined to support its dictates and doctrine at the expense of the values we all share?

Enough questions. But these questions, and many, many more, lead us to a fundamental examination of the implications of society's reigning institutions, and to contest the worthiness of those institutions themselves.

If we're interested in changes, let alone fundamental change, if we count as among our primary responsibilities to regenerate things, that renewal in all things wouldn't just be a nice thing but a prerequisite to staving off disaster never mind big change or progress, if we think that we'll have difficulty avoiding the worst much less providing worthy analysis or education, still less win big gains, come up with viable strategies to do so, or stimulate a mutual sense of lasting individual and collective agency, then together it would be to our collective benefit to engage in the process of coming up with visions in the here and now of a better society for the short and long term.

What will placing an emphasis on vision accomplish? What are the implications of this focus?

Before getting to that, just one more thing. We might keep in mind that we've got centuries of major gains, sometimes revolutionary in nature. A whole range of civic institutions won – govern-

ments, parliaments, laws, civil, labor, gender and other rights as well as public advocacy organizations of every color, even international in nature – supposedly meant to uphold peace, security, prosperity, equality etc for all. And beyond that an incalculable number of activist organizations, institutionally recognized and not, who prioritize education, organizing, tactics and strategy who charge themselves with holding those institutions to account. But one look at societal outcomes and one knows a lot is badly missing and adrift. At the core of that something may be the capacity to envision a society in which our collective values are manifested into institutions that not only work for all but in turn continually reinforce the values and concepts that we want played out.

The focus of a more substantial part of our efforts on evoking, sharing and presenting vision, while fighting day to day against current ills might provide a more favorable and effective alternative to solely focusing all of our efforts on fighting those ills from a defensive posture. The latter approach is by and large the current one, regrettably. Instead, we not only can but must walk and chew gum.

If we do begin emphasizing vision, we're already taking a big step. We're extending beyond a defining characteristic of popular movements, particularly over recent generations, in taking on that defensive stance. Moreover, we're extending our own sense of agency and appealing to others' agency. Yes, attention to vision signifies a concrete, pro-active rejection of the inequities of the status quo, but what's more is it's a reflection of the awareness that we need to be consistently seeking to transcend any status quo. Without that search, we give all our agency away to power centers on every scale. Atrophy ensues.

If placing emphasis on shared vision means an appeal to others' agency – a concept not given sufficient attention or even outright warped in society and in movements – it also signifies that we are not solely interested in individual growth or catharsis. There is no emphasis on shared vision if there is no belief in others. And no belief in others means



"Labor Solidarity has no Borders." This mural by Mike Alewitz was painted in Los Angeles in 1992 to advocate for immigrant worker's rights. The green monster- "the green monster of capitalism" was also seen in a 1985 mural for Hormel strikers painted by the same artist.

no solidarity, meaning no vision can be had. The belief in others finally affirms our awareness that we all have an innate drive towards more liberation and empowerment, otherwise realizing visions is impossible and the exercise becomes intellectual twiddling of the thumbs.

So emphasis on shared vision also reinforces a belief in a better future and a recognition that losing is simply not an option, particularly in the face of what's in front of us today. It opens up more space for needed hope and inspiration to seep in. That should in turn strengthen determination, since the tendency towards vision further lends itself more compatibly to enabling us to collectively develop strategies to realize the vision. A look around and one sees there is a need for far more willingness to work alongside the infinitely disparate groups, organizations, movements and individuals that make up the whole spectrum of those fighting for a better world. Emphasizing shared vision of a desired future can help in this regard, indeed it may be key.

If we engage in the process of inclusive developing

vision and the strategies to get there, and do so in a flexible manner, we undermine some of the ways in which limiting ourselves to analysis of current events, solely single-issue focus and even disagreement over some values in and of themselves can work to further divide us. Stressing shared vision – what we collectively want – allows us at every turn to reframe and repurpose our diverse efforts, including strategizing, in order to get at underlying, festering cynicism and division. It can erode this cynicism by reorienting a positive approach to the way we speak, write, work with others, make reading choices and so on, which further reinforces shared values. It gives us direction, as well as a positive springboard that inspires and motivates attainment of the vision. On this note, and to paraphrase what activist Bridget Meehan relates, highlighting vision can overcome a fear of the unknown, and provide a way to transcend burnout and defeatism.

Instead of solely parting from the horrifying news of the day to reach broader areas of the population – often counterproductive – highlighting shared vision can inspire positively by instead depart-

ing from what we want. Further, it can cut across tenuous lines – “right,” “left,” activist, non-activist, anarchist, “conservative,” liberal, socialist, young, old, gender, ethnicity, geography etc. – in the urging of shared values to provide its basis. Values by and large we already tend to share but perhaps haven’t explored in ways which reveal the institutions those values lead to. Emphasizing vision gives us this opportunity to transcend sectors of the population to get the participation without which necessary changes in society would be unimaginable.

Further, exploring and elaborating on those values not only reveals to us what’s missing in our current institutions in a more penetrating and comprehensive way, but allows us to continue to refine the concepts and institutions borne out of those values. It affords us the opportunity for a different level of understanding of current conditions, non-cynically and flexibly. “It provides clarity through contrast,” as Michael Albert, co-developer of participatory economics with Robin Hahnel, portrays the role of vision. We should seek to have these values borne out by laying out a vision which motivates, inspires and helps to impede sectarianism. The process of developing and exploring vision can do that by recontextualizing the gains already made in society, illuminating cynicism and hypocrisy in current orthodoxy and institutions, escaping a sense of rampant and cynical inevitability and giving us a model to judge the present against. At the least. It could also do much more.

As indispensable as the focus on values is, is it enough? The aforementioned institutions that the exploration of values reveals needs serious attention as well. If we don’t also envision the concepts and institutions that follow logically out of our flexible and flexibly shared values, we may well have run a very valuable exercise in raising consciousness to an extent, however we’ll remain in the milquetoast area of many sectors of society who claim to uphold these values but whose economic, political, cultural and other institutions not only don’t realize these values but in many cases fundamentally subvert them. We see this today emphatically in, among other areas, the economic realm regarding assump-

tions centered around markets – efficiency, productivity, equity, costs, range of options, flexibility and more.

Therefore, if we’re interested in developing a shared vision for the future we want – as well as to illuminate present deficiencies – what’s to differentiate our engagement in this from what emanates from current and past society on vision? How can we offer something up which could correct deep societal ills and ensure our values are manifested? Current and past societal visions and institutions claimed to have done it, many even have values we’d share.

There are at least a few ways in which we could distinguish a serious envisioning of a society that produces our desired outcomes from what’s projected by current mainstream institutions and theorists.

One is that previously stated actual elaboration on current shared values – taken for granted but not often explored – in what they mean for us individually and collectively in critical areas of society, as well as how the institutions we instead envision actually contain roles that reproduce behavior in line with these values. We all agree on justice, honesty, integrity, responsibility, accountability, commitment, creativity, empathy, generosity and many others. How do these translate into more refined values and deeper but more applicable concepts that could give us institutions that fulfill them? If we engage in these questions we’re on the road to differentiating our vision from what currently is recognized.

Flowing logically out of this question, we might ask and illuminate what areas of society allow for its most basic functioning and whose purposes, whose tasks, may be most in need of improved or even fully replaced institutions. They’d be areas to apply our shared values and see if current institutions fulfill them and, what’s more, how those newly envisioned institutions would work both internally as well as together with other envisioned institutions emanating out of other shared values. This is envisioning, by and large, not currently carried out on any substantial scale today. It’s also envisioning where our concrete proposals for new institutions are

based directly on set shared values elaborated on in a participatory manner. We're not, on the contrary, making proposals to fulfill any existing ideology, doctrine, paradigm, law, convention or assumption.

Underlying all of society's range of institutions are values containing assumptions that need to be confronted, whether we agree with the values on the surface or not. Again, are these values translating into concepts and institutions which are leading to favorable outcomes in the world today? One area among many where we might get a resounding "no" on that question and which has not been duly attended to in past and current envisioning and institutions is the economy. We might hear from several sectors that we need to apply democracy to the economy to finally get it to work. That point seems to need major attention and the question can be approached by developing and applying our shared values to the kind of economic outcomes we want for society. It will be hard, on this question, to avoid once again calling into question the fundamental nature of markets and their effects on all of society, let alone the economy. Like all of the questions brought forth by engaging in vision, one in no way need be an "expert" to give a minute's thought based on individual and collective experiences and engage in the invaluable introspection needed to come to flexible shared values which will likely run counter to, in this instance, the way a market functions. And then to envision and outline ensuing institutions which fulfill those values. To engage in vision, by the way, might be one way to reveal in the first place why this search specifically for better institutions is not an exercise in daydreaming, but rather crucial to our hopes and prospects as a society.

The values undergirding a desired economy are likely going to be those which also fundamentally inform those other principal areas of society such as politics, community, culture, family, international relations and our relation to the environment, among others. Encompassing societal vision of this sort is also in need of attention, to say the least, and this is yet another aspect which would distinguish newly developed visions from those of the past. Underneath all of these areas of society lie crucially

needed vision for shared values concerning interrelations, decision-making, range of options, common responsibilities and welfare, remuneration, applicability of values and many others. All crucial and interconnected. Do any of these transcend the others?

So calling for vibrant vision means being explicit about what we want for a better society we're in desperate need of. Critical questions to begin any of these discussions might be, for instance, not only what our concerns are but what is it that we're looking for?

We're not drawing up a manifesto all must adhere to. Quite the contrary. Nor are we foolishly over-extending into a future we can't know by drawing up exhaustively detailed master plans. Even if we could, which we can't, that would be absurdly counterproductive. We're appealing rather to everyone's innate inclination to empathy, to do better not just for self and to our own intuitive sense of deficit and defeat in society without that very search for vision. Based on this, we're evoking key elements of values, concepts and institutions, while always remaining open to refining our views. In the process of envisioning, we might also get a deeper sense of the value of education, cynicism and agency. Likewise, we're not just getting at the insidious essence of power and the servility it invokes, we're looking to elucidate how we might transcend it through our own concrete proposals. Ultimately, by stressing vision we're intending to elevate meaningful participation, without which, again, realizing visions is just a dream.

We often find teachers asking young children in school to come up with, as children as predisposed to, their own visual creations of how they envision their beautiful, desired world to be. Is there any reason for that kind of activity to end at such a young age? Maybe it would be to our benefit, well beyond elementary school, to ask ourselves collectively the same questions and act on them. After all, we've got certain sizeable responsibilities not only to each other but to the generations to follow, particularly in this moment.

Can We Protect Our Children From the Government?

Sonali Kolhatkar

As summer winds down, kids all over the United States are starting the school year. In addition to the standard back-to-school trepidation, children of color are facing the unimaginable terror of being snatched by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

In Southern California, which has been an epicenter of ICE activity since early summer, federal agents handcuffed a 15-year-old boy with disabilities at gunpoint on August 11, 2025. The boy, a student of San Fernando High School, was waiting in the car outside Arleta High School with his mom while his sister finished registration for the new school year.

It was apparently a case of mistaken identity, and the ICE agents ultimately released him. But LAUSD Superintendent Alberto Carvalho told the press, “The trauma will linger. It will not cease.” Those children who witnessed the incident while attending their school orientation were also likely terrified and will remain psychologically scarred.

ICE officers are snatching children and their families without warrants, traumatizing them first and asking questions later. And, they aren’t going into private, whiter, and wealthier schools to check if foreign students might have overstayed tourist visas. They are targeting low-income, brown-skinned public school children and their families. As a mother of two brown-skinned boys who take a city bus to public school in Southern California, this inspires a visceral horror in me.

Parents are also being violently separated from their children. In San Diego, California, there have been numerous documented cases of federal agents snatching parents near schools. One man, grabbed by federal agents in Linda Vista Elementary in Au-

gust, was waiting to pick up his son.

Agents picked up another San Diego man in Encinitas near his child’s elementary school. “Let him say goodbye to his family,” a bystander filming the incident is heard saying. The man was on his way to work when agents separated him from his family as his daughter wailed in distress.

Traditionally, schools and their surrounding areas have been off-limits to ICE agents and considered “protected areas” from immigration enforcement. Such areas have included churches, courthouses, and hospitals. “Schools should be completely off-limits in any kind of issue around immigration,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). “And, even in the first Trump administration, they were.”

But on the day he began his second term on January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump rescinded that rule. In an indication of how much worse things are today than they were during his first term, a DHS spokesperson said, “Criminals will no longer be able to hide in America’s schools and churches to avoid arrest. The Trump Administration will not tie the hands of our brave law enforcement, and instead trusts them to use common sense.”

The Trump administration is labeling innocent children “criminals” based on their skin color and national origin. Moreover, trusting agents to use their “common sense” within this out-of-control fascistic landscape offers little comfort.

ICE agents began persecuting public school children as early as this April when federal agents attempted to enter two LAUSD elementary schools in the first such incident of its kind. In their quest to snatch five

first- through-sixth-grade children, the agents lied to school authorities, saying they were checking on the students' well-being and had parental permission. The children remained safe only thanks to the school authorities' diligent protection.

Weingarten explained that teachers are "in loco parentis." In other words, "we serve in the stead of parents for the time that kids are in school. So, somebody knocks on that school door and says, 'I want that kid,' we have an obligation to say 'no.'"

Trump's unleashing of law enforcement in schools sets teachers on a collision course with armed federal agents—a disaster waiting to happen. It's no wonder teachers are demanding their school districts do more in their official capacity to keep families safe. "As teachers, of course, we are worried about the well-being of our students and their families," said Ron Gochez, a high school history teacher in South Central Los Angeles and a leading member of the community organization, Unión del Barrio, during an interview.

How we treat our children ought to be a measure of the health and well-being of our society. By such standards, we have become a very sick nation, as kids face ICE arrest and disappearance and separation from their parents—at the same time, the scourge of gun violence, school police, and the memory of COVID-19 shutdowns haunts K-12 campuses. In Southern California, there is the added trauma of wildfire destruction.

The fate awaiting young people after they are snatched by federal law enforcement is nightmarish. ICE agents snatched 18-year-old Benjamin Marcelo Guerrero-Cruz in mid-August, just days before he started his senior year of high school. Guerrero-Cruz was walking his dog in Van Nuys when plainclothes federal agents disappeared him in what his family called a "kidnapping."

He told his former teacher that he overheard the men who kidnapped him boasting of a \$1,500 payment they expected to get for his capture. The teen is currently being held at the notorious Adelanto detention

center in Southern California, sharing a cell with two dozen men.

It's not just Southern California schools where ICE is unleashing its terror and mayhem. Since January 2025, immigration enforcement has detained and deported dozens of children in the New York City area, including one child as young as six. A 15-year-old and his father were secretly held in hotels before being sent to Ecuador.

And, a father in Beaverton, Oregon, was pulled over while transporting his child to day care. ICE agents smashed his car window and arrested him in spite of his status as the spouse of a U.S. citizen awaiting his green card, and they are now holding him in detention.

Southern California immigrant rights activists, who have experience with community self-defense, are offering a way forward for all those around the country who want to protect children from the government. Groups such as Gochez's Unión del Barrio and LA Tenants Union are part of a Community Self-Defense Coalition patrolling schools to help parents and children feel safe and to alert the neighborhood of potential ICE activity. They provide helpful ways to identify ICE agents' cars on social media.

Gochez said his organization has trained more than 1,500 educators over the summer, preparing them for possible ICE activity at schools. "We are patrolling around our schools before and after school to keep an eye out for our kids and will continue to do so until the kidnappers leave our communities," he said.

In San Diego, members of Unión del Barrio are training teachers to do safety patrols during drop off and pick up outside schools. If ICE agents are sighted, activists want schools to go into lockdown mode in the same way they would in the case of an active shooter.

Gochez is determined. "We will do everything within our power, and we will use our school and union structures to defend our students," he said.

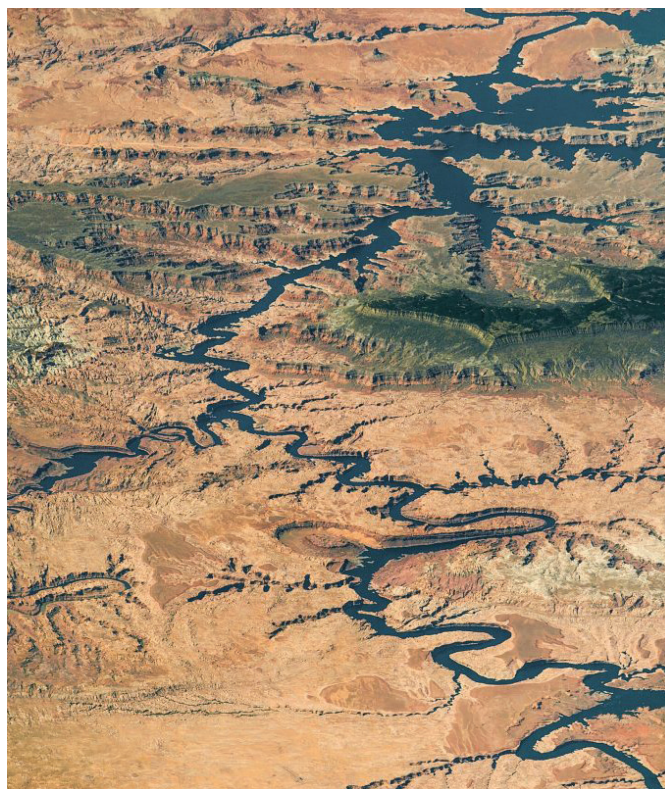
When Water Becomes War: The Moral Failure of Global Governance in the Middle East

Peiman Salehi

The Middle East today is witnessing a transformation that goes far beyond conventional geopolitics or the competition for oil. One of the most urgent yet underexplored dimensions of its crisis is the question of water, which has increasingly become both a scarce commodity and a weapon in the hands of states and non-state actors alike. According to the Pacific Institute, in 2023 alone there were roughly 350 conflicts worldwide linked directly to water, and the Middle East, particularly Palestine, accounted for a disproportionate share of these incidents. This reality is not accidental. It reflects the way global climate change intersects with regional inequalities, colonial structures, and authoritarian governance to create a cycle of violence where access to water itself becomes a matter of survival, control, and domination.

For decades, international observers focused on energy as the main axis of power in the Middle East. But as climate patterns shift, it is water that increasingly defines the possibilities of stability or conflict. Israel's control over Palestinian aquifers and its systematic restriction of water access in Gaza and the West Bank is a striking example of how resource management is turned into an instrument of collective punishment. For Palestinians, the denial of water is not simply a matter of inconvenience; it is a violation of their most basic human right, used deliberately to weaken their social fabric and impose dependency. In this sense, water becomes no different from a siege or a blockade: it is a tool of war under another name.

The instrumentalization of water is not confined to Palestine. In Iraq and Syria, dams on the Tigris and Euphrates have repeatedly been manipulated by regional powers and armed groups to gain leverage over civilian populations. The deliberate flooding or drying of entire areas has been used both as a tacti-



cal weapon and as a form of coercion against communities already devastated by decades of war and sanctions. In North Africa, the tensions between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan over the Grand Renaissance Dam reveal how water disputes are reshaping the geopolitics of the Nile basin. These examples highlight a pattern that is not unique to one country but characteristic of the entire region: water is increasingly governed not as a shared resource but as an instrument of power, deployed in ways that exacerbate fragility and deepen mistrust.

Overlaying these conflicts is the accelerating impact of climate change. The Middle East is warming faster than many other regions, and prolonged droughts are already destabilizing entire societies. In Syria, a decade of severe drought preceding the outbreak of civil war played a major role in driving

rural populations toward cities, where state neglect and economic desperation created fertile ground for unrest. In Iran, recurring protests over water shortages reveal how ecological stress translates directly into political instability. In Yemen, the depletion of groundwater has compounded the devastation of war and famine, pushing communities into cycles of displacement and despair. These are not isolated events; they are symptoms of a systemic crisis in which the environment is no longer a neutral background but an active driver of conflict.

From the perspective of the Global South, the crisis of water in the Middle East cannot be separated from broader patterns of structural inequality in the international system. Just as natural resources such as oil or minerals have long been subjected to forms of colonial extraction, water too has been folded into systems of control shaped by external powers and neoliberal institutions. Privatization schemes, often promoted by global financial institutions, commodify access to water and place it in the hands of corporate actors whose logic of profit directly contradicts the principle of universal human rights. For vulnerable populations in Gaza, Basra, or Sana'a, the question is not merely ecological but profoundly political: who controls the flow of life itself?

The human cost of these dynamics is staggering. Water scarcity strikes hardest at the most vulnerable children, women, refugees, and the poor who bear the brunt of disease, malnutrition, and displacement. When families must choose between buying water or food, the very notion of human dignity is stripped away. In refugee camps across the region, inadequate water supply is linked to rising health crises, while urban populations face soaring prices as corporations exploit scarcity. To speak of water in the Middle East is therefore to speak of justice, of whose lives are considered expendable in a system that treats water as a weapon rather than as a shared right.

At the same time, the weaponization of water reveals a profound moral failure of the international community. Global powers that once justified

their interventions in the Middle East with rhetoric about human rights remain silent when basic rights are violated through the denial of water. This silence reflects a double standard in which ecological violence is normalized when it serves geopolitical interests. It also underscores how little regard is given to the voices of the Global South, where communities consistently insist that climate justice cannot be divorced from political justice. To demand fair access to water is to demand a reordering of priorities that places human survival above strategic advantage.

The irony of the current moment is that while the West proclaims its commitment to universal values, it is in fact the countries of the Global South that articulate a more compelling vision of planetary justice. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, movements have emerged insisting that water is a commons, inseparable from human dignity and beyond the logic of commodification. This resonates deeply in the Middle East, where communities understand that peace cannot be built on pipelines of oil or weapons, but only on the guarantee that every person can drink, irrigate, and live without fear of thirst. Such a vision requires not only local cooperation but also a radical shift in global governance, one that dismantles the structures of environmental colonialism and affirms water as a fundamental right.

The Middle East stands today at a crossroads where climate change, conflict, and inequality converge. If water continues to be treated as a weapon, the region will face not only deeper wars but also the erosion of any possibility of trust among its peoples. Yet the very urgency of this crisis also opens a space for a new discourse one that reframes water not as an object of control but as a foundation for coexistence. To imagine such a future is not naïve; it is the only realistic response to a world where climate shocks are intensifying and old paradigms of power are collapsing. For those of us in the Global South, the lesson is clear: the struggle for justice in the twenty-first century is inseparable from the struggle for water. To defend the right to water is to defend the possibility of peace, dignity, and life itself.

Mother Mary Comes to Me

Michael Albert

Imagine an okay High School Tennis player trying to comment usefully, publicly, on Carlos Alcaraz's play. Or imagine a squirrel made suddenly talkative trying to comment on the life of a lion. Difficult, and I feel like that.

There are many people who are exceptionally smart, witty, funny. Many people who are internally diverse. Such a person channels many. And many people journey into that one person. Then there are some people, I have no idea how many, who are unfathomably complex, courageous, and creative. And then there is Arundhati Roy—and her Mother Mary—or so it seemed to me as I read about their lives.

I met Arundhati, briefly, a couple of times. I found her very impressive but back then I didn't perceive multitudes in her one body. But now, Film script writer and film actor. Novelist and essayist. Escape artist and loyalist. Speechifier and activist. I did not earlier see all that. The book reveals all that.

I have read numerous Roy essays, speeches, and interviews, and after doing so I have found her writing quite special. Her prose was inspiring. But I have to admit, even if a bit embarrassed by the fact, that I haven't read her novels. How trite it seems that I started to do so, but for me they had too many names to follow. Yet, if I had read on, it would have added another dimension to my awareness of her. But I couldn't manage it. I was deaf to her fiction.

Now I have read her recent book. Hours ago I finished it. Libraries will call it a memoir—she called it *Mother Mary Comes to Me*. The book seriously stirred my mind. My heart too. I here want to advocate for it as a worthy read. But I don't want to review it. I did, however, read a bunch of reviews and their composition veri-

fied my disinclination to do one. None of them stirred my mind. None did Mother Mary or Arundhati Roy justice. All instead ignored much of what is incandescently present in the book. Maybe by now there is a review that does do the book justice. A review that will inspire potential new readers. But I doubt it. Perhaps Arundhati herself could justly review it, but I even have doubts about that. This kind of book doesn't welcome a review.

I write quite a lot. Perhaps in sum total I have written more words than Arundhati has written. But if what I do is called writing which is of course a noble and worthy pursuit that all can contribute to—we might need a new word for what Arundhati does. She sees herself as a writer. She likes the word. Perhaps I should let her have the word. I could keep on typing words, of course. I could be inspired by her writing and by others who manage similarly. But I can't deny that what she does is different. Maybe it would be good to keep calling what I/we do writing, but then we will need a new word for what she does.

Having now read about her life, and her mother's life, each full of incredible tumult, travail, and achievement, if I could I would ask Arundhati some questions. How do you do this? Do your essays, this book, your other books, flow to the page finished, or nearly so? It feels like they do, like they are effortless, like they are born not only free but complete. Or do you instead go over and over the lines of text that compose what emerges with fits and starts? Do you rewrite, revise, and even renovate? When you address your writing in your new book, you indicate that you spent years on each novel. Okay, but still, is the -final result when you write just spontaneous talent that births immediately well-ordered words, or is it spontaneous talent plus a lot of powerful painful perseverance that orders your words? When they

first appear, have you already thought hard on your words? Or do your words just arrive, like a gift from your unconscious, a gift that lands in your fingers from nowhere? Do you channel the words without a conscious thought? I think that is what everyone who writes, indeed what everyone who talks, mostly does, but maybe you diverge. Do you?

I have a memory that was aged when I was young and is moribund now so your memory is beyond my comprehension. And since your words indicate that you see in your mind the scenes from your life and that you hear in your mind the voices from your life, I wonder, how do you keep all those images and sounds of your distant thens from drowning your immediate nows?

Is part of the secret of good, clear, moving, and imaginative writing the way that one sees and hears plentifully? Is it to remember more than others do? To me that is mystery. Is part of worthy story telling an imagination which pops up patterns that mystify like seemingly impossible magic? Maybe that capacity is widespread. Is it something all novelists have? It isn't in me. I loved reading it.

And I also have, I hesitate to admit, another kind of question I would like to ask Arundhati, if I ever have the opportunity. Given your voice, values, and commitments—which are not a mystery to me since I recognize those—and given your reach, how do you manage to stop yourself from producing new writing every minute you are able to? To share, to affect, to always pursue writing's activism aspect?

I would ask that, but I may know the answer. Since your novels each took years to complete and their characters lived and even travelled with you during all that time, how could you have done any more? The answer may be, I think, you couldn't. You are that writer. You do it when you must. To mess with that would morph you into being a different writer and thus not who you are. Goodbye to your ghosts would mean so long

to your imagination. To force the words out more often than they want to emerge would reduce the words to lesser quality than those you do generate. Is that the answer? You are you, like Mother Mary was she, and neither you nor she could be other than who you were without losing it all?

Intemperate but curious, I'd ask those questions. And then I'd ask another strange one. Even an amusing one, perhaps. You use the word "lucky" many times. Each time it stands alone. Itself a sentence. Is that a method of your own devising? Was it perhaps inspired by how Vonnegut used the words "so it goes" and "hi ho," though you use the technique far more frugally than he did? Likewise you occasionally reference earlier scenes from within later scenes. For me, this weaved connections and interconnections. For me, both those techniques worked.

And now, reader, don't get the wrong idea. Roy's "memoir" is not just incredibly effective prose. It is also highly readable. It is rich but it is not obscure. It requires no higher learning. I doubt there is a page that doesn't have a moving and memorable phrase or sentence. Every word fits. Arundhati's memoir—is that even what it is?—if so, maybe many of us need to find a new word for "memoirs" that we have written. Or maybe it would be better to use a different word for Mother Mary Comes to Me. It is personal history but it is also wit, humor, history, and social commentary. It is specific local daily life but it is also general large scale political insight.

The reviewers all say Mother Mary Comes to Me is built around Arundhati's Mother, Mrs Roy, and around Arundhati's experiences of her mother. And Mother Mary is plenty present, for sure. And Mother Mary matters to what occurs, absolutely. But I don't buy that the book is about Mother Mary, even though it certainly is about Mother Mary. Nor do I buy that it is about Arundhati Roy, even though it certainly is about Arundhati Roy. I read it. I don't know her mother other than that she was for many an abominable person to be around while for others a saving



grace to know, to learn from, and to enjoy. Talk about one being many.

In contrast, about Arundhati I know lots, at least now, even though I suspect there is likely much more to know. Then again there being more to know is always true of everyone, isn't it? This book is about life and life only, ma. But life and life only is in turn about everything. That's how the book felt to me. And that would be another question I would like to ask. When you wrote it, Arundhati, did you have readers in mind? Do you have something you want your readers to gain from your book, or were you only trying to tell what happened like it happened, to tell it for yourself and for whoever else might tag along? Is that another feature of remarkable writing? To report and not to try to convince? I can't comprehend that. Here, I am trying to convince whoever reads this to read the book.

Mother Mary Comes To Me? Has no one noticed that the title is plagiarized in the best possible way from Beatle Paul McCartney's song, Let It Be which he dedicated to his mother, who was also named Mary?

*"When I find myself in times of trouble,
Mother Mary comes to me*

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

*And in my hour of darkness she is
standing right in front of me*

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be."

I admit, I don't like that message, "let it be," however much I like the song. Que Sera, Sera is not for me. Not for Arundhati either, I think. Most of the time. So finally, what do the reviewers

leave out even though they try to describe what's there? The only way to decide is to read the book. I did and I spewed more laughs and dripped more tears doing so than I have done for any other book I can call to mind. Okay, I will report, the reviewers leave out life. The reviewers leave out struggle.

Even so, even as I want to avoid that failing, I feel strange offering an excerpt. To pull a piece from any whole tapestry so as to convey a feeling for the whole tapestry rarely makes much sense. Most often a fragment misleads. But to not offer any piece at all, that seems incomplete. An excerpt might motivate another potential new reader to read it all. So here are two excerpts. But note, interspersed before, between, and after these two, nearly every page has a potential excerpt that is comparably or more worthy. Indeed, if I wanted to levy a criticism, I might even suggest that there may be too many memorable words and lines.

From early in the book: "I have a vivid memory of one of those journeys. It was a clear, beautiful night. We passed a buffalo cart with a lantern tied behind it for a taillight. The driver of the cart was lying on his back, singing to the stars, confident that his buffalo would take him home. I remember feeling jealous of him. I remember thinking that no matter how long and hard we fought, in India no woman of any religion, class, caste, or creed would ever feel safe enough to sing to the stars on a lonely highway while her buffalo took her home." Beautiful depiction, as she saw it, but one hopes, also wrong.

From late in the book: "We were well into the dark years of Hindu nationalist hell: public lynching of Muslims, videos of public lynching, public floggings, videos of public floggings, mass murder, videos of mass murder and sword-wielding mobs marching through our streets calling openly for the genocide of Muslims. A group of students in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi decided to hold a protest to mark the third anniversary of the hanging of

Afzal Guru. It was another of those moments of mainstream media hysteria. Screaming anchors on television channels aired doctored videos with fake soundtracks. They singled out students one by one, hounded them, lied about them, and called them Pakistani agents. They reserved a special brand of hysterics for Muslims, particularly Kashmiris. The police entered the campus and made arrests. One anchor took to addressing me directly on his prime-time news show, looking straight into the camera: 'Arundhati Roy, we think you are disgusting.' Night after night he would rave, 'Why has she not been arrested? Why is she free?'

"By then I was only weeks away from finishing *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The thought of going to prison at that particular moment was devastating. An almost-complete manuscript can make a writer paranoid and fearful. I felt responsible for Anjum and all the other characters in the book. If I went to prison, they would be locked up with me. I thought it was my duty to usher them into the world, to make sure that their chatter mingled with other conversations on living bookshelves. To protect them I did what I never thought I ever would. I fled. I bought a ticket to London. I have never felt worse about myself. I woke up in a horrible hotel room with racist paintings of African dancers with real straw for skirts. I sat in the breakfast room and cried for myself, for my country, for everything that was going up in flames. Within a day I knew I had to return. Because I was a tree in Anjum's graveyard. If I was transplanted in another forest, my leaves would fall. I was back home within a week. Why was I not arrested while so many others were? Who knows. Maybe my readers protected me. Maybe my iron angel did." Can one convey more content in so few words?

Whoever or whatever protected Arundhati Roy—thanks go to you. And now I have to return to my own writing, not put off but spurred on by Arundhati Roy's incredible mastery of the form.

The Scapegoat and the Mirror: Donald Trump as Lightning Rod for Liberal Guilt

Martina Moneke

In the cultural psyche of 21st-century America, Donald J. Trump occupies a symbolic role that far surpasses his actual political achievements or capacities. For many liberals—particularly those embedded in the media, academia, and the professional-managerial class—Trump is not merely a political adversary, but the embodiment of civilizational decline. His vulgarity, ignorance, racism, sexism, and authoritarian impulses are seen as a direct repudiation of Enlightenment rationalism, liberal democracy, and the moral arc of progress.

Yet in this fervent denunciation lies a paradox: Trump has become essential to the liberal imagination, not as an object of genuine political reckoning, but as a totem onto which vast reservoirs of liberal guilt and ambivalence are projected. He is, in effect, a lightning rod—absorbing the psychic charge of unresolved contradictions within the liberal-globalist worldview, offering catharsis through condemnation, and allowing many to say, with comforting self-assurance, “at least I am not that.”

Projection and the Crisis of Liberal Self-Understanding

In his 1967 work *Alchemical Studies*, Vol. 13, psychologist Carl Jung wrote, “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular.” He observed that individuals project their repressed “shadows” onto others by attributing their own unacceptable or unacknowledged traits—both positive and negative—onto people or

groups in their environment. He characterized this behavior as a defense mechanism to avoid confronting one’s own unacceptable or negative traits.

In the case of Trump, American liberalism appears to be engaging in Jung’s shadow projection. The liberal establishment—elite universities, legacy media institutions, and centrist political organs—has, since 2016, devoted an astonishing amount of intellectual and emotional energy to analyzing, mocking, deconstructing, and “resisting” Trump. While some of this is undoubtedly justified, the sheer scale and obsessiveness of the focus raise a deeper question: What work is Trump doing for liberalism?

The answer lies in displacement. Trump serves as an externalized repository for the very qualities that liberal America wishes to distance itself from—crassness, racial animus, anti-intellectualism, misogyny, populist demagoguery. But many of these forces, though disavowed, are not foreign to the liberal tradition. The exploitation of racial minorities, the expansion of the surveillance state, militarism abroad, and economic policies that hollowed out the working class were not the exclusive legacy of conservative regimes. One need only examine the triangulating politics of the Clinton era—the 1994 Crime Bill, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, NAFTA—as evidence that the neoliberal consensus, embraced by both parties, laid much of the groundwork for the resentment that Trump so effectively exploited.

By projecting these uncomfortable truths onto a single grotesque figure, liberals absolve themselves. The moral horror of Trump’s behavior

becomes a mirror turned outward, rather than inward. It is easier to decry his lack of decorum than to ask why tens of millions of Americans remain unconvinced by liberal alternatives. It is easier to mock his tweets than to confront the failures of a media landscape that amplifies his every word. In this way, Trump serves not only as antagonist but as absolver—a scapegoat in the full, almost biblical, mythological sense.

The Function of the Villain in the Liberal Cosmology

Throughout history, political movements have often relied on the figure of a villain to unify disparate factions and preserve ideological coherence. After the French Revolution, Robespierre invoked foreign enemies and internal traitors to justify the Terror. During the Cold War, American liberalism defined itself in opposition to communism—its values shaped largely by contrast. The problem, of course, is that over-reliance on an antagonist tends to ossify ideological thinking. When the opposition becomes the center of gravity, one's own vision begins to hollow out.

This is precisely the trap into which the liberal intelligentsia has fallen. In casting Trump as the embodiment—and even the source—of all that is wicked, they have reduced politics to a morality play. The left becomes the righteous, Trump the villain, and complexity, nuance, and historical continuity are lost. Yet, as thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Iris Murdoch, and Susan Sontag have warned, moralism without self-examination easily slips into narcissism. Condemnation becomes performative rather than transformative. In her 1970 book *The Sovereignty of Good*, Murdoch argued that without continuous attention to others and reality, morality becomes self-centered fantasy. This problematic state, characterized by an individual imposing their own illusions onto others rather than perceiving them accurately, is what she referred to as the dominance of the “fat relentless ego.”

Nowhere is this dynamic more visible than in

liberal media and academic discourse. Entire news cycles, think pieces, classroom debates, and Twitter threads revolve around parsing Trump's latest gaffe or provocation. This fixation is not just disproportionate—it's strategically self-defeating. The left has failed to articulate a coherent political vision that addresses the material concerns of broad swaths of the electorate. Critical issues—deindustrialization, the opioid crisis, the decline of organized labor, the collapse of rural infrastructure, and the degradation of the planetary ecosystem—are routinely drowned out by culture war narratives that cater to the anxieties of coastal elites while alienating the very constituencies needed for electoral victory.

Trump as Distraction From Political Imagination

“President Trump is not governing, he's gaslighting. The chaos and calamity we've witnessed over the last several weeks are not incidental. It is coordinated,” said NAACP president Derrick Johnson. “From stirring up conflict in Iran to unlawfully deploying the National Guard in California, from the inhumane mass immigrant arrests to a taxpayer-funded military parade and the continued attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, this president is seeking to distract from the real issue: the passage of one of the worst budgets we've ever seen. One that would lay siege to working families,” he said, calling out Trump's “authoritarian tactics as a smokescreen to disenfranchise the American people through legislation.”

In classical Athenian tragedy, the scapegoat—or *pharmakos*—was a symbolic embodiment of the community's impurities and misfortunes. This person was ritually expelled or killed to cleanse the community of its sins and eliminate the source of its misfortunes. For the liberal order, Trump serves a similar symbolic function. His outrageousness allows liberals to avoid confronting their own impotence, their complicity in sustaining systems of inequality, and their decades-long estrangement from the working class. The spectacle of Trump permits a form of political theater in

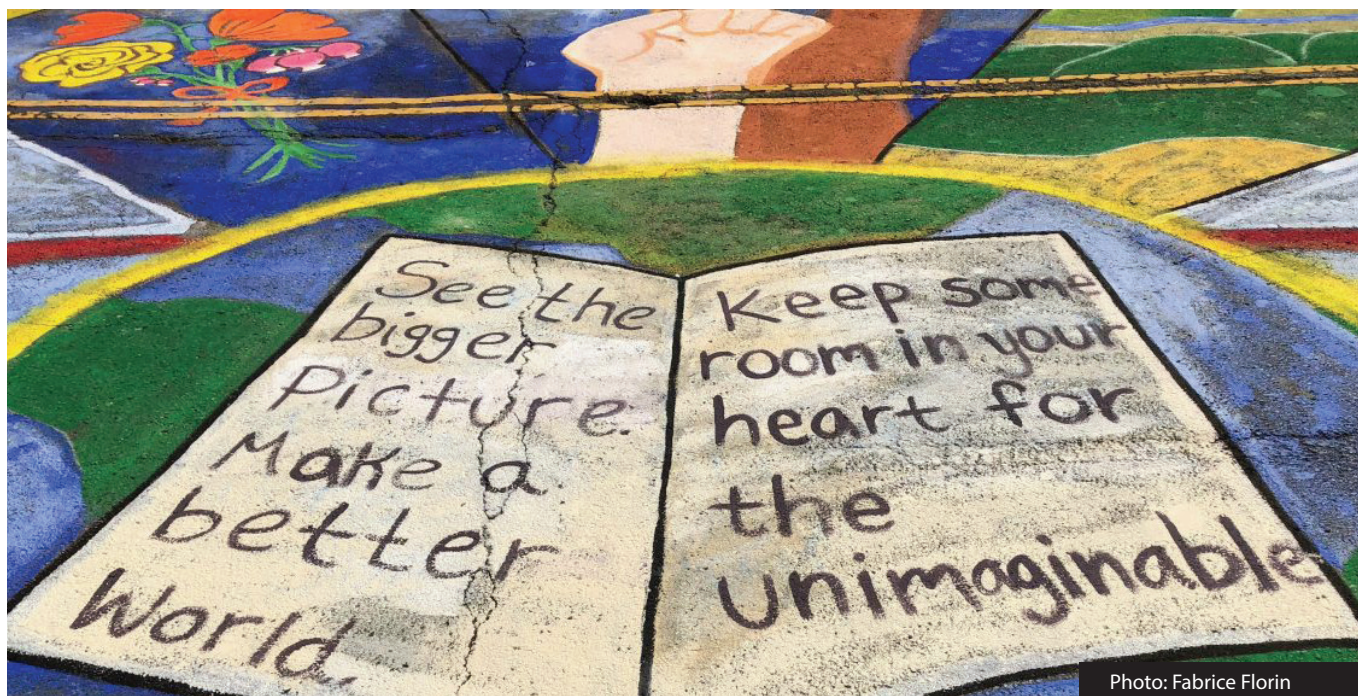


Photo: Fabrice Florin

which virtue is signaled rather than practiced, ripe for exposure by Socratic irony.

More insidiously, the obsession with Trump has crowded out the space necessary for genuine political imagination. The Democratic Party's policy platform remains tepid, technocratic, and fundamentally reactive. There is little in the way of a galvanizing narrative—no Green New Deal at the center of public discourse, no universal healthcare movement with mass mobilization, no concrete plan for economic democratization. Instead, the prevailing message has often amounted to little more than: "We are not Trump." While this may deliver narrow electoral wins, it falls far short of offering a compelling vision for the future.

The consequences are already apparent. In 2020, Biden's campaign was largely framed as a restoration of normalcy. Yet "normal" was precisely what produced the conditions for Trumpism to thrive. The current political landscape is a vacuum waiting to be filled—not by moderate managerialism that characterized the Obama and Biden administrations but by the next ghastly iteration of populist authoritarianism. If liberals do not fill that vacuum with something substantive, someone worse than Trump almost certainly will.

Trump as Rorschach: From Catharsis to Accountability

Donald Trump is not merely a political figure; he functions as a psychological mechanism—a Rorschach test for a liberal class uneasy with its own legacy and uncertain future. To see Trump only as a cause, rather than a symptom, is to misdiagnose the American condition. He is not the disease, but the fever—the body politic's signal that something deeper is amiss.

Liberal guilt—over class privilege, institutional failure, racial injustice, global inequality, overconsumption, and ecological collapse—cannot be absolved through performative condemnation. It demands honest reckoning and structural change.

"Trumpism has become a worldview unto itself," said Pete Buttigieg in a recent NPR interview. "But we do have to look at what we're doing that makes it hard to hear what we have to say." Indeed, to move beyond Trumpism, liberals must turn inward, relinquish the catharsis of moral superiority, and commit to the harder task of building a world in which figures like Trump are not just offensive, but irrelevant. Until then, Trump will remain what he has become: the mirror liberals refuse to face.