

The Long View



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Whose Blood, Whose Soil?

**Policy,
Passports, War
and the Future
of Citizenship**

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MERALI**

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Islamophobia in
Germany**

**ZVIAD
JUGHASHVILI**

**Shia Islam, the
Social Winner of the
latest Karabakh War**

**NIYOUSHA
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**Extirpating the Deep
Roots of Racism in the US**



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

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Daily in the news there is some case or another that calls into question claims by Western(ised) or European(ised) states that they are they beacons of equality. Played out on a grand scale, these cases focusing on nationality, religious dress, discriminatory policing and law, surveillance and even social disapprobation, all connect centrally with the idea of citizenship.

This term, in its formal legal sense, of course means the legal rights of nationality. These days, as political space narrows, it has also come to mean the rites of nationality – specifically what a person should do to attain nationality and what they should believe to be deserving of that nationality. This latter trend has become a dominant theme in the European context, led, so argues our first essay, by trends in Germany. Formerly, the emotional aspects of citizenship – the need to belong and feel belonged by your country – were part of the narrative of what it means – as individuals and groups – to be part of a nation. This was evidenced in e.g. British notions of multiculturalism and the adoption / adaptation of the term in the German context. This scenario in Germany has not only drastically been reversed, according to **Arzu Merali** in ‘New Citizens for Old’, it has now become a dominating narrative of citizenship for minoritised communities, especially Muslims. Set to fail in their aspiration to be fully considered citizens, Muslims find themselves viewed in political and legal terms as unworthy – labelled homophobic, sexist, backward and resistant to ‘integration’. This is compounded by a growing resurgence in the idea that citizenship and belonging are based somehow on blood – or put more drastically racial purity – as the real determinants of who belongs where. All is not doom and gloom however, as Merali highlights the possibilities and contradictions in the German political and legal landscape that set good precedent and can provide the basis for a truly new and inclusive form of citizenship.

These ideas of who is ‘worthy’ and who has ‘rights’ can be found internalised in Muslims’ views of themselves and each other. Our second and third essays look at this from different vantage points. Discussing the recent (continuation of) war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, **Zviad Jughashvili** looks at the almost unreported role and influence of Shia Islam in the region. In this scenario, people have literally given blood to establish who ‘belongs’ on this soil. Highlighting the prevalence of Shia Muslims in Azerbaijan and its forces, Jughashvili uncovers the influence of Shia Muslim narratives in this battle over the Ngorno Karabakh region, com-

pared to the previous conflagration in the 1990s. This influence, he argues, resets regional dynamics in surprising ways. Whilst popular international Muslim narratives during the recent battles either promoted or did not dispel the idea of this being a battle between Sunni, ethnic Turks, supported by their Sunni Turkish brethren (and to some extent Sunni fighters from elsewhere), the local realities were something entirely different. The events, when viewed through this lens, challenge Muslims in their own expectations of who is a Muslim and what Muslim commonalities are.

Niyousha Bastani’s piece takes us right back to the UK and the pervasive influence of the Prevent policy in the everyday lives of Muslims. In *Intimate Surveillance*, she argues that the normative lens of the Prevent policy, as averred to also in Merali’s piece, focussing on Muslims as sexually deviant, and particularly homophobic, has impacted on how Muslims think about themselves and each other – right down to the minutiae of everyday interactions between family members. This type of racist gaze, internalised, affects both establishment figures and those seeking to represent Muslims as their leaders, as well as critical thinkers. So unassuming and second place have these ideas become that the critical functions of representation and resistance are compromised. This dissonance then reinforces the ideas and feelings of exclusion, and stifles expectations on the part of those minoritised, for inclusion.

In our final essay, **Richard Sudan** looks at the role of white supremacy and policing as a foundational part of what the USA is today. How can there ever be equal citizenship when the very notion of who is human is contested from the outset of the establishment of the country? As Sudan points out, when black people and other people of colour have been delimited in law as less than worthy, policing becomes an inevitable tool of white supremacy. To escape from this vicious cycle, the US must become something entirely other, shorn completely of all institutional (and foundational) notions of white supremacy. Without this, last summer’s marches and calls for equality and justice cannot become a reality.

This is an important intervention in unmasking the hidden problems that prevent the realisation of transformative citizenship. All our essays hit upon the need for reimagining or regaining the narratives of belonging and being. We hope this issue helps bring that necessity to a quicker fruition.

Arzu Merali
Editor

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The
Long View

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Editor:
Arzu Merali

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Web www.ihrc.org.uk
E info@ihrc.org
Tel +44 20 8904 4222

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New Citizens for Old: How Islamophobia makes Contemporary Germany

As narratives of belonging get narrower and narrower, **Arzu Merali** argues that Germany provides both worrying precedents as well as ways to move beyond the arguments that to be a citizen in the current age means to be and believe only one thing.

If this were a story or a play, there would need to be a prologue of some sort. Setting the scene for the story to unfold would be the [introduction of citizenship tests](#) in the 2000s. It demands respondents check the right boxes on issues such as homosexuality, 'allowing' girls to wear what they want, date who they want and so on.

Shift scene. A doctor politely declines to shake the hand of the woman passing him his certificate of naturalisation. The presentation was simply a formality - a celebration of this particular batch of 'new citizens'. It is 2015. The doctor has scored the highest in his citizenship test - presumably the same or similar to those above. The Baden-Württemberg courts would later agree that he had an 'impeccable record of integration' after arriving in Germany as a medical student in 2002. In 2020, those courts found that the decision to strip him of his citizenship, based on that one act, was sound. Why? The judgment, made in the middle of a pandemic that forbids the shaking of hands, or even standing within two metres of each other, was done so on the basis that the doctor had seen the bureaucrat's hand as "[posing the threat of sexual seduction.](#)" He explained that his refusal was based on a promise he made to his wife when they married and swore never to shake anyone's hand ever again, whether male or female, to please the court, but it mattered not a jot.

Shift scene again. Hundreds, perhaps a few thousand protestors turn out annually in Berlin for the Quds Day march and rally. Alongside the usual suspects - Zionists, Iranian monarchists and (some) communists - stand, adorned by or adorning Rainbow flags. The politics of Germany demand that to be gay is to be anti-Palestine, because Palestine = Muslim = homophobia. This is, it seems, constitutional. But only with regard to Muslims. Whether not shaking hands, or protesting Israeli human rights violations, Muslims it seems, cannot escape being defined by sex and sexuality using the most basic of racist tropes. Incredibly this sexualisation of (the idea of) 'Islam' and 'Muslims', not only reproduces racist tropes about millions of German 'new' and 'aspiring' citizens and denizens, it creates a sexualised idea of Germanness, which, without doubt is

equally absurd and in many ways just as dangerous - albeit in different ways - as the tropes that deny Muslims acceptance into the fabric of Germany political and national space.

(Lack of) integration, ontological difference and sexual deviance are three key tropes identified as being the [most powerful in the narratives](#) of Islamophobia in Germany. In that, they are perhaps not so different to [other European countries](#). Those looking in from the outside, however, can find salutary lessons, particularly when it comes to the idea of citizenship, whereby indeed other Western(ised) governments are following Germany's lead, and not necessarily in the way of best practice.

Blood or soil? Old and new ways of being German

Why is any of this a surprise? Germany was until 2000, a country that defined citizenship on the basis of blood (*jus sanguinis*) long after this concept was, at least formally, rejected by most Western European powers. A country with a devastating recent history of racism enacted at genocidal levels, might perhaps not be the most obvious candidate for promoting equality amongst its racialised communities, despite its very public repentance. Except that there have been many moments in the recent history of Germany that gave hope to those watching externally and those living new Germanness internally: the changing of laws of Citizenship, to the basis of birth (*jus soli*) as opposed to ethnicity; the ensuing social discourse and what seemed to be acceptance of the idea of *multikulti* (multiculturalism); as well as the acceptance of over one million mainly Muslim migrants during the crisis of 2015. These were events that bucked the European trend (not least when compared to the United Kingdom) in the same period, when other countries were moving away from multiculturalism (insofar as any had ever embraced it) as a form of social organisation. Even the UK - the doyenne of the concept - had long moved towards strict immigration limits, a deportation regime named '[the hostile environment](#)', the demonising and curtailing of [asylum applications](#) and rules and the hardening of

ideas of what it [means to be a citizen](#) particularly with regards to Muslim subjects.

That turn of millennium moment, when Germany legislated to make citizenship available to everyone born within its boundaries regardless of heritage, was a moment of both wonder and hope. The so-called new citizens heralded an age of *multikulti* in a country that has long ignored its racialised communities. In particular communities of Turkish, Moroccan and other Muslim heritages including from the Balkans had been treated purely as guest workers, with no interest from the authorities in integrating them in any meaningful way. These so-called guest workers who had arrived mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, as documented by John Berger in his seminal book *A Seventh Man*, came to fulfil the roles in German society that ethnic Germans did not want to take on. As he recounts, their arrival was meant to be only a temporary moment in the history of those countries with similar arrangements. However, as the years turned into decades and the immigrants became settled, thousands of families were created and generations of German born denizens came into being of these various ethnic cultural and religious heritages. Already at the turn-of-the-century those communities were thought to number in the millions with an estimate of maybe 3 - 4 million of Turkish heritage denizens only. The recognition of the children of these communities as being entitled to German citizenship and therefore equality before the law was of course lauded in every circle concerned with basic civil political and human rights.

Of course, there were denizens of different ethnic heritage including e.g. significantly many Italians and other European heritages, and herein lies the rub. On the one hand you had a promise of equality, and on the other you already had at the outset a differential way of understanding new citizenship. This happened not least in the actual formal legal sense, whereby those of certain heritages, in particular Turkish heritage, could [not upon adoption of German citizenship have a dual nationality](#). However, those of (EU) European heritage could hold dual nationality. To be a new citizen, did not mean equality from the get go. Ideas of religion and culture had

already intermingled into law and policy to create different tiers of what it meant to be German. Despite changes in the law the issue of dual nationality, with a focus on Muslims citizens, reignites and becomes part of political manifestos.

To add insult to injury, policy-speak developed the term (from circa 2005 according to Luis Hernandez-Aguilar) citizens of 'immigrant background'. Largely applied to those new citizens from Muslim backgrounds and in less than flattering contexts, 'immigrant background' is another confirmation that Muslims, even with the right paperwork, do not belong and there remains a barrier to their equality that relates to their nature (immigrant) as opposed to the failure of the state to accept that their citizenship means belonging and the right to equality.

The death of Multikulti, and the reprise of Eugenics

According to [Marina Wasmer](#), the term 'multicultural' circulated during the late 1970s and the 1980s in church, union, social workers' and teachers' circles. The Green Party leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) intellectual Heiner Geißler and groups within the Social Democratic Party (SPD) were early proponents of a multicultural society. From there *Multikulti* became a catchy refrain, sounding 'fresh, modern and easy-going'. However, much like the critique of multiculturalism in the UK as propounding a 'saris and samosa' approach to multicultural reality and problems, the public imagination in Germany appreciated *mutlikulti* in superficial, often 'folkloric' ways, as Wasmer highlights: "equating it with pizza and doner kebabs. Nowadays, *multikulti* and terms such as 'dreams/dreamers', 'illusion' or 'naive' are frequently mentioned in the same breath, signifying its bad reputation."

The death of the term came in tandem with the UK's own dereliction of an idea that many argued hailed from its shores. Announced as a failure by erstwhile UK Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011, it was done so at the Munich Security Conference, a year after Angela Merkel made similar comments about the utter failure of 'multikulti'. Cameron's speech then (though arguably in many ways not [dissimilar to the New Labour approach](#)) was hailed and condemned as a follow-on from Merkel's and Germany's paradigm shift. The Australian Sydney Morning Herald newspaper [described the Cameron and Merkel](#) approach as likely pre-empting a "chill in the melting pot". Identifying this approach's salient feature as opposite to: 'Australia's more relaxed multiculturalism [which] has concentrated more on the positive contributions of other cultures to the mainstream, and has been quite successful as a result,' it laments a 'slow hardening of opinion now apparent overseas' that may in time also become part of Australian discourse. This all too prescient comment summarises how Islamophobic narratives travel across

borders, with Australia now also standing accused under successive administrations of adopting an aggressively anti-multiculturalist policy.

Merkel and Cameron's comments, coincide with Germany's contemporaneous 'debates' provoked by the publication of Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, (Germany Abolishes Itself) in 2010. Sarrazin's book conspicuously related statistics to eugenics and became Germany's best-selling book in 2011. [Sarrazin argued in his book](#) that Germany was becoming dumber on account of the "growing" Muslim population while also writing about the "average higher intelligence of the Jews' passed through a Jewish gene".

This philosemitism ([itself a form of anti-semitism](#)) has informed Islamophobic narrative in subsequent years and has impacted on Muslim civil society organisation and political freedoms in ways that have eventually impacted wider society. Perhaps as acutely concerning, is the unabashed return of eugenicist discourse. A crude conversation about genetic inferiority and superiority of 'races' was at that time taboo across Europe, let alone in Germany, a country that prided itself on coming to terms with its racist and genocidal past. Instead of seeing the clear associations and repetitions of tropes and racisms, Sarrazin's book (though condemned in many intellectual circles) found warm reception in wider society including middle class and political circles. According to [Marina Wasmer this was](#), in part also due to the book's proximity to arguments regarding *Leitkultur* (leading culture) feeding into controversy surrounding the concept.

[Aristotle Kallis](#) sounds a further alarm:

"the most eloquent measure of the book's capacity for penetrating mainstream society lies elsewhere: it has sold more than 1.5 million copies, becoming an instant best-seller and going through numerous editions. Opinion polls conducted in late 2010 and 2011 revealed that about half of the population broadly agreed with Sarrazin's line of argument, and a fifth of those polled would vote for a party that he would..."

Sarrazin's focus on Muslims, their number but specifically their role as part of the nation (in this case negatively impacting the nation), again 'distinguishes' Muslims as errant or deviant citizens, who although integrated enough to lower the standard of the nation, must by this account not be allowed to do so. The lens through which Muslims are then 'distinguished' whether by counting their numbers, identifying them as Muslim or creating policy to deal with their deficiency/ies, take on a meaning beyond simple bureaucratic or administrative concerns. Germany has a very recent history of counting its citizens / denizens, racializing their characteristics and enacting laws to counter their 'malign' influence.

Becoming what it is not, or erasing what it has been – Old/ New stories of Germany

There are, it seems two Germanys always, when discussing this issue. A violent, chauvinistic entity self-defining around race – even co-opting the Christian faith into its narratives of nation. And one that has resisted: from a culture of contrition after the Holocaust and in its West German iteration to a wholesale educational program of de-Nazification. The former is the Germany that has seen in the post-Sarrazin years the rise of the *Alternatif für Duetschland* (AfD) party, from foundation in 2013 to the largest parliamentary opposition party in 2021. It is the Germany where ministers like Horst Seehofer can state that Islam has no place in Germany, and where a witch-hunt against pro-Palestinian activists and organisations has led to the banning of [Boycott Divestment and Sanctions activities](#). The latter is the one that saw 1000s of people come out in the streets of Dresden, Cologne and other cities to protest the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, Pegida movement, such protests [involving Cathedrals, churches, automobile companies and local authority offices](#) turning their lights off in solidarity against neo-fascism. It is the Germany where leading members of cultural institutions [have taken a public stance](#) against the IHRA definition of anti-semitism being instrumentalised to close down criticism of Israel, and where the courts released the [Humbolt Three](#).

Despite the counter-interventions to the move rightwards listed above, there seems to be no escaping the direction of travel in German society and politics. It makes little difference if the Chancellor [Angela Merkel states that](#), "Islam has... become part of Germany," if it is prefaced by the statements that Germany has been historically Christian and Jewish, and are only made because the interior minister Horst Seehofer stated, "Islam does not belong in Germany." The narrative of belonging cuts across European(ised) borders. What should be a right of citizenship – to *feel* part of the national body- has been subverted – or perhaps is yet to be realised – and it started long before Brexit-type movements took root. Political culture currently allows or emboldens senior politicians to make statements like Seehofer's, or parties like AfD can be elected on anti-Muslim and anti-migrant rhetoric. Unless making such comments become taboo, as generally speaking anti-semitic narratives have become in Germany, there can be no transformation of Germany into the country its much proclaimed 'contrition' for past racism claimed it had become.

Put simply, understanding the Holocaust and the events that led to it, is imperative if the current slide into unfettered state and social Islamophobia – and all the hatreds that come with it - is to be reversed. Islamophobia, as academic and author [Arun Kundnani](#) in an interview with this author highlights, is a product of the deeper and wider problems

that face society. Unfettered Islamophobia policy and praxis leads inevitably – as the accelerated and structural demonisation of Jews a century ago has shown – to the targeting of other groups. Think Jews, communists, Roma, the disabled and homosexuals in the 1930s and 1940s. Think Muslims, immigrants, refugees now. As France's attacks on 'Islam-leftism' or Britain's putative crusade on the 'radical' left show, these processes are well underway. In Germany, one of its many manifestations has been in the instrumentalisation of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism to attack firstly Muslims and then pro-Palestinian activity in general.

How can this cycle be disrupted? The key is maybe in Merkel's statement above. She speaks of Germany as historically Christian and Jewish. This is the official dogma of contrition Germany, yet for the longest time and in its Islamophobic resurgence the idea of Germanness as solely Christian is an idea co-opted to exclude the 'other', Jewish, Muslim, Marxist etc. The idea that 100 years ago, a German head of state could say what Merkel has, is unfathomable. By speaking thus, Merkel was creating a(nother) (new) story of the nation. It's part of nation building and, as Miriam François has pointed out [on these pages](#), it can be done for the good and the bad. Including Jewishness in German identity is essential, but then so too is to incorporate Islam and not simply as a latter force in social history. The idea of Germany and Germanness as immutable – whether bordered ethnically, religiously or with fences and soldiers – is as fallacious as that of any other 'nation'. Just as the nation state is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history, Germany itself is but [150 years old](#). And in its nascent years, prior to the bloodshed and horror of the Second World War, there were Muslims aplenty in and a part of Germany. As Luis Hernandez-Aguilar points out, Muslims as part of Germany society including those who met the criteria of ethnic Germanness; Muslims in Germany to study or take part in cultural exchange; Muslims from the German colonies, including those brought to train to fight 'jihad' for the German state. Their existence and the interactions between them, society and government puts to bed the lie that Islam is either a recent German phenomenon, seen as 'immigrant' so many generations down the line.

The wisdom of Nathan: Wasn't Germany originally plural?

This is not just a German issue, but it pertains here as much as if not more than other European(ised) contexts. Whilst those of us watching in 2000 from the UK, saw Germany at last slowly – in our naivety – catching up with the lead of British multiculturalism, it is in fact the increasingly constricted and racially bounded idea of citizenship being invoked by powerful political and social movements in Germany that has won the ideological day in the UK. Hush. Don't tell the Brexiteers.

Ironically there is repeated and increasingly recent precedent that invokes the idea of Germany as Christian in favour of religious pluralism and latterly in favour of Islam and Muslims. As arguments about and bans against the hijab raged (as they sadly still do) in 2004, the late President Johannes Rau invoked the 18th Century play *Nathan the Wise* – a text seen to be foundational to the German Enlightenment. The play is set during an armistice in the Third Crusade and through various storylines, and the 'ring

Poster campaigns for AfD in 2017 and 2018 raised eyebrows momentarily inside and outside the country. ..One demands Islam free (Islamfrei) schools, reminiscent as many noted, of the Nazi era rhetoric demanding Judenfrei i.e. Jewish free areas.

parable' within the tale, makes a call to religious pluralism and equality between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Whilst invoked at the time of its creation as a call to equality for Jews and Deists in German (speaking) states, it again highlights that the idea of Islam as part of the cultural fabric of Germanness is hardly alien but indeed key to one of its constituent stories.

Speaking on the 275th anniversary of the playwright, Gotthold Lessing's birthday, Rau stated: 'The democratic State of law recognizes the right to difference, but there is not a differential application of rights.' He states further: 'I do not want this. This is not my conception of a country shaped for many centuries by Christianity.' And further: 'humans of different faiths – Christians, Jews, Muslims – can live together as equals and this is good for everybody'.

Frank Peter who discusses the importance of the play and Rau's invocation of it states:

"His reference to *Nathan the Wise* serves Rau not only as evidence for the well-established feasibility of religious pluralism and its beneficial effects on society: 'humans of different faiths – Christians, Jews, Muslims – can live together as equals and this is good for everybody'. Crucially it goes further, for it allows Rau to redefine the relationship between individual belief, legal order and the identity of the German nation. Rau's reassessment of the power of law to shape German identity is based on the analogy drawn here

between today's multireligious Germany and Palestine at the time of *Nathan the Wise*."

How ironic that this story is set in Palestine.

In the destruction of nuance or indeed common sense necessitated by the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism, the fire of German chauvinism is fanned. To be German is to be pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian, and then without irony invoke equality as a reason to deny Muslims citizenship, because of, well in the above cases, sex. Despite making so many new citizens and indeed new denizens, the conflict between two ideas of Germany has not been able to make those terms meaningful as one of pluralism. Currently Muslims are held to account for beliefs they may or may not have in ways that 'accepted' (read ethnic, read Christian) Germans may or may not also share – as is their right. Whilst denigrating Muslim views on homosexuality or perceived views on gender and using this as a bar to citizenship or civic participation, there is no equivalent process of denying participation or rights to the ethnic / Christian Germans who do actually hold those views or indeed racist views that deny others their basic humanity. In official lore, such Germans do not exist. As the voting patterns for right wing and far-right parties show, and as the increasingly vitriolic voices of anti-Muslim racism across the political spectrum also show, these Germans exist aplenty.

Many of these would fail the citizenship test on any number of points. Not least, maybe Chancellor Merkel herself who voted against legalising gay marriage in 2017, and whose party had always staunchly opposed it and favoured views on homosexuality more aligned with those espoused by Muslims based on their religious values. If these views are deemed natural conservative politics, then for Germany to heal its split nation they must be understood to be the acceptable politics and values of Muslims and other minorities. Equality and plurality are not easy. They are often messy. Their modalities need to be constantly checked and reviewed and there will always be tension between the competing ideas, ideologies, values and norms of everyone sharing the same space.

Whither Germany? Sharing space or Expulsion?

Poster campaigns for AfD in 2017 and 2018 raised eyebrows momentarily inside and outside the country. They are forgotten now – normalised. One demands [Islam free](#) (Islamfrei) schools, reminiscent as many noted, of the Nazi era rhetoric demanding Judenfrei i.e. Jewish free areas. In it school-girls with short shorts and almost non-existent skirts skip along happy in their Islam-free whiteness. This somewhat alarming, though less remarked, sexualisation of female children came off the heels of the previous year's posters that included one entitled '[Burkini? We Prefer Bikinis](#)'. The slogan was

Islamophobia - the new German identity marker

emblazoned across a photo of two women in skimpy bikinis seen from behind. This co-option of the female body as Hernandez-Aguilar and Sarah Bracke argue, is integral to the idea of 'authentic' Germanness. Hardly models of liberation, this idea of German femininity has been invoked in another poster thus: a pregnant woman smiling – her head cut partly out of shot – [lies on the ground](#) with the slogan across: 'New Germans: We will Make them by Ourselves.'

In the furore over the 'migrant sex attack' scandal of Cologne in 2015, when gangs of migrants were accused of attacking women during the New Year's Eve celebrations in the city, there was little remark on Germans' 'own' views on rape. The attacks were used by political and social commentators as another way of accusing Muslims in particular of misogynistic and violent attitudes towards women – everything the citizenship tests were supposed to keep out. Crudely, there is a line of causality imagined in this type of magical legal thinking: allow Muslim men to not shake hands with women – and this is what happens. As [Korac highlights](#), whilst there was simply no evidence that the high number of attacks were perpetrated by Muslim (heritage) men – just that x amount of Muslim men were arrested by police who had clearly profiled them – there was little or no reflection on the views of the majority of German society on rape and sexual violence. According to European Commission survey results published in 2016, not long after the notorious Cologne incident, 27% of Germans believe sex without consent is acceptable in some circumstances, including where the victim is 'wearing provocative clothing' and 'not clearly saying no or fighting back'. According to a study commissioned by the (German) Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, one in seven women in Germany experiences sexual violence. One in four women—irrespective of education level or socio-economic status—is exposed to domestic violence. The perpetrators are almost always men, among whom there is no significant distinction based on religion, background, educational level or social status. As Korac asks, what makes these attacks on women seem an 'ordinary event' as opposed to those in Cologne?

If Muslims wanted to pervert the narrative we could argue, let a German man shake hands with a woman and this is what happens. Except Muslims do not have the power or privilege (and maybe the prejudice) to make such assertions.

How to change the narrative?

The latest work of IHRC on the Domination Hate Model of Intercultural Relations (DHMIR) [looks at Germany](#). It has more detailed recommendations but a few are outlined below. As with many they cross-cut with other 'national' experiences, and the UK, despite everything, has a few that can also inform.

A nuanced and robust citizenship education needs to be designed and provided across schools as a compulsory part of the curriculum in Germany. This can and must provide contextual understanding of Europe and Germany's long history of migration and cultural diversity, as well as engaging with the rights and equalities of citizenship that respect difference.

The project [Our Migration Story](#), takes British schoolchildren and indeed anyone willing to learn through two thousand years of successive migrations to the UK highlighting the lack of one ethnos that makes anyone authentically British. Germany as a nation of immigrants and migrants (before the Second World War, Germans were one of the most widely settled ethnicities across Europe, particularly in its East) can benefit from the long view of its ethnic, religious and national history. Muslims, as has been briefly argued, have a much longer role in that history than current narratives will allow. The historical presence of Muslims in Germany, and interactions between German history and culture with Islam and Muslims needs to be taught in history and literature classes in schools.

Re-establishing the idea of Christianness as faith and not nation is a role that both the state and the established [churches in Germany must participate](#) in (see the European Court of Justice advice to Germany that churches should not be exempted from anti-discrimination laws). It should be noted that there are also many examples of good prac-

tice by Churches and church leadership on the issue of Islamophobia.

The role of the arts in not only promoting that vision (alongside news media) but also including Muslim voices in that process (as referred to above) in a democratic fashion, is essential.

The state and its institutions, however, need to lead. A strong and unequivocal commitment to the full citizenship of Muslims and all racialised minorities must be made by the government. The state must remove discriminatory citizenship regimes e.g. issues around dual citizenship, and discriminatory policy language like 'immigrant background'.

As stated before, it is not enough for some ministers, or even the Chancellor to make conciliatory noises about the role of Islam and Muslims or other racialised minorities, when other political figures, groups and parties across the political spectrum can and do demonise with impunity. There has to be a consistent and non-discriminatory frame of discussing racialised minorities. There needs to be a normalisation of equalities in political speech, deviance from which is seen, rightly, as deviance from basic norms which result in sanction. Put simply, disciplinary and even legal procedures as well as cultural disapprobation need to be brought to bear against politicians who seek to demonise Muslims.

It is clear that a deepening and widening understanding of social issues is required across the general polity of Germany, and this can only happen when the political discourse of the state and its political elite promotes nuance rather than demonisation; and a 'new' citizenship for all.

• Arzu Merali

is a writer and researcher based in London, UK. She is one of the founders of Islamic Human Rights Commission, formerly editor in chief of Palestine Internationalist and currently one of the editors at The LongView. She has contributed to the upcoming publication [Muslim Experiences of Hatred and Discrimination in Germany](#) alongside Saied R. Ameli and Ibraheem Mohseni Ahoeei. She is co-author of [Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK](#) and other books, reports and articles on Islamophobia.

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by Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria

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

Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria

is an Assistant Professor at University of Tehran, Faculty of Islamic Knowledge and Thought.

Shia Islam, the Social Winner of the latest Karabakh War

When the conflict over the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh erupted again after almost thirty years, people around the world, including Muslims, often viewed it through superficial lenses. **Zviad Jughashvili** argues that the influence of religion, specifically Islam and more particularly Shia Islam, has evolved in ways that Muslims and other non-regional observers have failed to understand.

The Basics

As political analysts and think-tanks focus on the study of [geopolitical outcomes](#) of the latest war in [Armenian occupied Karabakh](#), the social outcome of the war is a glaring omission.

Contrary to popular opinion the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenian nationalism is not a religious one. Religion plays a role for [social mobilization](#) on both sides, but it's neither a catalyst or a driving force. The conflict is primarily territorial.

After [Iran](#), Azerbaijan has the second largest proportion of Shia Muslims in the world – some 70 to 80 percent of the population. This is something not known to most Muslims abroad, especially in the English-speaking world. Prior to being forcefully incorporated into the Russian empire and later into the Soviet Union, Azerbaijanis played a key historical role in the ascendancy of Shia Islam. The Safavid dynasty and Qizilbash were Azeri. Many contemporary Shia heavyweights like Ayatollah Khomeini, Allamah Tabataba'i, to name just a few, are of Azeri ethnic background.

Another key fact that has been largely ignored so far by the mainstream media is that in addition to Karabakh, Armenian nationalist militias have occupied and ethnically cleansed seven other regions of Azerbaijan that border Karabakh. The recent clashes mostly took place in these additional regions. Most of Karabakh is still under the control of Armenian militias with the now added presence of Russian peacekeeping forces.

Key Concepts

Astute analysis of the latest war in Karabakh by reputable policy centers concurs that [Moscow won](#) the latest Karabakh war without fighting it directly. Undoubtedly, Russia scored a major political victory. The other primary victor, a social winner so to say, is Shia Islam.

This article approaches the term Shia Islam more from a contemporary socio-political angle. It does not use Shia Islam strictly in its theological and jurisprudential meaning when discussing *contemporary matters* surrounding the Karabakh war.

What is the definition of Shia Islam in

this analysis when referring to more *contemporary issues* surrounding the Karabakh war? The definition is contrarian.

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, imperialist power centres and their surrogates actively began defining “true Islam” as anything which blocks the expansion of the revolution. Whether a movement or individuals prayed with their hands folded or by their sides, mattered little so long as the Islamic revolution was pressured and opposed at a political level. Thus, any projection, empowerment and manifestation of Islam which does not challenge the narrative and the fundamental pillars of Imam Khomeini's (RA) revived God-centric socio-political program is Shia Islam.

To make a practical point, if this author was to write a book on Islamic revival of the past century, Sayyid Qutb, Mauwlanah Mawdudi, Ramadan Shalah, Fathi Shaqqi, Dr. Kalim Siddiqui, it would not be differentiated from Ayatollah Shaheed Mohammed al-Baqir or Muqtada al-Sadr. Neither would Ayatollah Sadiq Shirazi, Yasir al-Habib or Subhi al-Tufayli differ from Abdulrahman Al-Sudais or Abdallah bin Bayyah. While being Sunni, figures like Mawdudi and Dr. Kalim were much closer to the Islamic vision of Qum and Tehran than Riyadh or Ankara. The same applies to the opposing side. While being Shia, figures like Ayatollah Sadiq Shirazi or Subhi al-Tufayli are more aligned with Riyadh's vision of Islam in the modern world than with the vision of Qum or Najaf.

Karabakh Wars & Islam

Those who have not lived through the first Karabakh war of the 1990s or are not familiar with the intimate details of the war, might be puzzled as to why Imam Khomeini (RA) or Sayyid Qutb are mentioned in relation to it. Hopefully the following analysis will demystify this matter.

Prior to moving to a more contemporary period and issues relating to the conflict in Karabakh, it should be kept in mind that in the Karabakh region itself, Shia Islam has very deep historical roots.

The author of this paper spoke to a few elderly locals from the Lachin region, who pointed out that the early Muslim migrants

to the area were mainly persecuted Shia scholars escaping from Hijaz and other parts of the Arab world. The elders highlighted that the village of Hoces is an Azerified pronunciation of Hijaz. Other villages very close to it are called Aligulu, meaning servant of Ali, a common Shia reference to their identity. A village near Aligulu is called Seyidler, meaning the Sayyids, a common general name given to the descendants from the Prophet Muhammad's (AS) household.

During the first Karabakh war, religion played a crucial role in mobilising Armenian nationalists to fight for the occupation of Karabakh. In simplified terms, the Armenian narrative went as follows; Azerbaijan is a newly formed Muslim-Turkic state with a [bloody historical](#) relationship with Armenians from its very formation. Thus, Armenians, the people of the world's first Christian state, must defend their community and land from being dominated by Muslims.

During the 1990's the Russian speaking press regularly published articles written by Armenian Christian seminary members on the battlefields in Karabakh. Thus, when right at the very start of the latest Karabakh war, [a picture](#) of an armed Armenian priest, Father Hovhannes, emerged holding a machinegun and was popularized on the internet by Armenian users under the hashtag Faith & Power; it did not come as a surprise to those who had witnessed the Karabakh war of the 1990s.

In the 1990s, on the Azerbaijani side, religion played a cosmetic role. Newly independent Azerbaijan which had just seceded from the atheist Soviet Union, was only beginning to rediscover its Muslim identity.

Lack of ideological motivation created a shortage of young men willing to fight for Azerbaijan's territorial sovereignty in the 1990s. Paying bribes to avoid being called out to the front was a common practice for those who could afford it. This is no longer the case. In the most recent conflict, mobilisation centres in Azerbaijan were overwhelmed by the number of volunteers willing to sign up for the front lines. When I spoke to one veteran of the Karabakh war of the 1990s, he expressed great pride and astonishment at the high levels of social motivation to join the war in comparison to the 1990s.

Thus, a question arises as to what has

The role of Islam in the Karabkh conflict

changed in Azeri society that now inspires millions to express their willingness to die for their state's territorial sovereignty? After speaking to a few volunteers, veterans and viewing dozens of **organically posted** videos from the frontlines of the Karabkh war, Islam's centrality as a social mobilisation force stands out.

The liberation of every village and town during the recent conflict was followed by the Azaan (Muslim Call to Prayer). Videos of Azerbaijani soldiers praying on the front lines and regularly narrating poems (*latmiyah*) in praise of the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) at the start of the latest war often confused some viewers. Some Azerbaijani social media users often assumed that the videos were fakes and hailed from Islamic Iran's war against Saddam Hussein in the 1980s.

As the war went on, the Azerbaijani blogosphere and social media were flooded with videos of Azerbaijani soldiers remembering the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (AS). Even one of Azerbaijan's well known atheist propagators, Vusal Mamedov was moved to **tweet** that while he is still an atheist, he cannot ignore the reality that it is Islam which mobilised the Azerbaijani armed forces and raised their fighting spirit.

Azerbaijan, Islam and Internal Dynamics

Those unfamiliar with Azerbaijan's internal political dynamics might not see anything surprising. Most governments of Muslim states utilise Islam as a battle cry and a catalyst for social mobilisation. Despots like Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qadhafi and Saudi royals, have all used Islam as a veneer. What is different in Azerbaijan is that the regime of the Aliyev family which has ruled Azerbaijan for more than 25 years, defines itself as a secular gatekeeper, safeguarding Azerbaijan from rolling "backwards" towards Islam.

During the Soviet era, the founder of the current regime, Geidar Aliyev, was a KGB General and a top-ranking communist official. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the

Aliyevs usurped power and turned government into a family affair.

Islam's role as a camouflage for a Baathist regime in Iraq or Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was a natural phenomenon, because at least on a ritualistic level, to the societies of those regimes, Islam was a fundamental part of their identity. In most Muslim states of the former Soviet Union, Islam had been reduced to playing a very minor role in social identity.

At independence, the reins of power in the newly formed independent Muslim states of the former Soviet Union were hijacked by former communist bosses. All ruling elites that managed to consolidate power were previous high-ranking Soviet KGB or Politburo officials.

The newly formed ruling regimes made sure that Islam remained a marginal or at best a completely government-controlled phenomenon in the newly independent Muslim countries.

Azerbaijan was no exception and thus ever since independence, the Aliyev regime went about suppressing most forms of Islamic revival in Azerbaijan. From official **hijab bans, to imprisoning, killing and torturing** Azerbaijan's leading Islamic activists, scholars and **journalists**, the Aliyev regime defined itself in total opposition to Islam's organic revival within Azerbaijan.

After 2015 when the Aliyev regime **attacked the Muslim Unity Movement (MUM)** and imprisoned its leadership, the Aliyevs embarked on a long-term political project of cultivating a loyal segment of Islamic scholars in Azerbaijan.

Over the past five years this strategy has proven to be partially successful. Statements, writings and social activities of many Islamic scholars and unofficial NGO's in Azerbaijan have become less political and less critical of the ruling regime.

Nevertheless, the regime's success in domesticating the Islamic movement in Azerbaijan has been far from total. For example, prominent preacher Haji Shahin Hasanli, who until his official association with the regime controlled Religious Council of the Caucasus (RCC), was seen as a credible independent preacher, received a fierce backlash

for his association with the RCC. Also, imprisoned Islamic scholars like Dr. Movsum Samedov, Taleh Baqirzade and Abgul Suleymanov not only continue to command wide respect and following, but have become a benchmark of authenticity of Islam in Azerbaijan.

From the very start of the recent Karabkh war, members of MUM, graduates of Islamic seminaries in Qum and many ordinary practising Muslims formed the backbone of Azerbaijan's military reserve forces as volunteers. Known for **banning Islamic literature** and limiting the activities of independent Islamic scholars and preachers, the Aliyev regime suddenly began turning a blind eye to Azerbaijani soldiers and officers posting **highly Islamically charged** footage from the frontlines. While the Aliyev regime tolerated Islamic manifestations within the Azerbaijani army, it is inevitable that it will have to pay a political and social price for this political expediency.

On a political level, the ruling regime will be able to contain the organic resurfacing of Islam through political machinations, brute force, and external assistance. Many from the leadership and active members of the Islamic movement in Azerbaijan are either in prison or in exile.

The organisations on the ground have been erased from the political scene. Even basic social activities of organic Islamic organisations are not tolerated. For example, on March 20, 2020, members of the Muslim Unity Movement (MUM) were arrested for simply distributing free masks and information cards to help contain the coronavirus pandemic.

Nevertheless, the socio-political manifestations of Islam's organic resurfacing in Azerbaijan during the recent Karabkh war are explicit and undeniable. A video **posted** on a popular Azerbaijani Islamic Facebook page on December 2, 2020, featured an Azerbaijani soldier requesting the release of Islamic prisoners arrested for protesting the hijab ban in Azerbaijan. In the same video the soldier asked for the release of MUM leader Sheikh Taleh Baqirzade. This is one of many impactful public manifestations of the Islamic revival in Azerbaijan.



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While the political ramifications of Islam's manifestation during the recent Karabakh war are difficult to predict accurately, the social impact is evident and immediate.

Dozens of videos of Azerbaijani soldiers praying to attain martyrdom on the frontlines and [discussing the military events in Karabakh](#) through the prism of Imam Hussein's (AS) struggle in Karbala, cultivated a phenomenon which normalised Islam as an integral part of Azerbaijani statehood.

Due to Azerbaijan's unanimous glorification of the Safavid period in its national discourse, the mental reintegration of Islam into the matters of statehood carries social repercussions with political ramifications which should not be underestimated.

Azerbaijan's historicity is primarily based on its Safavid Turkic heritage, where Shia Islam's integration into the state apparatus was its primary pillar. Just like in Iran, where the state-sanctioned Shia Islamic ideology unites Iranian 'hardliners' and 'moderates', Shia Islam plays a similar role in Azerbaijani society.

Another crucial factor regarding Shia Islam's organic resurgence on a socio-political level during the recent Karabakh war is the influence of the scholarly institutions of Qum.

Referred to by Western pundits as the Vatican of Shia Islam, the presence of Azerbaijani scholars with educational backgrounds from Qum on the frontlines, sent a powerful message that Qum's role as a key religious centre cannot be overshadowed by religious projects propelled by the ruling regime in Baku.

Since about 2010, the ruling regime in Azerbaijan has attempted to formulate its own version of "Shia Islam" in a secularised form. The project was [mainly managed](#) by the former presidential adviser, Ali Hasanov, but in time he lost the support of the ruling Aliyev family and was fired in 2019. In Azerbaijan it is widely speculated that part of the reason the trusted confidant of the Aliyev family was sent packing was because he did not manage to create

an indigenous religious counterweight to Qum and its Azeri graduates.

Secularising Islam in Azerbaijan also has an external dimension. Israel and the US would be very pleased to create a secularised version of Shia Islam as a counterweight to Iran's Islamic system. The [successful implementation](#) of a similar agenda among Sunni Muslim nations resulted in the establishment of UAE or Bahrain type regimes but is yet to be implemented among Shia Muslims.

Israel has been quite open about [using Azerbaijan](#) as an intelligence platform against Iran and are adamant that Azerbaijan should remain secular. In October 2020, Israel's former foreign minister Avigdor Liberman [stated](#) that "it is important that we have a [friendly] state in that location, a Muslim state, modern and secular."

Prognosis

Maintaining Azerbaijan's secularity means creating an environment where its religious community will define itself in opposition to Qum. This is at best is a very unrealistic objective. This would require the reconfiguration of key tenets of Shia Islam and especially the [institution of Maraja](#). In recent history, it was attempted by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in Iran, resulting in his regime's collapse. The US attempted to do the same in Iraq after its invasion in 2003. Realising its impossibility, Washington changed tack and tried to play off Najaf against Qum. The strategy backfired and produced [the opposite](#) of what the US desired.

While Azerbaijan occupies an important geopolitical position, the religion factor would play a minimal role if it did not border Iran, and Israel were not locked in an ideological cold war against the Islamic revival.

Iran's standoff with NATO and Israel is not going to disappear any time soon thus ensuring that Azerbaijan's Shia Muslim identity will continue [to play an important](#) tangible and soft-power role in this global standoff, unintentionally pitting the increasingly religious society of Azerbaijan against the autocratic secular regime.

No Islamic leader or movement in Azerbaijan is aiming to establish an Islamic governing system in Azerbaijan. Several key figures of the Islamic movement in Azerbaijan have [stated on record](#) that Azerbaijani society is not yet ready for a comprehensive Islamic governing model. Nevertheless, Islam's role, as the latest Karabakh war has clearly demonstrated, is organically going to penetrate all levels of society, similar to what has happened in Turkey. While NATO regimes spent decades [in making](#) sure that Turkey remained a pro-Western secular satellite, the rise to power of the AKP highlighted the [flaws](#) of this approach, with significant negative geopolitical repercussions for NATO regimes.

Azerbaijani society spent over 70 years under a Soviet atheist system which all but eradicated Islam from public and personal life. The fact that within 30 years, despite harsh internal and external pressure, Islam has managed to turn into one of the key rallying cries of Azerbaijan society on such a crucial issue as Karabakh, shows that the internal and external experts have underestimated the regenerative power of religion among Azerbaijanis.

Much of how the interaction between the Aliyev regime and the Shia Muslim community will evolve depends on how the ruling regime chooses to address the resurgent role of Shia Islam once the hype over the recent Karabakh war dies down. If the Aliyev regime attempts to impose its social dominance through [its usual aggressive](#) social engineering, there will be a backlash. The religious community post-Karabakh war, just like wider society, has gained a sense of self-confidence and will not allow itself to be pushed around. On the other hand, if the Aliyev regime leaves things as they are, the organic social growth of Shia Islam will continue and sooner or later will spill further into the domain of politics.

• Zviad Jughashvili

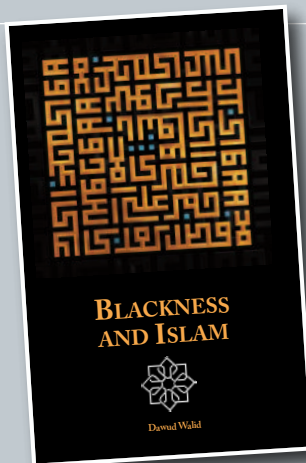
has been writing about issues mainly covering the former Soviet Union for over eight years. He has studied International Relations and taught Business Studies at college level.

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Dr. Rudolph Bilal Ware - Associate Professor of West Africa, Islamic Knowledge & Spirituality, African Diaspora at the University of California – Santa Barbara

The Intimacies of Surveillance

The internalisation of governmental narratives about oneself, especially as an individual or a group, is a common and arguably essential by-product of state policies aimed at controlling dissent, particularly from minoritised communities. **Niyousha Bastani** argues that the Prevent policy in the UK, with its racialised hierarchies and normativities, has permeated Muslim life, thinking and crucially, resistance.

The embeddedness of structures of surveillance in everyday life encourages Muslims, along with everyone else, to “see like a state.” This essay grapples with one consequence of violent anti-Muslim surveillance structures — their potential internalisation by Muslims, in public and intimate spaces.

Governance through surveillance works by categorising people into flat and essential identities — through categories such as race, gender, class, religion, and ability — and making decisions based on assumptions about these identities. In its targeting of Muslims as ‘potential terrorists’ or as ‘vulnerable to radicalisation,’ anti-Muslim surveillance then also defines Muslimness and pins it down. When the state’s constructions of Muslim identity are internalised, Muslims can struggle to see themselves outside the reductive terms of the state. In the recent collected volume, *I Refuse to Condemn: Resisting Racism in Times of National Security* (Qureshi, 2020), Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan and Yasir Morsi write eloquently about the difficulty of seeing oneself outside this dominant gaze. Manzoor-Khan writes that “we have more knowledge of how our identities are understood by others than we have of who we are on our own terms” (2020, 188-9); Morsi writes of the ‘Muslim’ as constructed by the ‘War on Terror’ as a shadow he must reckon with (2020, 137-148). I expand on the gaze they speak of here as the liberal white gaze of the ‘War on Terror.’

Especially important to the surveillance state is the idea that Muslims are inherently out of place in “the West.” The habit of “seeing like the state” naturalises Muslims feeling alienated in “the West” by blaming this experience on their inherent Otherness. It marks their feeling lost due to feeling ‘Other’ as a danger to society at large. At the same time, to be too certain of one’s religious identity is also marked as being “fundamentalist.” Muslims’ religiosity is deemed dangerous if they are too “practising” or committed, or conversely, if they are too “confused” and figuring it out. The acceptable way of being Muslim is then squeezed into a small suffocating space of being neither too committed nor too confused — the safest way of being Muslim becomes being ambivalent about religiosity.

This dynamic flattens being Muslim into static tropes and limits the scope for cultivating Muslim spaces on different terms and for nurturing spiritual and religious curiosity.

In the UK, the state has embedded its gaze and its definition of Muslim authenticity through providing counter-extremism funding to materially influence the agenda of community groups, among other tactics; beyond such direct influence, this piece grasps at the less tangible impacts of the surveillance state’s rigid delimitations of Muslim identity. My focus is on the UK, where I’m currently researching the implementation of the anti-Muslim counter-terrorism legislation known as PREVENT in university settings, but it is fair to hypothesise that similar dynamics are played out in other nation-states where anti-Muslim surveillance is prevalent through counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policies. Experiences in other such places also inform this piece. Policies like PREVENT operate on the premise that Muslims who are “vulnerable to radicalisation” can be identified by anyone through visible signs of increasing or “too much” religiosity or signs of “identity confusion.” I outline and problematise the ways in which such a premise reifies acceptable and “authentic” Muslim identity.

My thinking draws on my research, my own perspective as a woman committed to trying to become Muslim (and failing daily), and on stories research informants and loved ones have shared with me. In drawing on some of the stories I have heard through my research and in my daily life, I rewrite them here in a way that mixes accounts of different peoples’ experiences (including my own) without separating them out into different stories. I present these experiences as snapshots of a single imaginary character’s life throughout this piece, and I refer to her simply as she. This approach is inspired by ethnographic methods particularly concerned with maintaining anonymity. It is also a way of resisting reductive terms.

My conclusion is simple but fraught: to fight against the surveillance state, we must also let go of a particular notion of being authentically Muslim. These are notions that amount to performing Muslim identity as

the inherently out of place Other of the white liberal norm. These notions of authenticity either echo the state’s reductive terms or mirror them through equally reductive terms of “our own.” The letting go that I speak of can manifest in our day to day lives, and in the communities and religious, activist, and scholarly spaces we foster; when they do, I believe they make it easier for us to be.

1. Counterinsurgency as Keeping the House in Order

Home: a place where one lives.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 placed a legal duty (“the Prevent duty”) on public facing social service providers, like the National Health Service and education institutions (from nurseries to universities), to partake in identifying those who might be “vulnerable to radicalisation.” The Prevent duty intervened in interpersonal relations where trust is essential: between doctors and patients, mental health counsellors and clients, teachers and students. It did more than that too: it pushed its way into households, looking to children as potential channels for finding out about “terrorist homes,” intervening also in parent-child relations. Ambiguous drawings and misspellings of Muslim kids in schools brought police to family homes; Muslim university students for whom their institutions were meant to be a new home encountered instead a minefield of gazes that demanded they look “safe,” or else.

Since 2015, the Prevent duty has made the provision of social services a direct method of policing Muslims and migrants, and those perceived as either, who are the obvious targets of Prevent and the broader infrastructure of hostile environment policies. The latter infrastructure also requires the NHS and educational institutions to act as border guards, partaking in visa and residency checks on the government’s behalf. Even before becoming a statutory duty, the selective provision of funding from Prevent to community groups so long as they agreed to participate in the Home Office’s counter-radicalisation efforts, was demonstrative of

how consent can be coerced through welfare management.

When the cost of social services is widespread surveillance, those already disproportionately targeted by state violence are dissuaded from accessing these services on the one hand and on the other hand, incentivised toward conforming to the status quo when they do access these provisions — lest they catch the socially pervasive eye of the surveillance state.

In *Economy of Force*, Patricia Owens argues that “the defining social question of nineteenth century European thought” was whether the welfare of disaffected populations “at home” and in colonies could be prevented from revolt through the careful management of their life processes, that is, the processes involved in the reproduction of human life (2015, 16). Post-Enlightenment thinkers did not so much discover the social as “invent” it, as a space that scales up life processes previously embedded in family households and the hierarchies that go hand in hand with them. Scaling up the household also created a space wherein the state could regulate the activities of those most likely to revolt against the status quo.

Household: “one of the historically variable units of rule in which the life processes of members are reproduced and the collective unit of the household is maintained” (Owens 2015, 7).

Governing through the social realm, as PREVENT for example does is “the distinctly modern and capitalist form of household rule” (2015, 7). Owens therefore argues that liberal wars of counterinsurgency — including the ‘War on Terror’ — are wars of social work, of “domestication.” Counter-insurgency wars pacify a population by managing its welfare in such a way to ensure that they do not revolt against the dominant international political order. That is, social services are selectively provided to coerce a population’s consent for counter-insurgency rule. That counter-insurgency works through the realm of the social, and that social regulation is a type of household governance, indicate the ways in which counter-insurgency intervenes in the most necessary and intimate life processes: health care, shelter, and access to other resources necessary for survival.

Social government then, as a type of household rule, is always counter-insurgent and concerned with reconfiguring intimate relations; it reconfigures relations in such a way as to coerce those at the margins to comply with the status quo of the national and (post)colonial household. Wherever counterinsurgency wars are fought, the violence of such governance is evident. On “the home-front” too, the “domestic” ‘War on Terror’ has certainly knocked down doors of homes at night to make arrests on thinly founded suspicions, to detain without charge, and sometimes to deport or extradite — to make life processes difficult or unbearable. The work done by the incredible UK charity organisation HUGGS (Helping Households Under

Great Stress) is emblematic of this. Committed to providing “financial, emotional, and practical support and advice to Muslim households impacted by counter-terrorism, national security and extremism-related laws,” the organisation provides services to make life manageable in the aftermath of such violence.

PREVENT is the branch of counter-terrorism with the widest access to social space and therefore the greatest number of people in whose life processes it can intervene — everyone who attends an education institution, uses the NHS or has close contact with someone who does either is exposed to its gaze. As a strategy, it provides plenty of opportunity to intervene in life processes, and to make them difficult, exhausting or unbearable.

The processes that Owens outlines as being involved in the reproduction of life and therefore intervened on by counterinsurgency strategy are too narrow for fully grasping the extent to which counterterrorism policies conquer “a place where one lives,” or home. Sustaining life necessitates safety, shelter, food, medicine and healthcare; it also requires mental health support, intimacy; sustaining Muslim life, we may add, necessitates a community of faith and ability to practise one’s faith without facing violence.

Precisely because PREVENT grasps *living* as such, a central premise underpinning the strategy is that “radicalisation occurs as people search for identity, meaning and community” and that “some second or third generation Muslims in Europe, facing apparent or real discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage, can find in terrorism a ‘value system’, a community.” With one hand then, PREVENT institutes discrimination against (those perceived as) Muslims, especially young people, by marking them as “vulnerable to radicalisation” and directing society’s surveillance gaze toward them; with the other hand, PREVENT sweeps in as the solution for those facing “apparent” discrimination (read: the same real discrimination that the policy itself institutionalises across society).

PREVENT referrals can lead to being enrolled in the Channel program, which can include being directed to a mentorship program, mental health support, or a religious leader deemed “safe” for guidance that will steer one off the path to radicalisation. A second premise underlying PREVENT then is that the line dividing ‘bad, at risk/risky Muslims’ and ‘Good ones’ is constituted by a sort of psychoeducational care. This premise is the basis of a particularly liberal flavour of anti-Muslim sentiment — that ‘bad Muslims’ need to be educated into being good liberal subjects. Bad Muslims are conceived of as emotionally lost and uneducated. For those of us who *are* lost, searching for meaning, community, and identity through faith, it can be difficult to resist internalising this white liberal gaze and its pernicious understanding of good versus bad (that is, at risky/risky) Muslims. It is a gaze encountered everywhere, not only in the institutions charged with the

Prevent duty, but also at times in the eyes of near and dear liberal friends and family.

It is their first time meeting in years. He was her childhood music teacher; he is familiar with her home, her family. In a cafe, they talk about how their lives have shaped up. She is a young adult now, in her early twenties. He is white; she is not. She mentions her increasing discomfort and impatience with her parents’ subtle expressions of homophobia. She thinks it is not exactly why she wanted to catch up with him; but she doubts herself, it very well could be exactly why. As a kid, he was the first openly gay person she had a close relationship with, and realising that this is probably why she is catching up with him now, she cringes at herself. He is surprised: “I always thought of your parents as really like, well, cosmopolitan, educated Muslims.” Again, she tries not to squirm. She had not said they are “not educated,” she had said they express homophobia in ways that upset her. She leaves confused. In recounting this story to a friend later on, she is ashamed of herself for tokenising her former teacher for this conversation. She is ashamed of opening up her parents to be reduced to tropes of backwardness and of Good versus Bad Muslims in the white, secular, liberal imagination of education and progress.

2. Reconfigurations of being

Counter-terrorism and counter-extremism laws and policies that pin down Muslim identity through a white gaze reconfigure even our relationship to ourselves. The most recent and frightening example of this in the UK is the counter-extremism framing of the Department of Education’s Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) guidance for schools. As two groups taking legal action against this guidance, the Coalition of Antiracist Educators (CARE) and Black Educators Alliance (BEA), state in their [pre-action letter](#) to the Secretary of State for Education, guidance on relationship and sex education “has no rational link” to preventing extremism. However, when we consider that the unstated aim of counter-insurgency is always to intervene on intimate life processes and reconfigure our relations to ourselves and others, the rational link becomes clear.

Officially, the link to counter-extremism will no doubt be defended with references to protests in 2019 against the use of a curriculum called “[No Outsiders in our School: Teaching the Equalities Act](#).” The protests outside Birmingham schools largely involved parents who did not approve of the curriculum. The curriculum was designed by an assistant headteacher at Parkfield community primary school, which has a 98% Muslim student population. From the get go, the [programme was framed](#) as part of a “counter-radicalisation” effort, using PREVENT buzzwords like “community cohesion” and “fundamental British values.” News reports

gave accounts of parents' reasons for protesting as being that the kids are too young for the curriculum's content on sex and sexuality, and that the curriculum teaches about being trans and queer. These reports were then fed into justifications in public discourse of just how much counter-radicalisation efforts are needed in homophobic Muslim communities.

The framing of lessons about queer equality as a "fundamental British value" is an example of Jaspir Puar's (2018) concept of homonationalism. To quote Rahul Rao's explanation of the term, homonationalism is "an assemblage in which LGBT rights have come to be mobilised as new markers for an old divide between the civilised and the savage" (2020, 33). A poignant letter against the counter-extremism approach to equality by LGBT+ individuals and organisations that support LGBT+ communities lays out the hypocrisy of such homonationalism. They write, "it is worth remembering that the 21 MPs who voted against the new LGBT+ inclusive guidance on compulsory RSE earlier this year were predominantly white British men from the Conservative Party and the DUP" and that, "our (unelected) prime minister Boris Johnson has a history of making homophobic remarks, including attacking Labour for encouraging the teaching of homosexuality in schools and describing gay men as 'bumboys.'" They insightfully note that while there is homophobia in Muslim communities, there is also homophobia in all communities, and that painting Muslims as uniquely homophobic and anti-trans has served to support a racist agenda.

I believe that it is entirely predictable how teaching about sex, gender, and sexuality under a counter-radicalisation framework will intervene in intimate relationships and make life unliveable, perhaps especially for queer Muslims. Anyone who has grown up Muslim during the global 'War on Terror' knows what it is like to constantly fight against the internalisation of a gaze that sees ourselves, our families and our faith as uniquely violent, misogynist, homophobic and "uncivilised."

She is having her thousandth fight with her mom about this. They're walking through the gay neighbourhood, and there are flags painted on the sidewalks. Her mom says it all makes her feel sick, nauseous. When she was little, she used to just cry when her family said stuff like that. Now, as an adult, she gets an immediate migraine and feels all energy drained from her body, but she tries instead to reason. They go back and forth, they go in circles. She tries her knowledge from school; she tries a lazier "all hate is bad" appeal; she tries referring to alternative readings of relevant Quranic passages. "I know you want me to be like the white moms. I know you're embarrassed of me. But I have prayed and prayed to be more accepting, and I can't do it," Mom retorts, sounding genuine

and desperate. She lasts longer than usual in the face of her mother's disgusted face; this mother whom she loves and respects and in this moment cannot stand at all. But like always, she runs out of steam and starts grabbing at whatever she can, throwing in everything and the kitchen sink. She is surprised to hear the words coming out of her own mouth: "You can be SO backwards sometimes. Honestly, WHERE did they bring you from?" As soon as the words are out there, hanging in the air, she knows she has made her mother into an "uncivilised" outsider, and that she can do nothing to take it back. Nothing to do but unravel in shame.

3. "Your silence will not protect you"

The letter from LGBT+ individuals and organisations is right to call for the abolition of PREVENT, to advise against framing equalities education through it, and to point out the hypocrisy in presenting homophobia as a uniquely "uncivilised" Muslim problem. They write, "Let us not forget that it was Britain that implemented anti-sodomy laws across its empire, and it is Britain that continues to deport LGBT+ people seeking asylum from those very laws." We should however, be careful as well about the mirror of homonationalism, which Rao (2020) coins as "homoromanticism." The latter is a framework that imagines Others as "blameless pawns in an essentially Western 'culture war'" (Rao 2020, 33). Just as homonationalism imagines the 'West' as having 'progressed' beyond the homophobia of its "uncivilised" others, homoromanticism imagines homophobia to be exclusively a Western colonial import to previously queer-friendly places. In the framework of homonationalism, homosexuality is Western; in the framework of homoromanticism, homophobia is. I have written elsewhere about my experience in some elite and educational Muslim spaces, where I have been surprised to see queerness as the defining otherness through which being authentically Muslim is defined. To give the same example, at a conference about Muslim identity, I listened to a renowned white Muslim scholar of Islam reiterate a notion at the very core of PREVENT: that it is "natural" for young Muslims to feel out of place in the 'West.' Like the PREVENT guidance, he did not mean to say that legally instituted anti-Muslim sentiment that haunts all social spaces alienates young Muslims; instead, he claimed that this feeling of alienation is "natural" because in the Muslim-majority world, "you don't have kids in school being taught about non-binary gender and homosexuality." With this allusion to the Birmingham school protests, the speaker presented the feeling of alienation as inevitable among "authentic" Muslims: in his framing, "authentic" Mus-

lims are always foreign to (and feel foreign to) 'the West,' queerness is completely foreign to "authentic" Muslims, and queer Muslims are an inauthentic impossibility — always and everywhere out of place. The scholar in question thus uncritically invoked the racist vision of PREVENT, which sees Muslimness in the UK as "backwards," homophobic, and out of place.

As I listened, I was aware that a number of people in the room full of academics doing critical work did not share this view and a number would strongly oppose this underhanded homophobic and racist view in other contexts. Yet, while the message was abundantly clear (authentic Muslims are not queer nor do they accept queerness; and authentic Muslims see queerness as foreign and feel out of place in the West because of the prevalence of queerness), no one raised their voice to oppose it. The scholar mediated "authentic" Muslimness (as scholars often do) through the dominant white gaze, and he did not face strong opposition. There was a silent consent to this gaze, my own heavy silence included.

In an essay titled, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," Audre Lorde (2017) reflects on the surgical removal of a tumour that led her to consider all the things she had not spoken in her life from fear of pain and death. The experience makes her realise, "I was going to die, if not sooner than later, whether or not I had ever spoken myself. My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you". As Muslims, I think, we have many reasons to share in this sentiment: we believe that there is nothing and no one to fear but Allah; we believe that after the pain and death of this life, to Allah we will return. We have Sura al-Nisa, which reads:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." [Surah al-Nisa: 135]

4. On being, becoming, and bewilderment

No doubt, what justice means for the themes I have been outlining will have no easy consensus. Still, I hope to clarify some points about the difficulties of being Muslim at times of institutionalised anti-Muslim surveillance and violence, and what will and will not help us *be* and cultivate better living room.

PREVENT (and indeed, the whole infrastructure of the 'War on Terror') has perniciously coerced a silent consent in the social realm for anti-Muslim feeling, language and action that reduce being Muslim to false static tropes. As a mode of house-

hold rule, domestic counter-insurgency has thus intervened on the most essential life processes and reconfigured the most intimate of relationships. If we believe as I do, to quote Lorde again, that “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house,” then it is clear that quietly coercing consensus for “our own” reductive notions of being “authentically” Muslim will not protect us; it will not allow us to cultivate the homes, that is, the places of living, the living *room* that we desire and deserve, as all human beings do.

It might be useful to instead think about and speak of being Muslim as a process of *becoming*, to allow for confusion and the messiness of being an embodied human in a world with much injustice, without flattening ourselves into an abstract and ahistoric imaginary of idealised “authenticity.” We can resist without accepting PRE-VENT’s premise that confusion and uncertainty make us risky or at risk, and

that to be “safe” we must assert our certainty in what being Muslim means through designating its other. This other construction is how whiteness knows itself; it need not be how we understand the self.

There is much about faith that demands simultaneous certainty and bewilderment: what can we be aside from both certain and bewildered when we contemplate the limitlessness of Allah?

My not all too radical conclusion is that we can resist by cultivating spaces for *becoming* Muslim, without constructing a Self through an Other. In doing so, we may also nurture space to be bewildered, to become, to live.

Niyousha Bastani

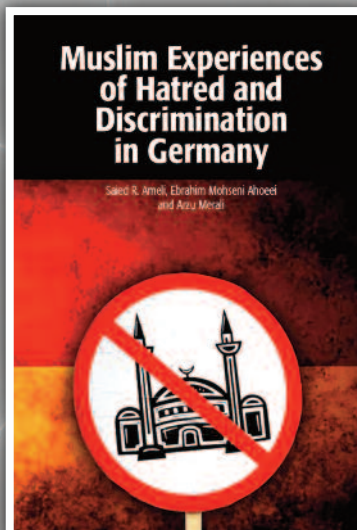
is a PhD candidate at the Department of Politics & International Studies, University of Cambridge, where she researches ideas of liberal education, race, and care in counter-extremist UK. She is Features Editor at the Cambridge Review of In-

ternational Affairs, and was formerly host of Declarations: the Human Rights Podcast at Cambridge’s Centre for Governance and Human Rights. She tweets @bnuyoush.

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The latest reports in the IHRC series on Muslim Experiences of Hostility and Discrimination are available soon. Looking at Germany and Austria, the research reveals unprecedented levels of hate crime, as well as state sanctioned Islamophobia in the form of discriminatory laws and policies.

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Extirpating the Deep Roots of Racism in the US

With the much celebrated election of Joe Biden, and his much vaunted reversals of Trump's policies in the first few days of office, there is an expectation of change for the US. However, **Richard Sudan** argues that regardless of whoever is in charge, the US must deal with its foundational demons of inequality and injustice, if there is to be hope of serious change.

Black Lives Matter should be a simple statement of fact and one of the most uncontroversial phrases spoken in the English language.

But it's not. And, the fact that it provokes the reactions it does reflects deeply embedded racism at the heart of America, lining the very fabric of society.

Black Lives Matter was born as a direct consequence of Black people being killed at the hands of the US police, an organisation which has its roots in slave patrols. Those patrols were tasked with catching runaway slaves who were legally owned as property and treated as subhuman.

The culture of disregard for Black life in America by trigger happy police and their sympathisers, viewing Black people as targets and Black life as expendable, can be traced directly back to the foundation of the country and how the police were formed. Such racism is so deeply endemic in the US that some people describe White Supremacy as a religion.

To be clear, White European settler colonialism is a globally exported model which has been practised in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Palestine, the Americas and in all corners of the world.

Also, the reality is that it was so effective that it often created a tier system, or a racial hierarchy resulting in anti-Black racism being practised by non-white people, themselves also impacted by European colonialism or White Supremacy.

Racism is a complicated disease predicated on the false science of 'race'. It's so brutal, and at times complex that it has led to many non-white populations practising this anti-black racism and even self-hate, in a desperate attempt to assimilate to whiteness, or the dominant society. The aim and result of the psychosis is to be accepted, and to not be on the receiving end of racism.

Sadly, we see this dynamic played out in the Caribbean, South America, Asia and in many other places.

And I say that to say this. Because the truth might not make for comfortable reading for some, who still cling to the notion of democracy and freedom in the US.

Undoubtedly, and without question, one

of the most effective settler colonial projects took place in America. We see one aspect of this legacy playing out today in the United States through the lens of police brutality. Sadly, there are many more examples to evoke, but police brutality is currently one of the most visible and certainly one of the most talked about symptoms of European White Supremacy.

"In theory the US police exist to uphold the law. But laws in the United States were written for the benefit of white populations and have always been stacked against Black people."

Why? Because we witness one brutal killing by the police followed by another almost constantly taking place, captured not on black and white celebratory postcards, as was the case in the past, but on video for the whole world to see. Police officers are rarely charged and almost never go to jail. The problem is as obvious as ever and easily diagnosed. And yet it persists, upheld by the silence of the privileged. This barbaric abuse of power can't continue.

In theory the US police exist to uphold the law. But laws in the United States were written for the benefit of white populations and have always been stacked against Black people.

The Electoral College voting system, it is argued, was designed to give southern states rooted in slavery disproportionate political power compared to the north.

The controversial 'stand your ground

law', was designed to give white men the legal power to 'protect' with guns what they viewed as property and that which they owned (including white women), against Black people, and to be able to act as judge, jury and executioner against whomever they wished.

These laws are therefore not rooted in any grand sense of democracy and equality. The stand your ground law does not work in Black people's favour. Its critics argue that it simply serves as a means for Black people to be killed with impunity and for white supremacists to evade punishment, as was the case with George Zimmerman who murdered the Black child Trayvon Martin.

The US police are no exception to this system. They are the system. They are not subject to the law in the same way as the people they are meant to serve. In truth, they are above the law, and are custodians of a 400-year-long racist status quo, including when slavery was also legal.

This state of affairs is not a broken system: It is the system functioning as it was intended, and as it was designed and built. This is America.

The deaths at the hands of the police today are described by many as modern lynchings for good reason. Because the lynchings that happened in the past were justified in the name of the law, fortified by racist propaganda.

The pseudo-science, the belief that the White race is superior along with weaponised Christianity, were all employed as tools to justify the murder of Black people. Not too much has changed since then.

People often talk about the end of slavery in the US and also Britain. In fact, Western orientated liberals often name Britain as the first nation to end slavery in 1807, when in truth Haiti was the first nation to achieve this in 1804.

Both claims are untrue.

For example, the widely celebrated United States constitution makes clear provision, in the 13th amendment, that while slavery is illegal, it is a perfectly legal punishment if a crime has been committed.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, when this amendment was added, vast labour was



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needed to rebuild and reconstruct the south.

Black people became the source of the that labour, despite fighting in the civil war to 'end slavery'. Under the same system still rigged against them, they found themselves falling victim to the 13th Amendment, imprisoned for crimes as vague and arbitrary as 'loitering' and 'vagrancy', and once again working for free, to rebuild the south shackled in chains under a different form of slavery. This cycle has continued to the present day.

Today in America, Black people make up 13% of the population but represent almost half of the US prison population, a population which has spiralled into the millions over the last few decades as the prison industrial complex continues to yield massive profits. President Joe Biden is widely acknowledged as helping to pave the way for such mass incarceration, helping to push through the now infamous Violent Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, more commonly known now as the '94 crime bill.

White Supremacy runs deep. It's more than a few thugs in the street, convenient as that notion may be for some. In the same way many millions of Americans will never surrender their guns, many millions more will never detach from this ideology, and will fight to the death to preserve the very system which continues to benefit them as it benefited their ancestors before them.

In this sense, we have to ask the question; Is there really much of a difference between the past and present?

In 2015, for example, some have said that more Black people were killed by the police than during one of the worst years of Jim Crow.

As the actor Will Smith sharply remarked, "Racism isn't getting worse, it's just getting filmed"

Understanding how this system works, and the longevity of it makes it very apparent that the problem of unchecked White Supremacy didn't start in 2015, nor in the

summer of 2020 with the killing of George Floyd. It didn't start with the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson. It didn't start in the 1960s. It didn't start at the turn of the 20th century with the premier of 'Birth of a Nation', a racist piece of propaganda, shifting the American image of the Black man from the non-threatening 'Uncle Tom' to a hyper violent sexual predator, reigniting the birth of the Ku Klux Klan.

It started the moment the first Africans resisted and fought the first white supremacist slave merchants who landed in Africa, taking Black people as captives to America. And Africans did fight.

While for obvious reasons, much is made of the fact that many Africans sold their own people into slavery, very little is acknowledged about the Africans who fought back. The wide stretching battles against enslavement in Africa are well documented. And it's estimated that this resistance prevented up to a million Africans from being taken as captives through the Middle Passage.

The first Dutch slave merchants who arrived in Jamestown Virginia at the start of the 17th century shared exactly the same White Supremacist ideology which is shared today by all White Supremacists in all areas of life. Racism in the US cannot be neatly packaged and confined to stereotypical views of Hillbillies with guns, although there are many of them. Nor is it separate or apart from either political party, ideology or vocation. It is found in both political parties, in the homes of blue collar and white-collar families and from people of all classes. White Supremacism is a very broad church. There are even some Black people and non-white people who live by the ideology too (as previously mentioned). Judges, police, politicians, teachers, doctors, nurses, firefighters, lawyers, teachers, all have been proven to have practising white supremacists within their fields. White Supremacy is not a fringe ideology.

In fact, one thing we learned from the

Washington DC riots of Jan 6th 2021 is that among the many White Supremacists that descended on the Capitol, a good number of them or even most of them had 'respectable' jobs. And at the time of writing, many have yet to be questioned, much less arrested or charged. The FBI have even discussed not charging some of them. White Supremacy is so important to the United States that it often gets a free pass.

Black people who literally built the country without a day's pay still don't have a fair stake in the nation. And yet Black people have been in America for many hundreds of years if not longer. Their history did not begin in the continent with slavery. There are Black populations which are indigenous to the continent. Black people were already on the continent when Columbus arrived, evidenced and acknowledged in Columbus' own writings (Ivan van Sertima).

More and more evidence has come to light reflecting the presence of Africans in MesoAmerica, long before Columbus and any Spanish colonisation of the region. The Olmec culture in South America bears glaring hallmarks and influence from West African cultures. Some scholars argue the possibility of ancient explorers from the Kingdom of Mali reaching the American continent at the turn of the 14th century, many years before Columbus in 1492.

Put simply, the history of Black people in America is arguably older than the nation itself. It's certainly older than the racist ideology and individuals who target Black people today. Black people not only built America for free during the period of slavery and rebuilt it during the post-Civil War reconstruction period. Their influence in shaping the continent goes back thousands of years.

But, despite this rich history, there has been a deliberate and sustained effort in America to keep Black Americans at the bottom of the social order, and part of that has been to control the historical narrative. We know that a true understanding of Black his-

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tory in itself threatens the psychological hegemony of White Supremacy. It defeats any idea of Europeans being of a superior race, and of so-called European exceptionalism. It would also empower Black people, much like the history of Haiti and much like the other Black heroes scrubbed out of the books. For that reason, only the non-threatening acceptable version of Black history is offered by white America, and even that is often met with the response “What about a WHITE history?”

While many might point to individual examples of Black faces in high places as evidence of progress, this is not indicative of the condition of the masses of Black people. A Black President, or a number of Black millionaires or even billionaires is not evidence of the end of racism as a structure of power in the United States. Progress would be measured by seeing the racial disparities, evidenced in policing, mass incarceration, employment, housing, education, health care and the criminal justice system, broken once and for all.

I’ve mentioned mass incarceration as one of the big systemic problems needing to be tackled. And the police are the foot soldiers of that revolving system of injustice. Since 2004, several reports from the FBI have highlighted the growing problem of the infiltration of white supremacists into the ranks of law enforcement. Despite Jan 6, and the armed attempt by white supremacists to overthrow the government, the US has yet to designate the Proud Boys and other groups as terror groups. Canada has but the US has not.

But should this surprise us? After all, it was only last year that the US listed the Ku Klux Klan as a terrorist group. Why is this? Might it be because acknowledging these sorts of groups as terrorists, would mean that a significant portion of law enforcement in America would fall into the category?

According to film maker and anti-racism activist Tariq Nasheed, “It is common knowledge that law enforcement is not just infiltrated by white supremacists, it is completely

dominated by white supremacists. In fact, I don’t think people are allowed to be officers if they are NOT white supremacists, or have those leanings.”

If you think this might be a stretch too far, consider this. As recently as early 2021, Deputy Clyde Kerr III, a senior Black police officer in Louisiana committed suicide. In a series of Instagram posts before officer Kerr took his own life, he offered a damning critique of US policing and the racism within it, describing it as irredeemable. As a senior officer, Clyde Kerr had seen, heard and lived the reality of White Supremacy within the police force. So at odds was the grim reality with his own ideals that he saw no possible way to reconcile the two.

In one tragic way, the story of officer Kerr sums up a great deal about America. The ideals America talks about and the image it presents of itself, is in stark contrast with the cold reality of what it really is. In 2019, FBI director Christopher Wray acknowledged that a significant portion of the FBI’s domestic terror cases are directed at white supremacy. The problem is getting worse.

The election of Joe Biden solves nothing. Tens of millions voted for Trump in 2020. At any other point in American history, with such a result, he’d have strolled into the presidency. But Trump was never the system of White Supremacy itself. He is a product of it. Then again, the Republican vs Democratic paradigm of racism offered by liberals is too simplistic. Both parties are guilty of upholding systematic racism and maintaining it.

The way it needs to be tackled is in many ways obvious. Mass incarceration of Black people needs to end, with justice becoming a reality for those unjustly affected. Institutions in the United States need to be incentivised to root out white supremacists within their ranks, economically in terms of losing funding, or politically, with the threat of defunding or closure. White supremacist groups need to be unequivocally treated and designated as terrorists and treated just like any other terror groups. White supremacists in

the police need to be punished for killing Black people, not just lose their jobs. To do this, would reverse the trend of impunity. It would deter other white supremacists from murdering Black people. This is the only way. You cannot appeal to any sense of reason or morality with white supremacists. They have none. The idea you can send these individuals on some kind of diversity training to remedy their foul ideology is utterly contemptible, and I would imagine for Black people in America, insulting.

And lastly, there needs to be economic restorative justice for the descendants of Black American slaves in the United States: Direct cash payments, tax breaks, extra resources given directly to Black schools and Black majority areas, ultimately reparations. The same has been done for other groups historically wronged in America. And it should have been the case for Foundational Black Americans or American Descendants of Slavery a long time ago. Discussions about this took place in the run up to the election of 2020, but I believe they were just for politically expedient reasons. If early indications are anything to go by, President Joe will not make good on his promise to have the back of Black Americans. But why would he have their back? It would contradict the other political choices he has made in his entire political career.

• Richard Sudan

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

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