

Introduction: Global Impacts of September 11

LOUISE CAINKAR

This special issue examines some of the global outcomes of the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon—where thousands of civilians were killed by Al Qaeda fighters—and the U. S. government's response to these attacks—the “War on Terror.” The Bush Administration's “war on terror” has been waged within and outside the borders of the United States. Its impact is ongoing, unlike that of the attacks themselves, which in some arenas was short-lived (Dussold and Cespedes; Back) but in most cases cannot be disentangled from the response they unleashed, even if much of the response had no logical or tactical connection to the attacks. From Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, to the United States, Australia, and the global market, in this issue a multi-disciplinary group of anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, geographers, economists, and philosophers examines the topic of 9/11 impacts. Despite varying methodologies, theoretical approaches, and levels of analysis, their findings richly describe a changed world. Authors in this volume analyze changes in U. S. domestic and foreign policies; “green lights” given by the Bush Administration to other governments (notably Putin's Russia and Sharon's Israel) to launch their own indiscriminate “wars on terror” in Chechnya and Palestine; Bush Administration practices of intimidation that erode rather than support movements toward democracy and freedom (Iran); discussions and debates about the attacks within the Arab World; changes in world stock markets and Arab World tourism; and domestic policies and climates of hatred that have scapegoated entire Arab and Muslim populations (in the United States and Australia), effectively narrowing their civil and political rights.

The impact of the 9/11 attacks and the “war on terror” on Arabs and Muslims living in Western societies is staggering. The collective vilification of Arabs and Muslims carried out by some elected officials, religious leaders, members of the public and media outlets, and the collective suspicion cast on them by domestic government policies, is only partly countered by the increased interest of others in Islam and their own government's

activities in the Middle East. If large groups of people bearing no guilt for the attacks can be so easily “othered” and targeted, one must be concerned about the capacity of pluralistic societies to integrate difference and about the elasticity of this capacity given the relationship between foreign policy and domestic racialization processes. The effective dehumanization of Arabs and Muslims that is a *de facto* component of the “war on terror” is evidenced by the sameness that characterizes their treatment by U. S. government agents (and others) in Iraq, Afghanistan, the United States, and Guantanamo Bay, where collective punishment and humiliation tactics play key roles. The executors of these types of actions can only act efficiently if they believe (and have been taught) that certain groups of people are less worthy of human dignity than others. It is in the mind and body of the dehumanizer that the architects of foreign policy and the catalysts of domestic racism and chauvinism meet in synchronized timing. This synchrony is not lost on Arabs and Muslims in the United States, who feel increasingly insecure. This “homeland insecurity” is reflected in fears of internment camps and mass removal and acted upon through renewed strategies of saving money overseas, maintaining residences in another future homeland, and preparing their U. S.-born children for a transnational life.¹ The research note on “Post 9/11 Domestic Policies Affecting U. S. Arabs and Muslims” provides a brief discussion of selected government policies that collectively and indiscriminately target Arabs and Muslims living in the U. S.

Sunaina Maira's article in this issue looks at the concept of citizenship as it relates to South Asian Muslims in the U. S. She finds that the post 9/11 domestic environment of racial profiling and anti-Muslim backlash has “highlighted the gap between what the state can presumably guarantee, through citizenship or constitutional rights, and what a specific political project such as the War on Terror actually puts into effect.” Examining ideas about citizenship held by South Asian immigrant youth “coming of age ...when their right to belong in the nation is suspect,” she finds their views to be multi-faceted and dynamic, expressing various concepts of

citizenship constructed out of their relationships with various institutions, including the state and its shifting policies. She points out that much of what these youth are experiencing is not new for them. Rather, they are experiencing a post 9/11 exacerbation of policies of *empire* that were in place before 9/11, policies that link U. S. domestic and foreign policies. “[T]he war at home and the war abroad actually work in tandem, at the expense of ordinary people everywhere,” concludes Maira.

The post-9/11 experiences of Arab Australians bear remarkable similarities to those of Arabs and Muslims in the U. S. Victoria Mason shows that the post-9/11 vilification of Arabs and Muslims in Australia is rooted in a history of prejudice and discrimination similar to that in the United States. The events of 9/11 led to physical and verbal attacks against these communities and “heralded a discourse within Australia that legitimized the questioning of the compatibility of Arab and Muslim Australians to the Australian social context.” As has also been true in the United States, the Australian media and some elected officials contributed to this discourse. Arab Australians have been repeatedly asked to show their loyalty to Australia and to prove they are not an Al-Qaeda fifth column. While Arab Australian organizations have mobilized to defend their communities and educate the public, many Arab Australians continue to feel vulnerable.

Brian Glyn Williams looks at the impact of the 9/11 attacks on U. S. foreign policy towards Chechnya and the Russian government’s campaign to crush the Chechnyan independence movement. “September 11th gave Russian President Putin the opportunity to ... gain a modicum of American support for Russian military actions in Chechnya, and to discredit his Chechen Muslim adversaries...” Russian Federation Forces had been carrying out well-documented “crimes against humanity in their campaign to bludgeon the stubborn Chechen separatist guerillas into submission,” losing many of their own troops in the process. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush had condemned Russia’s Chechen campaign, National Security Advisor Rice had called on the Russian government to pursue the Chechen’s “legitimate aspirations for a political solution,” and the Bush Administration had called for Russian restraint against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. But in the post 9/11 environment “armed Muslim groups of all orientations and backgrounds were suddenly suspect in Washington...and linked to Al-Qaeda,” including groups as disparate as the Chechen rebels and Saddam Hussein’s Baathists.

After 9/11, Putin made many “previously unthinkable” concessions to Bush, including providing the United States with Russian intelligence data, use of Russian airspace, and basing rights in ex-Central Soviet republics. Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that

“Russia is fighting terrorists in Chechnya, there is no question about it.” The historic conflict between Chechens and the Russian Federation became a “sub-plot to the war against the Al Qaeda network.” Within weeks, Rumsfeld and Rice were citing media accounts about Chechen terrorists in Afghanistan. In exchange for the U. S. government’s acquiescence to Russia’s increased military operations in Chechnya, the U. S. government acquired thirteen military bases in a ring of countries on Russia’s southern frontier, including in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Iraq.

Derek Gregory examines the post 9/11 “war on terror” through the lens of Orientalism, which he says has been “revivified and hideously emboldened” by it. He describes the ways in which “imaginative geographies (Said) continue to articulate the colonial present” by folding distance into difference, demarcating the same from the other. Gregory shows how Israel’s Sharon government has “taken advantage of the so-called ‘war on terror’ to ratchet up the colonial dispossession of the Palestinian people,” proclaiming that acts of terror against Israeli citizens are indistinct from bin Laden’s terror. Beginning in November 2001, “the White House granted Israel its widest freedom of military action since the Reagan administration had turned a blind eye to Sharon’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982.” Imaginative geographies deployed by the Israeli military in the occupied territories of Palestine enacted performances of space: locating, opposing and casting out. “Locating” reduced opponents to “co-ordinates on a grid, letters on a map”; “opposing” reduced the antagonism “to a teleological conflict between ‘Civilization’ and ‘barbarism’”; and “casting out” placed ordinary civilians “beyond the privileges and protections of the law.” As in Afghanistan, Orientalist tropes were invoked, rendering Palestinian towns and cities as “impenetrable, unknowable spaces.” Palestinians lived beyond the pale of civilization. U. S. Senator Lieberman explicitly tied the two campaigns: “Israel has been under siege from a systematic and deliberate campaign of suicide and homicide attacks by terrorists. Their essence is identical to the attacks on our country of 11 September.”² Gregory notes that the Israeli Knesset’s “Imprisonment of Illegal Combatants Law,” was deliberately symmetrical with the U. S. government’s designation of captives from its war in Afghanistan as “unlawful combatants.” Rhetorical fusion has given Bush and Sharon “*carte blanche* to erase” Palestinians. Terrorism has been made “polymorphous... its mantle can be cast over *any* form of resistance to sovereign power.” Gregory concludes, “it is precisely the failure to discriminate, the refusal to understand—worse, the determination to discredit and disable any attempt to understand—that will ensure the continuation of terrorism.”

Bahram Rajaei speaks of such a failure to discriminate and refusal to understand when assessing Bush Administration policy toward Iran. Iran's political evolution since 1979 has demonstrated the fallacy of the notion that radical Islamism remains a unified and inimical enemy of the United States. From the mid-1990s onward, a powerful political movement emerged in Iran, driven by women and youth, and demanding greater democratization, expanded social, civic, and personal space for citizens, and reintegration with the outside world. This movement was given voice within the Islamic Republic's elite and government by modernist Islamist politicians led by President Mohammad Khatami. The importance of this change and its potential benefit for U. S.-Iranian cooperation has been willfully ignored by the Bush administration. Instead, "the Bush Administration's simplified worldview, clumsy diplomacy, and reliance on intimidation since January 2002 have effectively eliminated the option of cooperation with Iran and have to some extent unified all Iranians against the U. S." It has undercut the ability of the modernists to challenge the political monopoly of the radicals, the very source of the Iranian behavior the administration finds most objectionable, and has in fact strengthened the radicals. Instead of acting in ways that promote security and safety, the Bush Administration's policies have rendered Southwest Asia much less secure.

Irit Back examines post-9/11 political discourse within Nigeria and finds that religious affiliation—Muslim or Christian—was central to attitudes toward U. S. government policies in the immediate post-9/11 period. In the decade immediately prior to the 9/11 attacks, socio-economic inequality, human rights violations, and government corruption deepened feelings of alienation among the Nigerian masses, regardless of religion. One outcome of this alienation was an "intensification of religious identity and politicization of religion." While both the Christian and Muslim masses partly blamed U. S. government policies for these problems, each group found different mobilization resources available to them. For Muslims, it was political Islam, nourished by Saudi investments in Nigerian mosques and the activism of Nigerian students returning from Saudi universities. Christians, on the other hand, were mobilized by western evangelical Christians, such as Pentecostals and the conservative evangelists of the "700 Club." Animosity between religious groups escalated in 1999 with the implementation of Shari'a law in northern Nigeria. After the 9/11 attacks, Nigerian Muslims expressed a variety of responses. While all condemned the attacks, some stressed that the U. S. had brought them on by its actions. Despite diversity, the loudest voices among the Muslim masses were anti-U. S. government. On the other hand, Christian responses to the 9/11 attacks were more homogenous, proclaiming

broad solidarity with the United States government and its policies. In 2003, clashes between religious groups began decreasing, marking a return to the relative "religious status-quo" of earlier decades. The lack of fierce protest to George W. Bush's visit to Nigeria in April 2003 revealed a broader diversity in Muslim attitudes toward the United States government than those expressed in the immediate post-9/11 period, both across ideological lines and socio-economic groups, due to internal Nigerian events. Back suggests that prospects for the future in Nigeria lie in the ability of the government "to shape more democracy and pluralism" and recognize "the interests and needs of the masses, both Muslim and Christian."

Hamarneh and Steiner's paper on Islamic Tourism examines the impact of the 9/11 attacks and the "war on terror" on tourism in the Arab world. The authors show that tourism did not collapse in the Arab world, as some had expected, but that some Arab countries fared better than others, depending on their tourism industry's market and orientation. While Tunisia and Morocco were "big losers," due to their singular focus on Western leisure tourism, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Lebanon were winners because of their attraction to Arab tourists, many of whom changed their traditional holiday travel destinations from Europe, North America, and Australia to inter-regional travel. Other (non-Arab) Islamic countries, such as Turkey and Malaysia, also benefited from Post 9/11 tourism shifts. As tourism industry leaders in Arab and Muslim countries meet and develop plans for better inter-regional cooperation, the concept of "Islamic tourism" is gaining ground. Islamic tourism is oriented toward Islamic historical and cultural sights, is in sync with Islamic values, and has a leisure component oriented less toward consumption and western culture than current models. The rich heritage of the Arab and Islamic world has emerged resilient, and has been rediscovered by many who, prior to 9/11, spent holiday time in the West.

The authors in this issue offer no single conclusion as to whether the 9/11 attacks constitute a historical watershed or whether the attacks and the "war on terror" are events that will lose global significance in time. Which ever is the case, their outcomes for humanity as measured today have been devastating. The attacks and the U. S. government's subsequent "war on terror" have caused the deaths of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of innocent civilians. The world is indeed a much more dangerous place. In a message accompanying Amnesty International's (AI) 2004 World Report, AI Secretary General Khan concluded that the U. S.-led war on terror is "bankrupt of vision," and has sacrificed "human rights in the name of security at home, turning a blind eye to abuses abroad, and using pre-emptive force when and where it chooses." These have "neither

increased security nor advanced liberty,” an assessment that concurs with the findings of the authors in this issue. Human agency shall bring about a safer, better world. Examinations of Post 9/11 movements toward that end would provide a useful counterpoint to the somber findings described in this issue.

NOTES

¹Cainkar, Louise “The Impact of 9/11 on Muslims and Arabs in the United States,” in John Tirman, ed., *The Maze of Fear: Security & Migration After September 11th* (The New Press: New York, 2004), 215-239, and forthcoming articles.

²“Congress shows support for Israel,” at <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/05/02>>, 5 May 2002 (20 August 2004).