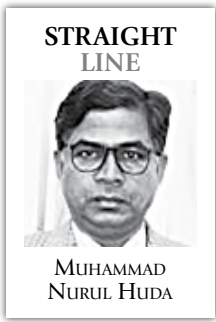


Police brutality: Understanding American policing



STRAIGHT LINE

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

month have demonstrated unusually deep anger and anguish, and protests continue. The rage and helplessness of the black minority can be gauged from the fact that recently a majority of Minneapolis city council has pledged to dismantle the local police department, a significant move amid nationwide protests sparked by George Floyd's death. Nine out of the 13 councilors said a "new model of public safety" would be created in a city where law enforcement has been accused of racism. Activists, who for years have demanded such a step, called it a turning point. The nine councilors read a statement which is as follows: "We are here because here in Minneapolis and in cities across the United States it is clear that our existing system of policing and public safety is not keeping our communities safe. Our efforts at incremental reform have failed." One councilor added that the city police department was "not reformable and that we are going to end the current policing system".

The director of the Minnesota based campaign group Black Vision said: "It should not have taken so much death to get us here. We are safer without armed, unaccountable patrols supported by the State hunting black people". Quite interestingly, the "defund the police" was a rallying cry during the latest street protests. "Defunding" advocates have for years been condemning what they

describe as the aggressive militarised policing in the United States. They argue that police department's budget should be slashed and funds diverted to social programmes to avoid unnecessary confrontation and heal the racial divide.

It is curious to note that in the United States, entire city police departments have been disbanded before; in Compton, California, in 2000 and 12 years later in Camden, New Jersey. In both case, they were replaced with bigger new forces that covered local counties.

In order to appreciate the dynamics of policing in America, one has to understand the American political structure and the history of politics in policing therein. The plethora of local police departments coupled with a political system which quite deliberately minimises State or national government control, has some very important consequences for police accountability in the United States. The American constitution is the defining document of the nation's political structure and the founding fathers defined the political structure in such a way that it expressly limits the power of government and implicitly forbids legislation which might contravene any of the provisions of the Constitution.

The power of the United States constitution over legislative changes is exemplified by the issue of gun control. Despite many instances of multiple shootings in schools and workplaces in the United States, any meaningful gun control legislation there would infringe the Constitutional right to bear arms, a right which much of the rest of the world sees as downright dangerous and completely anachronistic. The tenth amendment to the Constitution of the US held that all powers not explicitly reserved to the national government were delegate to the States and citizens, permitting the separate development of individual states. Thus when the

establishment of police was considered in mid-19th century, any surrender of control of police to State or national government was to relinquish power from the citizenry to that level of government, and therefore had to be resisted strongly.

There are no national requirements, still less is there is a national inspection system for police in the United States. For good or ill, control of police within the United States rests almost totally with local government. The bulk of

approved policing methods, whether or not they complied with State or Constitutional law.

The establishment by communities of their town council, policing and courts without reference to higher levels of government enabled the principles of vigilantism to be legitimised. At certain places in frontier history, the will of the people virtually legitimised vigilante justice. "In the South, the line between vigilante justice and official justice was scarcely discernable at all-at least not

required that "Negroes be kept in their place". One can understand how such unjustifiable form of policing came into being and continued unchecked due to a lack of effective supervision of local police by State or national government agencies.

The reality is that American cities are more violent than elsewhere and police there is generally rougher than the Australian or British counterparts. However, in the creation of this violent and rough climate, the attitude of a racially biased police outfit is no less a contributor. In such circumstances, training has failed to properly orient the white officers and consequently, the dejected black community has been constrained to realise that being black, itself, is an offence. It is no wonder that protestation like "my skin is not a weapon" has appeared quite prominently in recent protests.

It would not be out of place here to refer to professor Joseph Ellis, author of "American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson". Writing about the founding fathers, the author credits them with "All those unbelievable acts of imagination. The most creative political group in American history. We will never replicate that...." But poignantly adds that they failed to create a biracial state and that, "Racism is a chromosome in the DNA of the United States. It is like cancer. It ain't never gonna be cured."

Massive reform including change of police attitude is the key. Necessary legislative changes that are in the offing should include demilitarisation of police and greater resource allocation for socio-economic upliftment of the depressed sections. There is a flicker of hope in the fact that the grandchildren of the slave masters have taken active part in the dismantling of the statues of the slave masters.

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A demonstrator faces off with police officers during a protest in Denver, Colorado.

PHOTO: JASON CONNOLLY/AFP

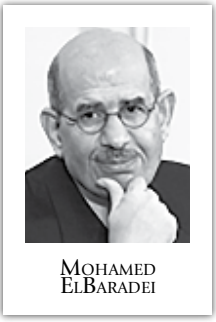
police work is done by local police. The resistance to government power implied in the declaration of independence of United States has prevented national or state government having significant control over the major agency for the expression of civil power, the police. In other words, the Constitutional authority for self-determination of American communities enabled policing to be a local responsibility. As a result, less interference was possible with locally

until the beginnings of Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the demise of the segregation laws."

Vigilante justice included lynching, usually of African-Americans, and was condoned by police. Before the Civil Rights movement, however, the voting population was white and the white, male police force was directly answerable only to the white community. Order maintenance, therefore, included steps to allay community fears, which

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Building a better post-Covid world



MOHAMED ELBARADEI

In a matter of months, the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the world almost beyond recognition. And yet the international cooperation that is so essential to confront a shared threat has been nowhere to be found. This should not be a surprise: our failure to respond effectively to the Covid-19 crisis reflects deeply entrenched—and severely skewed—values and priorities.

In 1952, the American statesman Adlai Stevenson declared: "The great enemies of man are war, poverty, and tyranny, and their assaults on human dignity, which are the most grievous consequences of each." Nearly seven decades later, those enemies remain as powerful as ever.

War continues to dominate—and disrupt—the human timeline. Despite the horrors we have collectively experienced, violence remains our default response to differences. Three decades after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons—and the terrifying doctrine of mutual assured destruction—remain a pillar of global security.

Meanwhile, limitations on the use of force agreed to in the United Nations Charter are being ignored, and even held in contempt. Humanitarian law increasingly seems like a relic of the past. Fifteen years after its conception, the "responsibility to protect" against the worst forms of violence and persecution has become a historical footnote. The

rich and powerful thumb their noses at the International Criminal Court.

As the world's response to the ongoing refugee crisis has starkly demonstrated, we consistently prioritise geostrategic and economic interests above human life. Last year, official development assistance amounted to less than 10 percent of global defence spending.

While significant progress has been made in reducing poverty in recent decades, some 10 percent of the world's

One-third of all countries are ruled by repressive, authoritarian regimes, and many democracies are falling prey to populism. Human-rights violations—such as crackdowns on free media and political dissent, the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, police brutality, and targeted killings, to name a few—are met with little more than expressions of concern from the international community.

As war, poverty, and tyranny proliferate, the need for international

recent years, as increasing polarisation and paralysis, together with dwindling resources, have undermined their authority. Tellingly, it took more than a month for the UN Security Council to convene after the Covid-19 crisis erupted. Two months later, its members have not agreed on a plan for a coordinated response.

Some might argue that repression, competition, violence, discrimination, and exclusion are unavoidable features of the human condition. If so, attempting to build a world based on principles like freedom, equity, and inclusiveness would be tantamount to attempting to change our very nature.

But this argument is facile, at best. After all, we now roundly reject many atrocities—such as slavery and torture—that were once considered natural and unavoidable. While we still have far to go, great strides have been made in addressing discrimination based on factors like gender and ethnicity.

The message is clear: our mindsets are far from immutable. On the contrary, the recalibration of values is an inescapable feature of human evolution.

Such a recalibration is badly needed today, in order to establish a new paradigm for global cooperation based on principles like human dignity, equality, inclusiveness, diversity, and solidarity. For such a system to work, there must be zero tolerance for tyranny, and geopolitical competition must give way to dialogue.

Moreover, the concept of security must be radically rethought. Dependence on nuclear weapons and displays of military power should give way to trust-building by addressing shared problems (such as cyber threats). Appeasement of dictators should have no place in the

new paradigm, but nor should external regime change and unilateral sanctions.

More broadly, the concept of security should be extended far beyond the physical, to include a focus on ensuring that basic human needs—such as food, health, education, and employment—are reliably met. Policies like universal basic incomes and wealth taxes could go a long way toward advancing these goals.

All of this will require a new approach to governance. In many democracies, citizens have lost trust in the political class and become increasingly suspicious of the influence of money over their leaders and institutions. The protests in the United States highlight the extent to which many people feel that their voices are not being heard. Reversing this trend will require not only targeted policies to protect democratic processes, but also efforts to improve the balance between direct and representative democracy.

At the international level, institutions must be given the authority and resources to deal with the challenges of a globalised world. Only by boosting the legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions can we effectively counter the forces of populism and xenophobia that have gained ground in recent years.

If the pandemic has made one thing clear, it is that we are one human family. Only by recognising this—by taking care of one another, as well as the planet on which we all depend—can any of us hope for a better future. In this sense, cooperation is not only an ethical imperative, but also an existential one.

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PHOTO: JUSTIN LANE/EPA

General Debate of the 74th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations at United Nations Headquarters in New York, New York, USA, September 27, 2019.

population were still living in extreme poverty, below the World Bank's poverty line of USD 1.90 per day, in 2015, and the Bank expects the Covid-19 crisis to increase the total by 40-60 million this year. Meanwhile, sharply rising inequality is pushing many societies toward civil disorder.

Tyranny also seems to be on the rise.

cooperation is only growing. Today, the most significant threats the world faces—such as climate change, infectious disease, terrorism, and cybercrime—do not respect borders. The only way to mitigate them is to work together.

And yet critical platforms for international cooperation, such as the UN, have been steadily eroded in

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



FIRST PRISONERS AT AUSCHWITZ

June 14, 1940

On this day in 1940, the first transport of Polish political prisoners arrived at Auschwitz, which became Nazi Germany's largest concentration, extermination, and slave-labour camp, where more than one million people died.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Poet Ogden
- 5 Yoga class sights
- 9 Contradict
- 10 Similar
- 12 Cobbler fruit
- 13 Nostalgic song
- 14 Promotes for money
- 16 Unwell
- 17 Wallet bills
- 18 Tourist stops
- 21 Ram's mate
- 22 Makes pigtailed
- 23 Hairstyles
- 24 Goes bad
- 26 Chasm
- 29 Casual walk
- 30 Galileo's birthplace

DOWN

- 1 Brother's son
- 2 Like edelweiss
- 3 Window parts
- 4 Foot part
- 5 China chairman
- 6 The whole amount
- 7 Neatened up
- 8 Useful abilities

- 9 Treat the turkey
- 11 Snaky fish
- 15 Screeches
- 19 Clumsy ones
- 20 "My country – of thee"
- 22 Seethe
- 23 Dove sound
- 24 Movie photos
- 25 Would-be lawyer's major
- 26 Temple support
- 27 Small keys
- 28 Designer's asset
- 29 Antlered animal
- 30 Ship of 1492
- 33 Prudent
- 35 Pitching stat
- 36 Desire



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BETTER BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.