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FOUNDER EDITOR
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Message of Eid-ul-Azha

Uphold the spirit of sacrifice

MUSLIMS in the country are going to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow, the second biggest festival in the Islamic calendar. It is an occasion for celebration as well as introspection, a solemn reminder of the supreme sacrifice of his beloved son that Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was ready make to honour the wishes of Allah. The unflinching degree of faith by surrendering to Allah and the patience that come with it was displayed by both the father and the son Ismail (AS). The rest is known to us all. The event is indeed a lesson that our life and earthly possessions are all subservient to striving in the path of the Almighty.

After all, the faith of a believer is ultimately tested by the degree of his loyalty to his Creator. The ultimate aim of the sacrifice of animals that Muslims make during Eid-ul-Azha is to please their Lord and to imbibe the spirit of love and giving among fellow human beings. It is for us to bear in mind the need of the poor, the destitute and the desperate.

The message of Eid-ul-Azha is even more relevant in the present world, which is marred by a lack of world order.

We are celebrating this Eid in the backdrop of a tragic accident in a Tongi factory that took the lives of 25 people. We pray for their souls as we do for the early recovery of the injured.

We wish all our readers, patrons and well wishers EID MUBARAK.

Syrian truce agreed upon

Parties will be judged by their actions

THE new ceasefire that the United States and Russia reached on Syria is due to come into effect on September 12, the first day of Eid-ul-Azha. The deal, if enforced, would open a new chapter in one of the deadliest and longest conflicts in the Middle East in modern times. It would pave the way for a joint military campaign by Moscow and Washington against Jihadists. President Assad who has given approval to the plan would have to stop attacking moderate rebels and these groups would have to sever ties with jihadist groups.

This is a conflict that has drawn in all major powers in the region and become a quagmire with no clear winner. The Syrian civil war has claimed nearly 400,000 casualties and left the country devastated with millions displaced. The war is fuelling the global jihadist war machine that has taken the war to other continents and whilst all that is going on, helpless Syrians witness the systematic destruction of their land and their way of life.

How long do we keep justifying this conflict with our lofty ideals and our sense of moral justice that leaves a nation and its people in a state of conflict? There comes a time when the world's superpowers have to take the lead to rein in on overenthusiastic allies and deliver the message to local militias that enough is enough. Leave Syria to the Syrians. Let the people of Syria manage their affairs and get back to their homeland to rebuild their shattered lives and build a future for their children and their children's children.

Fifteen Years after 9/11

Is America any safer?

STRANGER THAN FICTION



TAJ HASHMI

IS America Any Safer" is the cover story of this September's Atlantic magazine. CNN and other media outlets are also commemorating the catastrophic terror attacks on

the morning of September 11, 2001. Reflecting their collective paranoia or delusions of persecution, and exaggerated self-importance, Americans in general are perplexed about certain things with regard to 9/11: a) what went wrong with their intelligence; b) why some people hate them so much; c) America is no longer invincible; and d) theirs being "The land of the free and the home of the brave" will always remain "Number One". However, the politics of fear- and hate-mongering has impaired a large number of American minds, which only think Islamist terrorists are the sole security threat to their nation.

Some Americans honestly believe there are evil people around the world who are jealous of Americans, and hate their freedom. They aren't that different from some North Koreans, who also believe the whole world is jealous of their country. After a decade of teaching security studies in America – both in military and civilian settings – I am convinced the average American politicians, intellectuals, and generals believe terrorism is an original sin, and terrorists kill for the sake of killing! However, a ten-year-old American boy was exceptional. Moments after the second plane hit the Twin Towers, he quipped: "Why are they killing us? We must've done something wrong to some people, somewhere in the world!"

Fifteen years after 9/11, American media, politicians and analysts are evaluating what went wrong with American intelligence in 2001; and how much 9/11 cost the economy and society; and what else America should do to defeat al Qaeda, ISIS and of their ilk. There's no guilt, no remorse, no apology to the Muslim World for America's illegitimate invasions, GTMO, and Abu Gharib.

American bombs, guns, and drones since Hiroshima have killed more than ten million unarmed civilians across the world. And who doesn't know this except the overwhelming majority of Americans? They know very little to nothing about their country's covert and overt invasions of countries, and promotion of terrorist groups across the world. Americans somehow were instrumental in the creation of al Qaeda, Taliban, and the ISIS, directly or through its surrogates like Saudi Arabia. It's sad but true; in 2011 America turned a blind eye to Saudi invasion of Bahrain to crush the popular mass upsurge of the Shiite majority against the Sunni rulers of the

oil rich sheikhdom; and Saudi Arabia since 2015 has killed thousands of Yemeni rebels, with impunity.

America since 9/11 has confronted "the newfound fear" ... sometimes heroically and sometimes irrationally, mostly by fear-mongering and demonising Muslims, Syria and Iran. Meanwhile, the country has spent \$1 trillion to defend against al Qaeda and ISIS. "Has it worked?" is the embarrassing question. While the State, DoD, and Homeland Security agencies had been trying to defeat al Qaeda, the more deadly ISIS emerged from "nowhere" in Syria and Iraq. One's not sure if America's Middle Eastern surrogates, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (which was in good terms with Washington until the abortive July coup in 2016) created the anti-Shiite/anti-Iranian ISIS – with tacit US support! It raises two diametrically

the Pentagon ... and one of the generals called me in. He said, 'We've made the decision we're going to war with Iraq... I guess it's like we don't know what to do about terrorists, but we've got a good military and we can take down government.'" He also reveals Pentagon's hidden agenda about invading seven countries in five years, "starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and, finishing off, Iran".

Since invading countries for the sake of invasions being the raison d'être – America's mighty Military-Industrial Lobby loves mega wars in distant lands for the "profits of war" – 9/11 didn't precipitate the invasions of Iraq and Libya. The "profits of war" explain all American post-World War II invasions of countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; and millions of innocent civilians got killed in these countries.

killing tens of thousands of unarmed civilians. It's time to demand the trial of all war criminals that invaded countries and killed millions of innocent people during the last seven decades – from Hiroshima to Helmand, Aleppo to Fallujah, Sana'a to Mogadishu, and Bahrain to Beirut – for the sake of justice, and just and durable peace. It's time to stop demonising Muslims, Arab or non-Arab. It's time to inform the misinformed in the West about the lies, and deceptions their governments resort to justify invasions of countries out of sheer neo-imperialist design of plundering the weak and resource-rich countries in the Third World. American taxpayers must know that since 9/11, their Government has plundered around \$3 trillion from them in totally unnecessary and illegitimate wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and elsewhere.



PHOTO: AFP

opposite questions: a) Has the "War on Terror" been lost? b) Is the ISIS another US-sponsored false-flag operation?

The legacies of 9/11 haunt the world, and many Americans too. One knows about American and allied soldiers' indiscriminate killing and mass arrests of civilians in Afghanistan in the first few months of the invasion in November 2001. Hundreds of "unlawful combatants" from Afghanistan were tortured and kept behind bars at Guantanamo Bay Detention Center for years; a couple of hundred detainees are still there without any charges and trials.

The way US General Wesley Clark (ret.) publicly exposes the real motives of the American warmongers days after 9/11 is revealing. According to him, America didn't invade Iraq in 2003 for defending democracy, freedom, or America's Homeland Security, let alone 9/11: "About ten days after 9/11, I went to

However, democracy and free press create problems, even for the American hawks. What fascist, communist, and military dictators got away with – the world hardly knew how many people Stalin, Mao, or Saddam Hussein killed during their heydays – America's top warmongers, Truman, Johnson, Nixon, Bush Sr., and Bush Jr. couldn't hide from their own people and the world at large. Thanks to William Assange and Edward Snowden, we now know a lot more about American ways of illegitimate wars and invasions than before. We also know a lot about the part played by the US administration in operations that led to thousands of deaths of unarmed civilians in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere.

The 15th anniversary of 9/11 is a time to reflect on as to how despite being democracies, countries like America, Britain, France, Germany, and Australia get away with invading countries, and

We believe America and its allies would be safe only when they would ensure others' safety, freedom, honour and dignity. They must be told terrorists just don't drop from the heavens; terrorism is a weapon of the weak, and desperate people resort to terrorism as their last resort, not as their first choice; Islam doesn't permit suicide attacks, and killing of innocent people; only imperialists and neo-imperialists wage wars and kill innocent people. Apparently, today America is safer than before while countries in the Third World worry if they are the ones America contemplates invading next to bring "freedom and democracy" a la Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya!

The writer teaches security studies at Austin Peay State University. He is the author of several books, including his latest, *Global Jihad and America: The Hundred-Year War Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan* (Sage, 2014).
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PROJECT SYNDICATE

Refugees and rural poverty



KANAYO F. NWANZE

DEVELOPMENT experts and policymakers understandably focus on migration to urban areas and the need for sustainable urbanisation. But they should not

lose sight of the dramatic changes happening in rural areas, which are too often ignored.

While the growing demand for food – driven by rising population and incomes – is creating opportunities for rural people, hunger and poverty remain concentrated in rural parts of developing countries. Unless rural development receives more attention, young people will continue to abandon agriculture and rural areas in search of better livelihoods in cities or abroad.

Last year at the United Nations General Assembly, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include a commitment to "leave no one behind." And, with the number of forcibly displaced people reaching all-time highs this year, the UN will hold a summit on September 19 to discuss the problem.

But no effort to address the issues surrounding the global surge in migrants and refugees will succeed unless it specifically targets the plight of the world's rural poor.

According to the World Bank, in 1990, some 37 percent of people in developing regions lived on less than \$1.90 a day. By 2012, 12.7 percent did, amounting to more than one billion

people rising out of extreme poverty. And yet, inequality between rural and urban areas has increased. Today, three-quarters of the world's poorest and hungriest people live in rural areas.

Small farms support 2.5 billion people worldwide, accounting for up to 80 percent of food produced in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. But most smallholder farmers still operate without many of the basic conditions needed to grow their businesses and invest in their communities, such as

reducing poverty, hunger, and inequality worldwide. The International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) *Rural Development Report*, to be launched on September 14, compiles new research for policymakers and others working to eradicate poverty. Leading thinkers analysed rural-development efforts in more than 60 developing countries, drawing conclusions about what does and doesn't work.

One central finding is that

Rural areas' progress so far reveals their future potential. In many cases, their economies have diversified and become more dynamic, and new roads and communication networks have reduced the physical and cultural distance between rural and urban residents.

finance, infrastructure, market access, secure land ownership, and rights to resources.

This means that efforts to transform rural areas must target these institutional factors (along with improving gender equality and safeguarding the rule of law), while also introducing new technologies to local communities. And, most important, rural people themselves must be involved, not only as stakeholders or beneficiaries of aid, but as partners.

Two new studies provide important perspectives on the challenge of

development focused specifically on rural communities has a major positive impact on incomes, security, and food and nutrition. And these quality-of-life improvements then translate into better education, health care, and other critical services. At the same time, these gains have not been evenly distributed, and Sub-Saharan Africa has seen far less progress than other areas.

The second study, funded by IFAD and recently released by the International Food Policy Research Institute, examines the worldwide economic downturn starting in 2012 in the context of rural populations. It

finds that as a result of the downturn, 38 million more people will remain in extreme poverty in 2030 than likely would have otherwise, with farm households in middle-income countries particularly at risk.

This poses a serious challenge for the SDGs to end poverty "in all its forms everywhere," and it strengthens the case for policies and investments specifically targeting rural areas, which is where poverty-reduction measures are needed more and will have a larger impact.

Rural areas' progress so far reveals their future potential. In many cases, their economies have diversified and become more dynamic, and new roads and communication networks have reduced the physical and cultural distance between rural and urban residents. In small towns and villages, new types of societies are evolving wherein agriculture, while still important, is no longer the only thing that defines economic and cultural life.

It is time to look at development more holistically, acknowledging that rural development and urban development are not mutually exclusive – each needs the other. If we neglect rural areas, persistent poverty and hunger will continue to drive migration flows, not only to urban areas, but also to neighbouring and nearby countries and destinations farther abroad. Leaving rural areas behind will not move developing countries forward; on the contrary, for many, it threatens to throw the engines of progress into reverse.

The writer is President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the first recipient of the Africa Food Prize.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Overweight school bags

As a result of carrying heavy school bags, a growing number of children in South Asian countries are having back pain and spinal abnormalities, conditions that can be permanent for the rest of their lives. Why do children have to carry so many books? Why do we feel the need to burden their little shoulders with bags so heavy? It is high time teachers and parents sat together to find a solution to this problem. Childhood is a precious time. Children should be able to play, sing and feel free, instead of being 'chained' to overweight bags.

Munaj Gul Muhammad
Balochistan, Pakistan



Stop unnecessary honking

Most drivers plying the roads of Bangladesh seem to be aggressive and impatient, and that's why they continuously honk the horn of their cars. Moreover, drivers possess inappropriate knowledge about when to use the horn. The use of hydraulic horns makes the matter worse. Honking of horns causes sound pollution, and can even affect our health. Cities across the world have laws regarding unnecessary honking. However, there are no such laws in Bangladesh. It is high time our government introduced laws against unnecessary honking to stop this menace. Media and social networking sites can also play a powerful role in this regard to raise social awareness.

Ayaz Ur Rahman
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