

Palestinians who can't control their anger turn themselves into human bombs & haunt Israel's streets & public places, blowing themselves up, killing ordinary people, injecting terror into daily life, and eventually hardening both societies' suspicion & mutual hatred of each other. Each bombing invites merciless reprisal & even more hardship on Palestinian people. But then suicide bombing is an act of individual despair, not a revolutionary tactic. Although Palestinian attacks strike terror into Israeli citizens, they provide the perfect cover for the Israeli govt's daily incursions into Palestinian territory, the perfect excuse for old-fashioned, 19th century colonialism, dressed up as a new fashioned, twenty-first century "war."

Israel's staunchest political & military ally is and always has been the US. The US govt has blocked, along with Israel, almost every UN resolution that sought a peaceful, equitable solution to the conflict. It has supported almost every war that Israel has fought. **When Israel attacks Palestine, it is American missiles that smash through Palestinian homes.** And every year Israel receives several billion dollars from the United States taxpayers money.

What lessons should we draw from this tragic conflict? Is it really impossible for Jewish people who suffered so cruelly themselves to understand the vulnerability and the yearning of those whom they have displaced? Does extreme suffering always kindle cruelty? What hope does this leave the human race with? What will happen to the Palestinian people in the event of a victory? When a nation without a state eventually proclaims a state, what kind of state will it be? What horrors will be perpetrated under its flag? Is it a separate state that we should be fighting for or, the rights to a life of liberty & dignity for everyone regardless of their ethnicity or religion?

The world is called upon to condemn suicide bombers. But can we ignore the long road they have journeyed on before they have arrived at this destination? **September 11, 1922 to September 11, 2011** - eighty-nine years is a long time to have been waging war. *Is there some advice the world can give the people of Palestine?* Should they just take Golda Meir's suggestion & make a real effort **not to exist?**

In another part of the Middle East, September 11th strikes a more recent cord. It was on the **11th of September 1990** that Bush, Sr., then President of the US, made a speech to a joint session of Congress announcing his govt's decision to go to war against Iraq.

The first Allied attack on Iraq took place on January '91. The world watched the prime-time war as it was played out on TV. Tens of thousands of people were

killed in a month of devastating bombing. What many do not know is that the war never ended then. The initial fury simmered down into the longest sustained air attack on a country since the Vietnam War. In that decade the US & British forces fired thousands of missiles & bombs on Iraq. In the decade of economic sanctions that followed the war, Iraqi civilians have been denied food, medicine, hospital equipment, ambulances, clean water – the basic essentials.

About half a million Iraqi children died as a result of the sanctions. Of them, Madeleine Albright, then US ambassador to the UN, famously said, "It's a very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it." "Moral equivalence" was the term used to denounce those of us who criticized the war on Afghanistan. Albright cannot be accused of moral equivalence. What she said was just straightforward algebra. Who is guilty of feckless moralizing? Of preaching peace while it wages war? The US, which Bush called "**the most peaceful nation on earth (go ahead & laugh)**", **has been at war with one country or another every year for the last fifty.**

Wars are never fought for altruistic reasons. They're usually fought for hegemony, for business. And then of course there's the business of war. Protecting its control of the world's oil is fundamental to US foreign policy. The US govt's recent military interventions in the Balkans & Central Asia have to do with oil. Karzai, the puppet President of Afghanistan "**democratically installed**" by the US, is said to be a former employee of Unocal, the American-based oil company. The US govt's paranoid patrolling of the Middle East is because it has two-thirds of the world's oil reserves. Oil keeps America's engines purring sweetly. Oil keeps the Free Market rolling. Whoever controls the world's oil, controls the world's market. And how do you control the oil?

Nobody puts it more elegantly than The New York Times columnist, Thomas Friedman. In an article called, "Craziness Pays", he said, "The US has to make it clear to Iraq & US allies that...**America will use force without negotiation, hesitation or UN approval.**" His advice was well taken. In the wars against Iraq & Afghanistan as well as in the almost daily humiliation the US govt heaps on the UN. In his book on globalization, *The Lexus & the Olive Tree*, Friedman says, & I quote, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without the **hidden fist**. McDonalds cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas...and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the **US Army, Air Force, Navy & Marine Corps.**" Perhaps this was written in a moment of vulnerability, but it's certainly the most succinct, accurate description of the project of corporate globalization.

After the 11th of Sept 2001 & the War Against Terror, the hidden hand & fist have had their cover blown – and we have a clear view now of America's other weapon – the Free Market – **bearing down on the Developing World, with a clenched, unsmiling smile.** The Task That Never Ends is America's perfect war, the perfect vehicle for the endless expansion of US imperialism. In Urdu, the word for Profit, as in "p-r-o-f-i-t", is fayda. Al Qaida means The Word, The Word of God, The Law. So, in India, some of us call the War Against Terror, Al Qaida versus Al Fayda – The Word vs The Profit (no pun intended.) For the moment it looks as though Al Fayda will carry the day.

But then you never know...

Years after the War against Terror was officially flagged off in the ruins of Afghanistan, in country after country freedoms are being curtailed **in the name of** protecting freedom, civil liberties are being suspended **in the name of** protecting democracy. **All kinds of** dissent are being defined as "terrorism." All kinds of laws are being passed to deal with it.

Donald Rumsfeld said that his mission in the War Against Terror was to persuade the world that Americans must be allowed to continue their way of life. When the maddened king stamps his foot, slaves tremble in their quarters. So, standing here today, it's hard for me to say this, but "**The American Way of Life**" is **simply not sustainable.** Because it doesn't acknowledge that there is a world beyond America. [Applause]

But fortunately, power has a shelf life. When the time comes, **this mighty empire will, like others before it, overreach itself & implode from within.** Structural cracks have already appeared. As the War Against Terror casts its net wider & wider, America's corporate heart is hemorrhaging. For all the endless, empty chatter about democracy, today the world is run by three of the most secretive institutions in the world: The IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, all three of which, in turn, are dominated by the US. Their decisions are made in secret. The people who head them are appointed behind closed doors. Nobody really knows anything about them, their politics, their beliefs, their intentions. Nobody elected them. Nobody said they could make decisions on our behalf. A world run by a handful of greedy bankers and C.E.O.'s whom nobody elected can't possibly last.

Soviet-style communism failed, not because it was intrinsically evil but because it was flawed. It allowed too few people to usurp too much power. Twenty-first century market-capitalism, American style, will fail for the same reasons. Both are edifices constructed by the human intelligence, undone by human nature.

**O September, you beckon another cruel winter!**

**O September, heartaches we only remember!**



**By Arundathi Roy**

**None of us need anniversaries to remind us of what we cannot forget. September – a month of dreadful anniversaries – worldwide. The grief is still deep...the rage still sharp...the tears have not dried. Deadly wars are raging around the world by the perpetrators of these unnatural emotional tsunamis. The US endorses the kind of tribal combat that originated with the Neanderthals, a people, now extinct, who could imagine ensuring their survival by no other means than pre-emptive war. Each person who has lost a loved one surely knows secretly, deeply, that no war, no act of revenge, no daisy-cutters dropped on someone else's loved ones or someone else's children, will blunt the edges of their pain or bring their own loved ones back. War cannot avenge those who have died. War is only a brutal desecration of their memory. To fuel wars by cynically manipulating people's grief, by packaging it for TV specials sponsored by corporations selling detergent & running shoes, is to cheapen & devalue grief, to drain it of meaning. What we are seeing now is a vulgar display of the business of grief, the commerce of grief, the pillaging of even the most private human feelings for political purposes. It is a terrible, violent thing for a State to do to its people.**

**The last few US presidents were figures of such moral vacancy that it should make the few decent citizens left in that land to mourn for themselves. September 11th has a tragic resonance in the Middle East, too.**

Arundathi Roy

**“Nationalism of one kind or another was the cause of most of the genocide of the twentieth century. Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's brains and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead.” [Applause]**

When independent-thinking people (and here I do **not** include the corporate media) begin to rally under flags, when writers, painters, musicians, film makers suspend their judgment & blindly yoke their art to the service of the “Nation,” it's time for all of us to sit up & worry. In India we saw it happen soon after the Nuclear tests in 1998 and during the Cargill War against Pakistan in 1999. In the US we saw it during the Gulf War and we see it now during the “War Against Terror.” That blizzard of Made-in-China American flags. [Laughter] An inability to see the world in terms other than those the establishment has set out for you is racist & a failure of the imagination. If you're not a Bushie you're a Taliban. If you don't love us, you hate us. If you're not Good, you're Evil. If you're not with us, you're with the terrorists.

Like many others, I too made the mistake of scoffing at this post-Sept 11th rhetoric, dismissing it as foolish & arrogant. But I've realized it's not foolish at all. It's actually a canny recruitment drive for a misconceived, dangerous war. Everyday I'm taken aback at how many people believe that opposing the war in Afghanistan amounts to supporting terrorism, of voting for the Taliban. It's being made out that the whole point of the war was to topple the Taliban regime and liberate Afghan women from their burqas, we are being asked to believe that the US marines are actually on a feminist mission [laughter, applause]. (If so, will their next stop be America's military ally Saudi Arabia?) [Laughter] Think of it this way: in India there are reprehensible social practices against “untouchables”, against Christians & Muslims, against women. Pakistan & Bangladesh have even worse ways of dealing with minority communities & women. Should they be bombed? Should Delhi, Islamabad and Dhaka be destroyed? Is it possible to bomb bigotry out of India? Can we bomb our way to a feminist paradise? [Laughter] Is that how women won the vote in the US? Or how slavery was abolished? **Can we win redress for the genocide of the millions of Native Americans upon whose corpses the US was founded by bombing Santa Fe?** [Applause]

What I would really love to talk to you about is loss & losing. Grief, failure, brokenness, numbness, uncertainty, fear, the death of feeling, the death of dreaming. The absolute relentless, endless, unfairness of the world. What does loss mean to individuals? What does it mean to whole cultures, whole people who have learned to live with it as a constant companion?

Since it is Sept 11th we're talking about, perhaps it's in the fitness of things that we remember what that date means, not only to those who lost their loved ones in America last year, but to those in other parts of the world to whom that date has long held significance. This historical dredging is not offered as an accusation or a provocation. But just to **share the grief of history**. To thin the mists a little. To say to the citizens of America, in the gentlest, most human way: “Welcome to the World.” [Applause]

Thirty-eight years ago, in Chile, on the 11th of Sept 1973, Gen. Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in a **CIA-backed coup**. “Chile should not be allowed to go Marxist just because its people are irresponsible,” said Kissinger, Nobel Peace Laureate, then the US Sec. of State.

After the coup President Allende was found dead inside the presidential palace. Whether he was killed or whether he killed himself, we'll never know. In the regime of terror that ensued, thousands of people were killed. Many more simply “disappeared.” Firing squads conducted public executions. Concentration camps & torture chambers were opened across the country. The dead were buried in mine shafts & unmarked graves. For seventeen years the people of Chile lived in dread of the midnight knock, of routine “disappearances”, of sudden arrest & torture. Chileans tell the story of how the musician Victor Jara had his hands cut off in front of a crowd in the Santiago stadium. Before they shot him, Pinochet's soldiers threw his guitar at him and mockingly asked him to play.

In 1999, following the arrest of General Pinochet in Britain, thousands of secret documents were declassified by the U.S. government. They contain unequivocal evidence of the CIA's involvement in the coup as well as the fact that the U.S. government had detailed information about the situation in Chile during General Pinochet's reign. Yet, Kissinger assured the general of his support: “In the US as you know, we are sympathetic to what you're trying to do,” he said. “We wish your govt well.”

Those of us who have only ever known life in a democracy, however flawed, would find it hard to imagine what living in a dictatorship & enduring the absolute loss of freedom means. It isn't just those who Pinochet murdered, but the lives he stole from the living that must be accounted for too.

Sadly, Chile was not the only country in South America to be singled out for the US govt's attentions. Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, Peru, Mexico, Colombia – they've all been the playground for covert & overt operations by the CIA. Hundreds of thousands have been killed, tortured or have simply disappeared under the despotic regimes that were propped up in their countries. If this were not humiliation enough, the people of South America have had to bear the cross of being branded as people who are incapable of democracy – as if coups & massacres are somehow encrypted in their genes.

This list does not, of course, include countries in Africa or Asia that suffered US military interventions – Vietnam, Korea, Indonesia, Laos, and Cambodia. **For how many Septembers** for decades together have millions of Asian people been bombed, and burned, and slaughtered? **How many Septembers** have gone by since August 1945, when hundreds of thousands of ordinary Japanese people were obliterated by the nuclear strikes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? **For how many Septembers** have the thousands who had the misfortune of surviving those strikes endured that living hell that was visited on them, their unborn children, their children's children, on the earth, the sky, the water, the wind, and all the creatures that swim and walk and crawl and fly? Not far from here, in Albuquerque, is the National Atomic Museum where Fat Man & Little Boy (the affectionate nicknames for the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) were available as souvenir earrings. Funky young idiots wear them. A massacre dangling in each ear. But I'm straying from my theme. It's Sept that we're talking about, not August.

**September 11th has a tragic resonance in the Middle East**, too. On the 11th of Sept 1922, ignoring Arab outrage, the British govt proclaimed a mandate in Palestine, a follow-up to the 1917 Balfour Declaration which imperial Britain issued, with its army massed outside the gates of Gaza. The Declaration promised European Zionists a national home for Jews. (At the time, the Empire on which the Sun Never Set was free to snatch & bequeath national homes like a school bully distributes marbles.) How carelessly imperial power vivisected ancient civilizations. Palestine & Kashmir are imperial Britain's festering, blood-drenched gifts to the modern world. Both are fault lines in the raging international conflicts of today.

In 1937, Winston Churchill said of the Palestinians, I quote, **“I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit for instance, that a great wrong has**

**been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place.”** That set the trend for the Israeli State's attitude towards the Palestinians. In 1969, Israeli PM Golda Meir said, “Palestinians do not exist.” Her successor, PM Levi Eschol said, “What are Palestinians? When I came here, there were 250,000 non-Jews, mainly Arabs & Bedouins. It was a desert, more than underdeveloped. Nothing.” Menachem Begin called Palestinians “two-legged beasts.” Shamir called them “grasshoppers” who could be crushed. This is the language of Heads of State, not the words of ordinary people.

In 1947, the UN formally partitioned Palestine & allotted 55 per cent of Palestine's land to the Zionists. Within a year, they had captured 76 per cent. On the 14th of May 1948 the State of Israel was declared. **Minutes after the declaration, the United States recognized Israel.** The West Bank was annexed by Jordan. The Gaza strip came under Egyptian military control, and formally Palestine ceased to exist except in the minds and hearts of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people who became refugees. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank & the Gaza strip.

Over the decades there have been uprisings, wars, intifadas. Tens of thousands have lost their lives. Accords/treaties have been signed. Cease-fires declared & violated. But the bloodshed doesn't end. Palestine remains illegally occupied. Its people live in inhuman conditions, in virtual Bantustans, where they are subjected to collective punishments, twenty-four hour curfews, where they are humiliated and brutalized on a daily basis. They never know when their homes will be demolished, when their children will be shot, when their precious trees will be cut, when their roads will be closed, when they will be allowed to walk down to the market to buy food & medicine. And when they will not. They live with no semblance of dignity. With not much hope in sight. They have no control over their lands, their security, their movement, their communication, their water supply. **So when accords are signed, and words like “autonomy” & even “statehood” bandied about, it's always worth asking: What sort of autonomy? What sort of State? What sort of rights will its citizens have?**

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