

# God bless America

Aftermath of an attempted assassination

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Seated on the South Lawn of the White House on 15 September 2020, we couldn't help but stand as President Trump arrived on the Balcony, leading the three Middle East leaders into the afternoon sun. We were about to witness the signing of the Abraham Accords bringing Israel into peace with Bahrain and UAE that day, and soon after, Morocco and Sudan. I was seated towards the edge of the 600-strong crowd, surrounded by donors sporting Presidential Seal cufflinks, tribute to their deep pockets and deeper still networks.

Next to me Batsheva, dotting aunt of a Jared Kushner senior White House staffer, began reciting a soft prayer. Hearing the Hebrew, I enquired about the prayer. She was incanting the Jewish Bracha (blessing) uttered when one sees a king. I wanted to join in. Following her lead phonetically, we prayed together, one an American Jewish woman, one an American Muslim woman, both understanding our President to be our leader.

In the years since that moment of hope and light, President Trump has faced first ridicule, then derision, then dehumanisation and censure; silenced on mainstream and social media, bound in a litany of legal cases, convicted in my city of New York and finally today, targeted for assassination.

As an American and a Muslim, I pray for the full recovery of our former and likely future President and his family. I pray for my nation, the United States, a generous home to me for over 30 years. And as a Muslim I am bound to follow the example of our Prophet as we are reminded in the Islamic Hadith (Sahih Muslim 1828) to pray to our Maker for whomever is given charge of our nation beseeching of our Creator, 'Whoever is given charge over my nation and he is gentle with them, be gentle with him.' In other words one prays that the Almighty 'might treat the ruler as he reigns'. (I remembered this prayer when King Charles III was crowned and wrote about that in this column).

Tonight, I remember the other part of this prayer.

'Oh Allah, whoever is given charge over my nation and he is harsh with them, be harsh with him.'

There has been harshness within our nation. There has been harshness directed at our great nation's former president.

We are collectively responsible as a

nation for this appalling moment, led astray by a recklessly vitriolic far-left which has co-opted the remnants of the Democratic party. Today, the generous and hopeful America I first moved to in 1992 is unrecognisable.

Consumed by narcissism, extreme left woke neo-orthodoxy and an obscene marriage (maybe not only of convenience but also perhaps of infatuation) with virulent Islamism, the Democratic party that President Bill Clinton once led has been largely devoured.

In the void remaining, President Trump and his supporters have relentlessly been ridiculed, ostracised, dehumanised and demonised. This Frankenstein left calls Trump Hitler even as they celebrate, sanction and refuse to condemn breathtakingly virulent dehumanisation of America's Jews since 7 October unleashing an astonishing licence

*America the Beautiful is approaching almost a decade of intense domestic political tribalism*

for public hate speech, hate crimes and acts of hate towards America's Jews. All of this has contributed to these highly combustible moments we must now face as virulent anti-Semitism flows in our colleges, schools and campuses in the guise of anti-Zionism while espousing blatant allegiance with US designated Foreign Domestic Terrorist Organisations including Hamas and Hezbollah.

Today's events were not possible without extreme speech.

Extreme rhetoric in our nation has led to this moment. Islamist jihadist ideology I have examined for decades reveals the power of extreme speech and how it dehumanises, how it diminishes integrative complexity, how it devolves into us versus them, good versus evil, and binary constructs until – having successfully laid the groundwork in the previous absolute dehumanisation of 'the other' – there remains only the elimination of the other.

Who knew? While I was busy studying radicalisation in the foothills of the Hindu Kush in North-West Pakistan, or in the lands of Yazidism and the valleys of the Zagros in Iraqi Kurdistan, big-budget radicalisation was unfurling right under my nose here in America's most moneyed zip codes.

America the Beautiful is approaching

almost a decade of intense domestic political tribalism, poisonous identity politics and, thanks to Covid, a deeply frayed social fabric. Indeed, such a fraying of the social fabric characterises the aftermath of all pandemics, as the brilliant counterterrorism intellectual Brian Michael Jenkins clearly delineates in his work *Plagues and Their Aftermath: How Societies Recover from Pandemics*. This frayed fabric tends to persist – spoiler alert – not for decades but centuries in the wake of global plagues.

Extreme speech with its binary simplicity feeds a ravenous news cycle straining to capture an ever-diminishing attention span targeted by massive bot-farms financed by national and international malignant actors. The result: fraught with tension, suspicion, alienation and frightening hate, Americans are separated gaping chasm by gaping chasm.

As the prayer in the Hadith reminds us, our leaders at this moment will indeed be judged harshly by our Maker for our leaders have treated all of us harshly. They have manipulated us with extreme speech, silenced debate, and censured the target of their hatred, President Trump, who has been throughout captive like a moth to a flame in an incandescent crucible of their animus.

This harshness is exemplified by a government which shows compassion only to a rarefied elite, yet denies it to the everyman upon whom it only rains scorn; a compassion cultivating the rabid anti-Semite at the expense of the disempowered American Jewish citizen. When we cannot protect the most vulnerable minorities in our nation – the Jewish people – it must be said – we may not be able to protect our most empowered citizens, our former and future president.

Language, Foucault has argued, furnishes the building blocks of a particular reality. Language is the battlefield across which power struggles are waged. And it is to language we must now turn.

America's origins were inscribed in some of the finest language to define a democracy. We must now turn to our founding documents and tenets: one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Melania Trump in her letter after the assassination attempt wrote that our 'gentle nation is frayed'. Be gentle with my nation. God Bless America. God have mercy on us all.