

*Editorial*

## Calling the New America Differently: Addressing a Resilient Injustice

Babak Rezvani

### Introduction

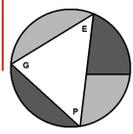
Since the beginning of the new millennium the *takfiri* terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Boko Haram and ISIL/Daesh, are ravaging the Islamic countries in the Middle East, Africa, South-East Asia and Central Asia, murdering tens if not hundreds of thousands of human beings in cold blood. I would use the word human being rather than “women and children” or simply “civilians”, because the male combatants are humans too, and have the right to live and to be treated with dignity and respect if captured—and not to be tortured and burnt alive.

The word *Takfiri* stems from the Arabic *Takfir* which roughly translates as “regarding (the Others) as infidels”. These terrorist groups have a rigid and intolerant understanding of the Sunni Islam and interpret its sources in ways which supposedly justify the killing of the “Others”. Although the victims belong to different faiths, the vast majority are Muslims—either Sunni, or Shia. However, the equally inhumane killings of civilians in the West receive relatively more coverage in the global media.

This is not surprising owing to the fact that the West has a hegemonic political position, as well as the dominance in the mainstream media and the control of the Internet. It allows manipulating these realities according to their “hegemonic” goals. In this way the West, also responsible for the wars in the Middle East, shapes the moral judgement on these political realities. This bias also explains lopsided reporting of events: to reiterate, *Takfiri* terrorist groups are primarily murdering inhabitants of Islamic countries, yet these massacres do not get the coverage and attentions that similar attacks in the West receive.

The hegemonic nature of the USA and the West are often disputed by political analysts and scholars among whom those from the USA and European countries constitute a majority. Whether or not they are still hegemonic, the USA and the West, in general, are still important players in world politics.

Consequently, certain statements by the new US Administration have unleashed a lot of debates and reactions. Indeed, there have been, and still are, many cases of injustice in the so-called *Land of the Free*, and it is appropriate to address them. However, there is a more resilient case of injustice in US history: the one afflicted upon America's original inhabitants. Finally this article argues the appropriateness to choose a new name for America.



### A new Era? A New America?

The political journal *Foreign Affairs* is the best-sold and indexed—i.e. listed in the *Web of Science*—journal that is available in regular bookshops in the United States and Europe. *Foreign Affairs* features essays, easily intelligible, but differently interpretable, by a large number of people. The articles in that journal are written by authors with different political orientations, but almost all essays discuss issues of world politics from an American perspective.

A lot of these articles focus on the US national interest or with the question whether or not the American military, economic and in general political power is still stable or waning. An oft-heard narrative since Donald Trump's presidency is that a retreating USA will put its own national interest ahead of the collective Euro-Atlantic security in NATO's realm.

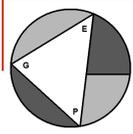
Although nowadays the US power, and its position in the global political arena, is challenged by countries such as Russia, China, India and even by its traditional European allies such as France and Germany—and not to forget Brazil in case of a Neo-Monrovia back-to-the-western-hemisphere USA. Nevertheless, most of the arguments of a waning USA are exaggerated and perhaps are consciously written with a fearmongering and populist purpose. The very fact that a large number of the journal's articles deal with such issues and are read all over the world means that the USA is still an important global player.

The nature of Trump's politics is discussed by a broad range of politicians and political thinkers. This article does not intend to discuss whether the world is at a greater risk now or that Trump's presidency will be significantly different from a number of US presidents in the (recent) past.<sup>1</sup> However, two facts remain and must be mentioned: that the USA still remains a global actor, and that a taboo of discursive political correctness is being violated that has existed in the USA for a couple of decades since the steady victory of the Civil Rights' Movement.

### Injustice in the Land of the Free

Indeed, a number of arguments are made by either Trump or his associates that run counter to the very fundamentals of the *Land of the Free*. The USA was established as a country of ideals; as a country in which people could freely live and observe their religion, political convictions and faith. Even though it does not have a good record of racial equality, as until relatively recently only its European white subjects were thought to have equal rights. However, later, the same fundamental ideas and rights were *discursively* extended to the rest of the society. Although the opportunities to success and social realities were not equal, the rights of its citizens formally were.

Removing citizens of Latin American ancestry from, and barring the entry of Muslims into, the country have become narratives—and in many cases political intentions—that awakened the American consciousness. Terrorist acts by a few individuals from Muslim ancestry have created a sense of fear among people. These individuals (are) believed to be



related to *Takfiri* terrorist groups in the Middle East. In reality, however, they may have been home-grown radicals or so-called *Lone-Wolves*.

As said before, the majority of terror attacks' victims, worldwide, are Muslims. Nevertheless, an image has been depicted as if the takfiri terrorism is a war of Muslims against the West in general and America in particular. Many discriminating potential policies by the Trump Administration are refuted and regarded as illegal by judges, at different levels and in different parts of the USA. In addition to the racial and religious discrimination, the planned abolishment of the Affordable Care Act (i.e. ObamaCare) is another fact that is regarded as a manifestation of injustice in the American society.

One must keep in mind, however, that some of the discriminating policies have been designed during Obama's presidency. Therefore, these policies cannot be regarded completely as Trump's as mentioned above. During Obama's presidency, a law was enacted that paradoxically ended visa-free travels for people of ancestry from certain Muslim countries that are actively in war against Al-Qaeda and Daesh/ISIL: Iran, Iraq and Syria. From that time onwards they need visa in order to enter the USA, even though they also were or became citizens of EU countries.

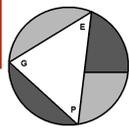
Be that as it may, collective insinuation of American citizens based on ancestry has a precedent in the American recent past: the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. There has been, however, another similar injustice in the US past, which has not received the due attention that it needs: the internment, genocide, and in short injustice afflicted upon the America's native peoples.

### The Americas and its Indigenous Inhabitants

Although all injustice is abject and needs due attention, I argue that the injustice on the Native Americans has never received the due attention that it deserves. The master narrative of US history begins either with American independence (Declaration of Independence) or with the British (and other European) colonization of US territory; it rarely begins in the Pre-Columbian era.

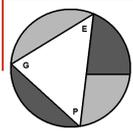
The nature of nationalism itself often prescribes states to claim as much antiquity as they can in order to legitimate themselves. Even though practically all modern nation-states are thought to be modern constructions, they do have traceable roots in pre-modern era. For example, the Franconian and Celtic civilizations are not shunned to be named as ancestors of the modern-day territorial-cultural polities of France and the UK. Perhaps more tangible are traces of the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Roman civilizations in the cultural-historical infrastructures of the modern-day states of Iraq, Egypt and Italy.

Cristoforo Colombo, better Known as Columbus, should not be an appropriate reference of pride. It is ironical that many places (e.g. the country Colombia) exist on the American continent whose indigenous populations were decimated after "its discovery" by Columbus.



**Figure 1 Calling the new America differently and hence addressing a resilient injustice  
(by Babak Rezvani)**





The idea of a discovery of the continent by Columbus is incredible, not only because there have been previous encounters between the American continent and the rest of the world, but mainly because the continent was already inhabited by people; the continent existed but only happened to be unknown to (most) Europeans.

Ancient civilizations such as the Aztecs and Incas were destroyed by an aggressive European conquest and colonization. Consequently, countless people were killed after their temples were destroyed and their land disowned. Similarly, the name of the continent, America, should in itself not be a reference of pride. It is named after Amerigo Vespucci, another sailor and colonizer.

Claiming to be a Land of the Free, with an economic system that believes in the right of ownership, does not rhyme with a master narrative that is hesitant to admit that disowning land from its owners and neglecting a non-European antiquity are cases of injustice that still must be fully addressed.<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion: Choosing a New Name for a New Era

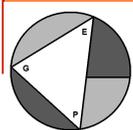
What should be the new name of the continent? Choosing a new name may be challenging and provide some food for thought (see Figure 1 above). Names that derive from such names and concepts as *The New World*, *Das Abendland* or the *West* are equally Eurocentric. One feature of the Americas is that unlike other continents, this landmass stretches from one pole to the other one; from the northern Arctic circle proximately to Antarctica.

Then, what would be a good name? Biarctica? Duoarctica? Arctoarctica? Poletoploe? Polonia? Poleland? Perhaps not a good idea, as it sounds too similar to Poland. Still, why would similarities to the existing names necessarily be a bad idea? There are many examples of toponyms which were transposed onto new places and which begot their own realities and identities. However, I propose a more authentic name.

One must know that in many Native American faiths the *Mother Earth* is sacred. Perhaps a good name is *Pachamama*, roughly translated as the Mother Earth in the Andean languages of Quetchua and Aymara. Is it fair to call only one continent, one land mass, one part of the Earth as the Mother Earth? Perhaps, it is not fair.

However, it is fair to give the Americas a name derived from a name or a concept rooted in that continent's Indigenous languages and cultures. A name derived from or related to Mother Earth pledges the due respect both to the Indigenous cultures as well as to the Earth, which itself is another victim of injustice.

It is appropriate to think about a new name replacing America; certainly nowadays, when the Americans and the rest of the world are reviewing, and reflecting upon, the current and past injustices. However, it is also appropriate that such a move should not be restricted



nominally; it is indeed of the utmost importance that such a move does not only address a name rather than the justice itself!

*Babak Rezvani, Editor-in-Chief June 2017*

### Endnotes

1. A number of arguments, made by the American political thinker Noam Chomsky and his colleagues, can be read or listened to, at <https://chomsky.info/interviews/>.
2. It is therefore not surprising that the creed of a “good Indian, is a dead Indian” is still not frowned upon in the USA, accordingly as it should be in a democratic society, when history books still tend to take pride in “national heroes” who have done many wrongs to that country’s indigenous inhabitants.

NB: do you have any comments on Rezvani’s editorial? Please send these to [info@ethnogeopolitics.org](mailto:info@ethnogeopolitics.org), or through the contact form at [www.ethnogeopolitics.org](http://www.ethnogeopolitics.org).

*Announcement:* Flyer 22th Srebrenica commemoration in The Hague, the Netherlands, 11 July 2017 (in Dutch)

**1995-2017**

**NATIONALE HERDENKING  
SREBRENICA-GENOCIDE**

**HET PLEIN-DEN HAAG  
DINSDAG 11 JULI 15:00 - 16:30**

SPREKERS:  
Erna Rijdsijk - Universitair Docent van de Faculteit Militaire Wetenschappen van de NLDA  
Admira Suljagic - overlevende van de genocide van Srebrenica

**Nooit vergeten - Nikad ne zaboraviti**  
[www.srebrenica-herdenking.nl](http://www.srebrenica-herdenking.nl)