

A person is standing on a rocky mountain peak, looking out over a vast, rocky landscape under a cloudy sky. The person is silhouetted against the sky. The overall scene is dramatic and atmospheric.

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Towards a Peaceful Future

For the United States of America

David Cerenzia

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Summary

While there is a sense of optimism that the administration of President Joe Biden will spell an end to the crippling polarisation that has gripped the United States of America, it is our fear that the far right movement will not settle down, nor respect the lawful results of the US Election of 2020 as certified by the US Senate and House of Representatives. Based on our experience as peacebuilders, and in countering radicalization and violent extremism, the Khalifa Ihler Institute takes the position that actions must be taken to rebuild the shared foundation and understanding of the political reality of the United States of America. This paper shall serve as the bedrock from which the Khalifa Ihler Institute will make policy recommendations to promote a peaceful future for the United States of America.

First, it will engage in a discussion highlighting why a formalized Truth and Reconciliation Process is of the utmost necessity in the early days of President Joe Biden’s term in office. Further, we analyse relevant case studies as examples of Truth and Reconciliation efforts undertaken in recent history whose various elements, if replicated, would serve as a strong starting point for such a process in the US.

As a conclusion, this paper articulates six recommended actions that will form a basis from which the US can strategically respond to the threats facing their nation. The primary themes of these actions will be: recognition, understanding, reconciliation, inclusion, rebuilding social infrastructure, and promoting unified efforts from those wielding economic, political, and social influence to develop meaningful strategic and political changes.

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Introduction

“It’s the past we step into and how we repair it” - Amanda Gorman¹

While most may be aware of the electric polarization that has swept through the United States of America, a common misconception is that this phenomena began during President Donald Trump’s term in office. President Trump was not the cause of the polarization, rather its by-product.

In 2009, the United States began to witness organized mass gatherings across the country called “tea parties”, whose existence ignited a revival of the politics of outrage and mistrust in the government, effectively breathing life into the populist passions that would threaten the stability of both political parties². Fast forward to 2016, the world would witness the founding of the Proud Boys by Canadian-British right-wing activist Gavin McInnes. Their platform would come to include the glorification of Trumpian ideas, libertarianism, and traditional gender roles, and willingness to engage in violent political confrontations.³

Notably, in 2019, while carrying out the sentencing of two adherents of the Proud Boys ideology for their involvement in a politically motivated street fight, New York State Supreme Court Justice Mark Dwyer highlighted the risk of letting this group go unchallenged. Justice Dwyer stated, “I know enough about history to know what happened in Europe in the 1930s when political street brawls were allowed to go ahead without any type of check from the criminal justice system,” and that, “we do not want that to happen in New York, especially at this time in the country when people are so divided”.⁴

Despite this positive example of public figures using their power to challenge this growing threat, since President Trump first announced his candidacy for office the United States has seen an unprecedented and abnormal rise of violent right wing extremism.⁵ From marching publicly at the “Unite the Right Rally” in Charlottesville in 2017 to public calls of overthrowing the government at “Stop the Steal” rallies after the 2020 election, President Trump has helped normalize their extremism in ways that at one point would have not seemed plausible.⁶

While many may have remained optimistic that a Biden victory in the 2020 Presidential election would have dampered the far right’s spirit, if anything the group became more emboldened.

¹ Angie Martoccio, “Amanda Gorman Delivers Powerful Poem at Biden’s Presidential Inauguration.” Rolling Stone, January 20 2021. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/amanda-gorman-poem-biden-inauguration-1116841/>

² Jeremy W. Peters, “The Tea Party Didn’t Get What It Wanted, but it Did Unleash the Politics of Anger,” *The New York Times*, August 30 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/28/us/politics/tea-party-trump.html>.

³ Mike Wendling, “US Election 2020: Who are the Proud Boys- and Who are Antifa?,” September 30 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54352635>

⁴ Colin Moynihan, “2 Proud Boys Sentenced to 4 Years in Brawl with Anti-Fascists at Republican Club,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/22/nyregion/proud-boys-antifa-sentence.html>

⁵ White Supremacism is a Domestic Terror Threat That Will Outlast Trump,” *Time*, n.d. <https://time.com/5927685/white-supremacism-threat-outlast-trump/>.

⁶ White Supremacism is a Domestic Terror Threat That Will Outlast Trump,” *Time*, n.d.

On December 21st 2020 a special legislative session was taking place at the Oregon Capitol, that was aggressively disrupted by far right protesters who descended upon the statehouse calling on lawmakers and the governor to reopen the state economy and end restrictions aimed at curbing COVID-19.⁷ The situation itself was far from peaceful, as Oregon State Police reported that officers were sprayed with, “some kind of chemical agent”, were attacked with bear mace, and after arrests were made to dissuade the crowd violence ensued as physical property was destroyed in unified acts of defiance.⁸ As such, while disbelief swept through the minds and hearts of many, the Storming of the Capitol that occurred two weeks later was far from surprising, and if anything it was predictable.

This discourse sets some of the tone for the “Unity” themed 2021 Inauguration of President Biden, Members of Congress, including Rep. [Barbara Lee](#)⁹, Rep. [John Larson](#)¹⁰, Sen. [Marco Rubio](#)¹¹, Sen. Cory Booker, as well as Vice President Kamala Harris have all underlined the importance of truth and reconciliation throughout their work among others on H. R. 1636 to establish the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys¹², and in H.Con.Res.100 - Urging the establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation, which was introduced by Representative Barbara Lee in June 2020 in part in response to the Black Lives Matter protests and police brutality against black americans.

“We must speak truth that slavery and our country’s long history of institutional racism continue to cause great pain and inequality toward communities of color” - Vice President Harris¹³

The events that occurred on January 6th 2021 were an extreme display of violent American actors. At the time writing this paper it is with conviction that one can state that this event occurred as a direct result of the inability of the global and local community to openly challenge the far right movement. These events are sobering, and demonstrate this movement’s ideological loyalty, willingness to engage in violence and even the violent overthrow of the

⁷ Lauren Dake, “Far-Right Protesters Disrupt Oregon Legislature Special Session,” OPB, December 20 2020, <https://www.opb.org/article/2020/12/21/oregon-legislature-special-session-protests>.

⁸ Lauren Dake, “Far-Right Protesters Disrupt Oregon Legislature Special Session,” OPB, December 20 2020,

⁹ “In the Wake of COVID-19 and Murder of George Floyd, Congresswoman Barbara Lee Calls for Formation of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission | Barbara Lee - Congresswoman for the 13th District of California.” n.d. Lee.House.Gov. Accessed January, 22, 2021.

<https://lee.house.gov/news/press-releases/in-the-wake-of-covid-19-and-murder-of-george-floyd-congresswoman-barbara-lee-calls-for-formation-of-truth-racial-healing-and-transformation-commission>.

¹⁰ Rep. John B. Larson, “Rep. Larson: Black Lives Matter.” 2020. Congressman John Larson. June 16, 2020.

<https://larson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-larson-black-lives-matter>.

¹¹ “Rubio, Harris, Booker Introduce Legislation to Establish Commission Devoted to Uplifting Black Communities.” n.d. U.S. Senator for Florida, Marco Rubio. Accessed January 22, 2021.

<https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/7/rubio-harris-booker-introduce-legislation-to-establish-commission-devoted-to-uplifting-black-communities>.

¹² Fredrica Wilson, “Text - H.R.1636 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys Act.” Www.Congress.Gov. April 12, 2019. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1636/text> .

¹³ “Rubio, Harris, Booker Introduce Legislation to Establish Commission Devoted to Uplifting Black Communities.” n.d. U.S. Senator for Florida, Marco Rubio. Accessed January 22, 2021.

<https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/7/rubio-harris-booker-introduce-legislation-to-establish-commission-devoted-to-uplifting-black-communities>

democratic institutions in the nation of which they at times claim to be patriots, to promote and protect their beliefs.

At this point in time, one should be wary of the months and years to come, as this movement's dialogue and actions are indicative of a position of rejecting and refusing to accept the certified results of the 2020 Presidential Election. The disputed election results represent the systematic undoing of the US political reality, and it is to be expected that this will last beyond the inauguration. It is possible that there may be the establishment of a Trump-shadow presidency that will see him continuing to wield influence with his followers, or the fragmentation of the violent right where militias might try to push for a political agenda they feel Trump has abandoned by leaving office. Those with economic, social and political influence must lead by example, withdraw themselves from their partisan views, and take swift action to reconcile, rehabilitate and rebuild the division that has gone unremended since the conclusion of the American Civil War.

Why reconciliation efforts are necessary

If a complex emergency has no clear beginning nor end, how can one expect the development of a new normality to come about, and for this process to be anything but lengthy? It would be irrational for one to assume that once the Capitol building was cleared of the domestic terrorists who breached its walls, and the election results certified, that the voices who inspired those actions would go silent. This position is confirmed by the documented spread of misinformation in the days that have followed.

One of the keys to achieving a new sense of normality will be to understand that the actions of this minority population, while outlandish and unbelievable to most, are not inherently irrational. The current state of polarization in the United States has been caused by issues of self respect and pride, self identity and greed. Furthermore the main actors in this movement, as evidenced by the vehement refusal to accept the results of the election as legitimate, are deliberately misrepresenting reality to ensure the survival of their extremist ideology in US governing institutions.

The US far right movement rooted in white supremacy has found itself in the position of a prominent feature of contemporary United States, as it is rooted in the divide that not only contributed to the onset of the American Civil War, but has yet to be reconciled.

This spring the police killing of George Floyd and several other Black Americans offered a painful reminder of the persistence of racism across American society.¹⁴ Following this wave of collective public outcry that saw an estimated 10% of the population attend demonstrations across all fifty states, a Monmouth University public opinion poll found that 76% of Americans

¹⁴ Sarah Souli, "Does America Need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission?" POLITICO, n.d. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/16/does-america-need-a-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-395332>.

now view racial and ethnic discrimination is a significant problem faced by the country.¹⁵¹⁶ Resolving a situation of this nature would require processes more significant than a national conversation, and yet, with some exceptions, the idea of a formal reconciliation process has not yet been a central part of discussion pertaining to the countries future, and few politicians are pushing such a measure.¹⁷

The Khalifa Ihler Institute is of the position that it is of the utmost importance and necessity that those who wield political, social and influence in the United States proactively pursue a formalized reconciliation process that includes stakeholders ranging from grass roots organizations to the White house. While academic literature on this subject is centred around its occurrence in a post-conflict setting, it is still applicable to present day America.

There are three areas of focus integral to the rehabilitation process in leading to an effective rehabilitation process.

The first area of focus is social rehabilitation, which would see effort placed in providing a framework for the rebuilding of livelihoods and civil institutions that were suppressed, eroded or rendered powerless.¹⁸ As a whole it is logical for one to infer that in the American context the reason livelihoods are suffering is not because a foreign enemy came and behaved in destructive fashion rather it is due to the domestic actors whose ideology has been kept alive in the wounds that went unattended following the conclusion of the American Civil War.

During the course of his term in power, President Trump has largely succeeded in making the executive branch work on his personal behalf, and has done so by punishing perceived enemies, co-opting craven allies, and forcing out officials with a high degree of competency and integrity.¹⁹ The impact this has had on public trust in their institutions is notable. Recent studies have shown that public trust in the federal government has been near historic lows for more than a decade, with only 20% saying they trust the federal government to do what is right just about always or most of the time.²⁰ The responsibility now falls on those who were forced to flee the halls of the Capitol to come together united, and proactively engage in efforts to rebuild the nation's trust in the government, and the institutions the previous administrations have destroyed.

The next area of immediate concern is the act of political rehabilitation. In war torn societies political rehabilitation takes place in highly polarized settings, characterized by deep suspicions between factions. It is in this period of uncertainty and mistrust where extremists factions are

¹⁵ Bui L. Buchanan and J.K. Patel, "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S History," The New York Times, July 3 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>

¹⁶ "Protestors' Anger Justified Even If Actions May Not Be," Monmouth University Polling Institute, June 2 2020. https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_060220/

¹⁷ Sarah Souli, "Does America Need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission?" POLITICO, n.d. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/16/does-america-need-a-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-395332>.

¹⁸ Ahmed I. Ismail and Reginald Herbold Green, "Rehabilitation, Sustainable Peace and Development: Towards Reconceptualisation," *Third World Quarterly* 20,no.1 (1999), 195.

¹⁹ George Packer, "The President is Winning His War on American Institutions," The Atlantic, April 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/04/how-to-destroy-a-government/606793/>

²⁰ Pew Research Centre, "Americans' Views of Government: Low Trust, but Some Positive Performance Ratings," Pew Research Center, September 14 2020.

most likely to strive to undermine peace efforts.²¹ High levels of polarization, deep suspicion between factions and general mistrust is also markedly present in the US context, despite not being a directly post-war context. With this in mind, one can logically infer that the onus will be on President Elect Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and their supporters to understand that efforts must be made to prevent this opposition feeling a further degree of alienation.

Finally, and potentially the most pressing, is the necessity of demobilisation, reintegration, and resettlement. In post war settings the responsibility of the victorious military party is to ensure that little or no direct targeting of defeated ex-combatants occurs.²² When applied to the US context, the equivalent action would be to see leaders of both political parties urge their followers to refrain from further alienating far-right supporters of President Trump by engaging in belittling or dehumanizing activity. Instead, members of this movement and extreme ideology should be held to account by the criminal justice system following due process. This can have the direct cause of reviving civil society, reducing fear and social tensions and restoring confidence in a shared sense of security.

At this point it is understandable for the reader to question why the reconciliation process would be needed in this setting? Some may suggest that while it was traumatic, the storming of the Capitol was merely one instance, and not a protracted period of organized violence by non-state actors. While this may be true, efforts to build peace in this divided nation were needed prior to this event, and this claim does not hold water when viewed through the established taxonomy in the field of Peace and Conflict studies which identifies direct, cultural and structural violence.

This theory suggests that it is specific elements of a culture, and not the culture in its entirety, are symbolic of one's existence, and can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.²³ Acts of cultural violence occur as a result of alienation, which can be defined as the internalization of a certain culture and the rejection of another, effectively transforming the moral colour of violence from wrong to right.²⁴ When applied to the context of the United States, to be alienated from one culture, American, and resocialized into another culture, Trumpism, can cause such an effect. Despite an election taking place, and its results certified despite their best efforts, small numbers of right wing extremists continue to gather outside of State Capitol buildings in the days leading up to the inauguration.²⁵ They do not do so in the best interest or the name of their country, rather they do it for their adopted cultural identity as Trump ideologues. This point is made particularly evident by the observed phenomena of members of the far right movement abandoning President Trump in order to promote their own version of what they held Trumpism to be through use of direct violence.²⁶

²¹ Ahmed I. Ismail and Reginald Herbold Green, "Rehabilitation, Sustainable Peace and Development: Towards Reconceptualisation," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no.1 (1999), 196.

²² Ahmed I. Ismail and Reginald Herbold Green, "Rehabilitation, Sustainable Peace and Development: Towards Reconceptualisation," 196.

²³ Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research*, 27, no. 3 (1990), 291.

²⁴ Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," (199), 293.

²⁵ Sarah McCammon, "Despite Warning Signs, Many State Capitols See Only Small Protests and Quiet Streets," NPR.org, January 17 2021.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/insurrection-at-the-capitol/2021/01/17/957947036/despite-warnings-many-state-capitols-see-only-small-protests-and-quiet-streets>

²⁶ Misinformation Report- a Fractured Landscape," The Khalifa Ihler Institute, January 17 2021.
<https://www.khalifaihler.org/news/2021/1/17/misinformation-report-a-fractured-landscape>

There is a natural flow from cultural, to structural, to direct violence. The culture preaches, teaches, advocates, eggs on, and dulls its population into the repression of normality. It is when this occurs that one can witness efforts of direct violence. One characteristic found in culture, that is of particular importance to the context of this paper, that can lead to such an occurrence is ideology.

When ideology becomes a factor the lines may no longer be drawn between, “God and the chosen, and Satan and the unchosen,” but in the current period of modernity, this distinction takes the form of the, “self” and the “other”.²⁷ In this setting a steep gradient is constituted to inflate the self, and deflate the other, and when the other is dehumanized, and converted to an it, the stage is set for direct violence that is to be blamed on the victim.²⁸ A hallmark of President Trump's term in office has been his utilization of the “us vs. them” narrative, where by his own admission he is always fighting someone on behalf of Americans, whether it be congress, courts, foreign countries, even his own government.²⁹

The Khalifa Ihler institute defines violent extremism as the violent denial of diversity where an in-group violently denies the right of existence of an out-group on the basis of culture. When an individual becomes indoctrinated to an ideology, and sees that ideology alienates them from others, there is grave cause for concern. When discussing Adolf Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt stated,

*The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.*³⁰

It is without question that President Trump and the right wing extremists who adhere to his ideology have developed an inability to think from the standpoint of someone else. From this, it becomes ever more apparent that a reconciliation process is needed, and must occur before this demographic fully detaches itself from reality, and begins increasing the use of violence in order to safeguard and protect their identity.

²⁷ Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,”(1990), 298.

²⁸ Johan Galtung, (1990), 298.

²⁹ Anita Kumar, “Trump Takes Back Spotlight in ‘Us vs Them’ War with States.” Politico Pro, n.d.
<https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2020/04/14/trump-takes-back-spotlight-in-us-vs-them-war-with-states-1915333>

³⁰ Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 19654), 49.

What the reconciliation process can look like, through contemporary examples

It is logical for one to conclude that despite not falling into the extreme category of a civil war, the prominence of onset cultural violence justifies the need for those who wield social, political, and economic power to engage earnestly in a reconciliation/peacebuilding process. While this is something that seems distant, and far removed from a country like the United States, history has shown that it can be done. To understand how, attention must be drawn to three recent examples of such efforts.

The first example to be highlighted is the steps taken to reach a peaceful conclusion to the period of protracted armed conflict that gripped the island of Ireland. When the conflict reached its conclusion, the border established in 1921 remained in place, but the infrastructure was laid to allow for unity if it was expressed as the desired will of the people. The concepts and language from the Downing Street Declaration of 1993 and the Joint Framework Document of 1995 avoided setting out separate positions, instead meddling together elements into a single text.³¹

The Sinn Fein Party of Ireland had contended that the General Election of 1918 demonstrated an all island majority in favour independence and this was the sole exercise of genuine self determination, and was effectively thwarted by the British partition in 1920.³² Therefore, finding a way to address the issue of self determination would be viewed as crucial in developing a basis for talks in which Sinn Fein would participate. This demonstrates that in the approach to rebuilding the relationships between divided sides, a conscious effort must be placed in addressing deep rooted historic grievances.

The Joint Declaration, the fullest expression of the philosophy underlying the peace process, stated that the lessons of Northern and Republic Irish history show that stability and wellbeing will not be found under a political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on the grounds of identity by a significant minority of those who are governed by it.³³ Moreover, one can conclude that those who were a part of this process thought consciously about the future of the Island by ensuring trust between the two main traditions that inhabited was rebuilt. As it stands today, a key catalyst in the storming of the US Capitol was the fact that a significant percentage of the United States population are proactively rejecting and refusing the allegiance to the political system that governs them. If politicians do work to rectify this swiftly, the risk is that this demographic will cling to this perceived injustice and will one day be referred to as the historical grievance that motivated this group to take even more drastic and consequential action.

A second example would be one in which the catalysts of the polarization that led to the reconciliation process are most akin to some of those currently found in the United States.

³¹ Rory Montgomery, "The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2021), 89.

³² Rory Montgomery, "The Good Friday Agreement and a United Ireland," (2021), 89.

³³ Rory Montgomery, (2021), 93.

Apartheid in South Africa can be described as a strategy to disempower the non-white population.³⁴ The origins of America's unjust racial order lie in the Trans Atlantic Slave trade, where millions of Africans of all ages were sold into a lifetime of forced labour, defined by nonstop violence and strategic dehumanization.³⁵ After the Civil War, lynchings, disenfranchisement and indentured servitude all reinforced racial hierarchy from the period of Reconstruction through Jim Crow segregation.³⁶ Contrary to their like minded counterparts across the Atlantic, the dissolution of this oppressive and dehumanizing system was not accompanied by reconciliatory efforts.

In South Africa, prior to the truth and reconciliation process, negotiations in general reflected a genuine concern for recognition and reconstruction, and specifically the conscious choice to include the views of the white minority who implemented this regime, and taking its concerns seriously.³⁷ What is even more important, is that prior to this process the victims of the oppression proactively chose to think of a future for their nation which included their oppressors as evidenced by a brief analysis of the South African Freedom Charter.

This was the statement of the core principles of the South African Congress Alliance, consisting of the African National Congress and its allies. In the preamble it is stated that, "We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to now: that South Africa belongs to all who lie in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim to authority unless it is based on the will of all the people."³⁸ Under the heading of, *The People Shall Govern!*, the charter states that, "The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour and sex."³⁹ In South Africa, racial injustice was created and executed by a class of white citizens, a minority demographic of the population, clinging to an ideology of white supremacy. Yet it was the victims of this unjustifiable hatred that worked to promote a future for their nation that would be characterized by equality.

Integral to the South African approach to reconciliation was the engagement in a public truth telling process, and controversially the nation went so far as to afford amnesty to ensure the truth was revealed to the utmost.⁴⁰ This however, as evidenced by the Rwanda approach, is not a necessity in all truth and reconciliation processes. To achieve this, parliament enacted the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act in 1995, with overcoming injustices of the past as its central objective.⁴¹ While some may have celebrated the passing of this legislation, the actual and ongoing implementation of it was of far greater importance.

That being said, blanket amnesty can not be an option. For too long people have utilized the system in the United States as a way to carry inhumane acts against their countrymen, and the lack of accountability is a feature that has continued to perpetuate the division between black and white Americans. As highlighted by Hanna Ardent,

³⁴ Kristin Henrard, "Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformation and Reconciliation," *World Affairs* 166, no. 1 (2003), 38.

³⁵ Justin Worland, "America's Long Overdue Awakening to Systemic Racism," *Time*, June 11 2020.
<https://time.com/5851855/systemic-racism-america/>

³⁶ Justin Worland, "America's Long Overdue Awakening to Systemic Racism," *Time*, June 11 2020.

³⁷ Henrard, Kristin. "Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformation and Reconciliation." *World Affairs* 166, no. 1 (2003), 39.

³⁸ "Misinformation Report- a Fractured Landscape," The Khalifa Ihler Institute, January 17 2021.

<https://www.khalifaihler.org/newsb/2021/1/17/misinformation-report-a-fractured-landscape>

³⁹ "Misinformation Report- a Fractured Landscape," The Khalifa Ihler Institute, January 17 2021.

⁴⁰ Kristin Henrard, "Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformation and Reconciliation," *World Affairs* 166, no. 1 (2003), 40.

⁴¹ Kristin Henrard, "Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformation and Reconciliation," (2003), 40.

Justice demands that the accused be prosecuted, defended and judged, and that all other questions of ‘how could it happen?’ and ‘why did it happen,’ of ‘why the jews’ and ‘why the Germans,’ of ‘what was the role of other nations?’ and ‘what was the extent of co-responsibility on the side of the Allies?,’ of ‘How could Jews through their own leaders cooperate in their own destruction?’ be left in abeyance.⁴²

The American public needs to engage in truth finding efforts and pursuing accountability for the perpetrators of violence if they wish to comprehend why members of their community decided that violent insurrection and terrorism against their own nation was what they needed to do to protect their beliefs. If they do not, then it will be impossible for the nation to move forward as one, and lay the foundation for a peaceful future.

When this legislation was passed, there was a strong reaction by white South Africans, including warnings of retreat, secession, or even the use of violence, yet these actions were simply met with a revamping of level negotiations.⁴³ South Africa’s reconciliation and reconstruction process is clearly ongoing and will presumably last for decades to come. That being said, if a country that was as deeply divided and scared by Apartheid can develop a constitution that secures and promotes individual rights in a way that acknowledge the nature of the nations diversity, the same can be achieved in the self proclaimed leader of the free world.

At this point it is again understandable that many may still feel a degree of hesitancy towards the idea of such efforts being made in the United States. One might highlight how while a similar scar caused by ethnic segregation can be found in both nations, the United States self classification as a first world nation would make this a difficult comparison. While objectively this statement holds true, it fails to consider reconciliation efforts that followed the reunification of Germany.

When engaging in the process of reunification, the depth of the German divide saw the precedent placed upon the overall coherence of the nation, rather than the restoration of the nation state itself.⁴⁴ This is a unique position as at face value it may lead to the conclusion that such an action would effectively delay the rebuilding process, and thus extend the window in which actors may undermine the process. Yet, the question must be asked as to whether one can join two divided sides together as one, if they have little understanding of what that unified body would look like?

A key element of this process was to ensure the obligation of Germans in the Federal Republic to exhibit national solidarity with those Germans whose democratic self determination had been deprived on the eastern side of the wall.⁴⁵ The priority seems to have not necessarily been the promotion or pursuit of physical unity. Instead, it would appear that a conscious effort to pursue equal experience and equality for those on either side of the divide. If both ideas feel equal to the other, the logic would be that unity would follow its wake.

⁴² Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 5.

⁴³ Kristin Henard, “Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformation and Reconciliation,” (2003), 48.

⁴⁴ Heinrich Winkler et al, “Rebuilding of a Nation: The Germans before and after Unification,” *Daedalus* 123, no.1 (1994),109.

⁴⁵ Heinrich Winkler et al, “Rebuilding of a Nation: The Germans before and after Unification,” (1994), 112.

Moving forward, the country realized that the term, “German”, need not only be defined by descent, but should be defined by the will of the people to belong to the German nation.⁴⁶ Germany could only play a role in the development of Europe and the world if it found constructive solutions for its inner problems. For the United States, a similar approach should be taken. Politicians must work together to ensure that those who they represent want to be a nation, and proactively change the collective perspective on what it means to be one.

As President Biden's term in office begins, a new chapter will be written in the nation's history, yet it will be marked by the inheriting of a grievance that has gone unresolved since the conclusion of the Civil War. The challenge of building peace that will resolve the historical grievances of the minority populations has been made even more difficult by his predecessor who was devoted to furthering the depth of this rift through the undermining of civil institutions, and the empowering of far right extremists who have acted violently against the citizens of the country they claim to be the sole protectors of. A nation that defines itself by its core values of liberty, and justice for all, could not be further removed from this ideal.

Recommendations

To move forward, those who wield political, social, and economic power must utilize their place of privilege to ensure the historic pattern of avoidance and unwillingness to engage in a reconciliation process does not become a hallmark of another US presidency. An imperative first step is to ensure that those who have been directly affected by the centuries of racial inequality, injustice and hatred are at the heart of said process. One example of how this could be achieved would be through the implementation of a community based approach to justice as used in Rwanda to try genocide related crimes. The *gacaca*, place where communities gather to resolve disputes, saw a positive reception due to their swift work and the extensive involvement of local communities that has helped them better understand the country's history and has eased tensions between the country's main ethnic groups.⁴⁷

Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the foundation is laid that will provide those who have been oppressed and suffered from institutionalized injustice the opportunity to represent their voice in the public domain. An example of the form this could take can be found in the establishment of the Sámi Parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Sámi, with their cultural variations, are the indigenous population of Fennoscandia and are a minority demographic of this region.⁴⁸ In 1973, the Finish Parliament signed and ratified the “Regulations for the Sámi Delegation,” which defined the responsibilities of the Sami Parliament, as a purely advisory position that would observe the rights of the Sámi and promote their economic, social and cultural conditions.⁴⁹ In Norway, the Department of Sámi and Minority Affairs in the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion works to make conditions favourable for the Sámis, and the

⁴⁶ Heinrich Winkler et al (1994), 123.

⁴⁷ “Justice Compromised| The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-Based Gacaca Courts,” Human Rights Watch, May 31 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/31/justice-compromised/legacy-rwandas-community-based-gacaca-courts>

⁴⁸ Ludger, Muller-Wille, “The Sami Parliament in Finland: A Model For Ethnic Minority Management?” *Etudies/Inuit/Studies* 3, no.2 (1979), 64.

⁴⁹ Ludger, Muller-Wille, “The Sami Parliament in Finland: A Model For Ethnic Minority Management?” (1979), 68.

government and the Sámediggi, (Sámi Parliament), have jointly developed procedures for when and how consultations between Norwegian authorities and the Sámdiggi shall be carried out.⁵⁰ In 1993, Sweden became the last of the three nations to do so, recognizing that for the Sami population to participate in political life, there was a need for a representative body of the entirety of this demographic's population.⁵¹

As it stands today, there are several different approaches and methods that the administration of President Biden can take to build peace within his nation and finally sew shut the wounds that have been left untended since the conclusion of the Civil War. However, the election results continue to be contested by President Trump and a vast following across the country. The Khalifa Ihler Institute is fearful that this movement will not settle down, nor respect the lawful result of the US Election of 2020 as Certified by the US Senate and House of Representatives. At this point the strength of institutions is not enough. Action must be taken to rebuild the shared foundation and understanding of the political reality of the United States of America.

Based on experiences as peacebuilders, and in countering radicalization into violent extremism that may lead to terrorism or violent uprising, the Khalifa Ihler Institute is in the process of developing a strategic response to the threats facing the USA. As a start we have developed six recommended actions that address these issues.

First and foremost the issue of the far right in the US can no longer be ignored. Recognition of the problem is the first step on the path to resolving it. The far right movement in the US has deep roots and a long history of violence. It is time lawmakers, academic the media and the public work together to acknowledge and address this. Recognizing and understanding the scale, scope and depth of the issue requires structural efforts, funding for research and collaboration across sectors.

Secondly; with the absence of a shared understanding of the political reality of the United States, paving a unified and peaceful path forward is impossible. We therefore recommend truth-finding efforts akin to what we have seen in post-conflict transitional processes such as in South Africa and Rwanda. This also requires work to cement ownership of the process in the American people in order to build trust in the process itself.

Third; on the basis of, and tandem with the truth finding efforts we recommend efforts to reconcile divided communities in order to fight back against political polarization, the developing and ever present hatred along racial, religious, socio-economic and other demographic and political divides across the United States.

Fourth; in order for these processes to have credibility and avoid disruption efforts must be undertaken to disengage and rehabilitate members of militant groups as well as members of fringe groups and networks within which conspiracy theories have thrived. Building the structure and infrastructure for rehabilitative efforts, Exit work, and efforts akin to efforts of demilitarisation, disengagement and rehabilitation of violent groups works, and it's key for the successful and peaceful future of the United States.

⁵⁰ "Wayback Machine." 2007. Web.Archive.org. September 28, 2007.
https://web.archive.org/web/20070928092819/http://www.galdu.org/govat/doc/eng_sami_issues.pdf.

⁵¹ Background." n.d. Sametinget. <https://www.sametinget.se/9688>.

Fifth; social infrastructure includes public schools, libraries and other arenas in which shared identity is developed. It also underpins the development of social capital and mobility. Working across these institutions, and working to strengthen these institutions in order to adequately address grievances, build a shared identity rooted in scientific fact, and the various experiences of the peoples of America and their histories is key to mend the social fabric of the nation.

Sixth; lawmakers, policy makers, private corporations and others wielding economic, political and social influence must come together, not only in a display of unity, but in order to develop meaningful strategic and political changes in order to support these efforts for the peaceful and prosperous future of America.

We hope for a peaceful and democratic future for the United States of America and for the peoples who have come together to build a country in unity. We stand ready to work with the US Administration, lawmakers, state officials, federal and local government officials, with local and international organizations, peacemakers, politicians, grassroots activists and others to build a brighter, more united future for communities across the country.

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