



## ***How Washington's 'War on Terror' Became Everyone's Islamophobia and the Impact of September 11 on the Political Terrain of South and Southeast Asia***

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**Abstract:** This paper sets out to examine the political impact of September 11, 2001, on South and Southeast Asia, focusing on three countries in particular: Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. It argues that the events following the terrorist attacks on the United States of America gave the American government the pretext to once again extend its foreign policy outreach to key Muslim states all over Asia and to deploy the ambiguous trope of the 'war on terror' as a means to justify the direct and indirect intervention in the domestic political affairs of the countries concerned. However the paper also shows how the governments of these Muslim countries were willing and able to adopt and adapt themselves to the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' to suit their own domestic political agendas, chief among which was to marginalize and demonise the legitimate Islamist opposition movements within their own borders. This conjunction of interests between the American government and comprador Muslim regimes has helped to further sediment the fear of Islam and political Islamism in particular, thereby reproducing and perpetuating the logic of Islamophobia well beyond the borders of the Western world.

### **I. INTRODUCTION: HOW WASHINGTON'S 'WAR ON TERROR' BECAME EVERYONE ELSE'S AS WELL**

*Any number of people can use (Islam) for their own objectives. The main thing for them is to gain power. We are going to be faced with this problem for a long time. We know that we in Malaysia are vulnerable to such forms of extremism, like every other country in the world. Every one of us is vulnerable.*

—Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir  
Mohamad, Speaking on 17 November 2001<sup>1</sup>

This paper sets out to examine the political impact of September 11, 2001, on South and Southeast Asia, focusing on three countries in particular: Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. It shall argue that the events following the terrorist attacks on the United States of America had given the American government the pretext to once again extend its foreign policy outreach to key Muslim states all over Asia and to deploy the trope of the ambiguous 'war on terror' as a means to justify the direct and indirect intervention in the domestic political affairs of the countries concerned. However the paper shall

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also show how the governments of these Muslim countries were willing and able to adopt and adapt themselves to the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' to suit their own domestic political agendas, chief among which was to marginalize and demonise the legitimate Islamist opposition movements within their own borders. This conjunction of interests between the American government and comprador Muslim regimes has helped to further sediment the fear of Islam and political Islamism in particular, thereby reproducing and perpetuating the logic of Islamophobia well beyond the borders of the Western world.

The paper shall begin by recounting the chain of events that followed in the wake of the September 11 attack itself; and then proceed to examine the impact of Washington's 'war on terror' discourse in the three countries that we propose to examine. We shall look at how the discourse of Washington was disseminated, reproduced and recontextualised to suit the domestic political agendas of the countries concerned, and how the elites of Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia seized upon the opportunity to further promote themselves as the 'defenders' of 'moderate Islam' in the face of growing Islamist opposition at home. Finally we shall end with a discursive analysis of the whole discourse of 'war on terror' and its tropes and themes of victimhood and vulnerability, and how this has helped to construct and consolidate even further the culture of Islamophobia today, making it a discourse of universal relevance.

On September 11, 2001, an event on the other side of the world became the latest unforeseen variable to shape the political terrain of Asia. In the early hours of that day, the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York were rammed by two airliners hijacked by unknown individuals. Both towers later collapsed to the ground, killing thousands who were still trapped in them. Reports then came of a third airliner that had crashed into the Pentagon building,

and a fourth went down before it could reach its intended target—the White House. To bring home the reality of the events that took place thousands of miles away, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) twin towers were evacuated the following day, after a bomb scare that came just as Malaysians were coming to terms with the loss of Malaysian workers missing or killed in the New York attacks.

As the events following the attack were broadcast all over the world by American media channels like CNN, emotions ran high. A shocked American public soon became angry, frustrated and vengeful. The American media added fuel to the fire by immediately accusing Islamist militant movements and, according to their critics, the Muslim world at large. Editorials in American papers were quick to condemn what they regarded as the 'international menace' of Islamic fundamentalism, and scores of experts were roused from their academic slumber to comment on the danger posed by the new 'Islamist international' poised to take over the free world.

The paranoia and xenophobia stoked by the media were soon echoed by the establishment itself. The U.S. government responded with calls for revenge and retribution, and President George W. Bush vowed that those responsible for the attacks would be made to pay and that the U.S. would lead the new global 'Crusade' against terrorism—an unfortunate choice of words that only added to the confusion and anxiety of the time. Other American politicians and intellectuals were even blunter in their public pronouncements. The notorious Republican Senator John McCain surpassed even his own inflated record where he stated that:

These were not just crimes, they were acts of war, and they have aroused in this great nation a controlled fury and unity of purpose not just to punish but to vanquish—vanquish our enemies. Americans know now that we are

at war and will make the sacrifices and show the resolve necessary to prevail. I say to our enemies: We are coming. God may show you mercy. We will not.<sup>2</sup>

Such confrontational rhetoric did little to calm the situation or to enlighten an already traumatised populace. Coming at a time when practically every single government in the Muslim world was faced with institutional crises, economic collapse and/or a credibility deficit, the events of September 11 forced the political élite of the Muslim world to take sides. This fact was driven home by the U.S. President himself, who bluntly stated: '*you are either with us or with the terrorists*'.

Overnight, the monochromatic oppositional dialectics of the Huntingtonian thesis had been turned into a reality, and the Muslim world was forced to live with the consequences. By the third day after the attacks, a clearer picture had begun to emerge. Both the CIA and FBI laid the blame for the attacks on Saudi dissident-turned-fugitive Osama ben Laden and his *al-Qaeda*<sup>3</sup> group based in Afghanistan. As Osama was based in Afghanistan, the *Taliban*<sup>4</sup> regime was brought into the picture. By drawing a link between the attacks and Osama and the *Taliban*, the U.S. authorities had given the impression that the problem they were facing was one of global proportions. The FBI and CIA claimed that Osama ben Laden's *al-Qaeda* network stretched from the U.S. to Southeast Asia.

The declaration of a 'global crusade' against 'Islamic terrorism' only succeeded in antagonising vast sections of the global Muslim community when it was the last thing the U.S. needed to do. The re-casting of Southeast Asia as the 'second front in the war on terror' only compounded the fear of Islamist groups there that their days were numbered and they would soon be targeted by both their own pro-Western governments as well as the West itself. The inept handling of the complex and sensitive matter of co-

operation with Muslim governments also helped to ignite local tensions that had been simmering under the surface in many Muslim countries. The first to suffer were the governments of countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Philippines—all facing growing unrest due to the activities of local Islamist opposition movements within their own borders. Other 'moderate' Muslim states like Malaysia, Egypt and Turkey were likewise forced to deal with a domestic Islamist opposition obviously riled by the discourse of Washington and eager to take to the streets to make their point. September 11 was no longer a local American affair, it had assumed the proportions of a global crisis.

The attacks on the United States on September, 2001, were, in a sense, a 'world-flattening' event to quote the phrase coined by the American economist Thomas L. Friedman. In his work *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twentieth Century*<sup>5</sup> (2005) Friedman argues that the twentieth century has been the century of world-shaping historical events that have 'flattened' the earth. Among the 'world-flattening' events he recounts in his work include the collapse of the Berlin wall (and with that the end of the Soviet Union), the development of the Netscape IPO, the proliferation of inexpensive off-the-rack commercially available user-friendly technology and other such innovations that have allowed the world's population to get on-line and wired up to a wider global community that is as real as it is virtual.

It is perhaps telling that Friedman's own analysis betrays his Eurocentric or Westerncentric solipsism, and that other events and developments across the world have escaped his attention, for the simple reason that they were not discussed at any great length by the Western (or rather American) media. Almost none of the top ten world-shaping historical events in his book took place in Asia, Africa or other parts of the non-Occidental world, though many would doubt whether the rest of the world

was as quiet as his work would suggest. What Friedman and other economists and political theorists have acknowledged, however, is the fact that the twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of a global community that is better connected than ever, and that there no longer exists any part of the world that can be considered remote or even exotic any more.

Friedman adds to his thesis the idea that this process of globalisation can only be accelerated further thanks to the fact that the last great frontiers of science and technology have been reached, and that in terms of communications technology in particular there are no longer other means of communication that can be invented, but only improved upon. Here Friedman introduces his notion of 'steroids': A metaphor for the new and improved modes of communication that have speeded up modes of communication of the past and which have rendered communication almost a timeless phenomenon without the time-lag delay between the transmission and the reception of the message sent. If modern communications technology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped connect the world together via the steamboat, telegraph, cable and postal service, the improvements to these technologies in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century have merely accelerated the process of communications via the fax, internet, email, SMS and MMS services. There is, as Friedman rightly notes, nothing new to all this technology save for the fact that it has accelerated what was already regarded as faster modes of communication: Hence the euphemism of 'steroids' that he uses to describe these latest developments.

By the time the hijacked planes had struck the twin towers of New York, there was already a global network (or more correctly networks) of religio-political movements that sought to bring together the various religious communities of the world. *Al-Qaeda* was but one among many Islamist movements with a global outreach and with global ambitions, and the same sort of or-

ganisation can also be found among the Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist diasporas. What is important, however, is the way in which the events of September 11 and the phenomena of Osama ben Laden and *al-Qaeda* were seized upon not only by Washington but also its allies in the Muslim world. It is to the Muslim world that we shall now turn, and our first foray shall be into the convoluted politics of one of America's most ambiguous allies: Pakistan.

## II. PAKISTAN: WAGING WASHINGTON'S 'CRUSADE AGAINST TERROR' IN THE CRADLE OF ISLAM

Among America's many allies in the Muslim world Pakistan stands out as a particularly stark example of uneven power differentials, political utilitarianism, and *realpolitik* at work. Since its creation in 1947 Pakistan has been a Muslim state of key strategic importance to U.S. global interests as the gateway to Central and South Asia. During the 1950s and 1960s it was the U.S. that propped up the military regimes of Generals Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan, first as a counterfoil to China and also as a counterweight to India that was fervently pro-South and anti-Western then. During the 1970s Pakistan's status as a favoured ally wavered under the stewardship of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who insisted on going his own way and who had the temerity to raise the question of the Pakistani nuclear option. The 1980s witnessed the warming of relations again during the leadership of General Zia 'ul Haq, perhaps the most pro-Western (and certainly most anti-Communist) leader of the country who presented Pakistan as the final buffer against Soviet expansionism into Asia. Since the death of Zia in 1988 Pakistan has been left to flounder under a host of feeble civilian leaders—Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif—and it was only with the growing realisation of the enormous oil and

gas reserves in Central Asia that Pakistan once again loomed over the horizon as a long-lost ally whose good relations had to be re-cultivated.

Perhaps the most ambivalent aspect of Washington's relations with Pakistan has been its indecisive posture towards the Islamist movements in the country. It was common knowledge that Pakistan's U.S.-backed military dictatorships have worked hand-in-glove with conservative Islamist organizations such as the *Jama'at-e Islami* (JI), the *Jamiat'ul Ulema-e Islam* (JUI) as well as militant groups such as the *Lashkar-e Tayyiba*, *Sipah-e Sahaba* and *Hizbul Mujahideen*. Pakistan's wide array of Islamist organizations have also courted the support of richer Arab states as well as the United States of America to create, arm and train groups like the *Mujahideen* and later, the *Taliban*. In this respect the Islamist groupings of Pakistan have had a long and proven record of international networking and mobilization on a global scale—long before the technocrats of Washington raised the alarm about 'international terror networks'.<sup>6</sup>

The encroachment of Islamist parties and movements into the public political arena in Pakistan began way back in the late 1960s and was well underway during the period of rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977). As soon as he came to power in 1971 Bhutto—as President of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)—launched his own 'people's revolution' in Pakistan. While preaching his ideology of 'Islamic Socialism' Bhutto announced the immediate nationalisation of ten major industries, including iron and steel, basic metals, heavy engineering, petrochemicals and motor vehicles. What Zulfikar had done, however, was lay down the framework for what would eventually become an Islamic state in form and content.

Following the *coup* that ousted him (and culminated in his execution), Pakistan would come under the dictatorship of General Zia 'ul Haq (1977-1988) who proceeded to Islamise the country in earnest. From 1977, the militaro-Islamic dictatorship of Zia

ul-Haq reinforced the Islamist project of the previous government by inscribing its reform program into a legislative and juridical framework and by focusing on women and religious minorities. However, far from competing with the holistic approach of neighbouring Iran, the Islamic model that was promoted by Zia was never free of political goals and agendas. During the 1980s, Zia worked tactically with the Islamists to legitimise his grab for power and to justify the policies that he introduced. Pakistan opted for all-out Islamisation, particularly in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1979. Zia Islamised the state bureaucracy, encouraged the creation of more and more institutions of Islamic learning, and indirectly supported (or at least tolerated) the growth of numerous forms of Islamic militancy in the country. During this time, many of these Pakistani Islamist groups were co-opted by the Pakistani state as an indirect means of keeping progressive Leftist forces at bay in the country, which also happened to suit the interests of Washington then. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's military intelligence bureau the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) worked with the U.S.A to help recruit, train and arm the *Mujahideen* movement that was used in the front line against the Soviet invaders. The direct result of this experiment with Islamic militancy was the introduction of the 'Kalashnikov culture' into the country as well as a flourishing drugs trade that was also another source of funding for the *Mujahideen*.

Following the death of General Zia in 1988, Pakistan has come under the weak control of civilian leaders from both the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistani Muslim League (PML). From 1988 to 1999, Pakistan has had four civilian governments, all of which have proven to be equally corrupt and incompetent. Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif have tried to curb the powers of the President and to bring the country's intelligence and para-military bodies under civilian control, but to no

avail. More worrying still, all these civilian governments have worked hand-in-glove with the Islamist opposition movements when it suited them, in order to consolidate their own weak hold on power.

It was during the leadership of Benazir Bhutto—the Oxford educated ‘model’ Muslim leader so beloved by Western governments and the media alike—that the Pakistani government turned to the *Jamiat’ul Ulema-e Islam* (JUI) party for support. The leaders of the JUI were given the green light to solicit funds abroad to further their own domestic agendas and it was during this time that the *Taliban* came into being, with the knowledge and assistance of the U.S. The last two decades have witnessed the ‘*Talibanisation*’ of vast swathes of Pakistan and the rise of the country’s Islamist parties—notably the *Jama’at-e Islami* and *Jamiat’ul Ulema-e Islam*—to an unprecedented degree. The Islamist movements of Pakistan have grown so well organised that the JI was able to topple the government of Benazir Bhutto twice, through the now-familiar tactic of street protests, demonstrations and sit-ins. The Islamist parties’ close links to militant groups like the *Hizbul Mujahideen*, *Lashkar Tayeaba*, *Sipah-e Sahabah* and the *Taliban* have also meant that when regular means of public demonstrations have failed, they have been able to raise the level of public tension and violence to a higher degree to achieve their desired ends.

The coming to power of American-trained General Pervez Musharraf<sup>7</sup> in 1999 ended the brief experiment with popular democracy and once again placed a strongman in the seat of power in this strategically important Muslim state. Musharraf’s ascendancy was not without its critics, both at home and abroad: Pakistani political parties, NGOs and the country’s free press objected to the intrusion of the army into civilian political life as did the international community. But as was the case with the military take-over in Algeria following the victory of the Islamists at the polls, the Western powers were prepared to turn a blind

eye to the rise of the general and his military clique for it was seen as a safeguard against the encroachment of anti-Western Islamists elements into the Pakistani political system.

During his first year in office (2000) General Musharraf was given a long list of conditions and ultimatums demanding that civilian power be restored as soon as possible. Lip service was duly paid to these feeble attempts to uphold the value of democracy in a country where illiteracy and sectarian religious discord was rife. Then came the events of September 11 which proved to be a boon for Musharraf himself. Since then the President has proven to be the most unpopular military ruler of Pakistan for the simple reason that it was during his period of rule that Pakistan’s foreign policy was re-aligned towards the West to suit the geo-strategic interests of Washington and the Bush administration. Promises of economic aid and a cancellation of outstanding loans were coupled with threats of even more comprehensive sanctions and international isolation should the Pakistani government fail to comply with the demands of Washington. In time, Islamabad agreed—but not without paying a heavy price in the form of massive demonstrations and violent protests in all Pakistan’s major cities, courtesy of Islamist parties like the *Jama’at-e Islami* (JI) and *Jamiat’ul Ulema-i Islam* (JUI).<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan lent its full support to the ‘war on terror’, and during the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2002 Pakistan allowed U.S. forces to use the country’s territory and airspace for the assault on Afghanistan which culminated in the fall of the *Taliban* government (that was regarded as a close ally by the Islamists of Pakistan, as well as sections of Pakistani intelligence and the leaders of the armed forces). Following the successful invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan’s government has increased the level of co-operation with the U.S. government and security forces in areas ranging from counter-terrorism to the ongoing effort to locate and neutralise former *al-Qaeda* leaders and supporters who are said to be hiding in

the mountainous regions in the north of the country.<sup>9</sup> The justification for this increased level of U.S.-Pakistani intelligence gathering and mutual support has been the 'war on terror', a campaign that President Musharraf himself has endorsed from the start.

In the wake of September 11, 2001, Pakistan has been designated a major strategic 'non-NATO ally' by the Bush administration and key members of the American security elite. U.S. involvement in Pakistani domestic politics and security has led to a powerful and visible backlash from local opposition groups, mainly among the Islamist front. This has weakened the position of the Musharraf regime, denied President Musharraf his credibility and empowered the opposition Islamic *Mutahida Majlis-e Amal* (MMA) alliance against the government. An indirect result of U.S. intervention has been the relative marginalisation of Pakistani military intelligence (ISI) and the promotion of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). The former was strongly supported by the American CIA in the 1980s and 1990s, while the latter is now being strongly supported, trained and financed by the American FBI.<sup>10</sup>

In the same way that President Zia 'ul Haq had adapted and adopted Washington's discourse on the 'war against Communism', President Musharraf has likewise taken the discourse of the 'war on terror' to heart. The 'war on terror' discourse furnished the Musharraf regime with the terms, ideas and symbols that were useful in its own tussle for power against the religiously-conservative forces of Islamism in the country, and provided the pretext for both the renewed campaign against the Islamist opposition movements in places like the Northwest Frontier Province as well as the tightening of laws and regulations concerning the entry of foreign students into the thousands of religious seminaries (*madrassahs*) of the country.<sup>11</sup> Echoing Washington's concerns about 'illegal' or 'clandestine' networks of foreign students, (potential and real) *Jihadis*, unrecorded transfer of funds from and into Pakistan, and the illegal

movement of arms and bio-chemical weapons through the country, the Musharraf regime has adroitly employed the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' to justify the maximisation of power of the state. This has culminated in the detention of Pakistan's once-lauded engineers who were responsible for the country's nuclear programme to the denial of educational visas and travel permits (in August 2005) for all foreign students who wish to come to the country to study in the *madrassahs* there. To sum up, the employment of the 'war on terror' discourse in Pakistan has given the Musharraf regime the justification for the imposition of maximalist state power as never before. Not even during the time of General Zia 'ul Haq has the President of Pakistan been given as much room to manoeuvre in the country, and with such a high level of international (primarily Western) support. If the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was President Zia's 'Christmas gift', the September 11 was certainly a bigger windfall for President Musharraf. September 11 would prove to be yet another timely godsend for two other Muslim countries of note: Malaysia and Indonesia.

### III. MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA: WAGING WASHINGTON'S CRUSADE IN THE 'SECOND FRONT' OF THE 'WAR ON TERROR'

The September 11 attacks had many long-term and far-flung consequences for Muslim and non-Muslim relations. For Asian countries with sizeable Muslim minorities, it opened up old wounds after decades of internal civil conflict, and served as a justification for clamping down on local Muslim resistance movements. In Southeast Asia, the worst affected country was the Philippines, where fears of renewed militancy by Islamist movements in the south were intensified after the New York attacks. The Philippines was forced to deal with a backlash from Islamist groups and movements

in the troubled southern province of Mindanao. Soon after the U.S. response was made known to the international community, the *Abu Sayyaf* group renewed its attacks on Filipino government installations and outposts all over the province, and a new wave of hostage-taking was soon on the way.

In Indonesia, groups like the *Front Pembela Islam* and *Laskar Jihad* were immediately mobilised and took to the streets as soon as America announced its unilateral move to confront its foes abroad. Like Pakistan, Indonesia was also caught in dire straits of its own. President Megawati Sukarnoputri flew to Washington to discuss the implications of Indonesia's involvement in the international campaign against Osama ben Laden and the *Taliban*—though it was soon clear that the sensitive matter of Indonesia's spiralling debt problem was also put on the agenda. *Realpolitik* considerations aside, the Islamist parties and movements in Indonesia were less inclined to be pragmatic in their approach to the problem. The Indonesian President was warned in no uncertain terms by the country's Islamist groups (and members of her own government) that any attempt to appease the Americans would lead to a backlash at home with heavy political costs. Once news of the deal between Washington and Jakarta became public, the Islamist opposition organized demonstrations in Jakarta against both the U.S. and Indonesian governments. The demonstrations grew in both size and ferocity, leading to large-scale protests and random raids on local hotels where *Laskar* members were on the lookout for Western tourists whom, they claimed, they wanted to 'expel' from Indonesia. As the pressure mounted and expectations of a violent conflict grew, Southeast Asian governments were forced on the defensive and compelled to take a stand. Like its neighbours Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia was drawn into the fray at the least opportune moment.<sup>12</sup>

Even before the attacks on September 11 2001, the Malaysian government was already taking seriously the threat of growing

Islamist militancy in the country. Political leaders, senior government members and heads of the state security services were openly discussing the problem of growing militancy among some sections of Malaysian society, particularly the younger generation of Malay-Muslims, returning students from abroad and the local Islamist parties and movements. Since the opening days of the *reformasi* (reform) movement against Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1998, terms like *jihad* had begun to penetrate deeper into the terrain of popular political discourse and were seen as indicators of a significant shift closer to a more radical form of Islamist politics. By 1999–2000, the Malaysian political scene was abuzz with stories about *jihadi* and *mujahideen* cells operating all over the country. In August 2001, the government had detained 10 Islamist activists—many of whom were members of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)—on the grounds that they belonged to an underground militant group called the *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (Malaysian Mujahideen Movement, KMM). The group's leader was said to be Ustaz Nik Adli Nik Aziz, the 34-year-old son of the spiritual leader (*Murshid'ul Am*) of PAS, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. Though Nik Adli was only a teacher at a religious school in Kelantan (of which his father was the Chief Minister), the authorities alleged that he had studied in Pakistan *madrasah* and had spent time training and working with *mujahideen* militants in Afghanistan. Several other men arrested had also travelled to Pakistan for religious education and military training with the *mujahideen* operating along the Pakistan-Afghan border.<sup>13</sup>

Also in August 2001, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar stated that clandestine Islamist 'militant networks' were operating in the cross-border regions between Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. The kidnapping of Western tourists off the coast of Borneo by Abu Sayyaf guerrillas operating from their base in Basilan was cited as a prime example of



the new sort of asymmetrical security threat faced by governments in the region. In an effort to seize the initiative on the issue, Kuala Lumpur had played host to the leaders of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines—Presidents Megawati Sukarnoputri, Thaksin Shinawatra and Gloria Arroyo—who had visited the country to discuss matters of bilateral concern, one of which was the problem of Islamist militant networks operating in the region. Soon afterwards, the three governments issued a series of statements to the effect that they would henceforth be increasing the level of co-operation among their intelligence and security services to deal with the problem of religious militancy in Southeast Asia. In time, however, it became clear to all that behind the scenes was the ever-present U.S.A. With ASEAN countries caught in a desperate race to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), the governments of ASEAN were caught in a race to out-bid each other's claim to be a reliable ally to the United States and to ensure that their countries remained in the good books of Washington and Wall Street. First to jump the gun were Singapore, Philippines and Thailand, with each country's respective leaders categorically stating that they would offer whatever help necessary to the U.S. in its bid to win the 'war against terror'.

Developments in Malaysia—like in Indonesia and the Philippines—soon took their course at an accelerated pace. During the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan in October 2001, the country's biggest Islamist opposition party (the Pan-Malaysian Islamic party, PAS) declared its own '*jihad*' against the United States and its allies Israel and Britain. Loud demonstrations outside the U.S. and British embassies sent shockwaves across the country, and the foreign business community as well as Malaysia's large non-Malay, non-Muslim minority groups were taken aback by PAS's call for *jihad* against the infidels.

Following America's invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir openly stated his dis-

satisfaction with the American-led attack. In a press conference held in Parliament, the Prime Minister said that "war against these countries will not be effective in fighting terrorism."<sup>14</sup> Although he was also careful to state that the attack on Afghanistan should not be regarded by anyone as an attack on Islam and the Muslim world, Dr. Mahathir did question the wisdom behind the action and pointed out the negative consequences that were sure to follow.<sup>15</sup>

Domestic political concerns were also not far from the mind of the Prime Minister. In a thinly-veiled warning to the Malaysian Islamist parties and groups that might think of extending their support to Osama ben Laden or the *Taliban*, he pointed out that "we will not tolerate anyone who supports violence and will act against these irresponsible people or anyone who backs terrorism."<sup>16</sup> The situation was exploited to the full by the Mahathir administration, which saw it as the best justification for its own policies *vis-a-vis* the local Islamist opposition. Henceforth, the Malaysian government's crackdown on Islamist cells and networks—both real and imagined—would receive less criticism from foreign and local observers. By presenting itself as the face of 'moderate' and 'progressive' Islam at work, the Mahathir government had managed to outflank the Islamist opposition and reposition itself successfully.

This fact was made all the more clearer when the American Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick (who was on a visit to Malaysia and the other countries in the region) publicly stated that President Bush 'was pleased with the support given by Malaysia'.<sup>17</sup> The United States then extended its thanks to the Mahathir administration for the support it had shown to the U.S. despite the difficulties it had to face from the local opposition (meaning PAS). By then it was clear that an *entente cordiale* had been struck: Neither Malaysia nor the United States was prepared to let political differences get in the way of economic necessity. Trade between the two countries amounted to U.S. \$38 bil-

lion (RM 144 billion) a year and America was, after all, Malaysia's biggest trading partner abroad. The American Trade Representative was also careful to mention all the key words that were necessary for the upward shift in bilateral relations to register: Zoellick stated that Washington viewed Malaysia as an Islamic country which could 'serve the others as a role model for leadership and economic development' not only for the region but for the rest of the Muslim world as well. As an *Islamic* country Malaysia was described a 'modern', 'progressive', 'liberal' and 'tolerant'—precisely the terms that were required to form a positive chain of equivalences that the Mahathir administration was looking for.

In neighbouring Indonesia—the biggest Muslim country in the world—the situation was made even more complex thanks to the institutionalised divisions of racial, ethnic and religious difference among the country's ruling elite. The Indonesian armed forces, whose presence and involvement in politics was less visible but nevertheless still apparent in the wake of the fall of President Soeharto in 1998, was also dominated by secular or Christian officers who have always maintained a cautious policy of keeping the Islamists at arms length and as far outside the political arena as possible. Since the days of General Benny Moerdani—Soeharto's right-arm man and the most anti-Muslim general in Indonesian history—the elite component of the Indonesian Armed forces (ABRI) have maintained that political Islam was a threat to the secular ideology of the state and that the Islamists were fundamentally terrorists who needed to be dealt with by force and violence. The Indonesian Islamists managed to reposition themselves into the country's political mainstream during the economic crisis of 1997-98 when prominent Islamist intellectuals like Amein Rais and Nurcholish Madjid were seen at the forefront of the pro-democracy *Reformasi* (reform) movement. The quiet victory of the moderate Islamists witnessed the ascendancy to power of the country's biggest Muslim

party, the *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU), under the leadership of the *Ulama*-politician Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur).

September 11 marked a radical reversal of fortunes for Indonesia's Islamists in general. With a new (and weak) President as head of state—Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the country's secular-nationalist founding father President Soekarno—the army was once again in a position to play the role of power-broker and king-maker. The apparent weakness of Indonesia, coupled with renewed Islamist activism in Java and Sumatra, opened the way for the resurgence of the secular generals and their cohorts, with the backing of the Indonesian President and the powers-that-be in Washington. In time Megawati promoted the controversial figure of General Hendrypriyono<sup>18</sup> (dubbed the 'Butcher of Lampung') to head the country's new integrated anti-terror operations unit based in Jakarta. At the same time Megawati also courted the help of U.S. military and intelligence services to help track down the terrorists who were allegedly behind the bombings in Bali and to help eliminate 'terror cells' that might be operating in the country.

These moves may have endeared Megawati and her generals even more with the U.S., but it also had the immediate effect of alienating her from her own Muslim-majority constituency. The move on the part of the President was immediately criticised by the country's Vice-President Hamzah Has, who was openly linked and close to the country's Islamist parties and radical Islamist movements. The more vocal and aggressive components of the Islamist fringe wasted no time before warning Megawati of the dire consequences of her diplomatic choices. Like Malaysia, though, the Indonesian government was not able (or inclined) to show excessive support to the U.S. for its military adventures abroad. The concerns expressed by Indonesia's political elite demonstrated their own worries about the possible re-ignition of radical Islamism in the country as a result of Megawati's closer ties to the U.S.A.

The major concern expressed by the government of Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia was the fact that the economic and political grievances of the Muslim world have hardly been addressed.

President Bush's support of strong ASEAN leaders who are willing to join him in his global 'Crusade' against terrorism has reawakened widely-held fears of 'Big Brother' America intervening in the affairs of Southeast Asia all over again: Washington's active endorsement of the anti-terror campaign in ASEAN; its recognition of Thailand as a major 'non-NATO ally'; its open endorsement of ex-military strongmen like Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra<sup>19</sup> and Indonesia's (American-trained) Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,<sup>20</sup> have all contributed to the popular perception that America has simply reverted back to its old tactics of gunboat diplomacy and mercenary support of dictators working to serve the needs of Uncle Sam. But here again we need to emphasise the salient point that the arrival and consolidation of Washington's 'war on terror' discourse in Malaysia and Indonesia was hardly a case of textbook neo-colonialism. In both countries (as was the case in the rest of Southeast Asia), Washington's outreach into the ASEAN region was facilitated by the active courtship on the part of ASEAN governments themselves. Neither in the case of Malaysia nor Indonesia was there ever any belligerent strategising on the part of the Bush establishment and its coterie of Neo-Con advisors and policy makers.

If the 'war on terror' has found a home in Southeast Asia, it is also because the governments of Southeast Asia have been willing and able to make it feel at home there. Here lies the alluring aspect of the 'war on terror' as a discourse replete with ambiguities and that is universally applicable in a multiplicity of contexts. And to understand why this is the case we end with a brief discursive analysis of the discourse itself and the context of Islamophobia from which it arose.

#### IV. ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR': VICTIMHOOD AND VULNERABILITY IN A DISCOURSE OF ALIENATION AND DEMONISATION

*Colonial domination, because it is total and tends to over-simplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultured life of a conquered people...Nothing has been left to chance, to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness.*

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

We are rarely afraid of the familiar, the known, the homely. One seldom comes across individuals terrified of sofas or bathtubs. More often than not the focus of our subjective anxiety and fear happens to be the thing that is relatively distant, outside the home, or things that are meant to be exterior to one's normalised interior life: rats, snakes, sharks, meteorites, aliens from Mars, ghosts from the past, zombies that walk the earth transgressing the frontier between the dead and the living. For ordinary folk to fear Muslims, the latter have to first be discursively constructed as the external Other that is beyond the pale of normality and the familiar. This is not as easy a task as it may sound.

'Islamophobia', if such a term can even be thought of as an analytical category worth academic interrogation, operates on the same logic of exteriorising and subsequently demonising the Other, in this case Islam and Muslims. For Islamophobia to work, it has to be strung together in the form of a sutured and coherent discourse that has its own nodal points, transcendental signifiers and an internal logic of dividing between the familiar and the alien. However, the construction of a discourse requires the deliberate and sustained attempt to bring together a myriad of empty floating signifiers and to assemble them in such a way as to give the discourse its identity and relative fixity, as discourses do not simply emerge *ex*

*nihilo* from nowhere. Nor are there any pre-conditions that necessitate their coming into existence. The discursivity of Islamophobia has to be our starting point, and we need to remind ourselves constantly that this discourse was and remains artificial, constructed and wilfully perpetuated and reproduced.

Islamophobia works by first identifying Islam and Muslims as the constitutive Other, while framing the subjective self as that which is normal, acceptable and universal. In order to frame Islam and Muslims as the negatively constituted other it falls back on the wide body of Orientalist tropes about Muslims being decadent, corrupt, violent, irrational, backward, hostile to modernity and opposed to the 'universal' values of Eurocentrism. Since the advent of September 11 we have witnessed the reactivation of many of the stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, as a medieval religion unable to catch up with the times and as a people bound by a creed that is dangerous, violent and hostile to values such as human rights and gender equality. The furore over the recent 'Muhammad cartoon controversy' that erupted all across Europe and which spanned the globe testifies to the fact that such negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims remain with us till today, and still figure prominently in the worldview of a section of Westerners in their relations with the Muslim world.<sup>21</sup>

The extent to which the 'war on terror' discourse fits into the schema of Islamophobia can be gauged by the extent to which it, too, falls back on now-familiar stereotypes about Muslims as the negative constitutive Other to the West. The most defining feature of the discourse, however, is its blatantly political character and its intended political uses: namely to lend justification to the exercise of power and violence against the Other and to divide the enemy into camps that are often crudely defined as 'good' moderate Muslims and 'bad' radical or militant Muslims. These may be fictional characterisations, but to borrow Edward Said's phrase

they remain 'instrumental fictions' that nonetheless serve the interests of power. (Thus to debunk these stereotypes of Islam and Muslims as false would be missing the point. It is precisely their falsehood that makes them politically useful.)

Several key points need to be identified and analysed in turn here:

### *The Origins of Islamophobia and the Discourse of the 'War on Terror'*

The 'war on terror' discourse, it should be noted, is one that has a singular point of origin and a singular purpose. It was developed by the Neo-Con political elite of Washington with the primary aim of explaining, rationalising and justifying the use of power and violence against Muslim states (deemed 'hostile' or 'rogue' states) as well as Muslim groups, movements, parties and communities whose own Islamist ambitions were seen as a counter-hegemonic challenge to Liberal-Capitalism and the conservative religio-political agenda of the Neo-Con administration. It sought to disguise its particularity via recourse to the vocabulary of universals, presenting 'justice', 'freedom', 'equality' and 'our (American) way of life' as a norm to be taken as a universal given and applicable across the globe. The central, foundational idea of the discourse—the ambiguous notion of 'terror' as an object of political and ideological struggle—was and is vague enough to allow for a variety of adroit appropriations and deployments of the discourse, making it both versatile and universal in its outreach. 'Terror', when left unqualified as such, is universal enough an idea to be meaningful everywhere: from the United States to countries like Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The second feature of the 'war on terror' discourse is its political mode of identifying the enemy while dividing it at the same time. Cognisant of the fact that Washington's foreign policy ambitions could only be served with the active support of friendly

Muslim states and elites, the 'war on terror' discourse operated along the bifurcated logic of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims to be courted and defeated simultaneously. Scholars of American history have noted the similarity between these twinned binary concepts with that of the equally dubious categorisation of 'good niggers' and 'bad niggers' during the days where slavery was practiced in the United States. The same binary logic was also at work at the height of Western colonialism, where colonised native subjects were categorised as 'good natives' who were (directly or indirectly) supportive of the colonial enterprise and 'bad natives' who resisted. In all these cases the fundamental workings of politics and power are evident.

By positing the category of 'bad' Muslims that need to be seen as the enemies of 'freedom', 'justice' and 'our way of life', the 'war on terror' discourse repeats the same fear-inducing strategies of Islamophobia by casting certain Muslims (and certain interpretations and normative expressions of Islamic religiosity) as dangerous and harmful. The emphasis on linking Islamist political activity with Islam as a system of values and beliefs also means that Islamism is cast in culturally essentialist terms, making 'bad' Islam a cultural (rather than political-economic) issue or concern. 'Bad Muslims' are thus explained and analysed in terms of their cultural identity and the cultural critique that follows is one that is inherently non-political, and even anti-political in its avowed neglect of structural questions of power and power differentials between the West and the Muslim world. But because the discourse of the 'war on terror' operates along the lines of a culturalist analysis that avoids discussion of politics and power, the exact nature of the 'threat' posed by Islam and Muslims can be left vague as well. Hardly any effort has been spent by the popular media and the co-opted Muslim regimes to explain the nature of the Islamists' challenge to the global order. Instead we have been reminded time and again that

they represent a threat and danger to be dealt with, feeding into the logic of victimhood and vulnerability that is also a key feature of both Islamophobia and the 'war on terror' discourse.

### *Victimhood and Vulnerability: The Re-casting of Victims as Aggressors*

Following the events of September 11, 2001, leaders of many Muslim states deemed 'moderate' by Washington's standards rushed to the fore to offer their support to the people and government of the United States, and to confess their own anxiety about the nebulous 'threat' of radical or militant Islam. Malaysia's leader Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad added his own list of concerns to the debate when he spoke thus:

Any number of people can use (Islam) for their own objectives. The main thing for them is to gain power. We are going to be faced with this problem for a long time. We know that we in Malaysia are vulnerable to such forms of extremism, like every other country in the world. Every one of us is vulnerable.<sup>22</sup>

The theme of victimhood and vulnerability was used most evidently by the government of the United States and its allies, as a justification for the measures that they were soon to take against the Islamists in their midst or beyond their borders. The idea that the U.S. was somehow a 'victim' of Muslim/Islamist aggression was of course a convenient way to overlook the role that the U.S. has played in interfering into the domestic political affairs of the Arab-Muslim world, as well as its continued support for both repressive Muslim regimes as well as its steadfast resistance to domestic forces of opposition in many Muslim countries that have struggled under the banner of political

Islam. Likewise the same logic of vulnerability and victimhood was evident in the rhetoric of the military regime of Pakistan and the authoritarian governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, all of whom also shared a dubious record in their dealings with the Islamists within their own borders. Victimhood and vulnerability in turn offer the polite escapism of revenge, helping to gloss over the actual realities of military expansionism and political repression under the cloak of justified retribution and the settling of scores. All of this confirms yet again the political usefulness of the 'war on terror' discourse and its intimate links with the culture of Islamophobia.

Yet even in this political play of words there remain blind-spots and black holes where the 'war on terror' discourse slips and displays the political agenda it tries to disguise, such as in the demonisation of 'radicalism'.

'Radical' Islam and Muslims have been cast as a threat to peace and stability of the world, though the nature and intent of the radicalism of these Muslims have not been sufficiently explained. Presented as an external contingent factor that renders the political and economic order of these countries 'vulnerable' and 'precarious', radical Islam was cast as a threat to everything that the government of the U.S. and its allies held dear.

However the political character of the term 'radical' is something difficult to conceal, considering the way in which the term has been used before in other historical political contexts. After all, the anti-Apartheid movement was a radical movement in the sense that it did not seek to accommodate itself to the racist apartheid regime, but rather to destroy it and replace it with something else altogether. Nelson Mandela, it should be remembered, was hailed as a 'radical' at a time when 'radicalism' was not seen as a negative category—even if by his actions he rendered the Apartheid regime 'vulnerable'. Likewise the anti-colonial movement at the height of decolonisation was also seen as

'radical', and famous 'radicals' of the 1950s and 1960s like Gandhi and Nehru of India, Soekarno of Indonesia, Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, Patrice Lumumba, Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah remain firmly embedded in the pantheon of Third World heroes. They too rendered 'vulnerable' colonialism's order of power and knowledge, though at that time there was more consensus about the good intentions of these radicals, and the necessity of making even more weak and vulnerable the structures of colonial rule.

Looking at the developments post-September 11 there remain many who regard men like Osama ben Laden as a 'radical' in the sense that his religio-political project seeks to challenge, destroy and replace the current global economic and political order—driven as it is by capital accumulation—with something entirely different; albeit a different world system predicated upon the religiously-inspired rules and norms of a certain creed, based on absolute and non-negotiable understandings of justice and goodness. Though many would not agree or even welcome this radical alternative offered by the likes of Osama, they do at least recognise that the radicalism of Osama ben Laden and *al-Qaeda* is not merely based on a narrow culturally essentialist understanding of the world, but is rather a programmatic and operationalisable counter-hegemonic system that should be taken seriously.

It is the seriousness of the Islamists' radical challenge to Western hegemony that has compelled Washington and its allies in the Muslim world to embark on this 'war on terror' that seeks to dismantle the structures of counter-hegemonic resistance in parts of the Muslim world. As we have tried to show in this paper, this campaign is fraught with difficulties and challenges, both political and discursive. The verdict on the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have yet to be delivered, though Washington has at least begun to admit the mistakes that were made in the painful process of regime change. (Though it has been less inclined to

admit that the mistakes were borne primarily by the people of Iraq themselves.)

More problematic is the fate of the 'war on terror' discourse as it continues to perpetuate the divisive logic of Islamophobia wherever it is at work. Our argument in this paper has been that by extending the logic of the 'war on terror' to Asia, and by Asian governments willingly and wilfully adopting this logic as their own, Islamophobia's influence has become truly globalised and embedded well beyond the confines of Western Europe and North America. Washington's fear of Islam has become the nightmare of everyone, and the reality of global politics remain discursively-constructed.

#### NOTES

1. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's keynote speech delivered at the Conference on Terrorism organised by the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Kuala Lumpur, 17 November 2001.

2. Elisabeth Liagin, 'A Terrorist Disaster: And the Warmongers Take Over', *Impact International*, 31(10) (2001): 6.

3. The *al-Qaeda al-Sulbah* (The Solid Base) organisation was first created in 1987 by the Palestinian-Jordanian Islamist leader Sheikh Abdullah Azzam. From the beginning it was meant to serve as the vanguard for a new global *jihād* waged against the West, and America and Israel in particular. Its members were drawn mostly from the Arab contingent of the *mujahideen* who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Apart from Abdullah Azzam, the other key leader of *al-Qaeda* was Osama ben Laden. Both Abdullah and Osama had worked together to form the *Makhtab al Khidmat lil Mujahideen al-Arab* (MAK—the Afghan-Arab Service Bureau) in Afghanistan when they were fighting against the Soviet Russians together. From the *Makhtab* they recruited the first members of *al-Qaeda*. But *al-Qaeda* soon expanded its networks and began to recruit members from all over the world. Many of their members came from the Arab states, Central Asia, Africa and Southeast Asia. There were even a few Westerners, includ-

ing American Muslim converts, who joined the group. The group's top training instructor was the Egyptian-born Ali Muhamad, who was formerly a member of the U.S. Special Forces. He trained the members of the groups in other countries like Sudan and Bosnia. Other Muslim countries also served as support bases and training centres for *al-Qaeda* members: When Osama was prevented from leaving Afghanistan in the wake of the bombing of the U.S. embassy in East Africa, he contacted Hashim Salamat, the leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao and asked Hashim to set up training camps in Southern Philippines (Gunaratna, 2002, pg. 5). The Philippines also served as the base for many other *al-Qaeda* activities in Asia, including the bombing of a Philippines Airlines flight over Japan in 1994 as well as the plans to assassinate U.S. President Clinton, Philippines President Ramos and the Pope in the Philippines (which were aborted). But the leaders of *al-Qaeda* were not united over matters of policy and tactics, and they were themselves the victims of attacks by other equally radical Islamist groups. In 1994 Osama escaped an attempt on his life by a member of the Egyptian *Takfir wa'l Hijrah*, who tried to kill him in Sudan. Osama favoured the use of terror attacks and assassinations in other countries, especially Egypt. Abdullah on the other hand wanted the group to consolidate and to base its activities in Afghanistan. Osama's more radical approach made it more difficult for *al-Qaeda* to operate in the open. After the attacks on the U.S. embassy in Tanzania, the U.S. government put pressure on Sudan to give up Osama to the U.S. authorities. The failed attack on the President of Egypt made things even more difficult for *al-Qaeda* in Sudan, as Egypt and America's response was to increase diplomatic support to Sudan's neighbours. In 1989 Abdullah Azzam and his two sons were killed in a bomb attack as they were on the way to Friday prayers in Peshawar, Pakistan. Gunaratna (2000) claims that Osama knew of the attack and colluded in the assassination of Abdullah who had been his mentor since he arrived in Afghanistan in the 1980s (Gunaratna, 2002, pg. 23). Osama then took command of *al-Qaeda*, transferred its base back to Afghanistan and expanded its activities worldwide. Its cells in Egypt and other Arab countries became more active, and in 1998 he issued a fatwa calling on a global *jihād* against the Jews and Crusaders of the world (*al-Jabhah al-*

*Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah Li-Qital al-Yahud wal-Salibiyyin*). Osama and the al-Qaeda would later be blamed for the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked four American jetliners and crashed them into the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in New York. America's response was to declare a 'war against terror' and to garner international support for a global campaign to wipe out al-Qaeda and its entire transnational network. [See: Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. Hurst and Company, London, 2002.]

4. The *Taliban* emerged from the turmoil and conflict among the *Mujahideen* factions and Islamist groupings in Afghanistan. In Kandahar, these intra-*Mujahideen* conflicts had led to the virtual elimination of the entire Islamist opposition, opening the way for the rise of the *Taliban* in 1994 (Rashid, 2000, pg. 19). The *Taliban* appeared in the Kandahar region in 1994 under the leadership of the *Mullah*-turned-militant warrior Mullah Mohammed Omar. It was soon spotted by American and Pakistani intelligence agencies who helped it grow by channelling funds and arms to the movement. Many of its early recruits were students (*talib*) who came from the *madrasahs* run by the radical Islamist *Jamiat'ul Ulama-e Islam* (JUI) party in Pakistan under the leadership of the Deoband-educated Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Most of its young members were of *Pashtun* ethnic background and many of these young boys were originally Afghan refugees and orphans who had fled to Pakistan in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Within a matter of months after its creation, the *Taliban* had managed to do something that even the *mujahideen* had failed to achieve: they attacked and captured the town of Kandahar (in 1994). Rashid (2000) notes that "the fall of Kandahar was celebrated by the Pakistani government and the JUI." (Pakistani intelligence head) General Naseerullah Babar took credit for the *Taliban's* victory, telling journalists privately that the *Taliban* were 'our boys'" (pg. 29). From Kandahar the *Taliban* expanded their activities across the rest of Afghanistan. In 1995 they took over the fabled city of Herat, once known as one of the major arts and cultural centres of the Muslim world. In 1996 they captured the capital of Kabul. Mullah Omar then called for the biggest assembly of Afghan *Ulama* and tribal leaders ever in Kandahar where he donned the mantle of

the Prophet Muhammad and declared himself the *Emir-ul Mu'minin* (Leader of the Faithful). Afghanistan's name was changed to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in turn. By 1999 the *Taliban* managed to extend their control over most of the country. Life in Afghanistan under the *Taliban* regime was harsh and brutal. Isolated from the rest of the world the people of Afghanistan lived under the strictest form of religious government made worse by incompetent administration and abuse of power: Its infant mortality rate (163 per 1000, around 18%) was the highest in the world. 25% of the children would die before the age of five. Life expectancy was brought down to 43 years for men and 44 years for women. Illiteracy, already high before the rise of the *Taliban*, rose to 90% for girls and 60% for boys (Rashid, 2000, pg. 107). Yet throughout the period of *Taliban* rule the *Taliban* government would receive diplomatic support from many Arab states (like Saudi Arabia), Pakistan and the United States of America (which supported the *Taliban* government mainly because of its strong anti-Shia, anti-Iran stand.) [See: Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. I. B. Tauris, London. 2000.]

5. Re: Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twentieth Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005.

6. For a detailed historical analysis of the development of the *Jama'at-e Islami* party of Pakistan, see: Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994). The *Taliban* movement's historical development has also been extensively studied by Ahmed Rashid in his work *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001.)

7. General Pervez Musharraf was originally a *muhajir* (migrant, *emigre*) from India and his rise to prominence was partly due to the outgoing Chief of Staff, General Jehangir Karamat who groomed him. He was trained by the Americans at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He was also a member of the elite 19th Baluch regiment, a Pakistani special forces unit that had trained alongside American elite troops in numerous operations before. Pervez Musharraf came under heavy attack from the Islamist parties like the *Jama'at-e Islami*. They claimed that his wife was of Qadiyani (Ahmedi) background and that his personal staff in the National Security Council



and Council of Ministers was dominated by Qadiyanis as well. By late 1999, Musharraf was caught up in the neo-feudal petty politics of the Nawaz Sharif government. Nawaz Sharif had moved about more than 100 senior civil servants and senior army personnel in an attempt to consolidate his hold on the government and armed forces. One of the moves he wanted to make was to remove Pervez Musharraf and replace him with another general who was more loyal to him personally. As the moves began to backfire, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Bokhari was the first to resign suddenly. On 12 October 1999 Nawaz Sharif ordered the resignation of Pervez Musharraf who was in Colombo, Sri Lanka, attending an army ceremony at the time. The Prime Minister's move was unconstitutional and General Musharraf flew back to Pakistan immediately. Back in Pakistan, Musharraf met his fellow officers and planned the *coup* to depose Nawaz Sharif's government. Despite the fact that Nawaz Sharif was arrested and sent to prison, General Musharraf's government later decided to send the ex-Prime Minister into political exile in Saudi Arabia. Immediately after the departure of Sharif, the leadership of the *Jama'at-e Islami* (led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed) attacked the government and denounced General Musharraf for opening up the country to a 'security risk'.

8. In time, President Musharraf was forced to place the Islamist parties' leaders (Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Sami'ul Haq of Jamiat) under house arrest while stern warnings were issued to Qazi Husain Ahmad and the leadership of the *Jama'at*. The President also removed a number of key leaders of the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, such as Mohammad Aziz Khan, Mahmud Ahmad and Muzaffar Usmani, who were known to have close links to the *jihadi* movements and the *Taliban*. These measures failed to stop massive (and sometimes violent) demonstrations organised by pro-Taliban supporters in Pakistan.

9. At the moment of the writing of this paper Pakistan's government and security forces are engaged in a long drawn-out campaign to neutralise alleged 'militant terrorist networks' that are said to be operating in the Federal-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the North and Northwest of the country. Pakistani army forces have been heavily engaged in tribal areas like the region of Waziristan, and by early 2006 there

were numerous reports of the Pakistani army using less-than-civil tactics to eliminate the terrorists who were said to be in hiding there. Many of the tribal groups in the FATA areas resented the intrusion of Pakistani armed forces and turned to the opposition Islamist parties of the *Mutahida Majlis-e Amal* (MMA) for support and protection. The MMA in turn exploited the issue to the hilt, using the army's campaign in Waziristan as proof that the Musharraf government was merely a puppet acting at the behest of the U.S. government. (Re: Intikhab Amir, *Backward March*, in *The Herald*, Annual Issue, 2006.)

10. Official Pakistani government sources (including the Prime Minister's office) claim that the number of American security operatives in Pakistan is no more than a dozen. Official FBI estimates from Washington put the figure between two dozen to one hundred. Local leaked media reports from insiders in the Pakistani government (particularly Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs) estimate between several dozen to two hundred and fifty. In 2004 the Pakistani Interior Ministry claimed that 28 FBI stations have been set up within the country. Twelve of these offices are located in the Afghan-Pak border regions, in the provinces of Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Sixteen others are based in the major cities. After September 11 Pakistan and the United States signed a bilateral pact to allow the creation of 24 FBI offices in Pakistan. The Pakistani government agreed to allow the creation of more FBI offices in the northern border areas after the visit of FBI Director Robert Mueller, following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan that was launched from U.S. staging posts in Pakistan. Thus far, the FBI has claimed credit and is known to have been actively involved in a number of key arrests in Pakistan of suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders and agents. These include: (1) The arrest of Abu Zubaydah, *al-Qaeda* no.3 man in Faisalabad in March 2002, (2) The arrest of Ramzi al-Shibh in Karachi in September 2002, (3) The arrest of Khaled Sheikh Muhammad in Rawalpindi in March 2003, and (4) The arrest of Walid bin Attash in Karachi in April 2003. After September 11, 2001, the American FBI and CIA agencies have begun to invest heavily and entrench their operatives in Pakistan. The Pakistani intelligence and security services are in turn increasingly dependent upon American technical support, logistical assistance

and financial aid. In some cases U.S. security and military assistance has aroused the suspicion of Pakistani authorities themselves, and it is not clear whether the Americans are working with or against Pakistani interests: For instance on 3 January 2004 an American Remote Pilot Vehicle (RPV) or airborne spy probe either crashed or was shot down by Pakistani air defence forces in the Dalbundeen area of Changi, 10 kilometres from the Pakistani nuclear test site. The Americans have also pressured the Pakistani authorities to accept the introduction of the Transaction Tracking Server (TTS) system that has been installed in the major airports and entry point in and out of Pakistan. Today the TTS system is operative in the major airports of the country, in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar. All visitors are photographed by a flex-cam camera and their passports are sifted through an on-line database. The system was installed in December 2001 and since then all visitors to Pakistan are immediately photographed and their personal records logged into an integrated national database. The TTS is presently linked to the Pakistani National Database Registration Authority (Nadra) (by landline), the FBI database and the Interpol database (by satellite). Though the TTS system is directed primarily to monitoring the entry and exit of foreigners, local analysts argue that the FBI and Pakistani government are also using the Nadra system to form a national database of every Pakistani citizen. The TTS system has been criticised by local opposition parties and NGOs in Pakistan because it allows the U.S. government and its agencies such as the FBI to keep track of every Pakistani citizen and keep a record on all Pakistanis via the back-up PISCES (Personal Identification Secure, Comparison and Evaluation System) which allows them to monitor the movement and activities of any foreign citizen wanted by the U.S. government. The PISCES system contains data on all known criminals, terrorist attacks, militant cells and even cases of civil crime recorded in the U.S. and abroad. But the database may also contain the particulars of political opponents, NGO activists, independent civil society actors and anyone suspected of having anti-American sympathies or opposed to further U.S. intrusion into Pakistani politics. To further consolidate its hold on the local intelligence network and its operations, the FBI and other related American intelligence networks have initiated the creation of the Spider

Group, a modernised hi-tech surveillance and espionage network based in the four major provincial cities (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar) as well as the Afghan-Pak border areas (NWFP, Baluchistan). The Spider Group is aimed at tackling more complicated security and intelligence-related issues and problems such as cyber-crime, militant networks, transborder transfer of funds, transborder communication between militant groups, etc. Its immediate objective is to accelerate the process of identifying, locating and neutralising elements of *al-Qaeda* and *Taliban* working in Pakistan, as well as local anti-American movements and militant groups.

11. For an analysis of the attempts by the Pakistani, Malaysian and Indonesian governments to clamp down on Southeast Asian students studying both legally and illegally in the *madrasahs* of Pakistan, see: Farish A. Noor, *Victims of Superpower Politics? The Uncertain Fate of ASEAN students in the Madrasahs of Pakistan in the Age of the 'War Against Terror'*, Paper for the conference on *'The Madrasah in Asia, Transnationalism and their Alleged or Real Political Linkages'*, jointly organised by the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM, Leiden) and the Zentrum für Modernen Orient (Centre for Modern Orient Studies, ZMO, Berlin), 23-25 May 2004.

12. Malaysia was unwittingly dragged into the investigations that followed the September 11 attack. First, a letter containing anthrax spores sent to an address in the U.S. was said to have originated from Malaysia. It was later discovered that the letter was not contaminated and that nobody in Malaysia was involved. But the FBI's reports also pointed the finger at Malaysia when it was later revealed that Khalid al-Midhar, a close associate of Osama ben Laden, had met other associates in Malaysia in January 2000. Later, a former member *al-Qaeda*, Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadhil, told a U.S. court that money was deposited in Malaysia which Malaysian authorities denied.

13. Those arrested included Zainon Ismail (founder of KMM), Mohamad Lutfi Arrifin (member of PAS Youth Wing, Kedah), Nor Ashid Saki (head of PAS Youth, Sungai Benut), Ahmad Tajudin Abu Bakar (head of PAS Youth, Larut), Salehan Abdul Ghafar, Abu Bakar Che Doi, Alias Ghah, Ahmad Fauzi Daraman and Asfawani Abdullah. Most were active PAS members and religious school teachers.

14. Malaysiakini.com, *We do not support war against any Muslim nation: PM* (8 October 2001).

15. A senior aide to the prime minister, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "Malaysia's stand is that if the attacks target specifically Osama ben Laden then they are acceptable, but not a widespread strike that will cause civilian casualties." Malaysiakini.com, *We do not support war against any Muslim nation: PM* (8 October 2001).

16. Ibid.

17. See: Tong Yee Siong, *U.S. thanks Mahathir for support, understands Malaysia's dilemma*. (Malaysiakini.com, 15 October 2001). At a special press conference held in Kuala Lumpur, the U.S. Trade Representative Zoellick stated that the U.S. "respects Malaysia for all the internal challenges and tensions it has to deal with, which makes its support more meaningful." He also denied that the Mahathir government's objection to the U.S. air strike on Afghanistan could jeopardise the countries' bilateral trade: "Our trade ties are based on close economic relationship. The support we received in many areas will only strengthen the nature of our relationship." He added that "I don't see any negative variety [of views] in there. The difference of views is understandable."

18. During the Soeharto era General A. M. Hendropriyono was one of the key generals who ran the Indonesian army's intelligence and counter-insurgency apparatus, and under his guidance the Indonesian special forces and covert ops units were responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in Indonesia's history. It was he who was put in charge of the operations in the Lampung district in South Sumatra, where the Indonesian army was given the task of 'containing' the 'threat' of Islamist activists and an alternative Sufi-inspired mass movement there. After a series of covert actions and psy-ops warfare (where the public was told that the Islamists were a 'terrorist threat') the army was ordered to move in for the kill. The end result was the massacre of hundreds of innocent civilians, and this earned Hendropriyono the nickname of 'the Butcher of Lampung'. But like all Indonesian generals, Hendropriyono has managed to survive thanks to his political skills and ability to win friends and allies. When President Soeharto met his end in 1998, Hendropriyono took a step back and began to support the President's contenders. Seasoned Indonesia-

watchers regard him as the man who was behind the meteoric rise of Megawati Sukarnoputri, and it was he who brokered the deal between Megawati's PDI party, the predominantly Chinese-Christian urban business elite and the army prior to her coming to power. When the beleaguered Megawati was in desperate search for partners to keep her feeble government together, and she turned to her one-time benefactor and supporter, Hendropriyono. Under President Megawati Hendropriyono was promoted to the head of Indonesia's new counter-insurgency intelligence service based in Jakarta. From the beginning, Hendropriyono was the most vocal advocate of more aggressive measures to be taken against the so-called 'Islamist threat' in Indonesia. Long before anyone else, it was he who claimed that *al-Qaeda* was now spreading to Indonesia and that the Indonesian army and intelligence services should be given more sweeping powers to deal with the threat. Hendropriyono continued to serve under President Megawati until she lost the elections of 2004. Shortly after Indonesia came under the leadership of ex-General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Hendropriyono announced his decision to retire from his post and public life. Till the end of his career he was never prosecuted for the alleged crimes against humanity he was said to be responsible for in Lampung.

19. Lieutenant-Colonel (rtd.) Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra's rise to power was, in many ways, an indirect result of the collapse of the democratic project in Thailand and the return of authoritarian, counter-reform tendencies in the country. Thailand's economic boom came to an end in 1997, with the devaluing of the Thai Baht that precipitated the catastrophic East Asian financial crisis of 1997-98. As a result of this crisis, the pro-democracy and pro-reform movement was delivered a fatal blow as the urban business elite switched their support to strong political leaders who proposed a stronger, centralist, even authoritarian state model for the country. It was at this time that Thaksin Shinawatra came to prominence. The man was himself an ex-security forces commander, who held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel of the Thai Police. With a similar educational background to that of the senior leaders of the Thai army, police and security services, he commanded considerable respect and support from the armed forces and security services. He then branched out into the

world of business and rose to become a tycoon in the telecommunications field. With strong business and army links as well as an independent financial base, he formed and led the *Thai Rak Thai* (Thais Love Thais) party and swept to power with the support of the urban middle class and business community (as well as the backing of foreign capital). Thaksin's rise to power coincided with the promulgation of the 1997 Thai Constitution, which was reformist in appearance but which in reality was directed at the expansion and consolidation of the power and authority of the Executive (Prime Minister) over the Legislature and other wings of the government. Part of Thaksin's project was his 'new social contract' with the Thai public, which promised the restoration of law and order at any cost. Under his leadership the Thai public was constantly fed with a stream of state propaganda about internal threats within Thailand, ranging from drugs gangs to Islamist militants in the South of the country. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001, and the alleged terrorist attacks in Indonesia in 2002, Thaksin has used the rhetoric and discourse of the 'war on terror' to further extend his power and the scope of activities of the Thai security forces. In particular the government of Prime Minister Thaksin was keen to demonstrate to the Thai public and the international community that the troubles in the Muslim provinces in the South of the country was part of a global trend of 'Islamic terrorism' that required a strong, even violent, response from the state. Contrary to the image of Thaksin as a civilian politician that is disseminated by his supporters, the man himself has maintained close links to the Thai armed forces and security agencies, and has further politicised the latter through his direct intervention in the re-shuffling of Thai senior army commanders. Thaksin has even appointed one of his relatives as a commander of the Thai army. General Pisarn has a close relationship to Prime Minister Thaksin (via his cousin Chaksin) and the Thai royal family (he is said to be on personal friendly terms with the Queen). [For further analysis on the development of the democratic reform movement in Thailand and its subsequent regression thanks to the rise of counter-reform tendencies, see: Kasian Tejapira, *Reform and Counter-Reform: Democratization and its Discontents in post-May 1992 Thai politics*. Paper presented at the workshop

*'Towards Good Society? Civil Society Actors, the State and the Business Class in Southeast Asia—facilitators or impediments to a strong, Democratic and Fair Society?'* Organised by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, Berlin, 27-28 October 2004.]

20. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was born in 1949 in Pacitan, East Java to a family that already enjoyed close links to the Indonesian armed forces. In 1970 he enrolled in the Academy of the Armed Forces of the Indonesian Republic (Akabri) and three years later (in 1973) graduated with the highest honours among all the students in the country. Having distinguished himself as the most promising military cadet of his year, Bambang was selected for further education and training by ABRI both within the country and abroad, particularly in the United States of America. During the New Order regime (1967-1998) of President Soeharto, Indonesia was under constant surveillance and supervision of the United States. America, along with Israel and a number of European allies, invested heavily into the Indonesian state and economy and both America and Israel were instrumental in the training and development of key Indonesian security units such as the Indonesian Intelligence Service (BIN) and the country's elite commando unit, Kopassus. Young officers who demonstrated promise and abilities were regularly promoted and sent abroad for further training in the U.S.A, and Bambang was one of them. In 1976 he took part in the U.S. Airborne and Rangers course at Fort Benning, Georgia, while attending an American Language course at Lackland, Texas, at the same time; in 1982-83 he took part in the Infantry Officers Advanced course at Fort Benning (where he graduated with honours); in 1983 he took part in the Jungle Warfare Training course in Panama; and in 1984 participated in the Antitank Weapons course that was conducted in Belgium and Germany. In the course of his academic work and training he also took part in 'on the job' training with the 82<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Airborne Division at Fort Bragg (in 1983). Bambang's working relationship with the U.S.A. continued well into the 1990s, and in 1990-91 he was at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He was later made the Commander of the Indonesian Infantry Training Academy between 1983 to 1985, and served with a number of important units in various military operations both in Indonesia and abroad. Within the coun-

try he was known as one of the senior commanders who were put in charge of military and security operations in East Timor. His first tour of command there was between 1979 to 1980, and his second between 1986 to 1988. Despite the global outcry over the violent military invasion and subsequent annexation of East Timor in 1974, it remains a fact that many of the Indonesian officers who were stationed there were trained by the U.S.A. and other Western states, and Bambang was one of them. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 led to mass demonstrations by students and civil society groups, who called for the resignation of Soeharto and the trial of key ABRI leaders. In the midst of this upheaval, Bambang was one of the few senior officers who could still maintain a dialogue with civil society organisations and the student demonstrators. While other senior army leaders like Major-General Wiranto were being accused of crimes against humanity in places like East Timor, Bambang was promoted and made the head of the ABRI representation at the People's Assembly (ABRI-MPR) in 1998. Following the resignation of Soeharto in May 1998 and the collapse of the New Order regime, Bambang was promoted to the post of Chief of Territorial Command (1998-99). Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's political career began as soon as he retired from the army in January 2000. While still holding the rank of Lieutenant General he served as the Minister for Energy in the cabinet of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). Following the withdrawal of General Wiranto from politics (due to charges of criminal abuse of human rights in the East Timor campaign), Bambang was then put in charge of national security by Gus Dur as well. Bambang was one of the few faces of the New Order era who managed to survive the transition from military to civilian rule. As the man in charge of security and the maintenance of law and order, Bambang was asked by President Wahid to set up the National Crisis Centre in 2001, a loosely-structured information-gathering and policy-setting group that reported directly to the President. Thus despite his status as retired general, Bambang was allowed to maintain close working links with the Indonesian army, police, intelligence and security services. In 2001 Bambang fell out with President Wahid. In the elections that came soon after, Bambang formed an alliance with Megawati Sukarnoputri. Following the victory of Megawati, Hamzah Haz was made

Vice-President and Bambang was brought into her cabinet. He was put in charge of the troubles in Aceh, North Sumatra. As Minister of Security it was Bambang who announced the state of emergency in Aceh on 19 May 2003, while at the same time trying to solve the disputes in Ambon and Poso. Bambang was able to weather the storms of criticism due to his own strong support from the army and the passive support of the Indonesian public, who wished to see the troubles in Aceh resolved once and for all. Finally in September 2004 Bambang—along with his running mate Muhammad Jusuf Kalla—stood against the pairing of Megawati Sukarnoputri and Kyai Hasyim Muzadi. Owing to his reputation as a leader who stood firm on the question of law and order, and his track record as an army officer and key player in the Indonesian security/intelligence network, Bambang managed to persuade most of the voters that he was the man who could deliver on his promise to restore calm and stability to the country. After seven years the Indonesian economy had yet to recover from the financial crisis of 1997-98 and the spate of bombings in Bali and Jakarta had sullied Indonesia's image abroad—particularly among foreign investors and tourists. Promising that he would rid the country of religious extremism, terror networks and communal violence, Bambang and Jusuf Kalla managed to secure 61% of the votes at the elections of September 2004. In October 2004 he was declared the winner and next President of Indonesia.

21. The origins of the 'Muhammad cartoon controversy' appear innocuous enough: It all began in 2005 when the Danish writer Kare Bluitgen found that it was impossible to find an illustrator who was willing to illustrate the Prophet Muhammad for a book that was based on his life. Taking up the challenge, *Jyllands-Posten* held an open competition inviting illustrators to undertake the task, though the results were hardly what was initially expected. Many of the drawings that were submitted to the paper were of a caricatural nature that sought to lampoon the Prophet instead (along with several other caricatures that ridiculed other prominent political figures as well as the editor of the paper and the author Kare Bluitgen himself). The initial reaction to the cartoons was somewhat subdued, with a number of local protests being voiced by Danish Muslims in Denmark itself. When the cartoons were re-published several months later

(including by other European papers such as *Charlie Hebdo* and *France Soir* of France), their republication was seen by some as a direct act of provocation; leading to the claim that *Jyllands-Posten* was engaged in a deliberate campaign to demonise and vilify Muslims and their religious beliefs. By February 2006, the campaign against the cartoons and the newspaper that published them had developed its own momentum and its impact had been spread further afield. Within a matter of weeks, protests against the *Jyllands-Posten* had spread across Europe and was soon mirrored by similar protests across the Muslim world. Among the first to condemn the cartoons were Muslim intellectuals and activists residing in Europe. The British academic Ziauddin Sardar warned of their potential marginalising and alienating effect, comparing them to anti-Semitic caricatures utilised by the Nazis in Germany at the start of their anti-Semitic campaigns in the 1930s. Other Muslim intellectuals called on the Western press to be more circumspect and to exercise more caution when dealing with Muslims, in the light of Islamophobic tendencies that had taken root in the continent following the events of September 11, 2001. But by far the most vocal and spectacular response came from Danish Muslim groups that were aligned to Islamist movements and parties both in Denmark and abroad, who were quick to utilise the internet and the media to disseminate information about the cartoons and to call for a global Muslim reaction. (See: Farish A. Noor, *Globalising the Local, Localising the Global: The Dynamics of the 'Muhammad Cartoon Controversy'*, Paper for the conference 'Freedom of Religion' Organised by the Faculty of Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Doorn, Netherlands, 10-12 April 2006 (to be published).

22. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's keynote speech delivered at the Conference on Terrorism organised by the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Kuala Lumpur, 17 November 2001.

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